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REBELLION

IN THE BACKLANDS

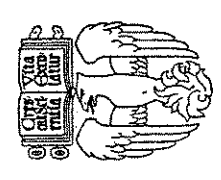
Translated from

OS SERTÕES by EUCLIDES DA CUNHA

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WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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ing been cleared up in this manner, the investigations then centered upon a definition of the special psychology of the aborigines, and the results were embodied in certain assured conclusions. It is not our purpose here to go into all this. In addition to lacking the necessary competence, we should be digressing from the objective that we have set ourselves.

The two other formative elements of alien origin were not made the subject of similar investigations. The Bantu, or Kafir, Negro in his various manifestations has been up to now consistently neglected by us. Only in very recent times has a persistent investigator, Nina Rodrigues, subjected to painstaking analysis the Negro's interesting and original religious sentiments.² Nonetheless, whatever transplanted branch of the African race he may represent, the Negro has brought with him, certainly, the preponderant attributes of the *Homo afer*, son of those parched and barbarous regions where, more than anywhere else, natural selection is effected through an intensive exercise of force and ferocity.

As for the aristocratic factor of our own *gens*, the Portuguese stock, which links us with the vibrant intellect of the Celt, it in turn, despite the complicated melting-pot from which it emerges, is quite characteristic.

We are thus acquainted with the three essential elements and, albeit in an imperfect manner, with the physical environment which differentiates them—and, beyond that, we are familiar, in all their forms, with the adverse or favorable historical conditions which have reacted upon those elements. In considering, however, all the alternatives and all the intermediary phases of this admixture of anthropological types, of varying degrees of development as regards their physical and psychic attributes and under the influence of a changeable environment, with differing climates, producing discordant aspects and opposed conditions of life, it may be said that we shall have done little to advance our knowledge. We shall have written down all the variations of an intricate formula, representing a grave problem; but we shall not have brought to light the unknown factors.

It is obviously not sufficient in the present instance to align the Bantu Negro, the Guarany Indian, and the white man and apply to them Broca's anthropological law. That law is too abstract and inflexible. It does not tell us what the reagents are which may attenuate the influence of the more numerous or stronger race, or the causes which may obliterate or attenuate that influence, when, in place of the binary combination which

² [Rodrigues' classic work, first published in French, in Bahia, in 1900, was *L'Animisme féliciste des nègres de Bahia*. The original Portuguese text was printed, with an introduction and notes, by Professor Arthur Ramos, under the title, *O Animismo felicitista dos negros bahianos* (Rio de Janeiro, 1935). See also the same author's *Os Africanos no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1932).]

CHAPTER II

MAN

I

COMPLEXITY OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN BRAZIL

BOUND up with influences which, in varying degrees, are modified by three ethnic elements, the origin of the mixed races of Brazil is a problem which for a long time to come will defy the efforts of the best minds. It has as yet been barely outlined.

Meanwhile, in the domain of Brazilian anthropological investigations, are to be found names that loom large in the intellectual life of our country. The studies which have been made of the prehistoric native races are models of subtle observation and brilliant critical analysis; and thanks to them, and contrary to the way of thinking of those capricious builders of the Aleutian bridge, it would now appear to have been definitely established that the races of the Americas are autochthonous ones.

In the field of these notable studies, completed by the profound paleontological elaborations of Wilhelm Lund, there are other names and achievements that stand out: the name of Morton, for example; Frederick Hartt, with his inspired intuition; the entire work of scientific organization accomplished by a Meyer; the rare lucidity of a Trajano de Moura; and many other men whose writings go to reinforce those of Nott and Gordon. These researches, in a general but thoroughgoing manner, serve to define America as a center of creation wholly apart from the great Central Asiatic cradleland. There arises, autonomous among the races, the *Homo americanus*.

The primordial phase of the question was thus clarified. Whether they stem from the "man of Lagoa Santa" crossed with the pre-Columbian of the "Sambaquis,"¹ or whether, greatly modified by later cross-breeding, they sprang from some invading race from the north, from which it is supposed the Tupis came, who were so very numerous in the Era of Discovery—whatever their origin, our own forest-dwellers, with their striking anthropological characteristics, may be looked upon as vanishing types of the old autochthonous races of our land.

The preliminary question of the origin of the indigenous element hav-

¹ [Term applied to shell heaps on the site of prehistoric settlements.]

is presupposed, we have to deal with three diverse factors closely bound up with the vicissitudes of history and of climate. Broca's law is a rule that may serve to orient us in our search for the truth, nothing more. It is modified, as all laws are, by the pressure of objective data. But even if, through an extraordinary lack of mental discipline, someone were to attempt to apply it, wholly without regard to such data, it would not simplify the problem in the least.

This is easy to prove. Putting to one side the innumerable factors that disturb the equation, let us consider the three constituent elements of our race in themselves, with their characteristic capacities intact.

We see at once that, even under this favorable hypothesis, there does not result from these elements the single product immanent in binary combinations, in the form of an immediate fusion in which the constituent characteristics are juxtaposed or summed up, converging toward a union in an intermediary type. On the contrary, the inevitable ternary combination, in the simplest of cases, gives rise to three other, binary ones. The initial elements are not summed up and they are not united; they reproduce themselves, creating an equal number of subformations, their place being taken by these derivatives, without any reduction whatsoever, in a confused intermixture of races in which we may distinguish as the most characteristic products the mulatto, the *mameluco* or *curiboca*, and the *cafuso*.³ The initial point of the investigation, if scarcely more confused than it was, is thus shifted by these reactions which express, not a reduction, but a reproduction. And the study of these subcategories takes the place of a study of the primary races, a task rendered all the more difficult when one stops to consider that these subformations comprise in their turn innumerable manifestations depending upon the varying admixture of blood.

The Brazilian, posed as an abstract type in process of formation, can arise only as the result of a more than ordinarily complex intermingling of races. Theoretically, he would be the *pardo* (brown-skinned) type,⁴ toward which the successive cross-breedings of the mulatto, the *curiboca*, and the *cafuso* converge.

However, taking into account the historical conditions, differing in dif-

³ Respectively: offspring of Negro and white; of white and Tupi (*cari-boc*, "coming from the white"); of Tupi and Negro. *Mameluco*, or better *mamaluco*, is employed as a generic term, embracing them all, though preferably applied to the second group. *Mamã-ruca*, "produced by mixture"; from *mamã*, "to mix," and *ruca*, "to draw out or produce."

⁴ (On the categories employed in Brazilian vital statistics (in this instance, in the city of Bahia) see Donald Pierson, *Negrees in Brazil: A Study of Race Contact at Bahia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 126-27. These categories are *branco* (white), *preto* (black), and *pardo* (brown-skinned, or mulatto).)

ferent regions; the climatic disparities, occasioning diverse reactions diversely borne by the constituent races; the greater or less degree of miscegenation in various parts of the country; and being further mindful of the intrusion—by arms in the colonial epoch, by immigration in our own day—of other peoples, another factor which was not and is not uniform, it may clearly be seen that the reality of such a type is highly doubtful, if indeed the supposition is not absurd.

Be this as it may, these brief remarks will serve to explain the divergence of view that prevails among our anthropologists. Shunning, generally, the laborious task of subjecting their researches to conditions so complex as these, they have given an inordinate amount of attention to the preponderance of ethnic capacities. Now, while we would not deny the weighty influence exerted by these factors, the stress upon them in this country was carried to the point of exaggeration, provoking an irruption of semiscientific nonsense in the form of extravagant, over daring, and sterile fantasies. There has been something like an excess of subjectivism on the part of those of our writers who, in recent times, have dealt with things so serious with a volubility that was somewhat scandalous in view of the magnitude of the subject. They began by excluding, in large part, the objective data provided by environmental and historical circumstances and then proceeded to play upon the theme of the three races, intermingling them and fusing them according to their whims of the moment. And out of all this fanciful metachemistry there came some fictitious precipitates.

Some of them began by asserting, with an air of authority that was open to question, the secondary function of the physical environment, proclaiming first of all the almost total extinction of the aborigine and the declining influence of the African since the abolition of the slave traffic; they foresaw the final victory of the white man, who was stronger and more numerous, all this representing the general tendency of the mulatto, an ever more diluted form of Negro, and of the *caboclo*, in whom the characteristic features of the aborigine were being all the time more obliterated.

Others gave yet freer rein to their fancy. They stressed the aborigine's influence and erected fantasies which fell at the first mild shock of criticism—fantasies that were not devoid of rhyme and meter, inasmuch as these writers had invaded science to the rhythmic lilt of Gonçalves Dias' verses.⁵

Others, again, kept their feet on the ground. These latter exaggerated the

⁵ [Well-known Brazilian poet of the last century (1823-64), noted for his love of nature, tinged with pantheism.]

African influence as being effectively capable, at many points, of reacting against the absorption of other types by the superior race. The mulatto now arose and was proclaimed to be the most characteristic of our ethnic subcategories.

In brief, the views put forward were many and multifarious and more than a little dubious.

It is our belief that all this happened for the reason that the essential scope of the investigations had been reduced to the search for a single ethnic type, when, the truth is, there are many of them. We do not possess unity of race, and it is possible we shall never possess it.⁶ We are predestined to form a historic race in the future, providing the autonomy of our national life endures long enough to permit it. In this respect we are inverting the natural order of events. Our biological evolution demands the guaranty of social evolution.

We are condemned to civilization. Either we shall progress or we shall perish. So much is certain, and our choice is clear.

This is scarcely suggested, it may be, by the heterogeneity of our ancestral elements; but they are reinforced by another element equally ponderable: a physical milieu that is wide and varied and, added to this, varied historical situations which in large part flow from that milieu. This is a subject which it will be necessary to consider for a few moments.

VARIABILITY OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Contrary to the opinion of those who would assign to the hot countries an expanse of thirty degrees in latitude, Brazil is far from answering to such a description. From a twofold point of view, astronomic and geographic, these limits are exaggerated. In addition to the fact that it extends beyond the commonly accepted theoretical demarcation, our country is excluded from such a scheme by its natural features, of landscape relief, which mitigate or reinforce the action of the meteorological agents, creating equatorial climates in the high altitudes and temperate ones in the tropics. Its entire climatology, in any part, inscribed within the ample boundaries of the general cosmological laws, is likely to be subject to those particular natural causes which are nearest at hand. A climate is by way of being the physiological translation of a geographic condition. Defining it in this manner, we must conclude that Brazil, by its very formation, is not likely to have a uniform one.

This is demonstrated by the most recent results—the only ones to be trusted—of meteorological investigations. These show the country to be

⁶ [See "Author's Notes," Note V, p. 481.]

divided into three clearly distinct zones: the definitely tropical zone, which extends through the northern states to southern Baía, with an average temperature of 88.8 degrees; the temperate zone, extending from São Paulo to Rio Grande, by way of Paraná and Santa Catarina, between the fifteenth and twentieth isotherms; and, as a transition, the subtropical zone, extending over the north central portions of certain states, from Minas to Paraná.

Here, obviously, are three distinct habitats. Even within their more or less definite limits, however, there are circumstances which diversify them. We shall indicate these in a few rapid strokes.

The disposition of the mountains in Brazil, great upheaved masses which follow the coast in a line perpendicular to the southeast, determines the primary distinctions over large tracts of territory which lie to the east, creating a significant climatological anomaly. The fact of the matter is, the climate here, entirely subordinated to geography, violates the general laws that ordinarily govern it. Starting from the tropics, on the side of Ecuador, its astronomical determination by latitudes yields to disturbing secondary causes, and it is, abnormally, defined by longitude.

This is a well-known fact. In the extensive strip of coast which runs from Baía to Paraíba more marked changes may be observed accompanying the parallel to the east then along the meridian northward. Those differences in climate and in natural features which in the latter direction are imperceptible stand out clearly in the former. All the way to the far northern regions, Nature exhibits the same unvarying exuberance in the great forests that border the coast; so that a stranger at a rapid glance would believe this to be a most fertile tract, of wide extent. On the other hand, beginning with the thirteenth parallel, the forests conceal a vast strip of sterile land, a barren tract, displaying all the inclemencies of a region in which the thermometric and hygrometric readings, marked by exaggerated extremes, vary in inverse ratio.

This is revealed by a brief journey to the west, starting from any point along the coast. The charm is broken, the beautiful illusion gone. Nature is here impoverished: no more great forests and mountaintops, but deserts and depressions, as the region is transformed into the parched and barbarous backlands with their intermittent streams and endless stretch of barren plains, forming a huge dais for the woebegone landscapes of the drought.

The contrast is most striking. A little more than a hundred miles distant are regions the exact opposite of this, with conditions of life that are equally different. It is as if one had found one's self suddenly in a desert.

And, certainly, those waves of humanity which, during the first two centuries of settlement, swept over the northern tracts on their way west to the interior must have encountered obstacles more serious than the roll of seas and mountains, when they came to cross the meager, bare-stripped caatingas. The failure of the Baians to penetrate to the interior of the country—and they, by the way, preceded the Paulistas⁷—is an eloquent case in point.

The same, however, is not true of the tropics to the south. Here, the geological warp of the earth, matrix of its interesting morphogeny, remains unalterable over large expanses of the interior, creating the same favorable conditions, the same flora, a climate greatly improved by altitude, and the same animated appearance as far as natural features are concerned.

The huge bulwark of the granite cordillera, standing perpendicular to the sea, along its inner slopes falls away gently in vast, rolling plains. It forms the abrupt, steeply inclined scarp of the plateaus.

Upon the plateaus, the landscape pictures are more ample and luxuriant, without the exaggerated overwhelming aspect of the mountains. The earth exhibits that "manageability of nature" of which Buckle speaks, while the climate, moderately warm, rivals in mildness the admirable one of southern Europe. It is not here, as in the north, exclusively governed by the southeast wind. Blowing down off the high plains of the interior, the northwest wind is the dominant factor, as throughout the whole of that extensive zone which ranges from the elevated lands of Minas and Rio to Paraná, by way of São Paulo.

We have done little more than sketch in these broad divisions, but enough has been said to show that there is an essential difference between the south and the north, two regions that are absolutely distinct as regards meteorological conditions, the lay of the land, and the varying transitions between the inland and the coast. Coming down to a closer analysis, we shall discover special aspects that are still more to the point. We shall avoid going into an extended explanation of the subject and shall confine ourselves to the most significant examples.

We have seen, in the preceding pages, that the southeast wind is the predominant regulator of the climate along the eastern seaboard but that it is replaced in the southern states by the northwest wind and in the far north by the northeaster. But these winds in their turn disappear in the heart of the plateaus before the southwest wind, which, like a mighty whiff

⁷ [Inhabitants of the São Paulo region.]

of the *pampeiros*,⁸ rushes down on Mato Grosso, occasioning thermometric variations that are out of all proportion, adding to the instability of the mainland climate, and subjecting the central regions to an extremely harsh set of conditions, differing from those that we have rapidly outlined above.

Indeed, it may be said that Nature in Mato Grosso lives up to Buckle's exaggerations.⁹ It is quite exceptional, unique; there is nothing like it anywhere. All the wild grandeur, all the inconceivable exuberance, along with a maximum of brutality on the part of the elements—qualities which the eminent thinker, in a hasty generalization, ascribed to Brazil as a whole—exist here in reality and are manifested in astounding landscapes. Beholding these landscapes, even with the cool eye of the naturalist who is not given to rhetorical descriptions, one realizes that this anomalous climate is one that affords the most significant example of the wide variations of environment to be found in Brazil.

There is nothing like it, when it comes to a play of antitheses. The general aspect of the region is one of extreme benignity—the earth in love with life; fecund Nature in a triumphant apotheosis of bright, calm days; the soil blossoming with a fantastic vegetation—fertile, irrigated with rivers that spread out to the four corners of the compass. But this opulent placidity conceals, paradoxically, the germs of cataclysms, which, bursting forth always with an unalterable rhythm, in the summertime, heralded by the same infallible omens, here descend with the irresistible finality of a natural law. It is difficult to describe them, but we shall endeavor to give a sketch.

When the hot, moist squalls have blown for some days from the northeast, the atmosphere becomes motionless, stagnant—not a breath of air stirring. Then it is that "Nature, as it were, droops in an ecstasy of fear; not even the tops of the trees are swaying; the forests, frightfully still, appear to be solid objects; the birds cower in their nests and sing no more."¹⁰

When, however, one looks up at the sky, there is not a cloud in sight! The limpid-arching blue is lighted still by a sun that is darkened, as if in eclipse. The atmospheric pressure, meanwhile, slowly but constantly drops, stifling all life as it does so. For moments, a dense cloud cumulus with copper-colored borders looms darkly on the southern horizon. Then

⁸ [The *pampeiros* of the Argentine pampas. "A cold, strong, dry southwest wind . . . generally advancing with a well-marked and very black cloud-front" (*Funk & Wagnall's Standard Dictionary*).]

⁹ [See pp. 52 and 144.]

¹⁰ Dr. João Severiano da Fonseca, *Viagem ao Redor do Brasil*.

comes a breeze whose velocity rapidly increases, turning into a high wind. The temperature falls in a few minutes, and, a moment later, the earth is shaken by a violent hurricane. Lightning flashes; thunderbolts resound in a sky that is lowering now; and a torrential rain descends on the vast expanse of plains, wiping out in a single inundation the uncertain *dévor-tium aquarum* that crosses them, uniting the sources of the rivers and embroiling their beds in a limitless overflow.

The assault is a sudden one. The cataclysm bursts precipitately in the vibrant spiral of a cyclone. Houses are unroofed; the aged carandá trees¹¹ are bent double, moan and split; the hills are islands; the plains deep in water.

An hour later the sun is shining triumphantly in the purest of skies! The restless birds are singing in the dripping foliage; the air is filled with gentle breezes—and man, leaving the shelter to which he had tremulously repaired, comes forth to view, amid the universal revival of Nature, the damage wrought by the storm. Trunks and boughs of trees rent by lightning and twisted by the winds; cottages in ruins, their roofs strewn over the ground; muddy rivers overflowing their banks with the last of the downpour; the grass of the fields beaten down, as if a herd of buffaloes had passed that way—sorry reminders, all, of the tempest and its fulminating onslaught.

Some days later the winds once more begin blowing up slowly from the east; the temperature begins to mount again; the barometer drops, little by little; and the feeling of general uneasiness constantly increases. This keeps up until the motionless air is caught in the formidable grip of the pampiro, and the destructive tempest arrives, blowing in turbulent whirling eddies, against the same lugubrious background, reviving the same old cycle, the same vicious circle of catastrophes.

And now, proceeding northward, we encounter, in contrast to such manifestations as these, the climate of Pará. Brazilians of other latitudes do not know a great deal about this climate, even through the pages of a Bates.¹² Mildly warm mornings, of about 73 degrees in temperature, coming unexpectedly after rainy nights; dawns that are a glowing revelation, bringing unlooked-for metamorphoses: trees which the evening before were bare now decked with flowers; marshy bogs changed into meadows. And then, again, complete transformations: silent forests, half-naked boughs with their parched or withered leaves; an air that is still and lifeless; branches shorn of their recently opened buds, whose dead, dried

¹¹ [*Copernicia australis* Becc., of the Palmaceae.]

¹² [H. W. Bates, *The Naturalist on the River Amazons* (London, 1892).]

petals fall upon an earth that lies motionless, enervated, in a heat of 95 degrees in the shade. "On the following morning, the sun rises without clouds, and in this manner is completed the cycle—spring, winter, and autumn on a single tropical day."¹³

The constancy of the climate is such that one is not aware of the passing of the seasons, which, all the while, as on a dial, follow one another in the hours of one day, although the average daily temperature throughout the entire year shows a variation of only one degree or a little more. Thus does life strike a balance, with a consistency that is not to be perturbed.

On the other hand, in the Upper Amazon region to the west, we come upon a new *habitat*, with different characteristics. And this, needless to say, imposes a painful process of acclimatization on the inhabitants of the bordering territories.

Here, at the height of the summer heat, when the last gusts of wind from the east are dying on the heavy-laden air, the thermometer comes to take the place of the hygrometer in the study of climate. The grievous round of human existence in these parts is dependent upon the emptying and filling of the great rivers. These streams rise in a most extraordinary manner. The Amazon, with a tremendous leap from its bed, in the course of a few days raises the water level to something like fifty-six feet. It expands in vast overflows, in a highly complicated network of pools and channels, *fueros* and *paramirimins*¹⁴ as they are called, forming an inland sea shot by strong currents, from which emerge the green-covered islanded *igapós*.¹⁵

The filling of the river brings a stoppage of life. Caught in the meshes of the *igarapés*,¹⁶ man displays a rare stoicism, in the presence of a fatality which he is powerless to avert, and awaits the end of this paradoxical winter with its high temperatures. Summer is the ebb season. The inhabitants then resume their rudimentary activities, of the only sort compatible with a natural environment that displays so wide a range of manifestations, rendering impossible the exertion of any sustained effort.

¹³ Daenert, *O Clima do Brasil*.

¹⁴ [Cf. Richard Spruce, *Notes of a Botanist on the Amazon and Andes*, ed. Alfred Russel Wallace (London, 1908), I, 174. The form in Spruce is *parand-miri*. He alludes to the *Paraná-mir* dos Ramos, the *Furo de Uruá*, and the *Furo de Canomá*.]

¹⁵ [The *igapós* are bits of aquatic jungle, pools entirely grown over with vegetation. For a good description of the *igapó*, the *igarapé*, and the *paraná* (cf. the *paramirim*, or *parand-miri*) see Rose and Bob Brown, *Amazing Amazon* (New York: Modern Age, 1942), pp. 24-25.]

¹⁶ [The *igarapés* are canoe creeks, natural channels between two islands or between an island and the mainland.]

Such an environment encourages a frank parasitism. Man imbibes the milk of life by sucking on the tumid chalices of the siphonias.¹⁷

But in this singular yet typical climate there are other anomalies that make it worse. The alternation of rainy and dry seasons, coming like the systole and diastole of one of earth's major arteries, is not enough. There are other factors which render futile for the one not born in these parts any attempt at a real acclimatization. Many times in the season when the rivers are filling, in April or in May, in the course of a calm, clear day, the air will be suddenly chilled with cold squalls from the south. It is like an icy blast from the pole. The thermometer then drops suddenly, many degrees, and for a number of days an unnatural situation prevails.

The ambitious pack-peddlers who, spurred on by hope of gain, have ventured into these parts, and the Indians themselves, who are hardened to the climate by adaptation, now take shelter in their insubstantial huts, huddling around wood fires. All work and other activities once more cease. The great solitudes, now under water, are depopulated; the fish die of cold in the rivers; the birds in the silent forests either die or take flight; nests are empty, and even the wild beasts vanish from sight, seeking refuge in the deepest holes they can find. In brief, all this marvelous wealth of equatorial nature, fashioned by the brilliant tropical suns, now presents the cruelly desolate and mournful appearance of a region at the poles. It is the cold season, or the time of *fríagem*.

However, we shall have to bring this hasty sketch to a close.

The northern backlands, as we have already seen, have in turn new climates to show, with yet other biological exigencies. Here, the same alternation of fair seasons and foul is, perhaps, more harshly reflected under other forms. Accordingly, if we stop to consider that these various climatic aspects do not represent exceptional cases but make their appearance, all of them, from the tempests of Mato Grosso to the cyclones of the northern drought area, with that periodicity which is immanent in inviolable natural laws, we shall then have to agree that the variability of our physical milieu is complete.

Whence the mistake made by those who, in studying our national physiology, fall into generalizations with regard to the particular effect of a tropical climate. It is undoubtedly true that such a climate tends to create a *sui generis* pathology throughout the whole of the northern coastal strip and a good part of the corresponding states, as far as Mato Grosso. The moisture-laden heat of the Amazon region, for example, is depressing and exhausting in effect. It forms stunted organisms, in which all activity

¹⁷ [*Siphonia* spp., genus of plants synonymous with *Hevea*.]

is subject to a permanent lack of balance between the impulsive energies of the strongly excited peripheral functions and the apathy of the central functions: marasmic intelligences, stupefied by the explosive force of the passions; feeble innervations, in contrast to the acuity of the senses, and ill compensated or repaired by a blood stream which has been impoverished by incomplete hematoses.

From this flow all the idiosyncracies of an exceptional physiology; lungs that are reduced in size, and which, in the obligatory elimination of carbon dioxide, are replaced by the liver, upon which falls life's heavy surcharge: organisms wasted by the persistent alternation of an impulsive exaltation and an enervating apathy, without the vibratility or energetic muscular tone of robust and full-blooded temperaments. Natural selection in such an environment is effected at the cost of grave compromises with the central functions of the brain, in a most prejudicial inverse progression between intellectual and physical development, assuring inevitably the victory of the expansive instincts and looking to the ideal of an adaptation which shall have as its sole consequences a maximum of organic energy and a minimum of moral fortitude. Acclimatization in such a case means a regressive evolution. The type wastes away in a constant decline, the effects of which are transmitted by heredity to the point of total extinction. Like the Englishman in Barbados, in Tasmania, or in Australia, the Portuguese in the Amazon region may flee miscegenation, but after a few generations his physical and moral characteristics will be profoundly altered, from his complexion, turned copper colored by the tropic suns and the incomplete elimination of carbon dioxide, to his temperament, which is weakened by having been deprived of its original qualities. The inferior race, the crude savage, dominates him; in league with the environment, he conquers him, crushes him, annihilates him, in formidable competition with malaria, hepatitis, debilitating fevers, the intense heat of summer, and the ague-breeding swamps.

This does not occur in a good part of central Brazil and throughout the southern regions. Even in the major part of the northern backlands the dry heat, largely counteracted by the strong air currents coming from the northeast and southeast, creates situations that are more encouraging, more beneficent and stimulating in their effect.

Returning to the south, to the territory which from northern Minas runs southeast to Rio Grande, we come upon conditions that are incomparably superior. An annual medium temperature ranging from 62 to 68 degrees, with a more harmonious and stable alternation of seasons, the summer rains being distributed over the autumn and spring in a manner

favorable to cultivation. As winter comes on, the impression of a European climate is deepened: the frigid southwest wind brings drizzling rains and mist; the snow forms a lacework on the windowpanes; the brooks are frozen over; and the frost is white on the fields.

REFLECTION OF ENVIRONMENT IN HISTORY

Our history reflects in a noteworthy manner these environmental conditions. Considering the subject from a general point of view, leaving out of account for the moment the disturbing effect of nontypical details, we may behold diversified situations already taking shape in our colonial period. With the land under feudal rule, divided up among the fortunate proprietors on whom it had been bestowed, the settlement of the country was undertaken from north and south, with the same identical elements, and with the same show of indifference in either case on the part of a metropolis whose gaze was still turned to the last mirages of the "marvelous Indies"; and it was then that the radical separation between south and north began.

There is no need here for us to go into the decisive factors in the case of the two regions. They are two distinct histories, registering movements and tendencies opposed to each other. Two societies in process of formation, alienated by their rival destinies, one wholly indifferent to the mode of life of the other, and both all the while evolving under the influence of a single administration. In the south new tendencies were developing, a greater division of labor, more vigor in a stock that was harder and more heterogeneous, more practical, and adventurous—a broad progressive movement, in short. And all this stood in contrast to the agitated, at times more brilliant, but always less productive life of the north: scattered and disunited captaincies, yoked to the same routine, amorphous and static, fulfilling the limited round of functions incumbent upon the pensioners of a distant court.

History here is more theatrical, less eloquent. There arise heroes, but they are great of stature only by contrast with the common run of men about them: brilliant, vibrant pages of history, but cut short, without definite objective, with the three formative races, wholly divorced from one another, playing their part in it all.

Even in the culminating period, that of the struggle with the Dutch, Henrique Dias' Negroes, Camarão's Indians, and Vieira's Lusitanians remained distinctly separate in their army tents.¹⁸ If they were separated in

¹⁸ [Allusion to the struggle between the Portuguese and the Dutch, in the Pernambuco region, 1644-54—a struggle led by João Fernandez Vieira, who is sometimes referred to as "the creator of Brazilian nationality."]

war, the distance between them grew in time of peace. The drama of the Palmares,¹⁹ the incursions of the Indians, the conflicts on the border of the backlands—all violated that truce which had been struck against the Batavian.

With the coastal region prisoned between the inaccessible backlands and the sea, there has been a tendency to hand down the old colonial alignment to our day, thanks to an obstinate and stupid centralization which has achieved the anomaly of dislocating in a new land the moral ambient of an old society. Fortunately, there was the impact of the impetuous wave from the south.

In the latter region, where acclimatization was a speedier process, in an environment that was less adverse, the newcomers soon attained an unwonted vigor. Out of the absorption of the aboriginal tribes came the mixed descendants of the backland conquests, the daring *mamelucos*. The Paulista—and this name, in its historic signification, takes in the sons of Rio de Janeiro, Minas, São Paulo, and regions south—now arose as an autonomous type, adventurous, rebellious, freedom-loving, the perfect model of a lord of the earth, freeing himself, rebel-like, from a distant rule, leaving behind him the sea and the galleons of the metropolis, casting in his lot with the hinterland, and carving out the unsung epic of the "Bandeiras."²⁰

All this admirably reflects the influence of environmental conditions. There was no racial distinction whatsoever between the colonizers from the south and those from the north. In either case, there was a prevalence of those same elements which were the despair of Diogo Coelho: "Worse here in the land than pestilence. . . ." But in the south the vital force of temperament remaining with those who had bested the unyielding ocean was not wasted by an enervating climate but found a fresh component in the very strength of earth, which changed it, and for the better. Man here felt himself strong and capable. With the theater of his great crimes shifted but a little, he might bring to bear upon the impervious backlands the same audacity which had hurled him into African circumnavigations.

In addition—and we must touch upon this point at the risk of scandalizing our puny historiographers—the mountains freed him from the preoccupation of having to defend a littoral where the bark of the covetous foreigner might put in. The Serra do Mar, towering perpendicularly above

¹⁹ [The historic seventeenth-century runaway-slave colony, or *quilombo*.]

²⁰ [See p. 10 and n. 12.]

the Atlantic, like the curtain of a huge bastion, has played a notable role in our history. Against its cliffs the warrior passion of the Cavendishes and the Fentons beat in vain. On its heights, letting his gaze roam round about him over the plains, the newcomer felt secure. He felt himself on battlements that were not to be moved, which served at once as his protection against the foreign invader and against the cavalier from the metropolis. The mountains, arched like hoops of stone about a continent, were an isolating factor in both the ethnic and the historical sense of the word. They canceled out that irrepressible attraction to the seaboard which existed in the north, a seaboard reduced to a narrow strip of swamps and reefs, which held out nothing to excite man's covetousness; while there arose, superior to all fleets, intangible in the depths of the forests, the mysterious lure of the mines.

What is more, the special topographical relief of these mountains turns them into a condenser of the first order, in precipitating the evaporated moisture of the ocean. The rivers which flow down the slopes may be said in a manner of speaking to rise in the sea, rolling their waters in an opposite direction from the coast, carrying them to the interior, making straight for the backlands. They inevitably put the newcomer in mind of exploring expeditions. The earth attracts man, calls him to her fertile bosom, enchants him with her great beauty, and ends by snatching him, irresistibly, into the river currents.

The Tieté in its course is an eloquent case in point, giving direction to this conquest of the land. Whereas on the São Francisco, the Parnaíba, the Amazon, and all the other streams of the eastern seaboard, in proceeding up them to the interior, one has to battle the currents and the cataracts which fall from the terraces of the plateaus, the Tieté without the exertion of rowing carries the inhabitants of the region to the Rio Grande and thence to the Paraná and the Parnaíba. It was the means of penetration into Minas, into Goiás, Santa Catarina, the Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Grosso, all Brazil. Following this line of least resistance, which at the same time affords the clearest outline of our colonial expansion, the bandeiras did not find, as in the north, a sterile earth and the intangible barrier of ugly deserts to slow their progress.

It is easy to show how this distinction of a physical nature sheds light on the anomalies and contrasts to be found in the course of events in the two parts of the country, above all in the acute period of colonial crisis in the seventeenth century. The Dutch rule at this time was centered in Pernambuco, but it affected the entire east coast from Baía to Maranhão; and in the struggle that ensued there were certain memorable encounters

in which our three formative races joined forces against the common enemy. The man of the south, on the other hand, held himself absolutely aloof from this movement and showed, by rebelling against the decrees from the metropolis, how completely divorced he was from his battling fellow-countrymen. He was in a way an enemy fully as dangerous as the Batavian. A strange race of mestizos, given to uprisings, swayed by other tendencies, guided by another star, setting off in other directions, these southerners resolutely trod underfoot all restraining bulls and letters patent. In stubborn reaction to the Jesuits, they entered into an open struggle with the Portuguese court. As for the Jesuit fathers, they, forgetting the Dutch, had recourse to Madrid through Ruy de Montoya, and to Rome through Dias Taño; which showed that they looked upon the southerner as being the more serious foe.

Indeed, while in Pernambuco Von Schöppe's troops were setting up the Nassau government, in São Paulo the groundwork was being laid for the somber drama of Guairá. And when the restoration in Portugal led to the defeat of the invader all along the line, bringing the exhausted combatants together once more, the men of the south made it still more plain that theirs was a separate destiny by taking advantage of this very fact to assert their full and free autonomy in the one-minute rule of Amador Bueno.

There is no greater contrast in all our history. It is one truly national in significance, but one of which there is barely a glimpse to be had in the spectacular courts of the governors in Baía, where the Society of Jesus held sway, with the privilege of the conquest of souls, a casuistic euphemism cloaking a monopoly of the native's good right arm.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the contrast becomes still more pronounced. The men of the south were spreading out over the interior, making their way as far as the extreme limits of Ecuador. Down to the middle of the eighteenth century, the settlers followed the confused trails of the bandeiras. Wave after wave of them came, with the untiring fatality of a natural law; and, indeed, they did represent a vast potential, these great warrior caravans, these human waves let loose on the four corners of the compass, stamping over their country at every point, discovering it after the discovery, laying bare the gleaming bosom of its mines.

Leaving behind them the seaboard, which reflected the decadence of the metropolis, along with all the vices of a nationality in process of hopeless decomposition, these pioneers, making their way to the far lands of Pernambuco and the Amazon, gave the impression of being of another race, in their intrepid daring and their ability to withstand adversity. When the incursions of the savage threatened Baía, or Pernambuco, or

Paraíba, and the runaway-slave *quilombos*, last refuge of the rebellious African, were set up in the forest, the southerner, as the crude epic of Palmares tells us, thereupon arose as the classic hero vanquishing all perils, the chosen one for the undertaking of giant hecatombs.

The truth is, the northerner did not possess a physical environment which endowed him with an equal amount of energy. Had such been the case, the bandeiras from the east and those from the north would have come together and crushed the native, who would have disappeared without leaving any trace. But the northern colonist, to the west and south, found himself face to face with hostile Nature and speedily turned back to the coast; his was not the daring of those conquerors who feel themselves at home in a friendly land; his was not the self-assurance inspired by the very attractiveness of luxuriant and easily accessible regions. The explorations which were here begun in the second half of the sixteenth century, by Sebastião Tourinho on the River Doce, by Bastião Alvares on the São Francisco, and by Gabriel Soares in northern Baía, up to the headwaters of the Paraguassú, although they may have had the energetic stimulus of the Belchior Dias Silver Mines, are but a pallid imitation of the irruptions of the *Anhangueira*²¹ or of a Paschoal de Araujo.

Caught between the coastal canebreaks and the backlands, between the sea and the desert, in a blockade that was rendered more formidable by the action of the climate, the northerner wholly lost that upstanding spirit of rebellion which resounds so eloquently throughout all the pages of southern history. Such a contrast, certainly, is not based on primordial racial factors.

Having thus outlined the environmental influence on our history, let us see now what its influence has been upon our ethnic formation.

ACTION OF ENVIRONMENT IN THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE FORMATION OF RACES

Let us return to our point of departure. Agreed that environment does not form races, in our own special case, in various parts of the country, it produces an excessive variation in the degree of admixture of the three essential elements. Through the very diversity of the conditions of adaptation, it prepares the way for the appearance of different subraces. Moreover (and this today is an undeniable fact), external conditions gravely affect even well-established societies, which are dislocated by long-continuing migrations, even though these societies may be decked out with the

²¹ [Large-scale *bandeirante* expedition.]

resources of a superior culture. If this is true in the case of thoroughly well-defined races in other climates, protected by a surrounding civilization which is like the blood plasma of these great collective organisms, what then shall we say of our own situation, which is very different in kind? In this case, it is evident, the juxtaposition of characteristics means an intimate transfusion of tendencies; and the corresponding long period of transformation is by way of being a period of debilitation so far as the capacities of the crossed races are concerned; all of which increases the relative importance of the influence of environment. Environment is then, as it were, better able to stamp its own characteristic features upon the human organism in process of fusion. Without venturing upon too daring a parallel, we may say that, for these complex biological reactions, it has more energetic agents than for the chemical reactions of matter. To heat and light, which exert their influence in both cases, there is added the lay of the land, the climatic manifestations, and that undeniable presence, that species of mysterious catalytic force, which is immanent in the various aspects of nature.

Among us, as we have seen, these latter elements are far from possessing that uniform intensity which is ascribed to them. As history shows, they have led to a diverse distribution of our ethnic strata, giving rise to dissimilar forms of racial admixture.

There is no such thing as a Brazilian anthropological type.

RACIAL FORMATION IN NORTHERN BRAZIL

Let us, nevertheless, continue, in this intricate labyrinth of races, to pursue the fugitive mirage of a subrace, possibly an ephemeral one. Not adept at discriminating between those of our races that are in process of formation, let us confine ourselves to our subject by outlining rapidly the historial antecedents of the jagunço.²²

As we have already seen, Brazilian racial formation in the north is very different from that in the south. Historic circumstances, deriving in large part from physical ones, gave rise to initial diversities in the intermingling of the races—diversities which have been handed down to our own day. The march of settlement from Maranhão to Baía reveals these differences.

THE FIRST SETTLERS

It was a slow process. The Portuguese did not approach the northern seaboard with that vital strength which comes from dense migrations,

²² [This term as employed by the author is practically synonymous with *sertanejo*, or inhabitant of the backlands. For its original meaning see p. 148.]

great masses of invaders capable of preserving, even when uprooted from their native soil, all those qualities acquired in the course of a long historical apprenticeship. They were scattered, parceled out in small bands of condemned exiles or counterfeit colonists, lacking in the virile mien of conquerors. They still were dazzled by visions of the Orient. Brazil was the land of exile, a huge garrison for the intimidating of heretics and backsliders, all those victims of the somber *let-him-die-for-it* justice of those days. And so it was, in these early times, the reduced number of settlers stood in contrast to the vast expanse of the land and the size of the native population. The instructions given, in 1615, to Captain Frágoso de Albuquerque, concerning the regularizing with the Spanish ambassador in France of the truce agreement with La Revardière, are sufficiently clear in this respect. Here it is stated that "the lands of Brazil are not unpopulated, for the reason that there exist in them more than three thousand Portuguese."

This for the whole of Brazil—more than a hundred years after the discovery.

As Ayres de Casal tells us, "the population grew so slowly that at the time of the decease of Sr. D. Sebastião (1580), there was not a settlement outside the island of Itamaracá, the inhabitants of which locality numbered some two hundred, with three sugar plantations."

When, a few years later, Baía was a little better populated, the unfavorable disproportion between the European and the two other elements still continued, in perfect arithmetic progression. According to Fernão Cardim,²³ there were two thousand whites, four thousand Negroes, and six thousand Indians. It is obvious that the autochthonous element was for a long time the predominant one. In the first intermarriages, therefore, it must have had a large influence.

The newcomers who descended upon these regions were, moreover, of a type adapted to large-scale miscegenation. Men of war, without homes, given to the solitary life of camps, or else exiles and corrupt adventurers, they were all guided by the aphorism of Barleus: *ultra aequinoctialem non peccari*.²⁴ Concubinage with the *caboças*²⁵ degenerated into open de-

²³ [The sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary whose letters, containing an account of his travels in the Baía, Pernambuco, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro regions, are a rich source of information on folklore and ethnography. Among his works are *Do princípio e origem dos Índios do Brasil* and *Narrativa epistolar de uma viagem e missão jesuítica*.]

²⁴ [Cf. Kipling's famous "east of Suez" couplet.]

²⁵ [The Indian women.]

bauchery, from which not even the clergy were free. Padre Nobrega²⁶ clearly establishes this fact, in his celebrated letter to the King (1549), in which, depicting with an ingenuous realism the laxity of manners, he declares that the interior of the country is full of the offspring of Christians, who increase and multiply in accordance with heathen custom. He thinks it would be better if orphans were sent out, or even *erring women, all of whom would find husbands, the land being so great and rich*. The first intensive mixture of races, between the European and the Indian, occurred, then, in these early times. "Soon," says Casal, "the Tupiniquins, who are pagans of good disposition, were christened and married off to Europeans, there being innumerable natural whites in the country with the blood of the Tupiniquins in their veins."

On the other hand, although they existed in large numbers within the bounds of the kingdom, the Africans in this first century played an inferior role. In many places there were few of them to be found. They were few, according to the trustworthy narrator just quoted, in Rio Grande do Norte, "where the Indians were long since reduced, despite their ferocity, and where their descendants through alliances with Europeans and Africans have augmented the classes of whites and brown-skins."

These excerpts are significant. Without any preconceived ideas on the subject, it may be asserted that the disappearance of the native in the north, as Varnhagen believes,²⁷ was due not so much to actual extermination as to repeated intermarriages.

We know, moreover, that the landed proprietors were anxious to make the most of such alliances in capturing the affections of the native. This attitude reflects the instincts of the metropolis, as is shown in the various royal charters from 1570 to 1758, in which, despite "a never interrupted train of hesitations and contradictions,"²⁸ there appeared a desire to mitigate the lust for gain on the part of the colonists, bent upon the enslavement of the savage. Some of these charters, that of 1680, for example, extend the royal protection to the point of decreeing that lands shall be granted the heathen, "even those uncultivated lands already given to others, inasmuch as those same Indians ought to have the preference, being the natural lords of the land."

²⁶ [The famous sixteenth-century Jesuit, Manoel de Nobrega, whose *Cartas do Brasil, 1549-1560* were published at Rio de Janeiro in 1886.]

²⁷ [Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen, Visconde de Porto Seguro (1816-78), one of Brazil's outstanding historians. Among his works is a *História geral do Brasil*. Varnhagen was noted for his antipathy to the Indian and his exaltation of the Portuguese element in Brazilian civilization; he was an ardent defender of the colonial regime.]

²⁸ João Francisco Lisboa.

THE JESUITS

In this persistent attempt at the assimilation of the native, an important part was played by the Society of Jesus, which, compelled in the south to submit to compromises, ruled supreme in the north. Putting aside any unworthy intentions, the Jesuits in this region performed an ennobling task. At the least, they were rivals of the colonist, who was bent on gain. In the stupid clash of perversity with barbarism, these eternal exiles found a function that was worthy of them. They did much. They were the only disciplined men of their day. Although the attempt to elevate the mental state of the aborigine to the abstractions of monotheism may have been a chimerical one, it had the effect of attracting him for a long time—down to the opportune intervention of Pombal²⁰—into the stream of our history.

The record of the missions in the north, throughout the tract from Maranhão to Baía, reveals a slow effort at penetration into the heart of the backlands, from the slopes of Itiupaba to those of Itiuba, completing in a manner the feverish activity of the bandeiras. If these latter, despite the disturbances which they brought with them, diffused widely over the newly discovered regions the blood of the three races, thereby occasioning a general miscegenation, the organized settlements, on the other hand, centers of the attractive force exerted by the apostolate, had the effect of unifying and integrating the native tribes, fusing their small communities into villages. Penetrating, as the result of a century-long effort, deep into the backlands, the missionaries were responsible for saving in part this factor in our racial picture. Some historians, distracted by the coming of the African on a large scale, an event which, beginning at the end of the sixteenth century, continued uninterruptedly down to our time (1850), have felt that the latter was the best ally of the Portuguese in the colonial epoch and, accordingly, attribute to him generally an exaggerated influence upon the formation of the inhabitant of the northern backlands. However, as far as any invasion by these conquered and unhappy beings is concerned, taking into account their extraordinary fecundity and their qualities of adaptation as tested by the burning suns of Africa, it is still debatable as to whether they exercised any profound influence on the backcountry regions.

It is certain that the Afro-Lusitanian association is an old one, antecedating even the discovery, since it goes back to the fifteenth century, to the *azulegues* and *jaloços* of Gil Eannes and Antão Gonçalves. In 1530

²⁰ [The Portuguese minister (1750-77), author of sweeping reforms, who decreed the Indians to be free men and provided for grants of land to them.]

there were more than ten thousand Negroes in the streets of Lisbon, and the same was true of other places. In Evora the Negroes were in a majority over the whites. The verses of a contemporary, Garcia de Rezende, are a document here:

Vemos no reyno metter,
Tantos captivos crescer,
Irem-se os naturaes,
Que, se assim fôr, serão mais
Elles que nós, a meu ver.²¹

THE ORIGIN OF THE MULATTO

Thus, the origin of the mulatto is to be looked for outside our own country. The first intermarrying with the African occurred in the metropolis. With us, naturally, the number of such marriages tended to increase. However, the dominated race found its capacities for development annulled by the social situation that prevailed. A powerful organism, given to an extreme humility, without the Indian's rebelliousness,²² the Negro at once had the whole burden of colonial life placed on his shoulders. He was a beast of burden, condemned to labor unceasingly. Old ordinances, setting forth "how one may rid himself of slaves and beasts upon finding them sick or maimed," show the brutality of the age. Moreover, and the point is incontrovertible, the numerous slaves imported were concen-

²⁰ ["We see so many captives brought into the kingdom and their numbers so increasing that, if this keeps up, as I see it, they will become the natives and will outnumber us."]

²¹ [It may be pointed out that present-day anthropologists and historians are not inclined to agree with this view. Arthur Ramos, for example, has this to say: "It has been repeatedly but erroneously asserted, by Brazilian historians and sociologists, that the Negro in Brazil . . . was a passive element, resigned to a state of slavery. According to these historians, the African Negro, a humble, docile creature, permitted himself to be taken, and submitted without protest to slave labor. This is a view which is categorically refuted by a study of history and sociology. Such a study shows us, on the contrary, that the Negro was never this docile, submissive type, incapable of reacting to conditions. . . . He was a good worker but a bad slave. Several centuries of slavery and slave revolts, not only in Brazil, but in other parts of the Americas as well, show us what his true reactions were. Those reactions ranged all the way from flight to suicide, from individual escape to great collective uprisings." Professor Ramos stresses the fact that if the Negro was enslaved in preference to the Indian, it was because he was "better adapted than the Indian to agricultural labor, by reason of his cultural background." Of Palmares, Ramos says: "The Republic of Palmares was a Negro state founded by slaves in Brazil, in the mid-seventeenth century. Situated in northeastern Brazil, in the heart of the present State of Alagoas, this extraordinary undertaking lasted from 1630 to 1697, or more than half a century." He quotes Rocha Pitta to the effect that Palmares was "a rustic republic, well ordered after its fashion" (see the article by Ramos, "O Espírito associativo do negro brasileiro," *Revista do Arquivo Municipal* [São Paulo], XLVII [May, 1938], 105-26). Cf. Henry Ramfard Parkes, *A History of Mexico* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1938), p. 932: "Negroes had more physical strength—and also more aggressiveness—than Indians. . . . In spite of their relatively small numbers the Spaniards were more afraid of Negro rebellions than of risings among the Indians." For a different view of Palmares cf. Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil: A Study of Race Contact at Bahia*, p. 59, n. 62; cf. also Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil*, pp. 111-43.]

trated on the seaboard. The great black border hemmed the coast from Baía to Maranhão but did not extend far into the interior. Even in open revolt, the humble Negro, become a dread *quilombola*³² foregrounding in *mocambos*,³³ appeared to avoid the heart of the country. Palmares, with its thirty thousand *mocambeiros*,³⁴ was, after all, only a few miles distant from the coast.

On the seaboard the fertility of the earth tended to retain there two of the three elements, while freeing the Indian. The extensive culture of sugar cane, imported from Madeira, led to the backlands' being forgotten. Already before the Dutch invasion, there were a hundred and sixty sugar plantations from Rio Grande do Norte to Baía.³⁵ And this exploitation, on an expanded scale, was later to increase in a rapid crescendo.

The African element, in any event, remained in the vast canebrakes of the coast, fettered to the earth and giving rise to a racial admixture quite different from the one taking place in the recesses of the captaincies. In the latter place the free Indian roamed, unadapted to toil and always rebellious or barely held in check in the settlements through the tenacity of the missionaries. Negro slavery, the result of the colonist's self-interest, left the padres less encumbered with manual labor than in the south and with more time for catechizing. As for the pioneers themselves, upon arriving at this last stage of their daring journey, they had all their combativeness extinguished. Some of them, like Domingos Sertão, brought an adventurous life to a close by seeking the profit to be made on the stock-breeding farms which had been opened on the great estates.

In this manner a thoroughgoing distinction arose between intermarriages in the backlands and those on the seaboard. As a consequence, with the white element the common denominator in both cases, the mulatto appeared as the principal result in the latter, and the curiboca in the former, instance.

II

ORIGIN OF THE JACUNÇOS

There can be no doubt that there is a notable trace of originality in the formation of our backlands population, we shall not say of the North, but

³² [Member of a *quilombo*, or runaway-slave colony, such as that of Palmares.]

³³ [Ramos (*op. cit.*, p. 117) says: "The center of political and social unity was the *quilombo*, a collection of small dwellings or *mocambos*, built within a fortified wooden enclosure. . . . Within this enclosure the *mocambos* were situated, forming irregular streets." In modern Brazilian usage, *mocambo* means a hut or hovel in which the very poor live; on the social implications of the *mocambo* in this latter sense see João Duarte Filho, "O Mocambo," *Cultura política*, II, No. 15 (May, 1942), 17-25.]

³⁴ [The *mocambeiros* were those who lived in the *mocambos*.]

³⁵ Diogo Campos, *Razão do estado do Brasil*.

of subtropical Brazil. Let us try to sketch it in; and, in order not to stray too far from the subject, let us keep close to that theater in which the historic drama of Canudos was unfolded, by traversing rapidly the reaches of the São Francisco, that "great highway of Brazilian civilization," as one historian has put it.³⁶

From the bird's-eye view given in the foregoing pages, we have seen that this river flows through regions that differ greatly in character. At its headwaters it spreads out, its expanded basin with its network of numerous tributaries taking in the half of Minas, in the zone of mountains and forests. Later, along its middle portion, it narrows, in the extremely beautiful region of the Campos Gerais.³⁷ Along its lower course, downstream from Joazeiro, where it is confined between slopes which render its bed uneven and which twist it about in the direction of the sea, it becomes poor in tributaries, almost all of them intermittent, and flows away hemmed in a single corredeira³⁸ of several hundred miles in length, extending to Paulo Afonso—and here it is that it cuts through the semidesert tract of caatinga.

In the threefold aspects of this river we have a diagram of the course of our history, one that reflects in parallel fashion its varying manifestations. It balances the influence of the Tieté. Whereas this latter river, with a course incomparably better suited to purposes of colonization, became the chosen pathway of pioneers seeking, above all, the enslavement and corruption of the savage, the São Francisco at its headwaters was essentially the center of the movement to the mines; in its lower course it was the scene of missionary activity; and, in its middle region, it became the classic land of the herdsman, representing the only mode of life compatible with existing social and economic conditions in the colony. Its banks were trod alike by the bandeirante, the Jesuit, and the vaqueiro.³⁹

When, at some future date, a more copious supply of documents shall enable us to reconstruct the life of the colony from the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth, it is possible that the vaqueiro, wholly forgotten today, will stand out with that prominence which he deserves, by reason of his formative influence on the life of our people. Brave and fearless as the bandeirante, as resigned and tenacious as the Jesuit, he had the advantage of a supplementary attribute which both the others lacked—he had his roots fixed in the soil.

³⁶ João Ribeiro, *História do Brasil*.

³⁷ [See p. 7, n. 7.]

³⁸ [See p. 8, n. 10.]

³⁹ [The cowboy of the North (see pp. 77 ff.).]

As for the *bandeiras*,⁴⁰ there were two sides to their activity, which were at times distinct, at other times mingled in confusion. Sometimes they fell upon the land and sometimes upon man. Sometimes they went in search of gold and sometimes in search of slaves. But one thing they did do was to discover huge tracts of land—land which they did not cultivate and which, it might be, they left more of a desert than it was before, as they passed rapidly on through the villages and the *catsas*.⁴¹ Their history, at times as undecipherable as the deliberately obscure entries in their log-books, was a successive alternation and combination of these two stimuli, depending upon the personal temperament of the adventurers concerned or the greater or less degree of practicability of the enterprises planned. In the permanent oscillation between these two motives, their really useful function, which lay in discovering the unknown, appears as an obligatory incident, an inevitable consequence to which they gave no thought.

With the expedition of Glimmer (1601), the deceptive vision of the "Emerald Mountains" was no more—that vision which, from the middle of the sixteenth century, had lured to the slopes of the Espinhaço, one after another, unmindful of constant failures, such men as Bruzzo Spinosa, Sebastião Tourinho, Dias Adorno, and Martins Carvalho. The enchanted land idealized in the romantic imagination of a Gabriel Soares having vanished in the north, the greater part of the seventeenth century is dominated by the somber legends of slave-hunters, centering about the brutally heroic figure of Antonio Raposo. It was about this time that the mirage of the mysterious "Sabará-bussú" and the eternally inaccessible "Silver Mines" likewise vanished. These dreams were given new life by the intensive explorations of Paes Leme, who, after they had lain untrod for the better part of a century, sought out the paths of Glimmer. They were kept alive by the golden nuggets of Arzão, who in 1693 followed in the very footsteps of Tourinho and Adorno. And then, at last, they were fully revived with Bartholomeu Bueno in Itaberaba and Miguel Garcia in Ribeirão do Carmo; the old passion for hinterland exploration lived again, and, radiating from the Ouro Preto district, and stronger than ever now, once more spread over the entire country.

It was during this brief period when, to all appearances, nothing of note was occurring on the seaboard beyond the struggle with the Batavian and, in the heart of the plateau country, the extraordinary surge of the

⁴⁰ [On the *bandeiras* see João Pandiá Calogeras, *A History of Brazil*, trans. and ed. Percy Alvin Martin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), pp. 20 ff.]

⁴¹ [Abandoned surface-mine clearings (see p. 44).]

bandeiras, that there began along the middle reaches of the São Francisco a process of settlement the results of which were only to become apparent later.

HISTORICAL FUNCTION OF THE SÃO FRANCISCO

It was a slow process. A determining factor in the beginning was the expeditions to the mines of Moreya, expeditions which, though their fame was scant, would seem to have extended all the way to the vicegerency of Lancastro, thus opening a path for successive swarms of settlers, to the highlands of Macaúbas, beyond Paramirim.⁴² Deprived of direct routes in a normal line with the coast, which would have been shorter, but which were cut off by thick mountain walls and blocked by forests, explorers found access to the backlands by way of the São Francisco. Affording them two entrances, one at its source and the other at its mouth, and bringing the southerners to meet the men of the north, the great river from the beginning took on the aspect of an ethnic unifier, an extensive bond of union between two societies that were in ignorance of each other. Although coming from diverse points and with equally diverse backgrounds, the Paulistas of Domingos Sertão, the Baianos of Garcia d'Ávila, with the small armies of his Tabajara⁴³ allies, or even the Portuguese of Manoel Nunes Vianna, who set out from his "Fazenda do Escuro," in Carinhanha, to subdue the *emboabas*⁴⁴ on the Rio das Mortes—whoever they were, from wherever they hailed, the newcomers, upon reaching the heart of the backlands, seldom returned.

The land at once highly productive and readily accessible compensated them for the lost mirage of the longed-for mines. The original character of its geological structure created topographical conformations in which the highlands, the last spurs and counterforts of the maritime cordillera, were offset by vast tablelands. Its flora was complex and varied, interspersed with forests that were not so vast and impenetrable as those of the coast, along with the "charm" and "rustic beauty" of fields and plains that were suddenly lost, all of them, in the enormous glades of the caatingas. Its special hydrographic conformation, with tributaries running almost symmetrically east and west, linked it to the coast on the one side and, on the other side, to the center of the plateau region. All these were precious lures, attracting the scattered elements and leading to their fu-

⁴² Letter of Pedro Barbosa Leal to the Conde de Sabugosa, 1725 (see F. A. Pereira da Costa, *Em prol da integridade do território de Pernambuco*, and Pedro Taques, *Nobiliarquia Paulista*).

⁴³ [Indians of the state of Ceará, Serra da Ibiapaba.]

⁴⁴ [Nickname given by the descendants of the Paulistas near the mines, in colonial times, to the Portuguese who went to the backlands in search of gold and precious stones.]

sion. And, finally, there was the opportunity for a herdsman's life, the one that was naturally suited to this region of the Campos Gerais.

In this latter connection, in addition to the rare fecundity of the soil, there was not lacking an essential element, salt, which was to be found in the brackish lowlands of the "pits."⁴⁵

Under these favorable conditions there was opened the extensive cattle-breeding zone, which already at the dawn of the eighteenth century extended from the northern sections of Minas to Goiás, to Piauí, to the boundaries of Maranhão and Ceará on the northwest and the fertile highlands of Bala on the east. As it was populated, this region became a strong and autonomous one; but little was heard of it, since the chroniclers of the time paid small attention to it, and it accordingly remained utterly forgotten, not only by the distant metropolis, but by the governors and viceroy's themselves. It did not produce taxes or revenues to interest a selfish-minded monarch. It represented, nonetheless, in contrast to the turbulence of the seaboard and the adventurous episode of the mines, "almost the only tranquil aspect of our culture."⁴⁶ Aside from the rare contingents of Pernambucan and Baian settlers, the majority of the well-to-do cattlemen who sprang up here came from the south, of the same enthusiastic and energetic stock from which the bandeiras sprang.

THE JAGUNÇOS: PROBABLE RELATIVES OF THE PAULISTAS

According to the information contained in the precious pages of Pedro Taques,⁴⁷ there were numerous families of São Paulo which, in continuous migrations, sought out these far corners of the land; and it is to be believed, if we accept the opinion of a perspicacious historian, that "the valley of the São Francisco, long since populated by the Paulistas and their descendants, from the eighteenth century became almost an exclusive colony of them."⁴⁸ It was, accordingly, natural that Bartholomeu Bueno, in discovering Goiás, to his surprise should have come upon the obvious traces of predecessors, anonymous pioneers who had come there, certainly,

⁴⁵ "All the animals greedily seek out these places, not only the mammals, but the birds and reptiles as well. The cattle lick the ground, standing knee-deep in the pools; they drink the water with relish and eat the mud" (*Escreva sobre Tamoio*).

Alluding to sites on the slope of the Barra do Rio Grande, Ayres de Casal says: "There are various small lakes at a greater or less distance from the river, all with water that is more or less salty; and on their borders the sun's heat brings out the salt like hoar-frost. The water from these lakes (even the fresh-water ones) is filtered through a portion of the adjacent earth in pails of wood or leather with fine holes in them, and is then exposed to the weather on the tablelands, and in eight days it crystallizes, turning into salt as white as that from the sea. Nearly all this salt appears in the center of Minas Gerais" (*Chorographia Brasileira*, II, 109).

⁴⁶ João Ribeiro.

⁴⁷ *Notícia da Paulista*.

⁴⁸ Dr. João Mendes de Almeida, *Notas geneológicas*.

from the east, after crossing the Paran Range. And then, in 1697, the most notable of the cycle of gold rushes began, amid all the noise and stir created by the waves of immigrants who stamped up the eastern slopes of the Espinhaço Range, along the thalweg of the Rio das Velhas, the hardiest of all those immigrants, perhaps, and possibly the ones who preceded the others in the discovery of the Caeté mines—passing the others by from side to side, and advancing in a contrary direction, like a reflux emanating from the north—were the bands of "Baianos," a term which, like that of "Paulista," was destined to become a generic one, being extended to take in all the northern settlers.⁴⁹

THE VAQUEIRO

The truth is, there was already being formed in the middle valley of the great river a race of mestizos identical with those bold mamelucos who had sprung up in São Paulo. We shall not be indulging in too daring a hypothesis by asserting that this extraordinary type of Paulista, arising and decaying in the south, the completeness of his degeneration being shown by the fact that it occurred in the very region that gave him its name, was here reborn and, not having to face the perils of migrations and mixed marriages, was able to preserve intact, down to our own time, the virile and adventurous character of his ancestors. Here he remained utterly divorced from the rest of Brazil and the world, walled in on the east by the Serra Geral and shut off on the west by the broad sweep of the Campos Gerais, which stretch away toward Piauí, and which to this day the native believes to be boundless.

The milieu at once attracted and held him. The water gaps on one and the other side of the meridian did not invite to dispersion but rather facilitated the intermingling of the far sections of the country, binding them together in space and in time. Assuring in the interior a contiguity of the population which was in part lacking on the coast, this rude society, arising between the northeasterners struggling for the autonomy of their nascent fatherland and the southerners who were enlarging its area and who, at the same time, were supplying it with those fat herds which roamed the valley of the Rio das Velhas or which made their way down to the head-

⁴⁹ Professor Orville Derby says: "According to Antonil, the discoveries in the Caeté region antedated those of the Rio das Velhas and Sabará; and in this case, it is to be presumed that they were made by Ouro Preto miners—passing to the west of the headwaters of the Santa Barbara, or possibly by Baianos coming from the north. The importance which certain Baianos attached to the events of 1709, and Antonil's allusion to Captain Luiz do Couto, who with three brothers that were 'great miners' came from Bala to this region, tend to support this latter hypothesis," etc. (*Os primeiros descobrimentos de Ouro em Minas Gerais*). [Translated from the Portuguese version.]

waters of the Parnaíba—this society, misunderstood and forgotten, was the vigorous core of our national life.⁵⁰

The first pioneers who were responsible for this creative effort, having overcome and supplanted the savage all along the line, proceeded now to capture and enslave him, making use of his capacities in the new industry which they were founding. The result was the inevitable intermarrying; and there appeared then a race of pure curibocas with almost no mixture of African blood, as is easily shown by the normal appearance of these inhabitants of the region. They sprang from the fierce embrace of victor and vanquished. They were created in a turbulent, adventurous society, settled upon a fertile land. By way of amplifying their ancestral attributes, they had a rude schooling in force and courage on those same broad-sweeping campos where even today the jaguar roars with impunity and the swift-footed reia roams—or else on the mountainsides, crumbling from surface-mining operations, when the Baianos later summoned these lusty-lunged cowboys from their roundups to work in the mines. It would take too long here to trace the evolution of their character. With something of the colonist's adventurous disposition, combined with the impulsiveness of the native, they were further subjected to the influence of their environment, which, by isolating them, helped them to preserve the attributes and habits of their forebears, only slightly modified by the exigencies of their new life.

Here they stand, then, with their characteristic garb, their ancient customs, their strange adherence to the most remote traditions, their religious sentiment carried to the point of fanaticism, their exaggerated point of honor, and their exceedingly beautiful folklore and folk poetry, three centuries old.

A strong and ancient race, with well-defined and immutable characteristics, even in the major crises of life—at which times the cowboy's leather garb becomes the jagunço's flexible armor—sprung from far-converging elements, yet different from all the rest of the population of the country, this stock is undeniably a significant example of the importance of those reactions induced by environment. Spreading out through the bordering or near-by regions of Goiás, Piauí, Maranhão, Ceará, and Pernambuco, their character became marked by a high degree of originality, which was expressed even in the houses that they built. All the villages, towns, and cities that give life to this territory show a common origin and are quite distinct in appearance from those in the north and in the south. In the south their dwellings were erected in the neighborhood of the mines or on

⁵⁰ [See "Author's Notes," Note V, p. 481.]

the edge of the *calas*; while in the far north, starting from a protracted line between Itiuba and Itiapaba, they were constructed in the locality of the ancient missionary villages; but in the region here under consideration they all of them sprang up from the old cattle ranches.

We may be excused from citing examples, of which there are many to be had. Whoever views the settlements along the São Francisco, from its source to its mouth, cannot fail to observe the three types of country that we have pointed out. Leaving the Alpine-like regions, with cities perched high on the mountainsides, reflecting the incomparable daring of the bandeiras, he will cross the great campos, a huge arena made to the measure of a rude, strong, and freedom-loving people, the *vaqueiros*; and then, finally, he will come to the unprepossessing district laid waste by drought and elected for the slow, laborious circuits of the missionaries.

There remains for us to describe, by way of rounding out these hasty comparisons, the Jesuit foundations in this tract of territory.

JESUIT FOUNDATIONS IN BAÍA

The truth of the matter is that the backland towns of the present day, wholly different in origin from those elsewhere, were formed from the old Indian villages which, in 1758, were wrested from the power of the padres as a result of the stern policy pursued by Pombal. Confining ourselves to those that still exist today, nearest to and round about the mud-walled Troy of the jagunços,⁵¹ we may find even within this restricted area the best examples.

Indeed, throughout the whole of this tract, which abusive concessions had placed within the power of a single family, that of Garcia d'Ávila (Casa da Torre), there are some very old settlements. From "Itapicuru-de-cima" to Geremoabo, and from there, following the São Francisco, to the backland regions of Rodellas and Cabrobó, the seventeenth-century missions proceeded at a slow pace, which was to continue until our own time.

They had no historian. It is difficult today to form a picture of this extraordinary undertaking from the few documents that exist and which are too scant to permit us to trace its continuity. Those that do exist, however, are an eloquent commentary on the special case here under consideration. They inform us, in a manner that leaves no room for doubt, that, while the Negro's days were spent amid the hurly-burly of the seaboard, the native was taking up a permanent abode in villages which were to become cities. The calculating solicitude of the Jesuit and the rare self-

⁵¹ [See p. 143. The allusion is to Canudos.]

abnegation displayed by the Capuchins and Franciscans were responsible for incorporating the native tribes into our national life; and when, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Paulistas stormed into Pambú and Jacobina, they gazed with surprise at these parishes which already were growing up out of the collections of tribal huts. The former place, which is a little more than fifty miles up from Paulo Afonso, from 1682 was a part of the metropolitan administration. Its destinies were guided by a Capuchin, who settled all tribal dissensions and ruled most humbly over the peaceful Morubichabas. The latter village, likewise, was exclusively native and dated from the very old mission of Sahy.

As for Geremoabo, we find it already a borough in 1698, which permits us to ascribe to it an origin that is a good deal more remote. Here there was a slight admixture of the native element with the African, of the *cunhembora* with the *quilombola*.⁵³ Incomparably more spirited than is the case today, the humble village not infrequently attracted the attention of João de Lancaastro, governor-general of Brazil, principally when the rivalries of the Indian chieftains, equipped with perfectly legal letters patent from the captaincies, grew more acute. In the year 1702 the first of the Franciscan missions undertook to discipline these settlements, their efforts proving more efficacious than had the governor's threats. The tribes were reconciled, and the influx of captured Indians into the church was such that on a single day the vicar of Itapicuri baptized 3,700 catechumens.⁵⁴ Near by was the mission of Massacará, also a very old one, where in 1687 the opulent Garcia d'Avila kept a company of his regiment.⁵⁴ Farther south there were yet others: Natuba, quite an old village, built by the Jesuits; Inhambupe, which upon its elevation to the status of a parish created a prolonged controversy between the padres and the aforesaid distributor of lands; and, finally, Itapicuri (1639), founded by the Franciscans.

It was, however, in the north, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, that the work of settlement was carried on most intensely, with the same racial elements. In the second half of the seventeenth century the vanguard of the southern bandeiras made its appearance in the Rodellas region. Domingos Sertão's fazenda of Sobrado was then the center of the animated life of the backlands. The effect which this rude pioneer had

⁵³ *Quilombola*, fugitive Negro in the *quilombos*. *Cunhembora* (*ámbora*), fugitive Indian. There is a striking likeness of form, meaning, and sound in these two words, the first of which sprang up in Africa, the second in Brazil, to describe a common misfortune which befell two races in origin so far apart.

⁵⁴ José Freire de Monteiro Mascarenhas, *Os Orizes conquistados*.

⁵⁵ Livro 3º, nat. gov. fl. 272.

upon the district has not been given the attention that it deserves. With a domain situated practically at the point of convergence of the northern captaincies, being near at once to Piauí, to Ceará, to Pernambuco, and to Baía, this rural *landlord*⁵⁵ made use of the restless, adventurous curibocas in the working of his half-hundred cattle ranches. Addicted to a crude variety of feudalism, which led him to transform his tributaries into vassals and the meek Tapuias into serfs, the bandeirante, once he had reached these parts and had attained his ideal of wealth and power, continued to fulfil his function of integrating the population in alliance with his humble but stubborn adversary, the priest. The northern metropolis, the fact is, unhesitatingly supported the efforts of the latter; for a long while since, the principle had been laid down of combatting the Indian with the Indian, each missionary village of catechumens being looked upon as a redoubt against the free-roaming and indomitable savage.

It was at the end of the seventeenth century that Lancaastro with his catechized natives founded the settlement of Barra, against the depredations of the Acazoas and Mocoazes; and from this point on, following the current of the São Francisco, there were to be found, one after another, the missionary villages of N. S. do Pilar, Sorobabé, Pambú, Aracapé, Pontal, Pajehú, etc. It is, then, evident that it was precisely in this section of the Baian backlands, the one with closest ties to the other northern states—along the entire border of the Canudos region—that there developed at the beginning of our history a strong colonization movement in which the aborigine played a leading role, intermingling with white man and Negro, with these latter elements never becoming so numerous as to destroy his undeniable influence.

Those foundations set up after the expulsion of the Jesuits follow the same model. From the end of the eighteenth century to our day, in Pom-bal, in Cumbe, in Bom Conselho and Monte Santo, etc., persevering missionaries, of whom Appollonio de Todi⁵⁶ is the outstanding exemplar, have continued the arduous labors of the apostolate.

What has happened is that this population stuck away in a corner of the backlands has remained there until now and has gone on reproducing itself without the admixture of foreign elements; it has been, as it were, insulated, and by reason of this very fact has been able to carry on the task of racial assimilation with a uniform and maximum intensity in a manner that would account for the appearance of a well-defined and well-rounded mestizo type.

Where on the seaboard there were a thousand and one complicating

⁵⁵ [The author uses the English word.]

⁵⁶ See pp. 114-15 and 198.

and disturbing factors, due to immigration and to war, while at other central points yet other impediments arose in the sweeping trail of the bandeiras, here, on the other hand, the indigenous population, in alliance with a few wandering *macambereiros*,⁵⁷ white fugitives from justice or audacious adventurers, remained the dominant one.

CAUSES FAVORABLE TO THE FORMATION OF A MESTIZO RACE IN
THE BACKLANDS, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM CROSS-
BREEDING ON THE LITTORAL

Let us not play sophists with history. There were very powerful causes which led to the isolation and conservation of the autochthonous stock.

First of all, there were the great land grants, representing the most pertinent aspect of our shamefaced feudalism. The possessors of the soil, the classic model being the heirs of Antonio Guedes de Britto, were jealous of their far-flung latifundia, which, with no boundary lines to demarcate them, made their owners the lords of the countryside, barely if at all tolerating the intervention of the metropolis itself. The erection of chapels or the establishment of parishes on their lands was always accompanied by controversies with the padres; and, although the latter won out in the end, they nevertheless, to a degree, came under the sway of these potentates, who made it difficult for new settlers or competitors to come in by turning their cattle ranches, which lay scattered around in the neighborhood of the newly formed church domains, into powerful centers of attraction for the mestizo race that inhabited the parishes.

That race accordingly developed without the influence of external elements. Devoting themselves to the herdsman's life, to which they were by nature well adapted, the curibocas or swarthy cafusos, immediate forebears of the present-day vaqueiros, being entirely cut off from the inhabitants of the south and the intensive colonization activities of the seaboard, proceeded to follow their own path of evolution, acquiring thereby a highly original physiognomy, like that of residents of another country. The royal charter of February 7, 1701, was a measure designed to increase this isolation. It prohibited, with severe penalties for infraction, any communication whatsoever between this part of the backlands and the south, the São Paulo mines. Not even commercial relations were tolerated, the simplest exchange of products being forbidden.

In addition to these factors there is, in view of the origin of the backwoodsman of the north, another that is to be taken into consideration: namely, the physical environment of the backlands, to be found through-

⁵⁷ [See p. 72 and nn. 33 and 34.]

out the whole vast expanse of territory which extends from the bed of the Vasa-Barris to that of the Parnaíba in the west.

We have seen something of the unusual physiognomy of this region: the aggressive flora; the merciless climate; the periodical droughts; the rugged, sterile soil of the barren mountain ranges, lying isolated amid the splendors of the majestic *araxás*⁵⁸ of the central plateaus; and the great forests that follow the curving border of the slopes. This unprepossessing region, for which the Tupi had a suggestive appellation, *pora-pora-eyma*⁵⁹—a name that remains attached to one of the mountains (the Borborema) which wall it in on the east—was the asylum of the Tapuia. Beaten by the Portuguese, by the Negro, and by the Tupi combined, falling back in the face of superior numbers, the indomitable *Carirys* found their only protection on this rough neck of land, rent by tempests, indurated by the rigid structure of the rocks, parched by the suns, and breaking out in briar patches and caatingas. Here too it was, in these vast open wastes, with no sign of the longed-for mines in sight, that the impulse of the bandeiras finally spent itself. As for the mysterious *Tapuy-relama* region,⁶⁰ it appealed to the stoicism of the missionary, and its long and devious trails saw the slow, grievous, agonizing onward march of these apostles of the Church. The bandeiras, on the other hand, when they reached this district, speedily decamped, fleeing it for other parts: it may have been fashioned for the battles of the Faith, but to them it was overwhelming and depressing; and so they left it, and nothing could prevail upon them to return; they left it, and left the heathen in peace.

Hence the happy circumstance, as is revealed by observation, of the predominance of Tapuia terms in the geographic names of these places—terms that have resisted absorption by the Portuguese and Tupi languages, which have prevailed in other localities. Without going too far afield, let us take a glance at the lands round about Canudos by way of illustrating this matter of language which so well reflects the historic vicissitudes of a people.

Starting out from the São Francisco in a southerly direction, we find ourselves once more in an unfriendly region, beneath an inclement sky; and from here we go on to cross the elevated basin of the Vasa-Barris, before reaching those scattered and more depressed sections of the Baian plains which from the Paulo Afonso Falls, from Canudos and from Monte Santo, bring us to Itiuba, to Tombador, and to Assuruá. Here on this, the most ungrateful tract of our native territory, where once the persecuted rem-

⁵⁸ According to Couto de Magalhães, this lovely word may be broken down into *ara*, day, and *echá*, to see at a distance. *Araxá*, a place where one first has a distant glimpse of the sun; by extension, the high plains of the interior.

⁵⁹ A sterile, unpopulated place.

⁶⁰ *Tapuy-relama*, region of the Tapuías.

nants of the Orizes, the Procas, and the Carrys⁶¹ sought refuge, we find today, appearing once more as place names, barbarous words from the Tapuia tongue which neither Portuguese nor Tupi have been able to supplant; we discover on the map of the region, occurring with the frequency of topographical landmarks, names such as Pambó, Patamoté, Uaúá, Bendegó, Cumbé, Massacará, Cocorobó, Geremoabo, Tragagó, Canché, Chorrochó, Quincunca, Conchó, Centocé, Assuruá, Chique-Chique, Jequé, Sincorá, Caculé or Catolé, Orobó, Mocugé, and others equally strange and barbarous-sounding.⁶²

It is natural that the great backlands populations, like the one which grew up in the middle basin of the São Francisco, should have been formed with a preponderant admixture of Tapuia blood. And there they remained in banishment, evolving in a closed circle for three centuries, down to our era—completely abandoned, wholly alien to our destinies, and preserving intact the traditions of the past. Accordingly, whoever today traverses these regions will observe a notable uniformity among the inhabitants: an appearance and stature that vary but slightly from a given model, conveying the impression of an unvarying anthropologic type, one which at first glance is seen to be distinct from the proteiform mestizo of the seaboard; for, where the latter shows all varieties of coloring and remains ill defined in type, depending upon the varying predominance of the formative factors, the man of the backlands appears to have been run through one common mold, with the individuals exhibiting almost identical physical characteristics: the same complexion, ranging from the bronze hue of the mameluco to the swarthy color of the cafuso; hair straight and sleek or slightly wavy; the same athletic build; and the same moral characteristics, the same superstitions, the same vices, and the same virtues.

This uniformity, in its various aspects, is most impressive. There is no doubt about it, the backwoodsman of the north represents an ethnic subcategory that has already been formed.⁶³

AN IRRITATING PARENTHESIS

Here we must make a few parenthetical remarks.⁶⁴

An intermingling of races highly diverse is, in the majority of cases, prejudicial. According to the conclusions of the evolutionist, even when

⁶¹ [Native tribes.]

⁶² Theodoro Sampaio, *Da Expansão da língua tupi e do seu predomínio na língua nacional*.

⁶³ See "Author's Notes," Note V, p. 481.

⁶⁴ [On this passage see Gilberto Freyre, *A atualidade de Eudóides da Cunha; conferência lida no Salão de Conferências do Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil, no dia 29 de outubro de 1940* (Rio de Janeiro: Edição da Casa do Estudante do Brasil, 1941). Freyre discusses Cunha's "racial pessimism" or "racial fatalism," his "rigid biologic determinism," and his "ethnocentric exaggerations" and finds that he was "the victim of scientific preconceptions with the appearance of anthropologic truths" such as were common at the turn of the century, e.g., in a writer like Silvio Romero; in other words, these views, according to Freyre, were inspired by too great

the influence of a superior race has reacted upon the offspring, the latter shows vivid traces of the inferior one. Miscegenation carried to an extreme means retrogression. The Indo-European, the Negro, and the Brazilian-Guarany or the Tapuia represent evolutionary stages in confrontation; and miscegenation, in addition to obliterating the pre-eminent qualities of the higher race, serves to stimulate the revival of the primitive attributes of the lower; so that the mestizo—a hyphen between the races, a brief individual existence into which are compressed age-old forces—is almost always an unbalanced type. Fovel compares them in a general way to hysterics, but the nervous disequilibrium in such a case is incurable; there is no therapeutic for this clash of antagonistic tendencies on the part of races of a sudden brought together and fused in an isolated organism. It is not to be understood how, after they have diverged so extremely for long ages—ages compared to which history is but a moment—two or three peoples can suddenly come together and combine their diverse mental constitutions, thus annulling within a short space of time those distinctions which have resulted from a long, slow, laborious process of selection. As in algebraic sums, the qualities of the juxtaposed elements are not increased, subtracted from, or destroyed by the positive and negative signs that are present. The mestizo—mulatto, mameluco, or cafuso—rather than an intermediary type, is a degenerate one, lacking the physical energy of his savage ancestors and without the intellectual elevation of his ancestors on the other side. In contrast to the fecundity which he happens to possess, he shows extraordinary cases of moral hybridism: a brilliant mind at times, but unstable, restless, inconstant, flaring one moment and the next moment extinguished, victim of the fatality of biologic laws, weighted down to the lower plane of the less favored race. Impotent when it comes to forming any bonds of solidarity between the opposed forbears

a reliance on his sources. On racial attitudes (with particular reference to the Negro) in present-day Brazil cf. Pierson, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-33: "Racial Ideology and Racial Attitudes." According to Dr. Pierson, a number of prominent Brazilians of mixed descent would themselves be inclined to agree with Cunha. On the other hand, there is the opinion of Colonel Arthur Lobo da Silva, of the Health Service of the Brazilian Army, who, on the basis of actual investigations, concludes that "mixed blood" is physically superior to the parent stocks (*A antropologia da Exército Brasileiro* [Rio de Janeiro: Arquivos do Museu Nacional, 1928], XXX, 281). A contemporary Brazilian sociologist who holds similar views is A. Austregesilo (see his paper, "A mestiçagem no Brasil como fator eugenico," in Gilberto Freyre [ed.], *Novos Estudos Afro-Brasileiros*, [Rio de Janeiro, 1937]; see also Pierson, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-15). For a good general summary of the most recent views of accredited anthropologists, see Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern (eds.), *When Peoples Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts* (New York: Progressive Education Association, 1942). See, in particular, the section on "Superiority Creeds and Race Thinking," pp. 420 ff. Cunha himself, it may be noted, pays tribute to the fine mind of the Negro engineer, André Rebouças (p. 47). Read also his moving description of the Negro captive going to his death at Canudos (pp. 440-41.)

from whom he sprang, he can reflect only their various dominant attributes in a permanent play of antitheses. And when, as not infrequently happens, he shows himself capable of broad generalizations and of grasping the most complex abstract relationships, all this mental vigor (saving those exceptional cases which merely go to prove the rule) will be found to rest upon a rudimentary morality in which is present the impulsive automatism of the lower races.

The fact is that in the marvelous competition of peoples, all of them evolving in a struggle that knows no truce, with selection capitalizing those attributes which heredity preserves, the mestizo is an intruder. He does not struggle; he does not represent an integration of forces; he is something that is dispersive and dissolvent, suddenly springing up without characteristics of his own and wavering between the opposing influences of a discordant ancestry. The tendency toward a regression to the primitive race is a mark of his instability. It is an instinctive tendency toward a situation of equilibrium. The very play of natural laws would appear to extinguish little by little the anomalous product which violates those laws, by sending it back to its own generative sources. The mulatto, then, has an irresistible contempt for the Negro and seeks with a most anxious tenacity such intermarriages as may extinguish in his progeny the stigma of the dark brow; the *mameluco* becomes the inexorable *bandeirante* and hurls himself fiercely on the conquered native villages.

This tendency is significant. In a manner of speaking, it picks up the thread of evolution which miscegenation has severed. The superior race becomes the remote objective toward which the depressed mestizos tend; and the latter, in seeking this objective, are merely obeying their own instinct of self-preservation and defense. The laws of the evolution of species are inviolable ones; yet, if all the subtlety of the missionaries was impotent when it came to winning the mind of the savage to the simplest conceptions of a superior mental state; if there is no force capable of causing the African, under the tutoring of the best masters, to approximate at least the intellectual average of the Indo-European—for every man is, above everything else, an integration of racial forces, and his brain is a heritage—if all this is true, how then account for the normality of an anthropologic type which suddenly makes its appearance, combining tendencies that are so opposed?

A STRONG RACE

Meanwhile, painstaking observation of the man of the north shows a distinct attenuation of this interplay of antagonistic tendencies and almost

a fixation with regard to the physiological characteristics of the emergent type. This fact, which would appear to contradict what has just been said above, affords on the contrary the most striking counterproof of those assertions.

It is undeniably true that the abnormal aspect of mestizos who come from races that are very diverse is due in good part to the fact that the more elevated ethnic element brings with it a more elevated way of life, which renders the process of accommodation a difficult and painful one; and, when there falls upon them the intellectual and moral surcharge of a civilization, it is inevitable that they should be thrown off balance. The incoherent, uneven, and turbulent character of the mestizo may be looked upon as denoting an inner and intensive effort to eliminate those attributes that impede his way of life in an environment that is more advanced and complex. It reflects, within a small circle, that silent, formidable combat which is the very life-struggle of races, a deeply moving and everlasting struggle, one that has been described in Gumpowicz' brilliant axiom as the motive force of history. The great professor of Gratz does not consider it under the aspect with which we are dealing here. The truth is, however, that if the strong ethnic element "tends to subordinate to its destiny the weaker element with which it comes in contact," then it finds in miscegenation a disturbing factor. The irresistible expansion of its syngenetic circle, though eluded in this manner, nevertheless is merely retarded; it is not extinguished. The struggle is transformed and becomes one with much graver implications, ranging from the vulgar case of the frank extermination of the inferior race through war to its slow elimination, absorption, dilution in the form of intermarriage. And during the course of this process of reduction the mestizos that emerge—variable, of all shades of color and all the shadings of form and character, without a well-defined appearance, without vigor, and in most cases not viable—are nothing more, in the last analysis, than the inevitable casualties in an unseen conflict that endures down the ages. In this latter case the strong race does not destroy the weak by force of arms; it crushes it with civilization.

It was in this manner that our rude fellow-countrymen of the north were formed. The abandonment in which they were left by the rest of the country had a beneficent effect. It freed them from a highly painful adaptation to a superior social state and at the same time prevented their slipping backward through the aberrations and vices of a more advanced milieu. The fusion that took place occurred under circumstances more

compatible with the inferior elements. The pre-eminent ethnic factor, while transmitting to them civilized tendencies, did not impose civilization upon them.

This is the basic and distinguishing fact with regard to miscegenation in the back-lying regions of the littoral. These are distinct formations, if not with respect to their ethnic elements, with respect to the conditions of environment. The contrast may be reduced to the simplest of parallels. The inhabitant of the backlands has in large degree taken from the savage the latter's intimacy with his physical surroundings, and this, instead of acting as a depressing influence, has enriched his potent organism. As a consequence, he reflects in character and costume only those attributes taken from other formative races which are most adaptable to his incipient phase of social life.

He is a retrograde, not a degenerate, type. The vicissitudes of history, by freeing him, in the most delicate period of his formation, from the disproportionate exigencies of a borrowed culture, have fitted him for the conquest of that culture some day.⁶⁸ His psychic evolution, however backward it may be, has therefore the guaranty of a strong, well-constituted physique. This crossed race, then, makes its appearance as an autonomous and, in a way, an original one, transfiguring within itself all the inherited attributes; so that, unfettered at last of a savage existence, it may attain to civilized life as a result of the very causes which prevent it from doing so at once. Such is the logical conclusion.

The situation here is the reverse of that to be observed in the cities of the seaboard, where an extravagant inversion prevails, highly complex functions being there imposed on feeble organisms, with the effect of compressing and atrophying them before they have attained their full development. In the backlands, on the other hand, the robust organic integrity of the mestizo remains unimpaired, inasmuch as, being immune to foreign admixtures, he is capable of evolving and differentiating himself in accommodation to new and loftier destinies; for the solid physical basis is there for the moral development that is to come.

Let us, however, have done with this digression, which is not too pleasing a one. Let us go on to consider in more direct fashion the original aspect presented by our backward fellow-countrymen. We shall do this unpretentiously and without method, taking pains to avoid those elegant neologisms of which ethnologists are so fond. We have neither the time nor the competence to become involved in those psychic-geometric fan-

⁶⁸ [See "Author's Notes," Note V, p. 481.]

tasies which today are exaggerated into what is practically a philosophic materialism; and so we shall not trouble with the facial angle or with tracing the *norma verticalis* of the jagunco.⁶⁹ Were we to encumber ourselves with the imaginary outlines of this species of psychic topography, which has been so much abused, we should not thereby make ourselves any more clearly understood; we should be a mere copyist.

Rather, we shall endeavor to reproduce intact all those true or illusory impressions which were ours when, upon accompanying a rapidly moving military expedition, we found ourselves suddenly, in making a tour of the backlands, brought face to face with these singular beings of whom so little is known, and who have been abandoned here for three whole centuries.

III

THE SERTANEJO

The sertanejo, or man of the backlands, is above all else a strong individual. He does not exhibit the debilitating rachitic tendencies of the neurasthenic mestizos of the seaboard.

His appearance, it is true, at first glance, would lead one to think that this was not the case. He does not have the flawless features, the graceful bearing, the correct build of the athlete. He is ugly, awkward, stooped. Hercules-Quasimodo reflects in his bearing the typical unprepossessing attributes of the weak. His unsteady, slightly swaying, sinuous gait conveys the impression of loose-jointedness. His normally downtrodden mien is aggravated by a dour look which gives him an air of depressing humility. On foot, when not walking, he is invariably to be found leaning against the first doorpost or wall that he encounters; while on horseback, if he reins in his mount to exchange a couple of words with an acquaintance, he braces himself on one stirrup and rests his weight against the saddle. When walking, even at a rapid pace, he does not go forward steadily in a straight line but reels swiftly, as if he were following the geometric outlines of the meandering backland trails. And if in the course of his walk he pauses for the most commonplace of reasons, to roll a *cigarro*, strike a light, or chat with a friend, he falls—"falls" is the word—into a squatting position and will remain for a long time in this unstable state of equilibrium, with the entire weight of his body suspended on his great-toes, as he sits there on his heels with a simplicity that is at once ridiculous and delightful.

⁶⁹ [As representative of the modern school of anthropology cf. Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York, 1939): "Differences between the white race and other races must not be interpreted to mean superiority of the former, inferiority of the latter, unless this relation can be proved by anatomical or physiological considerations."]

He is the man who is always tired. He displays this invincible sluggishness, this muscular atony, in everything that he does: in his slowness of speech, his forced gestures, his unsteady gait, the languorous cadence of his ditties—in brief, in his constant tendency to immobility and rest.

Yet all this apparent weariness is an illusion. Nothing is more surprising than to see the sertanejo's listlessness disappear all of a sudden. In this weakened organism complete transformations are effected in a few seconds. All that is needed is some incident that demands the release of stumbling energies. The fellow is transfigured. He straightens up, becomes a new man, with new lines in his posture and bearing; his head held high now, above his massive shoulders; his gaze straightforward and unflinching. Through an instantaneous discharge of nervous energy, he at once corrects all the faults that come from the habitual relaxation of his organs; and the awkward rustic unexpectedly assumes the dominating aspect of a powerful, copper-hued Titan, an amazingly different being, capable of extraordinary feats of strength and agility.

This contrast becomes evident upon the most superficial examination. It is one that is revealed at every moment, in all the smallest details of back-country life—marked always by an impressive alternation between the extremes of impulse and prolonged periods of apathy.

It is impossible to imagine a more inelegant, ungainly horseman: no carriage, legs glued to the belly of his mount, hunched forward and swaying to the gait of the unshod, mistreated backland ponies, which are sturdy animals and remarkably swift. In this gloomy, indolent posture the lazy cowboy will ride along, over the plains, behind his slow-paced herd, almost transforming his "nag" into the lulling hammock in which he spends two-thirds of his existence. But let some giddy steer up ahead stray into the tangled scrub of the caatinga, or let one of the herd at a distance become entrapped in the foliage, and he is at once a different being and, digging his broad-roweled spurs into the flanks of his mount, he is off like a dart and plunges at top speed into the labyrinth of jurema thickets.

Let us watch him at this barbarous *steepie chase*.⁶⁷ Nothing can stop him in his onward rush. Gullies, stone heaps, brush piles, thorny thickets, or riverbanks—nothing can halt his pursuit of the straying steer, for *wherever the cow goes, there the cowboy and his horse go too*. Glued to his horse's back, with his knees dug into its flanks until horse and rider appear to be one, he gives the bizarre impression of a crude sort of centaur: emerging unexpectedly into a clearing, plunging into the tall weeds, leaping ditches and swamps, taking the small hills in his stride,

⁶⁷ [The word is in English.]

crashing swiftly through the prickly briar patches, and galloping at full speed over the expanse of tablelands.

His robust constitution shows itself at such a moment to best advantage. It is as if the sturdy rider were lending vigor to the frail pony, sustaining it by his improvised reins of carová fiber,⁶⁸ suspending it by his spurs, hurling it onward—springing quickly into the stirrups, legs drawn up, knees well forward and close to the horse's side—"hot on the trail" of the wayward steer; now bending agilely to avoid a bough that threatens to brush him from the saddle; now leaping off quickly like an acrobat, clinging to his horse's mane, to avert collision with a stump sighted at the last moment; then back in the saddle again at a bound—and all the time galloping, galloping, through all obstacles, balancing in his right hand, without ever losing it once, never once dropping it in the liana thickets, the long, iron-pointed, leather-headed goad which in itself, in any other hands, would constitute a serious obstacle to progress.

But once the fracas is over and the unruly steer restored to the herd, the cowboy once more lolls back in the saddle, once more an inert and unpossessing individual, swaying to his pony's slow gait, with all the disheartening appearance of a languishing invalid.

DISPARATE TYPES: THE JAGUNÇO AND THE GAUCHO

The southern gaúcho, upon meeting the vaqueiro at this moment, would look him over commiseratingly. The northern cowboy is his very antithesis. In the matter of bearing, gesture, mode of speech, character, and habits there is no comparing the two. The former, denizen of the boundless plains, who spends his days in galloping over the pampas, and who finds his environment friendly and fascinating, has, assuredly, a more chivalrous and attractive mien. He does not know the horrors of the drought and those cruel combats with the dry-parched earth. His life is not saddened by periodic scenes of devastation and misery, the grievous sight of a calcined and absolutely impoverished soil, drained dry by the burning suns of the Equator. In his hours of peace and happiness he is not preoccupied with a future which is always a threatening one, rendering his happiness short lived and fleeting. He awakes to life amid a glowing, animating wealth of Nature; and he goes through life adventurous, jovial, eloquent of speech, valiant, and swaggering; he looks upon labor as a diversion which affords him the sport of stampedes; lord of the distances is

⁶⁸ [Cf. Waldo Frank, *South American Journey* (New York: Sloan, Duell & Pearce, 1943), pp. 311-12: "carová, the fiber of a sword-sharp cactus." Frank mentions this plant as typical of the *sertão*, or backlands, a region that breeds the *carová* and "the toughest of all Brazilians, the *sertanejo*." *Carová* is the more common spelling.)]

he, as he rides the broad level-lying pasture lands, while at his shoulders, like a gaily fluttering pennant, is the inevitable scarf, or *pala*.

The clothes that he wears are holiday garb compared to the vaqueiro's rustic garments. His wide breeches are cut to facilitate his movements astride his hard-galloping or wildly rearing bronco⁶⁰ and are not torn by the ripping thorns of the caatingas. Nor is his jaunty poncho ever lost by being caught on the boughs of the crooked trees. Tearing like an unleashed whirlwind across the trails, clad in large russet-colored boots with glittering silver spurs, a bright-red silk scarf at his neck, on his head his broad sombrero with its flapping brim, a gleaming pistol and dagger in the girdle about his waist—so accoutered, he is a conquering hero, merry and bold. His horse, inseparable companion of his romantic life, is a near-luxurious object, with its complicated and spectacular trappings. A ragged gaucho on a well-appareled *pingo* is a fitting sight, in perfectly good form, and, without feeling the least out of place, may ride through the town in festive mood.

THE VAQUEIRO

The vaqueiro, on the other hand, grew up under conditions the opposite of these, amid a seldom varying alternation of good times and bad, of abundance and want; and over his head hung the year-round threat of the sun, bringing with it in the course of the seasons repeated periods of devastation and misfortune. It was amid such a succession of catastrophes that his youth was spent. He grew to manhood almost without ever having been a child; what should have been the merry hours of childhood were embittered by the specter of the backland droughts, and soon enough he had to face the tormented existence that awaited him. He was one damned to life. He understood well enough that he was engaged in a conflict that knew no truce, one that imperiously demanded of him the utilization of every last drop of his energies. And so he became strong, expert, resigned, and practical. He was fitting himself for the struggle.

His appearance at first sight makes one think, vaguely, of some ancient warrior weary of the fray. His clothes are a suit of armor. Clad in his tanned leather doublet, made of goatskin or cowhide, in a leather vest, and in skintight leggings of the same material that come up to his crotch and which are fitted with knee pads, and with his hands and feet protected by calfskin gloves and shinguards, he presents the crude aspect of some medieval knight who has strayed into modern times.

This armor of his, however, reddish-gray in hue, as if it were made of flexible bronze, does not give off any scintillations; it does not gleam when

⁶⁰ [*Baqui*: an unbroken horse, one that can be controlled only by the lasso.]

the sun's rays strike it. It is dead and dusty-looking, as befits a warrior who brings back no victories from the fight.

His homemade saddle is an imitation of the one used in the Rio Grande region but is shorter and hollowed out, without the luxurious trappings of the other. Its accessories consist of a weatherproof goatskin blanket covering the animal's haunches, of a breast covering, or pectorals, and of pads attached to the mount's knees. This equipment of man and beast is adapted to the environment. Without it, they would not be able to gallop through the caatingas and over the beds of jagged rock in safety.

Nothing, to tell the truth, is more monotonous and ugly than this highly original garb of one color only, the russet-gray of tanned leather, without the slightest variation, without so much as a strip or band of any other hue. Only at rare intervals, when a "shindig" is held to the strains of the guitar, and the backwoodsman relaxes from his long hours of toil, does he add a touch of novelty to his appearance in the form of a striking vest made of jungle cat⁷⁰ or puma skin with the spots turned out—or else he may stick a bright red bromelia in his leather cap. This, however, is no more than a passing incident and occurs but rarely.

Once the hours of merrymaking are over, the sertanejo loses his bold and frolicsome air. Not long before he had been letting himself go in the dance, the *sapatada*,⁷¹ as the sharp clack of sandals on the ground mingled with the jingling of spurs and the tinkling of tambourine bells, to the vibrant rhythms, the "rip-snorings"⁷² of the guitars; but now once more he falls back into his old habitual posture, loutish, awkward, gawky, exhibiting at the same time a strange lack of nervous energy and an extraordinary degree of fatigue.

Now, nothing is more easily to be explained than this permanent state of contrast between extreme manifestations of strength and agility and prolonged intervals of apathy. A perfect reflection of the physical forces at work about him, the man of the northern backlands has served an arduous apprenticeship in the school of adversity, and he has quickly learned to face his troubles squarely and to react to them promptly. He goes through life ambushed on all sides by sudden, incomprehensible surprises on the part of Nature, and he never knows a moment's respite. He is a combatant who all the year round is weakened and exhausted, and all the year round is strong and daring, preparing himself always for an en-

⁷⁰ [*Gato do mato*: name given to small wildcats of the jungle.]

⁷¹ [From *sapata*, "a shoe"; the dance, as indicated, being marked by the clacking of shoes or sandals.]

⁷² [*Rasgados*: from *rasgar*, "to rip," "to tear."]

counter in which he will not be the victor, but in which he will not let himself be vanquished; passing from a maximum of repose to a maximum of movement, from his comfortable, slothful hammock to the hard saddle, to dart, like a streak of lightning, along the narrow trails in search of his herds. His contradictory appearance, accordingly, is a reflection of Nature herself in this region—passive before the play of the elements and passing without perceptible transition from one season to another, from a major exuberance to the penury of the parched desert, beneath the refracted glow of blazing suns. He is as inconstant as Nature. And it is natural that he should be. To live is to adapt one's self. And she has fashioned him in her own likeness: barbarous, impetuous, abrupt.

THE GAUCHO

The gaucho, valiant "cowpuncher"⁷³ that he is, is surely without an equal when it comes to any warlike undertaking. To the shrill and vibrant sound of trumpets, he will gallop across the pampas, the butt of his lance firmly couched in his stirrup; like a madman, he will plunge into the thick of the fight; with a shout of triumph, he is swallowed up from sight in the swirl of combat, where nothing is to be seen but the flashing of sword on sword; transforming his horse into a projectile, he will rout squadrons and trample his adversaries, or—he will fall in the struggle which he entered with so supreme a disregard for his life.

THE JAGUNÇO

The jagunço is less theatrically heroic; he is more tenacious; he holds out better; he is stronger and more dangerous, made of sterner stuff. He rarely assumes this romantic and vainglorious pose. Rather, he seeks out his adversary with the firm purpose of destroying him by whatever means he may. He is accustomed to prolonged and obscure conflicts, without any expansive display of enthusiasm. His life is one long arduously achieved conquest in the course of his daily task. He does not indulge in the slightest muscular contraction, the slightest expenditure of nervous energy, without being certain of the result. He coldly calculates his enemy. At dagger-play he does no feinting. In aiming the long rifle or the heavy *trabuco*,⁷⁴ he "sleeps upon the sights."

Should his missile fail to reach its mark and his enemy not fall, the gaucho, beaten or done in, is a very weak individual in the grip of a situation in which he is placed at a disadvantage or of the outcome of which he is uncertain. This is not the case with the jagunço. He bides his time.

⁷³ [*Pedador*.]

⁷⁴ [A species of catapult gun, for shooting rocks, horn-tips, etc. For a description see p. 145.]

He is a demon when it comes to leading his enemy on; and the latter has before him, from this hour forth, sighting him down his musket barrel, a man who hates him with an inextinguishable hatred and who lies hidden there in the shade of the thicket.

THE VAQUEIROS

These contrasting characteristics are prominent in normal times.

Thus, every sertanejo is a vaqueiro. Aside from the rudimentary agriculture of the bottom plantations on the edge of the rivers, for the growing of those cereals which are a prime necessity, cattle-breeding is in these parts the kind of labor that is least unsuited to the inhabitants and to the soil. On these backland ranches, however, one does not meet with the festive bustle of the southern *estancias*.

"Making the roundup" is for the gaucho a daily festival, of which the showy cavalcades on special occasions are little more than an elaboration. Within the narrow confines of the mango groves or out on the open plain, cowpunchers, foremen, and peons may be seen rounding up the herd, through the brooks and gullies, pursuing intractable steers, lassoing the wild pony, or felling the rearing bull with the boleador, as if they were playing a game of rings; their movements are executed with incredible swiftness, and they all gallop after one another, yelling lustily at the top of their lungs and creating a great tumult, as if having the best time in the world. In the course of their less strenuous labors, on the other hand, when they come to brand the cattle, treating their wounds, leading away those destined for the slaughter, separating the tame steers, and picking out the broncos condemned to the horsebreaker's spurs⁷⁵—at times like these, the same fire that heats the branding iron provides the embers with which to prepare the roast, cooked with the skin on, for their rude feasts, or serves to boil the water for their strong and bitter-tasting Paraguayan tea, or *mate*. And so their days go by, well filled and varied.

UNCONSCIOUS SERVITUDE

The same thing does not happen in the north. Unlike the *estancieiro*, the *fazendeiro*⁷⁶ of the backlands lives on the seaboard, at a distance from his extensive properties, which he sometimes never sees. He is heir to an old historic vice. Like the landed proprietor of colonial days, he parasitically enjoys the revenues from vast domains without fixed boundaries, and

⁷⁵ [These spurs (*chilenas*) are wicked ones, their rowels sometimes having points that are several inches long.]

⁷⁶ [*Estancieiro*, proprietor of an *estancia*; *fazendeiro*, owner of a *fazenda*; the words *estancia* and *fazenda* both mean a country estate or ranch. The author is here making a distinction between the southern *estancia* and the *fazenda* of the northern regions.]

brief hours of unstable fortune, the same long days of anguish, of trials and tribulations long drawn out.

MESTIZO RELIGION

Isolated in this manner in a country that knows nothing of him, and engaged in an open warfare with an environment which would appear to have stamped upon his physical organism and his temperament its own extraordinary ruggedness, the sertanejo, either a nomad or with few roots in the soil, does not, to tell the truth, possess the organic capacity for attaining a loftier place in life. The restricted circle of his activities retards his psychic development. His religion is a monotheism which he does not understand, marred by an extravagant mysticism, with an incongruous admixture of the fetishism of the Indian and the African. He is the primitive individual, bold and strong, but at the same time credulous, readily permitting himself to be led astray by the most absurd superstitions. An analysis of these will reveal a fusion of distinct emotional states.

His religion is, like himself, mestizo in character. A résumé of the physical and physiological characteristics of the races from which he springs would likewise serve to summarize their moral qualities. It is an index to the life of the three peoples. And the sertanejo's religious beliefs reflect this violent juxtaposition of distinct tendencies. It is not necessary to describe them. The hair-raising legends of the waggish and wanton *caçapora*, mounted on a peevish caitefú and crossing the plains on mysterious moonlit nights; the diabolic *sacy*, a vermilion-colored bonnet on its head, assailing the belated traveler on unlucky Good Friday eves; along with the werewolves and the night-wandering headless she-mules; all the temptations of the evil one, or Devil, that tragic bearer of celestial grievances, commissioned to the earth; the prayers addressed to São Campeiro, canonized *in partibus*, to whom candles are lighted on the plains¹⁰¹ to obtain his help in recovering lost objects; the cabalistic conjurings for the curing of animals, for "bruising" and "selling" fevers; all the visions, all the fantastic apparitions, all the fanciful prophecies of the insane messiahs; and the pious pilgrimages and the missions and the penances—all these complex manifestations of an ill-defined religiosity are wholly explicable.

HISTORIC FACTORS IN MESTIZO RELIGION

It would not be too far amiss to describe them as a miscegenation of beliefs. Here they are, plain to be seen: the anthropomorphism of the savage, the animism of the African, and, what is more worthy of note, the

¹⁰¹ [The name of this local saint, Campeiro, is derived from *campo*, a field or plain.]

emotional attitude of the superior race itself in the period of discovery and colonization. This last is a notable instance of historical atavism.

As we view the religious agitations of the hinterland, the singular evangelists and messiahs who at intervals make their appearance there, hair-shirt ascetics who are followed always by an imperious throng of fanatic, sorrowing, mad disciples, we instinctively recall the most critical phase in the spiritual life of Portugal, at the end of the sixteenth century, when, after having held for a moment or two the center of history's stage, this most interesting of all the peoples suddenly fell, entered upon a period of rapid decline which was ill disguised by the oriental splendor of Dom Manoel's court. The intensive settlement of Brazil took place under King John III, precisely at the height of this period of complete moral disequilibrium, when "all the terrors of the Middle Ages were crystallized in peninsular Catholicism."

The sertanejo is heir to a multitude of extravagant superstitions, which are no longer to be found along the seaboard, owing to the modifying influence of other creeds and other races, but which in the backlands have remained intact. This legacy was brought by those impressionable ones who flocked to our land after the miraculous dream of the Indies had been dispelled in the East. They came filled with a fierce mysticism, a religious fervor that vibrated to the brilliant glow of the inquisitorial fires which flared so intensely in the peninsula. They were part and parcel of the same people who in Lisbon, under the grievous obsession of miracles and assailed by sudden hallucinations, had beheld above the royal palace prophetic caskets, mysterious tongues of flame, throngs of white-hooded Moors passing in procession, and paladin combats in the skies. They were the same people who, after Alcaccer-Kebir, in the midst of a "national decline," as Oliveira Martins forcefully puts it, saw their only salvation, in the face of an imminent ruin, in a higher order of messianic hopes.

Indeed, as we view the backland disorders of today and the insane messiahs who provoke them, we are forcibly struck by their resemblance to the prophetic figures in the peninsula of former days—the King of "Penamacor," the King of "Ericeira," consecrated to martyrdom and wandering over the mountain slopes, infecting credulous multitudes with the same mad ideals, the same harassing dream.

This historical analogy is one that goes back for three centuries; but it is an exact one, complete and flawless. In the rustic society of the backlands time has stood still; this society has not been affected by the general evolutionary movement of the human race; it still breathes the moral atmosphere of those mad visionaries who pursued a Miguelhino or a Ban-