OF HEAVEN AND OF EARTH

GUARABIRA'S MEMORIAL TO FREI DAMIÃO

by

David Amott

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art History

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ABSTRACT

The history of Frei Damião, an Italian Capuchin friar who left an especially rich legacy in the Northeast, is illustrative of the manner in which a variety of Northeastern folk prophets have molded Northeastern Brazilian culture through their missionary work. Celebrated as a mystic prophet and miracle worker during his life, Frei Damião was declared a saint upon his death in 1997, and today his teachings still influence Northeast Brazil's popular religious practice. Since his passing, many Northeastern Brazilian cities have built monuments to honor Frei Damião. The largest of these monuments, a one hundred and twelve feet high statue of the friar, stands in the town of Guarabira in the Northeastern state of Paraíba. While this statue commemorates Damião's mission, as a pilgrimage destination it also celebrates many of the Northeast's long-standing religious, economic, and political traditions. By exploring Frei Damião's legacy through the history of his statue in Guarabira, one can see how Frei Damião's statue extends the friar's mission to alleviate the temporal and spiritual concerns of those that pilgrimage by representing the temporal and spiritual interests of the Northeast Brazilian region and its people.

FREI DAMIÃO'S MEMORIAL

My Jesus, powerful Father
Give me your protection
Enlighten my lyre
With correct inspiration
Because I will read the prophecy
Of the holy Frei Damião[1]

Thus begins the opening stanza of a poem entitled *The Dream of Frei Damião and the Letter Prophesying the Future,* written by the Brazilian folk poet João Fernandes de Oliveira (Figure 1). De Oliveira's poem continues for thirty more stanzas, describing events that must take place before the destruction of the world in the last days. These events, which include revolutions, famines, war, and widespread communism, are recorded in the poem as they were reportedly revealed in a dream to the Italian Capuchin Franciscan friar, Frei Damião, who received many such revelations from 1931 until his death in 1997 (Figure 2).[2] During this span of sixty-six years, this friar traveled throughout the dry Northeastern region of Brazil, preaching and ministering to the people of that area. The large number of widely published and recited poems, songs, and pamphlets centered on his revelations,

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[1] João Fernandes de Oliveira, *Sonho de Frei Damiao, a Carta Profetizando o Futuro* (Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará: Tipographia e Folhetaria, publication date unknown). Except as otherwise noted, all Portuguese language poems, books, and articles cited in this thesis were translated by the author.

[2] Ibid, 2-7.

teachings, and miracles testifies to the profound effect that Frei Damião had on his hundreds and thousands of devotees, who regarded him not as a mere missionary, but instead as a prophet and a saint.[3]

Poems and writings are not the only gauges of Frei Damião's lasting impact in Brazil, however. Perhaps the most monumental indications of Damião's spiritual legacy are the large number of monuments and memorials dedicated to the friar that stand in many of the communities in which he preached. Some of these monuments are miniature statues of Frei Damião made of ceramic or molded cement installed in private yards and garden shrines.[4] Other monuments, however, are life-size or larger than life-size statues of the friar erected in the public squares and streets of several Northeastern Brazilian cities (Figure 3).[5] These statues of Frei Damião do not merely serve as urban ornament, but carry deep significance for many of the region's people. When the mayor of one Northeastern city recently removed a statue of Damião from

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[3] For more information regarding the folk literature regarding Frei Damião, see Gutenburg Costa, *A Presença de Frei Damião na Literatura de Cordel* (Brasília: Thesaurus, 1998), 49.

[4] For more information regarding Frei Damião's statues and monuments, both large and small, see Gildson Olivera, *Damião, O Santo das Missoes* (São Paulo: Editora FTD S.A., 1997), 78.

[5] Ibid.

its familiar place at the city's entrance, many mourned its loss and bluntly demanded in a local newspaper that the mayor return the statue to its proper place.[6]

While statues of Frei Damião are fairly common throughout the Northeast, one particularly noteworthy statue of the friar is situated on a high hill located in the outskirts of the market city of Guarabira in the heart of the Brazilian state of Paraíba (Figure 4). Recently finished, in December 2004, the statue depicts Frei Damião modeled in blocky, stylized lines not unlike those found in the folk woodcuts and etchings of the region.[7] The statue idealizes Frei Damião's appearance, depicting him with a smiling face and lively eyes set at an angle that allows them to be seen from afar. Nonetheless, the statue shows the friar as he appeared in the latter years of his life with a hunchback and a wrinkled head crooked permanently downward after having listened to confessions for decades. Framing Frei Damião's face are prominent ears, a bushy beard, and a stylized head of hair which helps to center the viewer's attention on the statue's detailed facial features. The rest of the friar's statue, which is far less detailed than the face, depicts Damião clothed in the long, plain robes of the Capuchin order with a simple rosary tied to his belt. In his left hand, Damião is

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6 "Retirada de Estátua de Frei Damião Gera Polêmica em Município Cearense (Potengi Ceará)," *No Olhar,* January 4, 2004 [on-line article]: available from: http://www.catolicanet.com.br/noticias/noticias_integra.asp?cod=1&codigo_noticias=30424&edtoria=1; Internet; accessed 15 March, 2005.

7 Woodcuts and etchings commonly used as illustrations in publications of the region's folk literature, commonly called "literatura de cordel" are frequently done in the same blocky style of Guarabira's Frei Damião' Statue. For examples of these woodcuts, see images 9, 10, and 26.

depicted clutching a bible, while his right hand extends a crucifix out towards advancing pilgrims and the city of Guarabira below.

Frei Damião's statue rests on a mammoth pedestal that contains a visitor's center, a museum featuring photographs of the friar as well as many of his personal possessions, and a staircase that allows the pilgrim to ascend to the statue's feet. Together with its pedestal, the monument stands at one hundred and twelve feet and can be seen from nearly any vantage point in the city and throughout much of the adjacent countryside. As a result, this colossus serves as an omnipresent reminder of Frei Damião, and infuses Guarabira and its environs with the Friar's memory. Surrounding the statue is a via sacra (sacred path) lined with statues depicting the Stations of the Cross. This path leads to a sprawling pilgrimage complex that includes a large plaza, an amphitheatre, a souvenir shop, and a reliquary house intended to hold offerings brought to the statue by pilgrims (Figure 5). Eventually the pilgrimage complex will also include churches designed to hold large masses other religious services in the shadow of Frei Damião's statue.[8]

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[8] Lena Toscano, interview by author, 22 February, 2005, Wilmington Delaware, notes taken. *Lena* Toscano is the cousin of the mayor of Guarabira, *Lea* Toscano, discussed later in the paper. Lena Toscano is now a resident of the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba. Nevertheless, Lena grew up in Guarabira where she met Frei Damião as a child. As noted, Lena still has many family members living in Guarabira, many of whom have played active roles in the politics of the city over the past several decades.

See also "MEMORIAL FREI DAMIÃO 5ª Romaria Reúne Mais de 25 Mil Fiéis." *Guarabira Hoje,* Junho 2002 [on-line article] available from: http://64.233.187.104/search?q=cache:Wk_5uBWI2j4J:www.guarabira.pb.gov.br/pagi

Guarabira's gigantic monument to Frei Damião commemorates the friar and his work among the people of Northeastern Brazil, but the statue plays several additional roles as well. These roles, both secular and spiritual in nature, are not unlike the roles performed by other religious monuments constructed in other times and places. On one level, the statue brings economic profit to the city in which it is located. Not only is the statue a major symbol for the city of Guarabira, it is marketed as a tourist destination and economic catalyst designed to attract and serve the tens of thousands of pilgrims who visit each year and boost the local economy in the process. On another level, Frei Damião's statue functions as a spiritual focal point for these thousands of visitors, who come to honor the man who inspired its construction. Just as religious images from other eras stressed what Hans Belting calls "the supratemporal presence of saints,"[9] Damião's statue serves as a sacred nexus for his followers, who see the statue as a place where they can connect with the Friar and pray for his intercession in their lives. Finally, Damião's statue serves to validate and amplify popular Northeastern Brazilian values, beliefs, and traditions by celebrating them in monumental form, and can also be read as a reaction against the past efforts of numerous politicians and clergymen to alter the values and beliefs of the Northeast region by discouraging the prolongation of the region's long established traditions.

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nas/jornal/edicao4/ed4_pg5.pdf+site:www.guarabira.pb.gov.br&hl=en; Internet; accessed on Feburary 27, 2005.

[9] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5-6.

In order to explore how Frei Damião's statue functions as Guarabira's principal tourist attraction, as a destination for pilgrims, and as a monument to regional values and beliefs, it is necessary to study the statue in light of the Northeast region's historical traditions and cultural framework. These traditions and this framework not only shape the statue in large part, but also continuously endow it with the ability to both attract and represent the people of Northeastern Brazil by electrifying the monument with the energy of the region's history. By exploring both the region's historical background and the statue's modern cultural context, it is possible to see how Frei Damião's monument draws on multiple levels of local myth and memory to embody much of the economic, spiritual, and regionalist sentiment of Brazil's Northeast, addressing both sacred and secular concerns in the process.

THE NORTHEAST, ITS PEOPLE, AND ITS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Frei Damião's statue in Guarabira is strategically located in the Brejo Paribiano, a ring of land at the edge of Paraíba's costal plain where much of the state's agricultural production occurs (Figure 6). Pinned between the lush and densely populated coastal region and the sparsely populated interior desert—commonly called the Sertão—the Brejo and its principal city Guarabira serve as an important economic and cultural link between the coast and the Sertão. While economically impacted by the trends of the coast, the Brejo is perhaps most culturally influenced by the Sertão and its occupants, the Sertanejos, who for centuries have fought to scrape a life from the dry, sun-baked soil of their homeland.

Colonists who came to Brazil in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries mainly settled along the fertile coast or in the Brejo, and were understandably slow to penetrate the dry interior region. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, changes in imperial land policies led to a rise in the region's population.[10] At this time, the

[10] Before the second quarter of the nineteenth century, powerful cattlemen and landowners called coroneis ruled the Sertão by controlling large government sanctioned land grants called sesmarias. After Brazil won its independence from Portugal in 1822 however, the government allowed previously landless citizens, as well as new settlers, to gain legal titles to unoccupied land through homesteading. Nevertheless, many coroneis maintained their control over the arable land in the region, forcing the region's peasants to ally themselves with the coroneis who, in return for use of their lands, often forced the peasants under them to hand over a quarter to half of their harvest. For more specific information related to the nineteenth century settlement of the region see Candace Slater, *Trail of Miracles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 26-27.

majority of the region's inhabitants were made up of former slaves and poor and illiterate subsistence farmers who moved into the region in the mid to late-nineteenth century, renting land from powerful patrons at a heavy price. The arrangements made between these rootless farmers and their often-ruthless patrons perpetuated the farmers' poverty and misery while additionally insuring their position at the farthest edges of Brazil's social and political structure.[11]

Geographically and socially isolated from outside influence for several centuries, the Sertão region's impoverished inhabitants formed a unique culture of their own that enabled them to cope with the region's frequently harsh conditions. Many aspects of this Cultura Sertaneja revolved around popular interpretations of Catholic ideology that often emphasized the mystical and miraculous. Reports of saintly visions and visitations became commonplace in the region, as did many cases of messianism and sectarianism that were, at times, quite extreme. By the 1860's, the region's religious "peculiarities" caught the attention of the Rome-oriented segments of the Brazilian Catholic Church, the leaders of which then worked to appoint bishops to the region who would mainstream the Sertão's spiritual traditions and bring them more in keeping with those of the rest of the country.[12]

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[11] Sue Anderson Gross, "Religious Sectarianism in the Sertão," *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (July, 1968), 371.

[12] Ralph Della Cava, "Brazilian Messianism and National Institutions: A Reappraisal of Canudos and Juazeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Aug., 1968), 406-7.

While many of these early bishops worked diligently for many years to reorganize the Catholic Church in the Sertão, their efforts at reformation were frequently frustrated by powerful Northeastern religious traditions which resisted change. This was especially true when these local traditions presented themselves in the guise of zealous holy men and folk prophets who held various levels of influence in the region.[13] While the fame of many of these charismatic leaders was short lived, one folk prophet—Padre Cícero Romão Batista—enjoyed long-term renown as a miracle worker and a visionary.[14] Dreaming that Christ and his apostles called him to care for the Northeastern poor, Cícero began his ministry in 1870 and worked for the next sixty-four years among the Sertanejos (Figure 7).[15] While popular from the onset

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[13] While many church leaders condemned these prophets for teaching superstitious doctrines and excessively rigid morality, in the eyes of many of the sertanejos, the reputations of these holy men as God's representatives on earth remained undiminished. While economic and social conditions undoubtedly contributed to their attractiveness, these prophets provided genuine religious experiences in the eyes of their followers—experiences that fed these follower's faith and gave them hope in light of their often difficult lives. For more information please refer to Della Cava's, Gross's, and Slater's previously cited research that discusses in general terms the historic and modern living conditions in the Sertão. For a particularly rich case study on the earliest of these folk prophets, see Elucides da Cunha's important study *Trouble in the Backlands* regarding the relationship between the folk prophet Antônio Conselheiro, and the Brazilian government and church. Elucides da Cunha. *Rebellion in the Backlands* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1944).

[14] For a complete history of the life of Padre Cícero, see Ralph Della Cava, *Miracle at Juazeiro*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

[15] The Catholic Church and the Brazilian government smothered many movements throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially those they considered ideologically dangerous. For more information please refer to Sue Anderson Gross's previously cited article, "Religious Sectarianism in the Sertão."

of his career, Cícero's reputation as a holy man was not fully established until March 6, 1889 when a host that he placed into the mouth of a nun reportedly transformed into blood. From that point until the time of his death in 1934, Padre Cícero gained widespread religious, political, and social influence throughout the Sertão.[16] The church tried to squelch Cícero on many occasions, revoking his right to say mass in both 1916 and in 1920. The government also attempted to restrain Padre Cícero, and at one point even attacked Juazeiro in what later became known as the Revolution of 1913-14. However, Padre Cícero maintained his popularity and used his religious and political power to serve as both a temporal and spiritual voice for his followers.[17] As a result, the people of the Sertão felt multifaceted devotion for the padre and regarded him as a symbol of both their religion and their region.[18]

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[16] The town of Juazero where Padre Cícero lived quickly became a pilgrimage site that attracted thousands of people from far away places who came to see the priest who could perform miracles. Soon people began to credit spiritual powers to objects associated with Padre Cicero, such as the church that he administered and the city of Juazero itself. Even Cicero's ox was credited with possessing healing powers, and attracted many pilgrims who touched its horns and drank its urine hoping to be healed. For more information see Luciano N. Da Costa e Silva and Myrtis De Carvalho, *Padre Cícero: O Apóstolo do Juazeiro (A Aparecida do Nordeste)*, (São Paulo: Nova Época Editorial LTDA, 1976), 29, 33, 45.

[17] Padre Cícero was able to assemble an "army" of local peasants which soundly defeated the government forces that besieged the city. For a detailed discussion of priest's roles in mediating religious and political concerns in Northeast Brazil, see Eul-Soo Pang, "The Changing Roles of Priests in the Politics of Northeast Brazil, 1889-1964," *The Americas*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (January, 1974), 341-372.

[18] See Candace Slater, *Trail of Miracles*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986) 37. The devotion felt for padre Cícero on both religious and nationalistic planes is reflected in the words of the early twentieth century Brazilian writer, Simões Da Silva, who wrote "Padre Cícero Romao Baptista…[is a] true father

When Cícero died in 1934, the Sertanejos widely mourned his death. However, according to local tradition, the padre did not leave his followers comfortless, but reportedly arranged for his own successor. In the words of one northeastern poet, "Padre Cícero delivered his pilgrims into the hands of Frei Damião, who arrived in Brazil three years before [Cicero's death], proving…that he would be Cícero's successor (Figure 8)." [19] In the eyes of many sertanejos, Frei Damião was

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of the glory and peace that belongs to the honest and patriotic population of the Northeast...it is sad to know that this pastor and his sheep…are constant victims of the most cruel injustices and ingratitude of people with the same religious beliefs and national heritage." See Simõens Da Silva, *O padre Cícero e a população do nordeste (elementos de defesa, historia, "folklore" e propaganda)*, Rio de Janeiro; Imprensa Nacional, 1927), 1.

[19] de Oliveira, 3. Beyond attempting to connect both Padre Cícero and Frei Damião to each other, many Sertanejos also connect Cícero and Damião to the region's folk bandits, especially Lampião, (Virgulino Ferreira da Silva) a bandit who traveled throughout the Sertão during the 1920s and 1930s robbing and pillaging the various towns through which he passed. While infamous for his violent acts, he was also reportedly very religious and was reportedly a friend of Padre Cícero. Both Cícero and Lampião are frequently symbolize the Sertão's independence and are seen as protectors of the region's interests and traditions from the interference of the officials of church and state officials. There is a similar desire to link Frei Damião with Sertão folk heroes like Lampião. When asked by the journalist Ronildo Maia Leite in an interview for *Revista Veja* if he had ever "…had opportunities to counsel Lampião," Frei Damião replied "one time, I was told that Lampião was waiting for me, and wanted to interview me in Mata Grande, in the paróquia de Santa de Ipanema. But a downpour occurred the day we were supposed to meet, and he did not appear at our meeting." In subsequent questions, Frei Damião indicated that he respected Lampião because he "never treated representatives of the church poorly," but he also encouraged Lampião to repent. "I always looked for opportunities to council him to listen to the word of God, avoid the devil's temptations, marry, and stop committing the sin of murder." For more information, see Mario Souto Maior, *Frei Damião, Um Santo?*, (Reciefe: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, 1998), 47-48.

not only Cícero's successor but possessed the padre's own incarnated spirit.[20] While Frei Damião frequently tried to distance himself from Padre Cícero, stating that Cícero was "a rebellious fanatic,"[21] the sertanejos frequently linked the two together, calling them the "padrinhos" or godfathers of the Northeast.[22]

Before moving to Brazil to begin his ministry, Frei Damião, christened Pio Giannotti, lived in the small town of Bozzano, Italy, where he was born in 1898. At age twelve, Giannotti began to study religion. Four years later, he decided to join the Franciscan Capuchin order. In 1931, Giannotti, who by then had changed his name to Damião,[23] took advantage of an opportunity to serve as a friar missionary in Brazil, where he rapidly established a reputation as a miracle worker and a holy man possessing "grand and divine powers" in the words of one of his followers.[24]

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[20] Souto Maior, 30-31.

[21] Costa (*A Presença de Frei Damião na Literatura de Cordel*), 49.

[22] Gutemberg Costa, *Profetas do Nordeste*, (Natal: Editora Clima, 1994). 37, 39.

[23] Frei Damião changed his name at age sixteen upon entering the Capuchin Order from Pio Giannotti to Damiano, which was later translated to Damião when the friar reached Brazil. "Frei Damião de Bozzano," *Fundaçao Joaquim Nabuco*, Recife, [on-line article] available from: http://www.fundaj.gov.br:8080/notitia/servlet/newstorm.ns.presentation.NavigationServlet?publicationCode=16&pageCode=230&date=currentDate; Internet; accessed on August 29, 2005.

[24] Abdalaziz De Moura, *Frei Damião e os Impasses da Religao Popular*, (Petropolis: Editora Vozes Ltda, 1978), 13.

The frequent appearance of Frei Damião in the influential folk poetry of the Northeast, widely published in pamphlets called cord literature (literatura de cordel), serves as a measure of his influence on the region. The titles of these pamphlet poems, such as *The Girl Who Turned Into a Donkey After She Swore at Frei Damião*, or *The Protestant Who Turned Into a Vulture Because He Wanted to Kill Frei Damião,* suggest the extent to which many Northeastern Brazilians credited Frei Damião not only with possessing inspiring spirituality, but with unique abilities and powers which allowed him to perform miracles of all sorts (Figures 9, 10).[25] Clearly, not all Northeasterners believed reports of Frei Damião's miracles. Frei Damião himself tried to discourage such tales from taking root, suggesting that many of these miracle tales stemmed out of "popular religious sentiment" rather than from reality.[26] However, a significant number of Northeasterners did and still do believe that Damião was a miracle worker. This fact helps to suggest how and why Damiao attracted a large following wherever he went. It also suggests why he was referred to as a living "apostle of Christ," [27] and why he was even frequently compared to other saints, such

[25] For more information on the interpretation of cord literature referring to Frei Damião see Souto Maior, 52-64, and Costa, *A Presenca de Frei Damião na Literatura de Cordel*, 21-24.

[26] Souto Maior, 36.

[27] Souto Maior, 16.

as John the Baptist, Saint Paul of Tarsus, and Saint Francis of Assisi, by his followers.[28]

While Damião's miracle-working reputation won him popular support among the people, it did not necessarily earn him support among the religious leaders of Brazil's Northeast. The particularly strict Catholic ideology Frei Damião preached during his sixty-six year ministry in the region further distanced the friar from other religious leaders in the area. Among other things, his messages enforced the idea that those who divorced, kissed on the mouth, wore miniskirts, or danced would "enter hell head first."[29] This conservative approach to Catholicism created friction between Damião and the Northeast region's moderate and progressive priests who disagreed with both Damião's traditionalist doctrine and his popular influence over the region's Catholics. Many priests and bishops sent letters to Frei Damião which declared that the friar's "fanatical teachings...impeded the expansion of authentic Christian knowledge and love," and requested that he not preach to those that lived within their jurisdictions.[30]

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[28] One poem by the poet Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante, *Frei Damião – O Missionario do Nordeste* stated that Frei Damião had the ability to preach like Paul, pray like John the Baptist, and had the humility of Saint Francis. Cavalcante's poem is reproduced in Gutenburg Costa, *A Presenca de Frei Damião na Literatura de Cordel*, 35-36. Another author more directly compared Frei Damião with Jesus Christ. See José Luiz Silva, *Frei Damião* (João Pessoa: MARKET-Pesquisas e Propaganda, 1991), unpaginated book.

[29] Souto Maior, 22-23

[30] In 1975, Reciefe's *Nightly Diary* recorded "Frei Damião...finds himself with his circle of evangelical activities restricted more and more every day to small

Despite the censure of powerful religious leaders in the Northeast, Frei Damião maintained his traditional positions in the face of opposition, causing populist support for Damião to rapidly grow in many areas of the Northeast and particularly in the Sertão. In the eyes of many Sertanejos, censuring Frei Damião meant censuring the other prophets that preceded him, as well as many of the region's time-honored traditions. More importantly, however, censuring Damião also meant censuring God himself, who had sent Damião to serve the people of Brazil's Northeast in the first place.[31] Perceiving the power of Frei Damião's image with a large portion of the population, many politicians eventually began to associate themselves with the Friar, partially in an effort to win the respect, and the votes, of the region's people. Many of the region's priests began to do likewise in their attempts to resuscitate the fading faith of many of their parishioners and combat against the growing popularity of Brazil's many evangelical religions among other reasons.

Even though Frei Damião no longer travels through the Northeast to preach his sermons and hear the confessions of his followers, the friar's popularity has not diminished since his death. The increasing regard in which many Northeasterners

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areas...prohibitions of ecclesiastical authorities [forbid Damião to]...marry, baptize, and preach...the diaconal bishops have even annulled his authority [to do so]." See *Diario da Noite*, Recife, July 10, 1975 in Souto Maior, 44-45.

[31] When hearing of the prohibitions levied against Frei Damião, the people of the Northeastern city of Juazeiro where Padre Cicero preached most of his life, distributed pamphlets stating "Solitarity: Yesterday it was you Cicero. Today it is you Damião. Juazeiro is with you." See *Journão de Brasilia*, Brasilia, DF January 11, 1975 in Souto Maior, 44.

hold Frei Damião helps to answer many of the questions regarding why Guarabira constructed its Frei Damião memorial as well as explain how the city's memorial successfully manages to serve and represent economic, political, and spiritual interests in the Northeast.

FREI DAMIÃO'S MEMORIAL AS A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CATALYST

On the eighteenth of December 2004, approximately sixty thousand people came to Guarabira to participate in the official dedication of Frei Damião's monument.[32] The festivities surrounding the dedication lasted four days and began with the arrival of an important copy of Brazil's patron virgin, Nossa Senhora Apariceda, borrowed from the cathedral of the nearby city of Petrolina.[33] The following events of the festivities included a play narrating the life of the "saint of the missions," as well as a special mass and several speeches given by various dignitaries.[34] Among the speeches in the dedication ceremony itself, was an address delivered by the Governor of Paraíba, Cássio Cunha Lima, whose very presence

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[32] "Cássio fala a 60 mil romeiros no Memorial Frei Damião," *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 19, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=1&noticia=13482; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005.

[33] "Guarabira inaugura Memorial Frei Damião," *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 17, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=36&noticia=13478; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005.

[34] "50 mil pessoas deve participar da inauguração de memorial de Frei Damião" *O Norte*, Guarabira, December 17, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.onorte.com.br/paraiba/?40392; Internet; accessed on June 12, 2005.

provided both the ceremonies and Frei Damião's cult with apparent official recognition and endorsement. In his address, Lima declared that the Friar's statue not only stood as a monument to Guarabira and its leaders, but also represented "an expression of faith, a manifestation of the confidence of the people...[as well as] a new alternative to religious tourism in Paraíba's Brejo."[35]

By calling Frei Damião's statue "an expression of faith" and "a manifestation of the confidence of the people" Paraíba's governor suggested that Damião's statue was, first and foremost, a spiritual object that represented the qualities and attributes of both Frei Damião and Northeasterners in general. However, by also referring to the statue as a "new alternative to religious tourism," the governor directly implied that the statue had a more secular role as an economic catalyst intended to boost the local economy.

While the conjoining of temporal with spiritual interests might seem to compromise Frei Damião's statue as a religious symbol, the statue was not the first object whose meaning has been enriched economically through its association with Frei Damião. [36]

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[35] "Cássio fala a 60 mil romeiros no Memorial Frei Damião," *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 19, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=22&noticia=13488; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005.

[36]. Even the occasion of Frei Damião's death in 1997 was marked with juxtaposed expressions of faith and mercantilism. The Northeastern newspaper *O Diario de Pernambuco* published an article that detailed the events of both the friar's final hours as well as a spontaneously organized vigil held in memory of the dying monk by pilgrims who had come to pray for the friar's soul. While many of these pilgrims anxiously awaited news of Damião's condition, vendors offered them "tapes,

For decades, Frei Damião's name and image had been used to endorse everything from "religious" objects such as meditation books and prayer candles, to more secular products such as paint, wine, and coffee (Figure 11).[37] While many of Frei Damião's friends objected to the use of his name on merchandise, calling it a commercialization" and exploitation of the friar's mission, others saw such commercial use of Frei Damião's name as a symbol of their faith in the friar as well as a way to honor him. As one Northeastern author wrote, "paying homage to the Capuchin of Bozzano...[by putting his name on products] signifies the payment of promises or the belief that business will progress, as it is [placed] under the sign of the 'saint.'"[38]

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photographs, prayers, pendants, t-shirts," and other souvenirs which featured images of Frei Damião's or quotations from his speeches. See *Journal do Commercio*, política, 4, May 30, 1997 quoted in Osvaldo Meira Trigueiro, *Agonia e Morte de Frei Damião: dos journais para a boca do povo,* (João Pessoa: Universidade Federal de Paraiba), [on-line article] available from: http://64.233.161.104/search?q=cache:zPuYHD3E6P0J:www.bocc.ubi.pt/pag/trigueiro-osvaldo-frei-damiao.pdf+-site:.gigabusca.com+frei+damiao&hl=en&ie=UTF-8; Internet; accessed on March 5, 2005.

[37] Olivera, 48 & 77.

[38] Olivera, 48. A number of businesses have opened up in Guarabira that are named after Frei Damião. One of these is the Posto (gas station) Frei Damião. For more information see "Posto Frei Damião Faz Sorteio Entre os Clientes Este Sabado," *Brejo.Com*, April 29, 2005, [on-line article] available from: http://www.brejo.com/home/wmview.php?ArtID=1660&term=frei%20damiao; Internet; accessed on August 25, 2005.

Just as Frei Damião's name has been used to endorse products, his name has also frequently been used by politicians to promote their campaigns and political agendas as previously mentioned. Anxious to be photographed with Damião during his life, many politicians continued to link themselves with the friar after his death by distributing copies of both the friar's photograph and prayers to voters.[39] In an attempt to especially link himself and his town with the friar's memory, one ardent Northeastern politician argued for the construction of "a giant statue [of the friar] complete with an [adjoining] convent, a medical post...with additional hotels and restaurants" in his hometown of Bezerros, Pernambuco. While admitting that he was not a follower of Damião, this politician reaffirmed that it was important to "value the region's personality and its religious tradition, and transform it into an international attraction, creating work and money for [the region's] needy communities [in the process]."[40] While other Northeastern communities such as Bezerros hoped to honor Frei Damião with a large monument, it was Paraíba's Guarabira that managed to construct such a memorial before other interested cities made their similar plans a reality. Attempting to create a legacy for herself,[41] earn a place for Guarabira

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[39] Pedro Marins, "Candidatos ainda usam imagem de Frei Damião," *Jornal do Commercio - Recife*, May 31, 1998, politica [on-line article] available from: http://www2.uol.com.br/JC/_1998/3105/po3105j.htm; Internet; accessed March 6, 2005.

[40] Ibid.

[41] In a brochure printed by the city of Guarabira advertising the statue of Frei Damião, the current mayor of Guarabira, Fatíma Paulino, stated "Even before I

on the religious tourist's map, and consequently provide the city and its merchants, restaurant owners, and hotel owners with improved economic prospects, Guarabira's mayor, Lea Toscano, petitioned Paraíba's governor, Cassio Cunha Lima, for state support in constructing a gigantic statue of the Friar on the crest of the Serra do Jurema, a high hill which rises above Guarabira.[42] Seeing how the statue would fit into his larger plans to enhance the economic prospects of the region, which included the development of a string of religious attractions or "circuit of faith" within the state, as well as a regional pilgrimage route modeled on Spain's Camino de Santiago de Compostela, Paraíba's Governor Lima gave approval to the project.[43] Financed by

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became the mayor of Guarabira, I prayed that Frei Damião would never abandon the people of Guarabira whom I love." This statement suggests that this new mayor is anxious to connect herself not only with Frei Damião, but also his statue which rises above the city, as well as the legacy of Paulino's predecessor, Lea Toscano who, as mentioned, was responsible for orchestrating the statue's construction.

[42] "Cássio fala a 60 mil romeiros no Memorial Frei Damião," *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 19, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=1&noticia=13482; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005. Also see Jotabê Mederos, "Os novos pólos da fé no sertão nordestino," *Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, August 8, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.clippingexpress.com.br/noticias_justica.php?id=28544; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005.

[43] Lea Toscano, is married to Zenobío Toscano, Paraíba's Deputado Estadual (or state legislator) who represents Guarabira and its surrounding communities, (Zenobío once served Guarabira as mayor, himself). In his current position, Zenobío Toscano helps to plan cultural development within the state of Paraíba, among other things. One of the projects for which Zenobío secured funding was the statue of Frei Damião, a process that was facilitated by his personal connections with both the city of Guarabira as well as state government leaders. Everaldo Vasconcelos, a professor in the art department at the Universidade Federal de Paraíba praised Zenobío Toscano for his work on and support of Frei Damião's statue, stating that "the construction of

state and local funds, as well as private donations, work began on the statue in the fall of 2000 under the direction of Alexandre Azedo Lacerda, the statue's designer and architect.[44] Lacerda was an obvious choice for the position in as much as he had participated in the construction of other gigantic religious statues in Brazil's Northeast.[45] Lacerda was also a member of a family of "icon makers," in as much as his father, Armando, had served as architect for the northeast region's first giant

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the Frei Damião Memorial…is a bold undertaking worthy of a politician with a vision of bettering the future for his people…In my opinion, Paraíba would be much better if we had more men like him involved in state politics." For more information see "Assembléa Legislativa do Estado de Paraíba: Gabinete Virtual, Deputado Zenóbio Toscano," *Assembléa Legislativa do Estado de Paraíba*, João Pessoa, 2003, [on-line article] available from: http://alpb.codata.pb.gov.br/parlamentares/zenobiotoscano/atuacao/; Internet; accessed on September 5, 2005.

[44] During the inauguration of the Frei Damião memorial, Lea Toscano publicly signed a document which handed the care of the statue over to Guarabira's diocese for the next forty nine years. For more information see "Cássio fala a 60 mil romeiros no Memorial Frei Damião," Governo da Paraíba, João Pessoa, December 19, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.pariaiba.pb.gov.br/noticas/noticia_secom.jsb?canal=1&noticia=13482; Internet; accessed on September 5, 2005.

[45] Such as the gigantic Cristo Redentor in the Northeastern city of Itaporanga modeled on Rio de Janeiro's famous statue of Cristo Redentor, or the giant statue of São Francisco in the Northeastern city of Canindé. For more information see Jotabê Mederos, "Os Novos Pólos da Fé no Sertão Nordestino," *O Estado de São Paulo*, Sao Pãulo, August 1, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.clippingexpress.com.br/noticias_justica.php?id=28544; Internet; accessed on July 26, 2005.

concrete statue—an eighty-eight foot memorial to Padre Cícero in the Padre's hometown of Juazero constructed in 1969 (Figure 12).[46]

While following in the Brazilian tradition of giant concrete statues, which was first established by Rio de Janeiro's Cristo Redentor in the 1940s, the design of Guarabira's Frei Damião memorial more aggressively attempts to reference Padre Cícero's monument—a monument whose presence in Juazero both helped to make the city one of the Sertão's most important cultural, religious, and economic hubs, as well as earn the city the nickname "the center of the world."[47] The similarities between Cícero's and Damião's statues strongly suggest that Guarabira's leaders considered the formal qualities of Cícero's statue as well as the spiritual, cultural, and economic benefits it brings to Juazero as they plotted the design of Guarabira's own giant statue.[48] Even if Guarabira's leaders did not consider Padre Cícero's statue as they

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[46] Information from Guarabira's Frei Damião Memorial tourist brochure. See Prefeitura de Guarabira, *Visite o Memorial Frei Damião*, (Guarabira, Paraiba: Prefeitura de Guarabira, 2004). This brochure is reproduced in figs. 13, 14, and 15.

[47] Slater, 25.

[48] While Padre Cicero's statue celebrates the padre and his legacy, the statue also represents the city of Juazero which constructed the statue in part to further emphasize the links between the city and its famous citizen. While the people of Juazero wish to strengthen the links between their city and its renowned religious figure for spiritual reasons, the desire to strengthen these bonds can be traced to economic factors as well. "Thanks to Padre Cicero, there exists work for many of the region's people," states one source on Juazeiro's tourist attractions. The fact that Juazeiro's soccer stadium is named the "Romerão," or giant pilgrimage, further illustrates the important role that pilgrimage plays on many levels in Juazeiro. See Yoko Nakamura, "Os Místicos caminhos de Juazeiro do Norte" *Cidade Internet*, São Paulo, September 1, 2003 [on-line article] available from: http://revistaturismo.cidadeinternet.com.br/ passeios/juazeiro.htm; Internet; accessed

were constructing Frei Damião's monument, its architect, Amando Lacerda certainly regarded his father's statue of Cicero as a model for his own work in Guarabira. Like Frei Damião's statue, Padre Cícero's statue is fashioned in an idealized, blocky style which recalls the Northeast region's popular woodcut print tradition. The statue itself is built of concrete and depicts the Padre with a wrinkled face and expressive eyes that look out towards approaching pilgrims. Cícero's head is anchored to a squared-off body that stands erect, clothed in long clerical robes whose buttons lead the eye towards the padre's face. In his hands, Cícero holds his trademark itinerant priest hat and cane. Cícero's statue, like Frei Damião's statue, is approached through a museum and shrine installed in its base that gradually leads visitors to Cicero's feet. Also like Damião's statue, Cicero's statue is surrounded by a large complex that includes votive shrines, a via sacra, and chapels, among other things.[49]

While the formal qualities that Frei Damião's monument shares with that of Padre Cícero help to visually link the two statues with each other, perhaps the principal way Damião's statue most directly associates itself with, and yet rivals Cícero's statue, is through its impressive height. While never comparing Damião's

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on June 17, 2005. As suggested by the references to "religious tourism" in the speech given by Paraíba's governor at the dedication of Frei Damião's memorial, many hope that Damião's statue will associate Guarabira with Frei Damião in the same way that Juazero is associated with Padre Cicero, and in the process bring the same sort of economic aid to Guarabira that Cicero has brought to Juazero.

statue directly with that of Cícero in Juazeiro, or with other similar monolithic statues located elsewhere throughout Brazil, official publications and reports regarding Damião's statue place great emphasis on the fact that, at the time of its construction, Damião's statue was the second tallest in Brazil—second only to Rio de Janeiro's Cristo Redentor (Damião's statue is currently the third largest in Brazil).[50]

In a temporal sense, the height of Damião's statue serves to measure and enhance Guarabira's civic pride, just as the towering cathedrals and skyscrapers of the past served, and continue to serve, to both measure and enhance the pride of the cities that built them. The height of Guarabira's Frei Damião statue also gives the memorial distinctiveness that attempts to outshine other Northeastern pilgrimage monuments and shrines dedicated to Damião or to other religious figures. While the height of Frei Damião's memorial provides the statue with a temporal competitiveness, this competitiveness is tempered by the memorial's aura of sanctity that lends an elevating quality to the statue that raises it above temporal concerns and into the realm of the spiritual. As Karsten Harries wrote in his book *The Ethical Function of Architecture*:

> "There is an obvious connection between the assertiveness of the vertical and human pride. Pride built the towers of the Gothic cathedrals as it built our skyscrapers…[nevertheless] while the story of the Tower of Babel links the vertical to futile self assertion, the story of

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[49] For more information on the Padre Cicero statue complex in Juazeiro see Slater, 61-69. For more information on the Frei Damião statue complex see the previously cited Frei Damião Memorial brochure reproduced in figs. 13, 14, and 15.

[50] Guarabira's Frei Damião Memorial brochure mentions seven times that the statue ranks as the second tallest in Brazil, which it was at the time of the brochure's printing. See figs. 13, 14, and 15.

> Jacob's ladder gives it [verticality] a very different meaning…Here it is not prideful humanity that seeks to pierce the clouds with its towers, but God himself who bridges the gap between heaven and earth. But this place, this Bethel, not only is God's dwelling place but also opens up to a higher reality: It is the gate of Heaven."[51]

While Frei Damião's monument seemingly tries to bridge heaven and earth through height, this bridge is not necessarily intended to be seen as an egotistic human effort to reach heaven as was the Tower of Babel, but instead as a type of Jacob's ladder or celestial gate—a heaven approved invitation to access the divine via the statue and the intercessor it represents. Thus Damião's statue's amplified monumentality not only makes the monument into an object of civic pride for Guarabira, but serves as a spiritual focal point for the community as well. Nevertheless, if the amplified monumentality of Damião's statue is designed to instill in the viewer a sense of pride and spirituality, it is also designed to endow the statue with an iconic uniqueness that the city's leaders hope will translate into increased visitation to the statue and consequently additional revenue for the city (Figure 13, 14, 15). According to one Brazilian journalist, monuments such as Frei Damião's statue in Guarabira have created "spiritual phenomenon that has a large economic base. Little Northeastern cities [frequently] cultivate a mystic appeal to encourage industry…[And often] the symbols of these new holy cities are monumental images of concrete."[52]

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[51] Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Boston: MIT Press, 1998), 186.

[52] While the formal qualities and the height of Frei Damião's and Padre Cicero's statues serve to reinforce the connections between the Padre and the Friar, as

noted, Frei Damião's statue and other large statues throughout the Northeast were not intended merely to copy Cicero's memorial but were designed to "directly rival the cult of Padre Cicero" and the economic benefits it brought to Juazero. Soon after construction of the statue began, Guarabira's merchants began to respond to this new monumental statue and prepared to take advantage of the economic benefits presented by the city's newly established status as a pilgrimage center. As a recent newspaper commented, many of the region's pilgrimages are "rooted in religion, but present a great economic potential...small towns are able to tap into their mystic sensibility to stimulate the micro industries of faith: makers of candles, gesso images, religious images, and sightseeing tours." Hoping to associate themselves with the statue and therefore attract its pilgrims into their stores, many local merchants in Guarabira began to offer such souvenirs of the memorial and of Frei Damião himself. For more information see Mederos, http://www.clippingexpress.com.br/noticias_justica.php?id=28544.

FREI DAMIÃO'S MEMORIAL AS A SPIRITUAL CENTER AND PILGRIMAGE DESTINATION

Long before Guarabira completed its Frei Damião memorial, thousands of pilgrims began to travel to the city to see the monument under construction.[53] Due to the interest shown in the statue, Guarabira's diocese assisted in organizing a series of eight pre-dedicatory pilgrimages to accommodate the crowds.[54] That the statue attracted pilgrims, even in an incomplete state, suggests its sacrosanct power did not depend on its level of completion or even its accurate capturing of the friar's likeness (many pilgrims came to see the statue even before it had a head). Instead, regard for

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[53] While exact figures recording the number of pilgrims who participated in the pilgrimages to Guarabira prove illusive, articles state that the seventh pilgrimage to Frei Damião's statue in Guarabira (held on October 28, 2003 and was the last pilgrimage to be held before the monument's dedication) attracted twenty-five thousand people and was, in the words of Monsignor Nicodemus, one of the city's priests, "a true march of faith, not merely a simple walkabout…" For more information see "Romaria atria 25 Mil Pessoas." Paraíba.com.br, João Pessoa, October 28, 2003 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.com.br/noticia.shtml?1710; Internet; accessed on September 4, 2005.

[54] The eighth pilgrimage occurred during the week in which Frei Damião's memorial was dedicated in Guarabira. For more information regarding these pilgrimages see "Governador participa de romaria e inaugura memorial Frei Damião." *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 17, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=36&noticia=2828; Internet; accessed on June 22, 2005.

the statue as a holy object was primarily created through its explicit association with Frei Damião, whose position in the minds of his Northeastern followers was transformed from that of earthly prophet to heavenly intercessor upon his death in 1997. The statue's additional association with rich Northeastern traditions also contributed to the statue's impact and reception, and helped to make it an important pilgrimage destination with Northeasterners within a short period of time.

While Guarabira's Frei Damião's statue commemorates the friar and his life's work, it is the friar's present role as a heavenly intercessor that the statue most emphasizes in its function as an object of devotion and a pilgrimage destination. In part, it is this intercessory role that attracts many of the pilgrims to the friar's statues, many of which they consider to be miraculous in and of themselves. Frei Damião was never regarded as 'of the world,' even during his life, and perhaps for this reason many consider many of the various other statues of Frei Damião which are scattered throughout the Northeast as being as otherworldly as the friar himself. Underscoring this otherworldliness are reports of the miracles that many of Frei Damião's statues are credited with 'performing.' One stylized concrete statue of Damião erected in 1976 in the small Paraíbian town of São José da Lagoa Tapada reportedly began to cry miraculously. According to the folk poet Manoel Caboelo e Silva, pilgrims from distant towns and cities came to see the statue weep, to "bathe their faces" in its tears,

and be healed of their physical and spiritual ailments in the process.[55] The highly realistic life-sized depiction of the dead Frei Damião commissioned by the Centro de Traduções Nordestinas (CNT) in São Paulo, also gained a reputation as a miraculous image and consequently began to attract pilgrims (Figure 16, 17). The CNT statue's reputation as a miracle-working object eventually became so widespread that several of Guarabira's religious leaders asked that the statue be exhibited in Guarabira for a time. While in Guarabira, the statue was seen by thousands, and drew a great deal of attention to the city's own rising statue of the friar.[56]

Even though Guarabira only recently completed its Frei Damião statue, the thousands of pilgrims who have come to see the statue indicate that Guarabira's monument, like other Frei Damião statues, has established, at least in the minds of many of those it attracts, a reputation as a sacred, if not a miraculous, image. Clearly, the statue's association with Frei Damião contributes to this reputation. As a representation of the friar, Guarabira's statue serves as a mediator between the living

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[55] Manoel Caboclo e Silva, *Os Milagres da Estátua do Frade Frei Damião*, (Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará: Juizo do Ano, 1977), 1-5. Also see Maior, 39.

[55] The strong impact the CNT Frei Damião statue made on Guarabira during the period it was shown in the city (July 7-14, 2003) is suggested by the image prominently displayed on one of Guarabira's official Frei Damião Memorial brochures, which shows CNT's Damião statue dramatically superimposed over Guarabira's own Frei Damião monument. This overlay not only suggests a close relationship between CNT's miraculous statue and Guarabira's own Damião memorial, but also suggests that the two statues receive the same spiritual authority and power from the same source—namely Frei Damião, himself. See figures 15 and 16.

pilgrim and the now deceased friar who himself serves as a mediator between heaven and earth. Additionally, the statue's association with the Northeast region's rich pilgrimage traditions, as well as other well-known Brazilian pilgrimage sites, contributes to the statue's sacred and miraculous status. By calling Guarabira's statue a destination for pilgrims and by linking it with the pilgrimage traditions of other Northeastern shrines, such as Padre Cícero's monument, Guarabira's political and religious leaders have added layers of meaning, implication, and expectation to the experience of visiting Frei Damião's memorial.[57] Not only does this linkage contribute to the pilgrims' experience as they travel to and spend time in Guarabira, but it also further validates and perpetuates many of the region's age-old religious traditions (such as the pilgrimage) in the process.

The idea of the pilgrimage journey, frequently involving an often uncomfortable and difficult trek to a site closely associated with a particular holy figure, was brought to Brazil during the country's colonial era by Portuguese colonists who established new pilgrimage routes in Brazil based largely on Old World

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[57] There is currently an effort to link Frei Damião's statue and consequently his memory to another itinerant nineteenth century preacher, Padre Ibiapina. A new pilgrimage route snaking through the Brejo and following "The Steps of Padre Ibiapina" is being constructed by government leaders on both the state and local level. While this route principally commemorates Padre Ibiapina, Frei Damião's statue marks the pilgrimage route's starting point. For more information see "Roteiro de fé no Brejo da Paraíba," *Diario de Pernambuco*, Recife, March 31, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.pernambuco.com/diario/2004/03/31/viagem1_4.html; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005.

pilgrimage models. [58] As in Portugal, these and other Brazilian pilgrimage destinations frequently centered on rural shrines that not only celebrated a particular saint, but also the communities through which these routes passed, by encapsulating the community's history and acting as a primary focus of its energies.[59] Through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries popular religious movements and beliefs led to the development of several pilgrimage centers or communities within Brazil, such as Rio de Janeiro's Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Penha or the Sanctuaries of the Serra da Piedade in the mountainous regions of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerias.[60]

While the pilgrimage has long been a part of the religious culture and history of Brazil's Northeast communities, the importance of the pilgrimage increased considerably from the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth centuries when entire cities, such as Juazeiro, were transformed into devotional centers. However, unlike their counterpart Old World communities that largely focused their pilgrimages on statues or images of holy figures from antiquity, this handful of cities attracted pilgrims anxious to see the *living* prophets, such as Padre Cicero, who sanctified the

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[58] Pierre Sanchis, "The Portuguese Romarias," in *Saints and Their Cults*, ed. Steven Wilson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 261-3.

[59] Sanchis, 263-4

[60] Riolando Azzi, *O Catolicismo Popular no Brasil*, (Petropolis: Editora Vozes Ltda, 1978), 73-75.

cities in which they dwelt.[61] While the first pilgrims to Juazeiro came to see Padre Cicero, eventually the city's church and the padre's house became pilgrimage destinations in their own right, as did the city of Juazeiro itself which was sanctified through its association with the padre.[62]

Unlike Juazeiro or other pilgrimage centers in the Northeast whose histories are largely represented by their pilgrimage memorials, Guarabira's memorial is a new addition to a city whose history and reputation was only especially connected with Frei Damião since the city began constructing its Frei Damião Memorial in 2000. However, the many pilgrimages which brought thousands of visitors to the Damião statue even before its dedication suggests the rapidity with which Guarabira's statue became regarded as a genuine object of devotion and the city as a focal point of the friar's cult. Many of the thousands of devotees who participated in the initial pilgrimages to Frei Damião's monument came from Guarabira and the surrounding environs, but others traveled from locales as distant as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, arriving in Guarabira after spending several uncomfortable hours, if not days, traveling in overstuffed buses, the open beds of trucks, or even on foot under the broiling Northeastern sun. Paying for past misdeeds through the discomfort of the

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[61] See Gross, 370-1 and Robert M. Levine, "'Mud Hut Jerusalem': Canudos Revisited," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (August, 1988), 525-572.

[62] Luciano N. Da Costa e Silva and Myrtis De Carvalho, *Padre Cícero: O Apóstolo do Juazeiro*, (São Paulo: Nova Época Editorial LTDA, 1976) 37, 46.

journey, these pilgrims reached Guarabira spiritually prepared for the renewal they hoped to receive during the time they spent in the city and at Frei Damião's memorial.[63]

According to various reports regarding the initial pilgrimages to Frei Damião's monument, upon arriving in Guarabira after their often lengthy journey, many pilgrims started their procession towards the monument in the city's central district with a visit to Guarabira's Cathedral of Our Lady of Light (Nossa Senhora da Luz) where the pilgrims spiritually prepared themselves to visit Frei Damião's monument by attending a mass, confessing to a priest, or saying personal prayers asking for guidance, aid, or forgiveness (Figure 18).[64] After leaving the church, the pilgrims then journeyed towards the memorial itself by ascending a steep via sacra lined with life-sized sculpture groups depicting the fifteen Stations of the Cross (Figure 19, 20). While Guarabira's sculpture groups are similar to the Station of the Cross sculpture

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[63] While Frei Damião's statue provides the major incentive to gather the people and bring them to Guarabira, the large numbers of pilgrims who do gather provides another incentive for people to come to the city and participate in the pilgrimage. As Pierre Sanchis wrote in his article *The Portuguese Romaria*, every pilgrimage "...is a gathering, an encounter, a time of life in common, comprising either recurrent exchanges of visits, or a 'multiconvergence' expressive of regional unity...a setting aside of political barriers and a fleeting manifestation of fraternization. At all levels, these 'reunions' are an opportunity of all kinds of exchange: cultural, commercial, and agonistic." For more information see Sanchis, 263.

[64] "Guarabira inaugura Memorial de Frei Damião," *Portal Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.portalparaiba.com/site/noticias.php?id=725; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005.

groups that line the via sacra leading to Padre Cicero's memorial,[65] they also recall the older colonial tradition of sacra montes such as that constructed for pilgrimages during the closing years of the eighteenth century in Congonhas, Minas Gerais (Figure 21).[66] By incorporating the via sacra into Guarabira's Frei Damião memorial, the memorial's planners not only created further legitimizing associations that connect Damião's memorial to Padre Cicero's memorial in Juazero, but it also connects Damião's

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[65] In her rich description of the founding of Santa Brígida, the "new Jerusalem" constructed by the followers of the messianic leader Pedro Batista, the anthropologist Patricia Pessar mentions that Santa Brígida maintained its own Stations of the Cross in, and in the process "challenged Juazeiro—with its own sacred hillside and Stations of the Cross—as the most holy, and apposite, home for God's chosen." For more information see Patricia Pessar, *From Fanatics to Folk: Brazilian Millenarianism and Popular Culture*, (Durham; Duke University Press, 2004), 99.

[66] In Congonhas, pilgrims ascend a steep staircase or hill passing statues depicting the Stations of the Cross as they travel towards a large church at the top of the hill. Through the travels, the depictions of the suffering Christ are echoed in the pilgrims' own physical exertion. After "suffering" physically in their efforts to reach the crest of the hill, the pilgrims are rewarded for their exertion by reaching the church which serves as a metaphor for salvation which is only attainable through suffering, but suffering that is recompensed at the journey's end. In the case of Congonhas, the concept of increasing sacredness is reinforced as the pilgrims enter the church and pass the depictions of the Stations of the Cross or symbols of Christ's passion that line the walls and decorate the ceiling of the church's nave. Once again, the pilgrims are rewarded for their persistence when they reach the high alter and stand at the holiest place in the church where an image representing the crucified Christ or an enshrined Virgin Mary is displayed. In the case of Frei Damião's statue, however, it is not a church nor a high alter that rewards pilgrims for their efforts to climb the sacra monte and pass the Stations of the Cross—instead, it is Frei Damião's colossus that rewards the pilgrims and provides them with a chance to interact with the sacred. The sculptures of the Stations of the Cross merely emphasize the journey one takes to reach greater spirituality.

memorial to older pilgrimage customs which are themselves endowed with the weight of pilgrimage history and tradition.[67]

As in Congonhas and other historic pilgrimage sites, Guarabira's Frei Damião Memorial recompenses the pilgrim who makes the physical effort to ascend the steep via sacra with a spiritual reward.[68] However, this reward does not come in the form of a pilgrimage church like it is at Congonhas, or a grotto, spring, or shrine commonly found at other Catholic devotional sites. Instead it is the colossal statue of Frei Damião that compensates the pilgrims and provides them with the opportunity to interact with the sacred.[69] Pilgrims do not need to wait until they reach the top to begin to interact with the statue, however, in as much as the emotional and visual

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[67] "The reverence due to [tradition] increases from generation to generation. The tradition [itself] finally becomes holy and inspires awe." Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human,* second edition, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 96.

[68] For more information on the link between pilgrimage and nature see Victor Homo, "Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism," in *From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*, ed. William H. Swatos, Jr. and Luigi Tomasi, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 10-13.

[69] The statues that make up the Stations of the Cross invite interaction themselves. As they travel up the via sacra, pilgrims often personally engage the figures that compose the Station of the Cross by leaving offerings near the statues that portray Christ, Mary, and the saints, while abusing and chipping the statues which depict the Roman solders that are also included in the groupings. Such exchanges seem to indicate that in the minds of many pilgrims the statues that play a part in the Station of the Cross narrative do not remain merely innate, molded concrete forms but are endowed with a certain realism that allows the pilgrim to engage these statues in a physical and emotional dialogue. "Visitação ao Memorial Frei Damião cresce nos finais de semana," *Brejo.Com*, Guarabira, March 10, 2005, [on-line article] available from: http://www.brejo.com/home/wmview.php?ArtID=1381; Internet; accessed on

engagement between the statue and the pilgrims begins well before the pilgrim gets near the statue itself.

As mentioned, Frei Damião's statue is positioned to appear as if extending his gaze, as well as a cross, out towards Guarabira as if in the process of blessing both the city and the approaching pilgrim (Figure 22, 23). As pilgrims progress up the via sacra and Damião's face comes into focus, the statue's eyes, positioned as if looking slightly downward at the approaching pilgrims, engage the pilgrim's attention and offer them the opportunity to feel as if the friar's gaze and blessing is being personally directed at them. While Frei Damião was often depicted in the region's poetry and oral tradition as a reserved and rancorous missionary who punished those that did not follow his counsel,[70] the friar's giant statue, with its kindly gaze and gesture of blessing, endows the statue with a tone that is more welcoming than foreboding.[71] As the tone of Frei Damião's statue is friendly, it encourages the approaching pilgrim to respond to it as if it were a familiar and intimate friend.[72] While the statue appears

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June 24, 2005. This same chipping and abusing of Roman soldiers also takes place in Juazero. For more information see Slater, 68.

[70] In his book, *Frei Damião e os Impasses da Religão Popular*, Abdalaziz de Moura writes that the vast majority of miracles for which Frei Damião is given responsibility are miracles of punishment metered out to those who disobeyed or mocked the friar in some way. For more information, see de Moura, 22.

[71] Many of the songs and poems written about Frei Damião concentrated on the miraculous punishments he levied on sinners. For more information see Maior, 36-42 and Moura, 21-4.

[72] "He appears to be smiling when he looks at me," stated Alexandrina Josefa dos Santos during her visit to a statue of Frei Damião in Receife, modeled along similar lines as the statue of the friar found in Guarabira. See Ana Luiza Cardoso, "O

anxious to welcome the pilgrim, the pilgrim is also anxious to feel welcomed, and thus responds to the statue accordingly. As the art historian David Freedberg wrote, Christians "…spontaneously and inexorably seek to invest representation with the marks of the familiar...[thus explaining] why legends about miracle-working images so frequently have at their center images with traits or behavioral predispositions that are self-consciously low-level, intimate, and every day."[73]

While the concrete statue's overwhelming mass and size emphasizes its inanimate materiality, its approachable, "every-day" appearance as well as the belief that it encapsulates or connects somehow with Frei Damião's 'essence' or 'spirit' helps to bring the statue to life in the mind of the pilgrim. While Frei Damião's monument acquires some of its power in part through its association with the Catholic Church and its traditions, this power gained through its connection with the church is formal and impersonal in nature. Rather, it is the personal emotions Frei Damião's statue arises that bring it to life in the eyes of the worshiper. Through evoking personal memories, ideas, and feelings, Frei Damião's statue can create in the worshippers' mind the desire to "improve" themselves and feel healing comfort as a

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novo santo do Nordeste," *Tribuna do Norte*, Natal, March 24, 2002, [on-line article] available from: www.tribunadonorte.com.br/anteriores/020324/natal/natal1.html; Internet; accessed on June 3, 2005

[73] David Freedberg , *The Power of Image: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 191.

result.[74] In the process, Damião's statue seemingly bridges the divide between the human and the divine and makes heaven seem closer and more aware. The assurance given by the Damião statue's smiling face and eyes encourages the pilgrim to approach the friar himself through his statue on an emotional and spiritual level.[75] The comforting statue seems to reassure pilgrims that the friar, as their heavenly intercessor, is listening and will work to fulfill their needs and answer their prayers.

Although Frei Damião's statue's facial and other features encourage a response from the pilgrim that leads to spiritual consolation and greater resolve, as previously suggested, the statue's powerful physical presence is also an important feature of the memorial that additionally heightens its spirituality and consequently the

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[74] For more information see Colleen Mc Dannell, *Material Christianity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 25-38

[75] Eyes are a particularly important part of any image of a human, but especially in religious images designed to communicate messages of either hellfire, or alternatively, of comfort, peace, and saving grace. In regard to a Protestant image of Christ whose eyes look aslant of the viewer, Mc Dannell wrote in *Material Christianity* that "the image is less devotional because the believer's gaze does not directly meet the gaze of the divine. Christ's image serves as a mediator between the self and God. The eyes are interpreted as loving; they do not gaze down relentlessly on the believer." In the case of Frei Damião's statue, however, the eyes are meant to gaze down at the viewer, for unlike the protestant image of Christ, Frei Damião's image is meant to be a devotional object and therefore must engage the viewers' attention. However, the gaze Frei Damião's statue achieves is not relentless but is comforting. The eyes play a very important role in capturing the viewer's attention and transmitting this comforting message that encourage the viewer to respond physically and emotionally to the statue as a holy object endowed with sacred powers. For more information see Mc Dannell, 30.

pilgrim's response to the statue.[76] The Frei Damião memorial's ability to recreate the friar's physical presence is especially important to Frei Damião's devotees in as much as Damião's physical presence was so highly valued by his followers during the friar's lifetime. As one Northeastern author wrote, "to the Northeastern people, it did not matter what Frei Damião said. What was important was his presence, his gaze. His hand blessing the people…his robes, and his quick step." [77] As the Friar has "left" the

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[76] While a holy figure such as a saint can be approached through worshippers' thoughts and prayers, the immediate physicality of the saint's image, as it appears in a reproduced statue or print, makes the saint's presence seem particularly imminent and approachable through the living senses of touch and sight. "He once lived like us, and now he is a saint to everyone. Thank heavens I have him in my house" said a devotee of Frei Damião, Antonia Ancito da Silva, as she gingerly handled an image of the friar she keeps in her home. Through her image of Frei Damião, Antonia can feel Frei Damião's spiritual presence in her household, just as Frei Damião is always 'felt' in Guarabira as a result of the city's omnipresent memorial to the friar whose height and location on a hill allows it to be seen from most of Guarabira's neighborhoods. See Anna Luiza Cardoso, "O Novo Santo do Nordeste," *Tribuna do Norte*, Natal, March 24, 2003, [on-line article] available from: www.tribunadonorte.com.br/anteriores/020324/natal/natal1.html; Internet, accessed on August 25, 2005.

[77] For quotation see Silva, unpaginated book. After watching Damião preach to the people of one Northeastern town, the American anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes suggested that Damião seemed to his followers to be a type of living relic—a physical, earthly connection to the spiritual and unearthly. "…few seemed to pay attention to the friar's words…Frei Damião, unlike themselves, was not of this world, and his words were naturally strange and irrelevant.....[Instead], the power of Frei Damião...resided in his own person, his strange little, hunchbacked corporeal self...[People] would...tug affectionately on the friar's brown robe or pat his swollen and gnarled bare feet. But, most of all, they liked to approach him from behind and pat the top of his head, for that was considered very lucky, indeed." For more information see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 521.

Northeast,[78] many of his devotees now see his various cement statues as the best way to reach the spiritual power they once accessed by directly touching his body and standing in his living presence. Since Guarabira's statue is physically the largest likeness of Frei Damião in the world, a pilgrim who visits this monument feels that the statue possesses a correspondingly large share of the Friar's spiritual presence as well.[79]

As previously stated, the size of Frei Damião's statue serves to connect the statue to Padre Cícero's colossus statue, and other giant and well-known statues of religious figures in the region. However, the size of Damião's statue also serves to impress the pilgrims and fill them with a "strengthened belief in what [the statue] can achieve,"[80] by suggesting that the statue is connected to heaven and the otherworldly. As Susan Stewart notes in her book, *On Longing*, "...the gigantic [is often] found at the origin of public and natural history...and frequently becomes a figure on the interface between the natural and the human." [81] In the eyes of the religious pilgrim,

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[78] Northeastern Brazilians rarely refer to Padre Cicero or other prophets as dead. Instead they say they "moved" (mudou-se), "separated" (separou-se), or "left" (saiu) and thus make it seem as if the prophet could easily return at any time. For more information see Slater, 53.

[79] Lena Toscano, Guarabira resident, interview by author, 22 February, 2005, Wilmington Delaware, notes taken.

[80] Freedberg, 109.

[81] Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham; Duke University Press, 1993), 71.

however, Frei Damião's gigantic monument seemingly intends to reach beyond the temporality of the natural realm and extend into the mystical realm of the supernatural, in the process becoming a figure on the interface between the human and the divine.

A museum and a shrine, which stand on the statue's grounds, further serve to reinforce Frei Damião's own position as both a human and a divine figure that has the desire, the power, and the ability to help the pilgrim who visits them. The museum, housed in the base of Frei Damião's statue, contains a variety of personal items he used throughout his life.[82] As the statue's visitors pass through this assemblage of Frei Damião's possessions immediately before ascending to view the statue itself, the pilgrims' interpretation of these objects consequently shapes how pilgrims interpret his statue. These personal items are displayed in cases as if they are powerful relics; indeed, many pilgrims see them as having acquired power through their previous contact with Frei Damião's living body.[83] Nevertheless, these common, every-day

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[82] "Memorial de Frei Damião será exposto em São Paulo," *Governo da Paraíba*, João Pessoa, December 5, 2005, [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.pb.gov.br/noticias/noticia_secom.jsp?canal=22&noticia=7963; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005 and "50 mil pessoas deve participar da inauguração do memorial de Frei Damião," *O Norte*, João Pessoa, December 17, 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.db.com.br/paraiba/?40392; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005.

[83] During Frei Damião's life, the friar's personal items were often treated as powerful and sacred objects that were regarded as extensions of his corporeal self and consequently his heavenly power. The friar's devotees would tear off pieces of his robe or fight over the scraps of food he left on his plate. Many people believed that the things he touched inherited his powers and spirituality, and could produce miracles

objects also emphasize Frei Damião's humanness and suggest to the pilgrim that Frei Damião, while saintly, still understands and sympathizes with the human condition even from his exalted position. As one leaves the museum to view Frei Damião's statue, the pilgrim's impressions of the friar are of a kindly and once-human figure whose saintliness in life now endows him in death with full access to heaven's powers. The fact that pilgrims can access these powers is in part due to the friar's continued concern for their welfare and understanding of their earthly travails.

Like the first museum in the base of the statue, the shrine found on the statue's grounds also highlights Frei Damião's role as an intercessor with the power and desire to provide for pilgrims' needs.[84] This shrine is filled with offerings, commonly called ex-votos, brought to the statue by pilgrims and offered to Frei Damião. Such offerings, as are often left at other religious shrines all over Brazil, are typically presented in fulfillment of an agreement or vow which, in a time of need, an individual can make with a holy person (Figure 24).[85] When the requested blessing is received from the saintly figure, the blessing's recipient is then obliged to thank his or her benefactor by

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just like the friar himself. As one author has written, "the body image is capable of accommodating and incorporating...anything that comes into contact with the surface of the body...objects which were once connected with the body always retain something of the quality of the body image in them." See Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche,* (New York: International Universities Press, 1978), 213.

[84] "50 mil pessoas deve participar da inauguração do memorial de Frei Damião," *O Norte*, João Pessoa, December 17, 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.db.com.br/paraiba/?40392; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005.

[85] Sanchis, 267.

visiting and making an offering in the benefactor's "presence"—either at the place where the benefactor's relics are kept, a shrine that the benefactor is known to have visited, or at a statue that depicts and is dedicated to the benefactor to whom the vow is owed.[86] Many of the ex-votos brought in by pilgrims are carvings of different body parts that the friar has helped to heal, or images of events in which the friar miraculously interceded. These carvings and images are hung on the museum's wall and offer visual proof of the friar's intercessory powers and concern for the human welfare of his followers.

Dedicating an ex-voto to the friar, and in the process, repaying a promise to Frei Damião is, for many, the culmination of the pilgrimage experience. By making a public statement about their personal struggles, promises, and faith through the object they offer as an ex-voto, pilgrims at Frei Damião's memorial publicly confirm their conviction in and personal connection to the friar. Additionally, the pilgrims not only nourish their own faith and spirituality through the process of offering ex-votos, but

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[86] A vow can not fully be repaid outside this presence, and an unpaid vow can bring duress upon the head of the debtor. Thus, one can understand the distress felt recently by a Northeastern farmer, Vincente Pereira da Silva of Potengi, Cera, who, when realizing that a statue of Frei Damião that stood near his house had been removed from its familiar spot, expressed extreme frustration and helplessness. After confirming that "Frei Damião was the Protector of Potengi's citizens," Vicente da Silva stated, "I still have a vow with Frei Damião that I need to fulfill. Now I don't have a place to fulfill my promise." According to da Silva, "the return of the statue to its old spot is demanded by the citizens of Potengi." For more information, see "Retirada de Estátua de Frei Damião Gera Polêmica em Município Cearense (Potengi Ceará)," *No Olhar,* January 4, 2004 [on-line article] available from: http://www.catolicanet.com.br/noticias/noticias_integra.asp?cod=1&codigo_noticias=30424&edtoria=1; Internet; accessed 15 March, 2005.

they nourish and are nourished by the faith of others whose own offerings contribute to the expressed spirituality of the experience. Like the pilgrims' ex-votos, Frei Damião's memorial provides a way for people, individually and collectively, to express their devotion to Frei Damião through an object, namely the statue of Frei Damião itself. This not only has made the statue a focus of faith, but it has also turned it into a repository of local traditions and culture, as well as into an important civic and regional symbol. Guarabira's Frei Damião statue was built with the "intention of placing Guarabira in the middle of pilgrimage routes [in the Northeast],"[87] and has made Guarabira into a regional holy city by providing pilgrims with "a new alternative to religious tourism in Paraíba's Brejo"[88] and a new way to fortify their spirituality, their faith in Frei Damião, and their confidence in heaven's ability to intercede in their lives.

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[87] Ana Luiza Cardoso, "O Novo Santo do Nordeste," *Tribuna do Norte*, Natal, March 24, 2002, [on-line article] available from: http://www.tribunadonorte.com.br/anteriores/020324/natal/natal1/html; Internet; accessed on June 18, 2005.

[88] "Estátua de Frei Damião e a terceira maior do Brasil." O Norte, João Pessoa, December 25, 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.onorte.com.br/paraiba/?40711; Internet: accessed on July 20, 2005.

FREI DAMIÃO'S MEMORIAL AS A LOCAL AND REGIONAL SYMBOL

A recent article in the Northeastern newspaper, *O Diario de Pernambuco* reported on a pilgrimage which took place several hundred miles from Guarabira, in the Northeastern city of São Joaquim do Monte. At the highest point of the city near a shrine founded by Frei Damião himself, the city constructed a sixteen and a half foot statue of the friar which has became the focus of an annual pilgrimage involving as many as seventy thousand people from throughout the Northeast region. In response to the enthusiastic crowds that gathered to participate in this pilgrimage, the padre of São Joaquim do Monte, Antonio Filho proudly stated that "today we can affirm that Frei Damião is to Sao Joaquim do Monte as Padre Cicero Romao is to Juazero do Norte…" The padre's sentiments were echoed by a pilgrim, Maria da Conceção, who stated "...that the city should change its name to Frei Damião…"as she wept by the side of a bed where the friar had slept during his visits to São Joaquim. Impressed by the large crowd that gathered for the pilgrimage, a bishop visiting from a neighboring city stated that the events led him to believe that "Frei Damião was a Northeast Brazilian, even though he was born in Italy."[89]

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[89] Quotes and information in paragraph taken from André Duarte, "Romaria de Frei Damião com 70 mil fiéis," *Diario de Pernambuco,* Recife, March 3, 2004, [on-line article] available from; http://www.pernambuco.com/diario/2004/09/03/interior1_0.html; Internet; accessed on June 23, 2005.

While highlighting São Joaquim do Monte's Frei Damião pilgrimage, this report also illustrates the larger way in which Frei Damião's growing popularity in Brazil's Northeast has turned the friar from a self-professed "humble servant" into a symbol of the region, its religion, and its people. The article also illustrates the challenges Guarabira faces in attempting to make itself into the center of Damião's cult in light of the competition it faces from other cities in the region who are trying to do the same. While this competition underscores Frei Damião's popularity in the region, it also illustrates the important role that images such as Frei Damião's memorial play in shaping not only the friar's popular identity but also the identity of the cities, like Guarabira, who construct monuments in the Friar's name.

In their efforts to link their city's image to Frei Damião's own image, Guarabira's leaders have attempted to make the city's connection with the friar stronger by asserting itself as the city which Frei Damião loved most, and suggesting simultaneously that if Damião's presence could be felt anywhere, it would be in Guarabira "the rightful hub of Damião's cult and the rightful home of his most important monument."[90] While simultaneously attempting to further the reputation of their own statue of Damião as a genuine spiritual icon and likewise their own city as the genuine center of all things Damião, Guarabira's leaders have also been active in

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[90] Notes taken during an interview with Lena Toscano, Guarabira resident, interview by author, 22 February, 2005, Wilmington.

further developing Damião's reputation as a genuine Catholic saint. Such efforts are notable in the very design of Guarabira's statue of the friar, which incorporates several prominent symbols of Catholicism, such as the cross, the bible, and the rosary. These easily understood symbols not only serve to legitimize the statue but also legitimize Frei Damião's associations with the Catholic Church—suggesting that Frei Damião is officially and fully accepted by that Church as a holy figure with saintly mediating powers. In 2003, the Archdiocese of Olinda and Recife officially opened the canonization process with a solemn mass held on May 31, 2003, the sixth year anniversary of Frei Damião's death.[91] While raising funds for the process has proven difficult, and attempts to beatify Frei Damião have thus far been refused by the Vatican, several local and regional dioceses, including Guarabira's own, support Damião's canonization and continue to work to achieve recognition of his official

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[91] The ecclesiastical tribunal in charge of furthering Frei Damião's canonization includes, among other people, Monsenhor Edvaldo Bezerra of the Arquiciocese de Olinda e Recife, and Frei Francisco Fernando da Silva, Frei Damião's missionary companion of more than twenty years. This tribunal will hear testimonies regarding Frei Damião's life, miracles, and general saintliness. Once reports are written regarding these testimonies, they will be sent to the Vatican to be analyzed by the Theological Commission and the Congregation of Priests, Bishops, and Cardinals as well as church appointed doctors, and scientists who determine if the submitted "miracles" can be explained through earthly means. The results of the commission are sent to the Pope who makes the final decision to award the sainthood. This is an expensive process that can cost the sponsoring committee or diocese thousands of dollars. For more information on Frei Damião's beatification process see "Frei Damião perto de virar santo," *CatolicaNet*, Recife, January 30, 2003 [on-line article] available from: http://www.catolicanet.com.br/noticias/opniao/cadastro.asp?codigo_noticias=21948&edtoria=1; Internet; accessed on September 5, 2005.

sainthood.[92] In the meantime, however, as one Northeastern author wrote, "we will canonize him through our faith in his miracles...no one is better qualified than the Northeastern people to make [Frei Damião's] sainthood official."[93]

In addition to their efforts to improve Damião's status on the national and international level through canonization and other means, both Guarabira's political and ecclesiastical communities have joined forces on the local level to enhance Damião's renown, and concurrently the city's own reputation among the people of the Northeast. One way they have attempted to bring about this enhancement is through the further embellishment of their statue's complex in Guarabira, to which they soon hope to add two new chapels near the base of Damião's statue on the Serra do Jurema for the benefit of pilgrims. In addition to these physical additions, Guarabira's leaders have also aided in planning and organizing special masses and passion plays that are held on the grounds of the memorial itself, and have further petitioned the Convent of São Félix de Cantalice in Recife, the convent in which Damião is currently buried, for the Friar's remains.[94] While much of this has been done in the name of improving the

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[92] For more information see Souto Maior, 70-72.

[93] Silva, unpaginated book.

[94] Guarabira's leaders realize that their statue of Frei Damião will not be equal with Padre Cicero's in Juazero until they receive Frei Damião's remains. In an interview with the newspaper Tribuna do Norte, monsignor Jose Nicodemus de Sousa of Guarabira stated "I will not say that it [Guarabira's Frei Damião Memorial] is equal with [Padre Cicero's Memorial in] Juazero. It would be, if Frei Damião was buried in our memorial. As he is not, it is impossible." For more information see Cardoso, [on-line article] available from:

spiritual experience of the Guarabira pilgrim, these efforts can also be read as an attempt to keep up with the rising economic and spiritual competition Guarabira faces as they reconstruct their image as a center of Frei Damião's cult. In an attempt to become centers of Frei Damião's cult themselves, cities such as the previously mentioned São Joaquim do Monte, as well as Potengi or Araraipe, both in the state of Ceará have, like Guarabira, constructed their own large statues of Frei Damião. Additional competition for centrality is coming from cities such as Caruaru, Pernambuco which are joining Guarabira in petitioning the Convent of Sao Felix for Frei Damião's remains in the hopes of becoming his final resting place.[95]

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http://www.tribunadonorte.com.br/anteriores/020324/natal/natal1/html; Internet; accessed on June 24, 2005. Also see "Veriador de Guarabira quer relocar restos mortais de Frei Damião," *Paraíba.Com*, João Pessoa, March 23, 2005, [on-line article] available from: http://www.paraiba.com.br/noticia.shtml?11598 23/03/2005 as 16:33; Internet; accessed on July 10, 2005.

[95] Sao Joaquim do Monte in the state of Pernambuco, or the city of Araraipe in the Brazilian state of Cerá, both of which have their own large statues of Frei Damião designed to attract pilgrims. For more information on the statue in Araraipe see "Araripe recebe devotos de Frei Damião," *O Povo,* Fortaleza, November 23, 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.noolhar.com/opovo/ceara/67053.html; Internet; accessed on July 26, 2005. For more information on the statue in São Joaquim do Monte see André Duarte, "Romaira de Frei Damião com 70 mil Fiéis," *Diario de Pernambuco*, Receife, August 30, 2004, [on-line article] available from: http://www.pernambuco.com/diario/2004/09/03/interior1_0.html; Internet; accessed on July 26, 2005. For more information on the statue in Caruraru see "Restos mortais de frei Damião devem ir para Caruaru," *Diario de Pernambuco,* Receife, October 7, 2003, [on-line article] available from: http://www.jornalexpress.com.br/noticias/detalhes.php?id_jornal=1001&id_noticia=835; Internet; accessed on June 17, 2005.

The level of involvement that both the Brazilian Catholic Church and the Brazilian government have taken in developing pilgrimage sites throughout the Northeast indicate a high level of support for the region's popular religious traditions. While this is undoubtedly due to many factors, both politicians and priests feel that these traditions provide a good way to attract the attention and support of both constituents and parishioners. As one padre in Juazeiro stated, Padre Cicero has been an "antivirus" in maintaining control over evangelical churches in his area.[96] As previously indicated, however, over the past century and a half, both the church and the government in the Northeast region have more often muffled than celebrated the region's religious values and traditions; frequently besieging both the region's living "saints," such as Frei Damião and Cicero, as well as its religious images and icons (Figure 25). As physical embodiments of many of the region's traditions and values, both saint and image serve as particularly poignant and easy targets for church and government representatives to attack. According to former residents, Guarabira's own Cathedral of Our Lady of the Light was swept clean of its images as recently as the 1970s by its priests, reportedly involved with Brazil's Renovacão Popular movement,

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[96] Pastor Manuel de Lima Sousa, whose own evangelical church faces the giant statue of Padre Cicero in Juazero confirmed, "it has been more difficult to convert Catholics in the Northeast region than in other parts of Brazil." No doubt, religious leaders in Guarabira have similar hopes for their statue of Frei Damião. For more information see Larrry Rother, "No Sertão, Brasileiros fazem um caminho pedregoso para santidade," *NordesteWeb,* March 28, 2005, Juazeiro do Norte, June 17, 2005 [on-line article] available from: http://www.nordesteweb.com/not01_0305/ne_not_20050328c.htm; Internet; accessed on July 10, 2005.

who questioned the role of these images' in the religious experience of the Cathedral's parishioners.[97] However, by not only supporting but contributing to the construction of iconic statues, such as Guarabira's Frei Damião memorial, many ecclesiastical and political leaders currently use such icons to both encourage and associate themselves with the region's popular values and traditions. In doing so, these leaders not only legitimize these icons, but turn them into symbols of church and state—further entwining these images into the region's self image in the process.

[97] Notes taken during an interview with Lena Toscano, Guarabira resident, interview by author, 22 February, 2005, Wilmington.

CONCLUSIONS

Frei Damião's Memorial commemorates the friar and his work among the people of Northeastern Brazil, but the monument plays several additional roles as well. Frei Damião's Memorial serves as a tourist attraction that generates revenue and attention for Guarabira, as a spiritual focal point for thousands of pilgrims, and as a legitimizing and amplifying medium of popular Northeastern Brazilian values and traditions. Thus, Frei Damião's monument responds concurrently to a number of economic, political, cultural, and spiritual needs, and in the process, illustrates, among other things, "how images work and what they are capable of doing,…[in helping us] deal with our aspirations and expectations…[some of which] we are not convinced can wholly be fulfilled by any means on earth."[98]

As Frei Damião's monument is seen by many not as a dead but a "living" statue that recreates both the friar's image as well as his presence, one might question how the friar himself would interpret this likeness. Would the friar be offended to know that his statue represents many of Northeastern Brazil's temporal political and social affairs as well as its spiritual traditions? Or would the friar approve of his statue *because* of its ability to simultaneously represent the temporal as well as the spiritual? While it is impossible to directly answer these questions, it is clear that by

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[98] Ibid.

representing the interests of both heaven and of earth, Guarabira's Frei Damião Memorial—like Frei Damião himself—offers both temporal and spiritual comfort to many of the visitors that pilgrimage to the statue, and in the process extends the friar's mission to provide, in the words of one Northeastern poet:

A bigger hope,
And a better understanding,
For the Northeastern people.[99]

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[99] *A Verdadeira Bografia do Profeta do Nordeste*, author unknown, quoted in Costa, 30.

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FIGURES

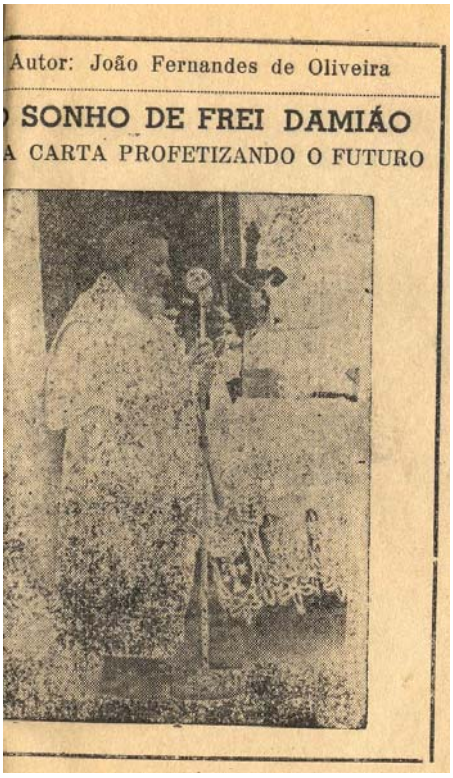

Figure 1. ***The Dream of Frei Damião and the Letter Prophesying the Future*****, date unknown. Tipografía e Folhetaria Manoel Caboclo e Silva.**

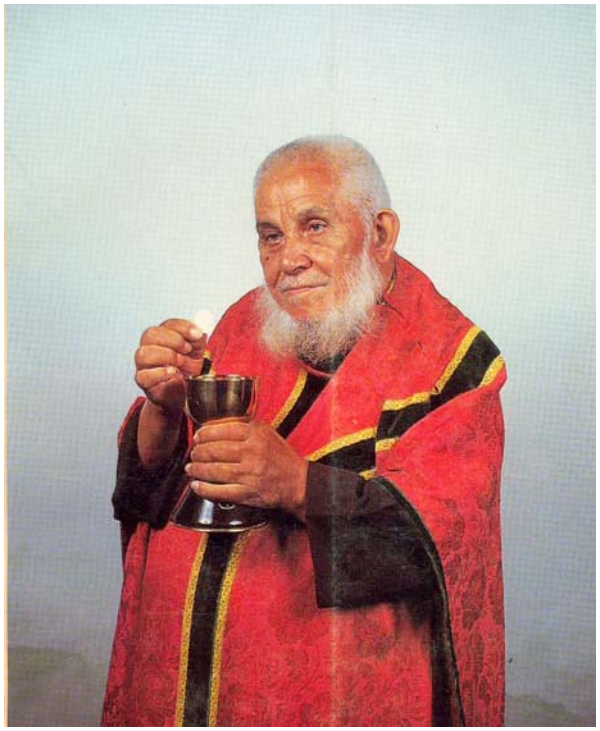

Figure 2. Frei Damião, 1983. Empresa Grafset.

Figure 3. Statue of Frei Damião in Sousa, Pernambuco, date unknown. Photographer unknown.

Figure 4. Statue of Frei Damião in Guarabira, Paraíba, 2004. Architect, Alixandre Azedo Lacerda. Photographer Gentil Filho. Brejo.Com.

Figure 5. Frei Damião Memorial Park in Guarabira, architect's model, 2004. Architect, Alexandre Azedo Lacerda. Arquivo Historico Radioamador Brasileiro.

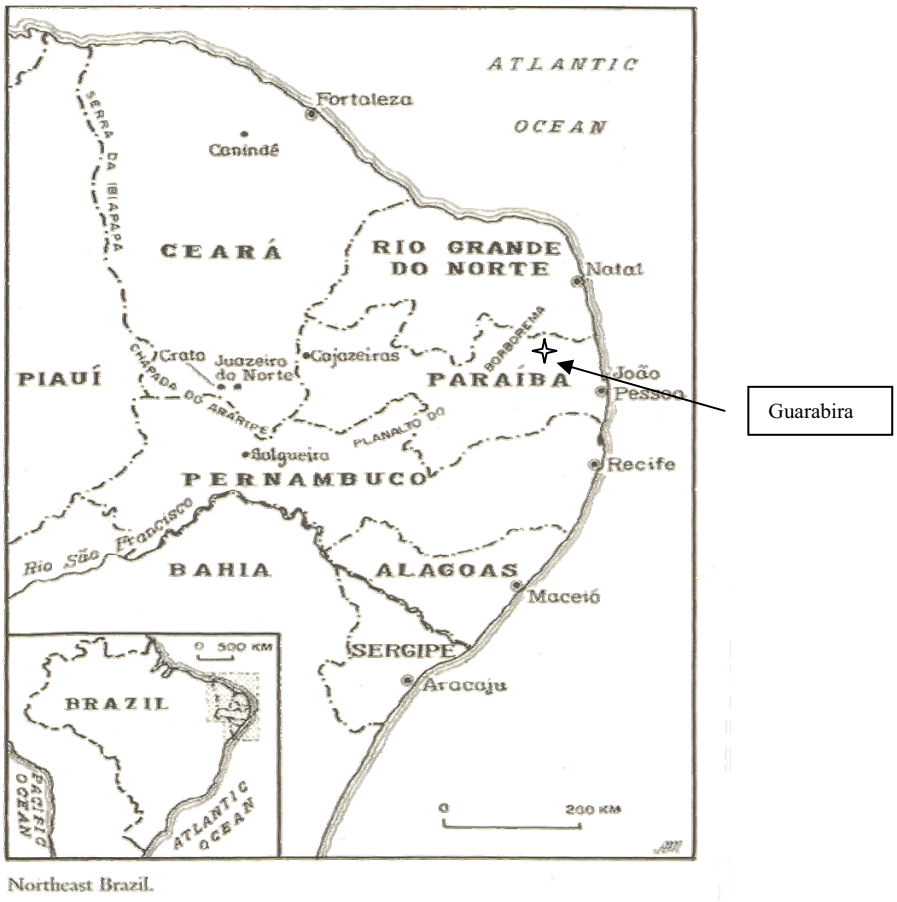

Figure 6. Map of Northeast Brazil. Illustration from Candice Slater's, *Stories on a String: Brazilian Literatura de Cordel*.

Figure 7. Padre Cicero Romão Batista, c. 1920. Photographer unknown.

Figure 8. Frei Damião, c. 1935. Photographer unknown.

Figure 9. "The Girl that Turned Into a Donkey Because She Spoke of Being Topless with Frei Damião," c. 1983. Woodblock print, J. Borges.

Figure 10. Protestant That Turned Into a Vulture Because He Wanted to Kill Frei Damião, 1990. Woodblock print, Manoel Serafim.

Figure 11. Frei Damião coffee, candles, and wine, c. 1995, Edvaldo Rodrigues.

Figure 12. Padre Cícero Memorial in Juazero, 1969. Armando Lacerda, architect. Photographer unknown.

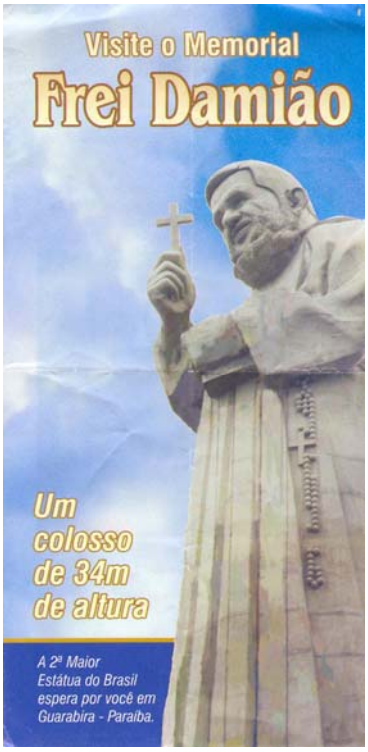

Figure 13. Brochure, Frei Damião Memorial, 2004. Prefeitura de Guarabira.

Figure 14. Brochure, Frei Damião Memorial, 2004. Prefeitura de Guarabira.

Por que em Guarabira?

Durante suas missões em todo o Nordeste, Frei Damião sempre reuniu multidões que ouviam emocionadas seus sermões. Em Guarabira, onde esteve inúmeras vezes, juntou num só dia, em 1995, mais de 80 mil seguidores, segundo dados da Policia Militar da Paraíba. A Prefeitura de Guarabira, ao construir o Memorial Frei Damião, traduziu o sentimento de reverência do nosso povo, àquele que, durante mais de 60 anos, caminhou pela região, pregando o Santo Evangelho, como verdadeiro missionário de Deus.

Léa Toscano
Prefeita de Guarabira

Cena da 6ª Romaria em 7 de julho de 2002

Medidas que impressionam:

ESTÁTUA - 22 metros de altura **PEDESTAL** - 12 metros de altura.
CABEÇA - 3m de largura por 4m de altura.
OLHO - 48x28 cm.
DA PONTA DO NARIZ PARA CADA OLHO - 90 cm de distância.
BOCA - 84cm de horizontalidade e 30 cm de abertura.
DE CADA OLHO PARA CADA ORELHA - 1,35 m de altura por 63 cm de largura.
TESTA - 84 cm de altura.
DO QUEIXO PARA O NARIZ - 1,15m de distância.
TERÇO DO CORDÃO DE SÃO FRANCISCO - 9,80 m
CONSTRUÇÃO - 436 metros cúbicos de concreto
PESO DA ESTÁTUA - 750 toneladas
ALTITUDE - 347 metros

GOVERNO DA PARAÍBA
Estado em movimento

PREFEITURA DE GUARABIRA
Governo de Todos Nós

Informações: (83) 271-4250 e 271-4351
www.guarabira.pb.gov.br

Fig. 15, Brochure, Frei Damião Memorial, 2004. Prefeitura de Guarabira.

Figure 16. Frei Damião,1997. Centro de Traduções Nordestinas, São Paulo. Photographer, Paulo Cesar do Prado.

Figure 17. Framed articles regarding the miraculous statue of Frei Damião in the Centro de Traduções Nordestinas, São Paulo. Photographer, Paulo Cesar do Prado.

Figure 18. Cathedral de Nossa Senhora da Luz and pilgrimage, Guarabira, 2004. Photographer Gentil Filho. Brejo.Com.

Figures 19 & 20. Estações da Cruz, Frei Damião Memorial, Guarabira, 2004. Photographer Gentil Filho. Brejo.Com.

Figure 21. ***Sexta Groupo do Paixão*****:** ***Cruz às Costas*****, Congonhas do Campo, 1808. Alejadinho. Photographs by the author.**

Figure 22. Frei Damiao Memorial as seen from the Via Sacra, Guarabira, 2004. Photographer Gentil Filho. Brejo.Com.

Figure 23. Frei Damiao Memorial, Guarabira, detail, 2004. Photographer Gentil Filho. Brejo.Com.

Figure 25. Ex-voto leg and foot, wood, artist unknown, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Indigo Gallery, Philadelphia, PA.

Fig. 26. The Prohibition of the Bishop of Crato Against Frei Damião and Why, 1983. Woodcut, Batista, Abraão.