

The 12th Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference at Yale University
Co-sponsored with the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies at Yale

American Counterpoint: New Approaches to Slavery and Abolition in Brazil

October 29-30, 2010
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

African Nations and Cultural Practices in Nineteenth-Century Salvador, Bahia

João José Reis, Universidade Federal da Bahia

Available online at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/brazil/papers/reis-paper.pdf>

© Do not cite or circulate without the author's permission

In the mid-sixteenth century sugar cane cultivation began to take over the lands that surrounded the Bay of All Saints, a region known as Recôncavo, on the southern tip of which the city of Salvador was founded in 1549. The production of sugar for export through the city's port would become the main economic activity in the region. Sugar plantations were operated by forced labor, first by the native population, who was slowly replaced by African hands in the course of the next century.¹

As African slavery developed in the sugar districts, it also did in the City of Bahia, as Salvador was known. By the end of the seventeenth century, Salvador was a mature slave society, which we know less by any precise counting of its population – there is no known comprehensive census for the period – but by the overwhelming presence of slaves in documents such as parish, probate, public notary (bills of sale and manumission papers), and administrative records, to name a few. The presence of slaves working both as domestics and in the streets of Salvador increased in the course of the eighteenth century, despite a crisis in

¹ Two outstanding works on the Recôncavo plantations from the sixteenth through the mid nineteenth century are Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1535-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and B. J. Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint: Sugar, Tobacco, Cassava, and Slavery in the Recôncavo, 1780-1860* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the sugar sector that led to a considerable reduction of African slaves imports to the region. Towards the end of that century, however, especially after the 1791 Haitian Revolution, sugar business recovered with enormous impetus, and so did the influx of slaves from Africa. In a report written in 1800 to the Portuguese Crown, its author said that the city's inhabitants "had a passion" for the Atlantic trade, especially with the Slave Coast (known as Costa da Mina in Brazil), the Bight of Benin region.²

Most slaves imported by merchants based in Salvador ended up in the plantations of the Recôncavo, or were re-exported to plantations and mining fields in the southeast of the colony. Many were sold and worked in the port city, however. Actually, based on lists of slaves in probate records between 1802 and 1806, Salvador displayed a higher proportion of African-born slaves (68.5%) than did the Recôncavo (40.2%). In the latter region the rate of demographic creolization ran very high in the sugar plantations and even higher in the districts where manioc and tobacco were the dominant crops, the former being the most important staple food -- consumed in the form of flour --, and the latter the main product to buy slaves in West Africa. The agricultural boom and the accompanying increase in the transatlantic trade changed this picture somewhat, but Salvador remained a densely African city in the mid-1830s, with about 60% of its slave population born overseas, and close to 80% of the estimated total population black and mulatto.³ European visitors to Salvador repeatedly wrote that they thought they had landed on an African city. One of them observed that "Everyone that runs, screams, work, everyone that transports [someone] or carries [something] is black". And a few pages later he described Salvador as the "metropolis of the negroes".⁴

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, slaves were being imported into the city of Bahia primarily, although not exclusively, and in growing numbers, from ports on the Bight of Benin, namely Whydah, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Lagos. Bahian traders controlled the importation of captives from these ports because they could offer greatly appreciated tobacco rolls in return. Figures for the last fifty years of the Brazilian slave trade (1801–1851) suggest that West Africa supplied a little under ten percent of the total number of slaves imported into Brazil. Of these West Africans, 88 percent landed in Bahia. The region was the

² Report to the Prince Regent by Joaquim Ferreira da Costa, c. 1800, Biblioteca Nacional (BN), Rio de Janeiro, I, 31, 30, 83.

³ João José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos malês em 1835*, 2d Ed. (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 24, 27.

⁴ Robert Avé-Lallemant, *Viagens pelas províncias da Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas e Sergipe (1859)* (Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia; São Paulo: EDUSP, 1980), 22, 31.

most common destination in Brazil of captives taken in the eighteenth-century Dahomeyan wars, later in the Fulani-Hausa jihad of the first two decades of the nineteenth century and the devastating Yoruba wars in the 1820s through 1840s. The latest estimate of slaves disembarked in Bahia in the first half of the nineteenth century (1801-66) is 415,331, or 20% of all imports into Brazil. Less reliable are the data for the ports of embarkation of the African captives to Bahia because, for the critical years between 1815 and 1831, when imports from regions above the Equator line were forbidden, slave traders would report West Central Africa, especially Molembo, and Mozambique as destination for their vessels but would indeed collect slaves at Bight of Benin ports.

Data from lists of slaves in probate records (Table 1) indicate the growing proportion of West Africans in the enslaved population of Bahia, and particularly the overwhelming presence of Yoruba speakers, known as Nagôs in that province.⁵

Table 1. African Nations in Salvador, 1802-1850

Nation	1802-06 (sample)	1819-20 (sample)	1835 (population)*	1845-50 (sample)
West Africa				
Mina	223	21	1681	23
Hausa	22	34	1611	15
Nagô	51	36	5388	378
Jeje	72	47	2668	40
Others	6	26	1268	25
Total	374	164	12616	481
	67%	68,6%	72,8%	85%
West Central Sotheast Africa				
Angola	149	31	1763	52
Benguela	30	8	399	3
Cabinda	--	26	1334	16

⁵ Not only the volume but also the proportion of slaves from West Africa entering Bahia should be but has not been revised upwards in the second edition of the Slave Trade Voyages Database (STVD). Based on partial population surveys, probate, police, and other records, students of slavery in nineteenth-century Bahia found that the distribution of slaves according to their African origins are not in agreement with what is available in the online STVD. The STVD found that over 79% of slaves who disembarked in Bahia between 1816 and 1831 were from West Central Africa and Mozambique, while they appear as less than 30% in probate records for the same period. The latter proportion is much closer to reality. After the official prohibition in 1831, when traders did not have to hide their destination any longer – now they had to hide their Transatlantic trade in slaves altogether – the proportion of slaves entering Bahia from ports at the Bight of Benin jumps to 66.5% in the STVD, which is a better representation of what actually happened.

Others	5		10		1213		14	
Total	184	33%	75	31,4%	4709	27,2%	85	15%
Total	558	100%	239	100%	17325	100%	566	100%

* Estimated African-born slave population of Salvador in 1835. Reis, *Rebelião*, 24.

Source: Probate records at the Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia.

These numbers show the distribution of African “nations” in Bahia in the first half of the nineteenth century. We are tired of knowing that these terms rarely referred to appellations of self-identity in Africa, but usually represented broad regions as they were known by European and New World traders, to hinterland African markets and ports of embarkation, or to terms used by African traders for the foreign groups they enslaved, bought and sold, among other criteria. The nomenclature also varied according to time period in the host slave society or to different regions where the slave labor force was specifically consumed. Despite these consideration, a “native” logic was not completely absent in the slave trade “ethnic” terminology. The names of African nations, therefore, encapsulated both African continuity and New World changes. They are a good entry point to discuss processes of African-born slaves cultural adaptation and creativity under slavery and beyond.

In early nineteenth-century Brazil, the term Mina represented an umbrella expression that included speakers of Gge, Yoruba, Hausa, and other smaller groups such as the Borno, Nupe (or Tapa, the Yoruba term for them), Borgu (or Bariba, idem) exported through the Bight of Benin or Bight of Biafra ports. In general, while in other regions of the country Mina continued to hold the same general meaning, in Bahia, as the century advanced, more specific terms such as Jeje, Nagô and Hausa became more prevalent and Mina gradually came to denote primarily slaves from Little Popo, or “Mina proper” to use late nineteenth-century anthropologist Nina Rodrigues’ expression.⁶ The change in the ethnic terminology derived from both the greater concentration of and the need to differentiate for the purpose of control African slaves from Dahomey (Gbe area), Yoruba, and Hausaland, as well as the local construction of African ethnic identities. The Nagôs in fact represented an umbrella term for Yoruba-speakers, a smaller umbrella, however, than Mina implied. Africans known as Nagôs originated from Oyo, Ilorin, Egba, Ilesa, Ijebu, Ketu, Onim (Lagos) and other Yoruba state formations. The Jeje identified primarily peoples of Fon, Mahi, Allada, Ewe origin, who fell in their majority under the political control of the kingdom of Dahomey in the course of the

⁶ Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1976), 107-8, 147.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Neither the ethnonyms Nagô, Jeje or Angola made much sense in the African context, although Nagô clearly derives from Anago, a small Yoruba-speaking group to the west of Dahomey, whose merchants connected with the Bahian trade imposed the term to captives from Yorubaland as a whole, and Angola (from Ngola, king of Ndongo) referred to slaves imported through the port of Luanda, usually captured or bought in markets between the Bengo and Kwanza rivers. In other Brazilian contexts, in Rio de Janeiro for instance, although the vaguer term Angola also prevailed among slaves from Luanda and its hinterland, one can more often find such specific denominations as Casange, Ambaca or even Luanda itself, to name just a few, terms which are rarely found in available sources for nineteenth-century Bahia.⁷

In nineteenth-century Bahia Nagô, Jeje, and to a less extent Hausa – a “native” term that covered peoples from different city-states in a vast area of the Central Sudan --developed and matured as local ethnonyms, based primarily on common linguistic features. There survived, however, in the midst of the larger reference group -- and for internal consumption so to speak -- smaller identities that usually reminded specific locations from where Africans had originated. Thus, if Nagô, for example, was the general term used by Yoruba speakers to identify themselves to outsiders, ethnonyms such as Egba, Jabu (for Ijebu), Jexá (for Ilesa), and so on continued to be operative within the Nagô community. The same phenomenon can be observed among the Jeje, and thus there were Jeje-Mahi (or Marrin), Jeje-Dagomé or simply Dagomé and Ardra (Allada), these last two rarely employed in the period covered here. Sometimes the deployment of these smaller identities crossed the frontier of the inclusive ethnic community. During the interrogations by the police in the wake of the 1835

⁷ An 1748-49 census of the mining region of Rio de Contas, for example, in the captaincy of Bahia, sometimes registered slaves such as “Matheus Benguella, born in (*natural de*) Angola”, “João Monjollo, born in Angola”, “Miguel Mazangano, born in Angolla”, or “Joseph Fon, born in the Mina Coast”, “Ventura Jeje, born in the Mina Coast”, and even “Manoel Crioulo, born in Angola” (probably born in a Portuguese settlement in the region). For Salvador between 1700 and 1750, a sample from probate records of 623 African-born slaves lists 158 Mina, 94 Angola, 68 Calabar, 36 Ardra, 30 Jeje, 20 Benguela, 17 São Tomé, 11 Cabo Verde, 10 Moçambique, considering only two-digit figures. Besides, 45 were listed as “Costa” (Coast) and 35 Guiné, terms that could mean anywhere in Africa. I wish to thank Daniele Santos de Souza for sharing her databank with me. For details on Rio’s African nations, see Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987, chap. 1. On identifying African nations in Bahia, see Maria Inês C. de Oliveira, “Quem eram os ‘negros da Guiné’? A origem dos africanos na Bahia”, *Afro-Ásia*, nº 19/20 (1997): 37-73. For the Yoruba in West Africa, see Robin Law, “Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: ‘Lucumi’ and ‘Nagô’ as Ethnonyms in West Africa”, *History in Africa*, 24 (1997): 205-19. For an “Atlantic” survey of the use of the term Mina, see Robin Law, “Etnias de africanos na diáspora: novas considerações sobre o termo ‘mina’”, *Tempo*, 10: 20 (2006), 109-31.

Muslim rebellion in Salvador, Nagô defendants often used terms like Nagô-Ba (Nagô from Egba), Nagô-Jabu and so on to differentiate themselves before interrogators from the Nagôs from the north (from Oyo and more specifically Yoruba Muslims from Ilorin) known by all Nagôs – not so much by the police -- to have been the most important factor behind the rebellious movement.

Ethnic formations or “nations” can be observed from different angles in the city of Bahia, both among African slaves and, especially, among African freed persons. The logic of ethnicity – some would prefer the term *meta-ethnicity* -- preponderated in residential arrangements, for instance. The police investigations after the 1835 rebellion revealed that there was a tendency for individuals, both slaves and freed, belonging to the same African nation to live together under the same roof. The pattern is confirmed in more detail, and using a larger sample, by the 1848 Santana parish survey of African freed persons. Of the 52 households with more than one tenant, 38 (or 71.7%) sheltered African men and women who declared to be of the same nation. Of these households, the Nagô formed 27, the Jeje ten, and there was one Mina, probably a “Mina proper”. Looking from another angle, 84% of the Nagôs who shared the same roof with other tenants, their marital partners included, had other Nagôs as house mates, against 61.5% of the Jejes in the same circumstance. Of course, these numbers reflect in part the great numbers of Nagôs and Jejes among the African freed population, which only mirrored their equally weighty presence among slaves. The two groups together stood for, respectively, 59.5% (Nagôs) and 29.5% (Jeje) of the two hundred freed Africans registered in the Santana parish in 1849 for whom an ethnic identification was recorded. However, the Nagôs represented 63.5% of the freed Africans living in collective residences, a good 20.5% distance behind the proportion of residential endogamy they displayed (84%); and in this regard the Jejes could be even more exclusive, for they represented only 26.3% of the Africans living together, a large 35% difference from their weight of residential ethnic exclusivity (61.5%). Of course the smaller nations, such as the Hausa – whose numbers had declined considerably by mid-century --, Borno, Tapa, Angola, and Mina had less chance to make ethnically restricted living arrangements. There were only five freed Hausas living in Santana parish, each one of whom shared houses with Jeje, Nagô, Borno, Mina, and Angola freed persons.⁸

⁸ “Relação dos Africanos Libertos residentes na Freguesia de Santana [1849]”, APEBa, *Escravos*, maço 2898. For the situation in 1835, see Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 400-17. African residential arrangements are also discussed by Maria Inês C. de Oliveira, “Viver e morrer no meio dos seus:

Among the Santana residents, I could identify only thirty African men and women who could have been couples and here again twenty were Nagôs living with Nagôs, four were Jejes living with Jejes. The remaining three couples were formed by a Hausa man and a Borno woman, a Mina man and a Jeje woman, and a Nagô man and a Jeje woman. A tendency towards marital endogamy is confirmed by the 1835 papers, where, of seventeen couples for whom an ethnic identification could be established, fourteen belonged to the same group. This situation is replicated by other researchers. Mieko Nishida identified thirty Catholic marriages involving freed Africans, 23 of whom belonged to the same nation; and Isabel Reis identified 27 couples, nineteen of whom married inside the same nation.⁹

Slaves in the city had more opportunity than rural slaves to bargain with masters, carve out spaces of their own within and outside the bounds of slavery, and to construct social identities, including ethnic identities, around common experience, beginning with the labor process itself. Besides domestic service, slavery in the urban setting was based on the hire-out or *ganho* system. Slaves employed as porters, artisans, street vendors and the like contracted with masters a reasonable amount of money they would hand in by the end of the day or more commonly by the end of the week. “To pay the week” is the expression more often found in nineteenth-century documents to describe this arrangement. Everything that exceeded the contracted amount slaves could keep. Slaves-for-hire often didn’t even live with their masters, but instead they rented or sublet rooms, usually from freed Africans who lived in the city center, closer to the port area, where their service was mostly needed. From time to time the police would try to force masters to keep their slaves at home, but masters would often prefer to keep their slaves away, caring for their own daily living, as long as they kept bringing the contracted weekly fee.¹⁰

Much of the urban economic activities were shared by African slaves and freed persons, who worked side by side in the streets of Salvador. Freedmen very often kept the

nação e comunidades africanas na Bahia do século XIX”, *Revista USP*, 28 (Dec. 1995/Jan. 1996): 175-193.

⁹ Mieko Nishida, “Manumission and Ethnicity in Urban Slavery: Salvador, Brazil, 1808-1888”, *HAHR*, 73: 3 (Aug. 1993): 372, n. 41; Isabel Cristina F. dos Reis, “A família negra no tempo da escravidão: Bahia, 1850-1888”, PhD, Universidade de Campinas, 2007, p. 102.

¹⁰ Maria José Andrade, *A mão-de-obra escrava em Salvador de 1811 a 1860* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988); Cecília Moreira Soares, “As ganhadeiras: mulher e resistência negra em Salvador no Século XIX”, *Afro-Ásia*, 17 (1996): 57-71; Maria Inês Côrtes de Oliveira, *O liberto: seu mundo e os outros* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988); and Ana de Lourdes Costa, “*Ekabó!*: Trabalho escravo e condições de moradia e reordenamento urbano em Salvador no século XIX”, dissertação de Mestrado, Faculdade de Arquitetura da UFBA, 1989.

same occupations they held when slaves. Both groups organized themselves together, and along ethnic lines, in groups called *canto*, a term that meant both song and street corner. African porters worked singing African tunes and usually gathered on street corners to fetch clients more easily. Each *canto* had a leader called *captain*, a man who should be familiar with the labor market, who negotiated payment, recruited *canto* members for specific tasks, and, later in the century, was responsible for his men's behavior before police authorities. While waiting for clients *canto* members could dedicate their time to weaving baskets and ropes, sewing clothes, making and fixing shoes, woodcarving, and other tasks. Many had more specialized occupations such as carpenter, bricklayer or smith and would only take jobs in the transportation business when out of work in those activities. There is evidence for the mid-1880s that *canto* captains presided over complete construction teams that could be quickly mobilized when needed. The *canto* thus served as a kind of ethnically defined labor pool where employers could find different kinds of specialized workers, including, besides builders, cooks, shoemakers, tailors and sailors who they could hire on an individual basis or in groups.¹¹

The *ganho* system and the *canto* groups constituted major institutions of urban slavery in Salvador. Besides being ethnically demarcated, *cantos* were gendered, male-only groups. Although they were not thus organized, African women circulated among *canto* sites, selling cooked food, the distribution of which they practically monopolized. Women were preeminent in the *ganho* system especially as peddlers and small time merchants. Besides doing business in fixed stalls in the market, they crossed the city north and south, east and west carrying shining glass boxes on top of their heads containing, besides all kinds of cooked and uncooked food, small trinkets, beads, West African textile (or *pano-da-costa*) and other products – including ritual ingredients -- imported from the other side of the Atlantic. In addition women worked out sewing, washing and ironing clothes. In many cases, they doubled as domestics and street earners. But they were particularly successful merchants in which position they managed to accumulate capital to buy their freedom, open small shops, and own slaves who were also employed in street work. They also belonged to what seems to

¹¹ João José Reis, “The Revolution of the Ganhadores’: Urban Labour, Ethnicity and the African Strike of 1857 in Bahia, Brazil”, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 29: 1 (1997), 355-93; idem, “Street Labor in Bahia on the Eve of the Abolition of Slavery”, in José Curto and Renée Soulodre La France (eds.), *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections During the Slave Trade* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), 141-72; Reis, “Ethnic Politics Among Africans in Nineteenth-Century Bahia”, in Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman (eds.), *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003), 240-64.

have been commercial networks with an ethnic accent. On different occasions in the 1850s Bahian merchants complained that African farmers sold their produce to African intermediaries, who in turn sold to African street peddlers and merchants in Salvador, thus forming a chain of preference that resulted in virtual market control of certain products such as manioc flour. Fish was another product controlled by African women since at least the turn of the nineteenth century.¹²

After long years of hard toil and disciplined savings – I have estimated between eight and ten years on the average --many African slaves were able to buy their freedom, this being the main mechanism for the formation of a sizeable and growing freed African population, estimated in 4,615 or 7.15 percent of Salvador’s inhabitants in 1835.¹³ Here again they gathered as nations to form the *juntas de alforria*, or manumission societies to which slaves contributed and from which they could borrow to help in the purchase of freedom or other expenses. Members of these *juntas*, having obtained their freedom and paid their debts, often continued to invest money for profit, for those who borrowed had to pay sometimes high interest rates to the group. The *juntas*’s membership, therefore, was not restricted to slaves. It seems, on the contrary, that their leaders were usually African freedmen responsible for receiving and safeguarding the association’s monies, for which they were compensated. Neither were the *juntas* exclusively for the purpose of funding manumission of slave members. In 1835, Africans of the Congo nation are known to have organized a money pool “with the purpose of helping the deprived ones of their Nation”, according to a witness heard in the inquiry concerning the African uprising in that year. Besides, *juntas* could result from a predominantly non-ethnic underlying principle. Luis Sanin, a Muslim preacher, organized a *junta* to collect from each member weekly fees corresponding to one day of *ganho* pay to be used for different purposes, namely to buy cloth to sew Muslim garments, to pay masters when members failed to earn enough to do so, and finally to help them buy their freedom.¹⁴

Formation and negotiation of identities around the notion of an enlarged African nation can be observed in religious institutions such as Catholic brotherhoods, Candomblé and Islamic groups. Although Catholic brotherhoods were in general not ethnically exclusive – due among other things to official pressure against it –certain African nations could and did control the government of specific sodalities usually in association with other groups, locally

¹² Reis, “The Revolution of the Ganhadores”, 470-1.

¹³ Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 24.

¹⁴ Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 292, 365-7

or African-born. The bylaws of the brotherhood of the Good Lord of Necessity and Redemption, written in 1778 and confirmed in 1804, established that only the “black nationals from out of town”, meaning “those from the Mina Coast or Luanda” (presumably all West and West Central Africans) were allowed as members. The Africans who founded the association barred specifically the admission of Creoles, under the pretext that they had their own brotherhoods, to which Africans could not belong.¹⁵ They were not quite right, however, for Creoles often shared their sodalities with Angolans – or the other way round –, as they did in the important Our Lady of the Rosary brotherhood in the central parish of Salvador. But the two groups sat on different boards in recognition of each other’s ethnic identities. Moreover, they ruled over an increasing number of Jejes, who formed the majority of new brothers and sisters at the turn of the nineteenth century. Alliances could be arranged between two nations whose members had come from regions thousands of miles apart back in Africa. Maybe as retaliation to being discriminated against by Creoles and Angolans in the brotherhoods they hegemonized, the Jejes, for example, joined the Benguelas in controlling the administrative board of the Our Lady of the Rosary brotherhood in São Pedro parish. We do not know precisely the rationale behind the choice of partners to form ethnic alliances of this sort inside Catholic brotherhoods.¹⁶

Alliances did not have to limit themselves to two or three nations, but involve several groups whose members had only one thing in common: they had all been born in Africa. That was the case with the pan-African front at the brotherhood of Good Lord of Necessity and Redemption mentioned above. This and similar rules adopted by other institutions probably did not survive the tremendous influx of the Nagôs in the first half of the following century, for any African brotherhood that would bar their access in this period would simply collapse for lack of new members. Ethnic diversity inside black brotherhoods expanded particularly with the growth of the African freed population, who represented the backbone of these institutions because slaves usually could not seat at their governing boards. Besides, to show around their prestige– or to produce it – a good number of African freed persons belonged to more than one of these institutions, even so they could be more active in one than in others. Gertrudes Maria do Espirito Santo, a Nagô freed woman who died in 1825, belonged to five

¹⁵ Arquivo Nacional, Lisbon, *Chancelarias Antigas. Ordem de Cristo. D. Maria*, livro 5, fls. 51v-60.

¹⁶ Parecer do Desembargador Ouvidor Geral do Crime a D. Rodrigo José Nunes, Sept. 11, 1784, APEBa, *Cartas ao governo, 1780-84*, maço 176; and João José Reis, “Ethnic Politics Among Africans in Nineteenth-Century Bahia”, in Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman (eds.), *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003), 240-64.

brotherhoods -- including two of the Rosary and that of São Benedito, the most popular one among the freed Africans -- all of which should join her funeral cortege to a grave at the brotherhood of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, located in the imposing Carmelite convent, where she said she wanted to be buried.¹⁷

The brotherhoods represented an urban institution *par excellence* because they needed a good number of members to flourish, to help build and maintain altars and churches, to celebrate with lavish festivals their patron saints, to help members when unemployed, hungry, homeless, sick, sometimes help them buy their freedom, and, of course, to bury them with due pomp when they died. Besides population density, ex-slaves abounded in the city and, as I mentioned, they played a vital role in the workings of these institutions. The brotherhoods designed frontiers of local identity in the urban landscape in the sense that they belonged to a specific parish, where the majority of their members usually resided. Brotherhoods were themselves a territory where Africans from different origins met around a devotion to specific Catholic saints. Local and devotional identities, however, were not in contradiction with the creation and reproduction of ethnic identities. Because some groups controlled the leadership in many of these institutions, ethnic identification often ensued that reinforced alignment around cultural values other than the ones emanating from the patron saint's altar.

The construction of New World African identities developed around religious values and practices that captives carried with them across the Atlantic and reconstituted, in part at least, in Brazil. Different aspects of the African spiritual experience, particularly spirit possession cults known as Calundu and Candomblé referred to a variety of practices, from the individual services offered by the medicine-man and the diviner to convent-like groups of initiates organized to worship one or more deities and ancestor spirits. The organized cults that can be identified in nineteenth-century sources were primarily dedicated to the Vodun of the Jejes and the Orisa of the Nagôs, although the undocumented Angolan Nkisi no doubt should also be added to the Afro-Bahian pantheon of the day. All these cults, especially the Orisa cult, still exist in Bahia. The Hausa Bori, on the other hand, vanished, although there is evidence of its presence in Bahia's nineteenth-century religious scene. A few elements of it,

¹⁷ APEBa, *Inventário e testamento*, no. 3/1343/1812/62 . On African freed persons participation in Catholic brotherhoods, see Maria Inês C. de Oliveira, *O liberto: o seu mundo e os outros* (Salvador: Corrupio, 1988), chap. 3.

however, can still be found in terms such as *djina*, the Muslim spirits or *jinns*, which is used in the Candomblé to signify the name given to the new member at initiation.¹⁸

It is difficult to assess the ethnic composition of nineteenth-century Candomblé initiates and clients because the police did not record the nations of those arrested in cult houses, who were vaguely referred to only as “Africans”, or “blacks” etc. In one case, however, the information is available, but not in police records. The famous Nagô high priestess Francisca da Silva, whose devotional name was Iya Nassô, was a prosperous merchant who owned several slave women, all of them Nagô, except a Tapa woman. There is good reason to believe that these women were also Orisa priestesses. Of course, the Tapa woman may or may not have held a place in the group of initiates, but if she did she accommodated herself and her devotion to a majority group. She may have had no other choice since she was a slave of the Candomblé Nagô leader. It may be more than a coincidence, however, that Dankô, a Tapa divinity, is to this day worshiped in the Nagô Candomblé founded by da Silva. When da Silva returned to Africa to escape police repression after the 1835 rebellion, she manumitted most of these slaves on the condition that they join her on the voyage. One of them, who by the way paid for her freedom, Marcelina da Silva, came back to Bahia to replace her former mistress as a high priestess in the cult she had founded and most of her slaves- initiates whose ethnic group could be identified belonged to the Nagô nation as well. Mind, however, that both Iya Nassô and Marcelina also owned creole slaves, in their majority children of their African slave women.¹⁹ However, the history of nineteenth-century Candomblé is primarily a history of inclusion, of rupture with ethnic and even African exclusivity, beginning with clients and, little by little, reaching all the way to the top of its hierarchy. The expansion of Candomblé was both geographical and social, and it began very early in the nineteenth century.²⁰

¹⁸ Renato da Silveira, *O candomblé da Barroquinha: processo de constituição do primeiro terreiro baiano de Keto* (Salvador: Maianga, 2006), 495.

¹⁹ See Lisa Earl Castillo and Luis Nicolau Parés, “Marcelina da Silva e seu mundo: novos dados para uma historiografia do candomblé ketu”, *Afro-Ásia*, 36 (2007): 111-52. On Dankô, see Silveira, *O candomblé da Barroquinha*, 494. Dankô is probably related to the *ndakó gboyá* ancestor spirit rituals of the Nupe. See S. F. Nadel. *Nupe Religion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).

²⁰ See João José Reis, “Candomblé in Nineteenth-Century Bahia: Priests, Followers, Clients”, in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (eds.), *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 116-34; and Rachel E. Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000.

Candomblé practices existed all over the city of Salvador, a good number in the Sé central parish, but the majority, especially those more openly organized around cult houses, settled in less visible sites, mainly the urban periphery. For obvious reasons, the police was more vigilant in the urban districts than in the suburbs, where, in addition, the woods, rivers, creeks and lakes favored the worship of spiritual beings associated with nature.²¹ Since at least the early nineteenth century, the outskirts of the city became a place where freed Africans and creole established themselves as small farmers, where they cultivated fruits, vegetables, beans, yams and manioc, and raised fowls which they sold to Salvador's market. Those farmers would both work on their own land or on other peoples' property. The occupation of the capital's outskirts increased with the growth in the number of slaves that left the urban center after they had obtained their manumission. Farming, however, went hand in hand with ritual life. The festival of the New Yam, for instance, was celebrated every year, usually in November, when the root was harvested, and the first picks offered in sacrifice to the gods.²²

A rich picture of predominantly African communities in the periphery of Salvador in the beginning of the nineteenth century was painted in a series of letters written by Bahia's colonial governor Count of Ponte (1805-1810) to the Portuguese minister of Overseas Affairs, Viscount of Anadia. The governor was particularly worried with the number of runaway slaves living or circulating in the area. However, those were peculiar runaway communities or *quilombos*. According to the governor, "In the outskirts of this Capital and in the woods that surround it, there were countless groups of this quality of people, who, led by the hand of industrious impostors, enticed the credulous, the vagrants, the superstitious, the thieves, criminals, and the sick to join them." He continued, "They lived in absolute liberty, dancing, wearing extravagant dress, false medicine, uttering fanatical prayers and blessings; they used to rejoice, to eat and indulge themselves, violating all rights, laws, orders, and the public peace."²³

²¹ On the geography of Candomblé in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Jocélio Teles dos Santos, "Candomblés e espaço urbano na Bahia do século XIX", *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, 27: 1-3 (Jan.-Dec. 2005): 205-26.

²² *O Alabama*, Nov. 24, 1870; Dale Graden, *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 121-2.

²³ "Ofício do Governador Conde da Ponte para o Visconde de Anadia [...]", Bahia, April 7, 1807, *Anais da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro*, n° 37 (1918), pp. 450-451. The original manuscript is in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarinho (AHU), Lisbon, *Baía*, cx. 149, doc. 29815. Data from newspaper's slave fugitive advertisements show that slaves Born in Brazil fled proportionately more often than those born in Africa.

This description reveals the existence of runaway settlements that were much more complex than a classic definition of *quilombo* would encompass, that is, a group of fugitive slaves living in isolation in the depths of forests or swamps, or on top of hills. The city, not plantations, produced the social types found in these suburban sites, and they were not reduced to fugitive slaves. Mixed with slaves were individuals defined by the governor as thieves, vagrants, and criminals, but also the credulous, superstitious, and the sickly. These were people who needed to protect or hide themselves from urban authorities, and who sought witch doctors and medicine men and women to cure them from diseases, witchcraft, and bad luck. Probably there were also those persons, Africans in their majority, enslaved or not, somehow committed to cult houses where they performed religious obligations as initiates, for institutions such as these are known to have existed since the late eighteenth century.²⁴ The quilombos were themselves, or they kept within their borders, religious temples or altars led by specialists of the sacred who distributed “false medicine, blessings and fanatical prayers” to coreligionists and clients, services that could be more freely offered in places located away from the urban center where neighbors denounced and the police repressed more easily.

The governor had discovered that the periphery of his capital was politically organized around religious leaders he called “industrious impostors”. We can assume that there existed cult houses of Candomblé complete with groups of initiates, priests and priestesses dedicated to different gods and goddesses, with consolidated hierarchies, a calendar of celebrations, besides the day-to-day obligations or rituals to spiritual beings, ancestors included. The “dances and extravagant dress” probably made up rituals in which the devotees were possessed by deities or ancestor spirits through dancing and drumming, dressed and adorned themselves in ways typical of each one of these spiritual beings.

The governor justifiably defined as *quilombo* places where African rituals were celebrated, an association that located the two kinds of community organizations on the same level of resistance, an association that would continue to be made in the future. In the late 1860s the newspaper *O Alabama* defined as *quilombos* Candomblé houses in the very heart of Salvador where initiation rites, drumming and animal sacrifice happened regularly.²⁵ Both *quilombos* and candomblés actually functioned throughout the century as shelter to fugitive

²⁴ João José Reis, “A invasão do calundu do pasto de Cachoeira”, *Revista de História*, ??? (1988): ???; idem, “Candomblé in Nineteenth-Century Bahia”,

²⁵ *O Alabama*, May 6, 1869.

slaves, where they found freedom, abundance, revelry, solace, cure and privileges that were difficult to find elsewhere in Salvador. They represented an attraction pole to slaves, ex-slaves and the free underdogs, but also to a few well-to-do. In the middle of the century a Catholic newspaper lamented that African “witches” (*feiticeiros*) were sought after by men and women who “*did not* belong to the lowest class of society”.²⁶ In 1868, *O Alabama* published a list of social types that attended Candomblé sessions, and they were “married women who seek medicine that would make their husbands remember conjugal duties; slaves asking for ingredients to soften the mood of their masters; ... and even businessmen seeking success in their dealings”.²⁷ Candomblé people sold services to and built alliances with members positioned in different layers of the social hierarchy.

If during the first half of the nineteenth century Bahian authorities worried about the association between what was seen as African religions and revolt, by the middle of the century they were concerned with what they considered the cultural Africanization of a city that the elite struggled to reform having the European model in mind. The African “barbarous customs” should be wiped out to allow the advancement of “civilization”. One important battle the educated elite fought was precisely to avoid the expansion of Candomblé practices beyond the African population, to include creole blacks, mulattos, and even whites. The main target of reformers was the African freed population for they constituted the Candomblé leadership just as they did in the brotherhoods. From the middle of the century, when the campaign to civilize the province took off, numerous freed Africans accused of crimes related to “witchcraft” were deported back to Africa against their will, just as they had been expelled from Bahia in great numbers after the 1835 rebellion. Actions such as these were, however, too little and too late for Candomblé had already won the souls of many in the Bahian population.²⁸

The proliferation of Candomblé houses and the inclusion of new social groups in their ritual life went hand in hand with the affirmation of the Orisa cult over other local African religious branches. Due in part to the overwhelming presence of the Nagôs, the religion of the Vodun and Nkisi lost territory to that of the Orisa. But a lot of intra-African borrowing went on. The Nagôs, for instance, adopted part of the institutional model of the Vodun devotees, namely the Jeje organizational edifice, which is reflected in initiation nomenclature.

²⁶ *O Noticiador Catholico*, 2: 89 (1850): 365. Emphasis added.

²⁷ *O Alabama*, Sept. 2, 1868.

²⁸ João José Reis, *Domingos Sodré, um sacerdote africano: escravidão, liberdade e candomblé na Bahia do século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2008), 21-52, 167-80.

Apparently, they also borrowed from the Jeje the practice of worshiping different deities under the same roof, although Catholic brotherhoods also seems to have functioned as a model – or reinforced built in tendencies -- for both Jejes and Nagôs in the sense that inside Catholic temples, besides their patron saints revered in the main altar, other saints occupied the secondary altars.²⁹

The experience of Islam was considerably different in many ways. African Muslims in Bahia belonged to a variety of nations; they could be Hausa, Nagô, Tapa, Borno, Bariba, and Fulani or Fulah. The latter three groups, especially the Fulani, counted with very few members among the African population of Bahia. The Hausas, on the other hand, were thousands among captives imported in the years that followed the conflicts related to the Fulani-Hausa Jihad initiated in 1804 under the leadership of the Fulani Sheik Usuman dan Fodio against Hausa rulers accused by him of being sloppy Muslims. Naturally among the Hausas of Bahia there were Muslims from both sides in the conflict and also “pagans” or Bori adepts. The Hausas as a whole represented 20.7% of all West African slaves in Salvador in 1819-20.

Muslim Hausa groups may have composed the complex cultural territory in the suburbs of Salvador described by governor Count of Ponte in 1807. Words used by the governor such as “blessings and fanatical prayers” described Muslim better than Candomblé practices. The blessings given by Muslim priests had special spiritual and prophylactic powers (or *baraka*), and the frequent daily prayers, besides the recitation of the Quran, denoted salient aspects of Islam in Bahia. Besides, African Muslims wore peculiar vests when they got together, such as the white *agbada*, turbans, and skull caps, all of which – besides the many amulets pending from their necks and tied to one or all pieces of the attire -- would fit the definition of “extravagant dress” advanced by the Portuguese colonial governor. One of the main signs of Hausa-ness in Bahia in the early days of the century was their propensity to rebel. A few weeks after sending his men to suppress the suburban settlements, the governor discovered that a sophisticated slave plot was being conceived in the port district of the capital, where captives disembarked from slave ships and were sold in warehouses. When the police invaded a house rented by a Hausa freedman that served as the

²⁹ Luís Nicolau Parés, “The ‘Nagôization’ Process in Bahian Candomblé”, in Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (eds.). *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 185-208; idem, *A formação do candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia* (Campinas: Editora da UNICAMP, 2006), chap. 4; Vivaldo da Costa Lima, *A família-de-santo nos candomblés jeje-nagôs da Bahia* (Salvador: Corrupio, 2003), 74; Silveira, *O candomblé da Barroquinha*.

epicenter of the conspiracy they found bows and arrows, a drum, and Muslim amulets. The investigation that followed revealed that, among other things, the Hausas planned to take over Salvador, gather Catholic images from churches and burn them in a public square, and have their leader be proclaimed governor and bishop of the colony, an allusion perhaps to the convergence of religious and political power being constructed across the Atlantic in Hausaland. The organization of the movement apparently followed in part a hierarchy previously built into labor groups, for Hausa *canto* captains were responsible for the mobilization of hire-out slaves throughout Salvador. Although the plot was an entirely Hausa affair, rumors circulated that other African nations would eventually be invited to the movement. However, those who faced trial and sentencing were all Hausas.³⁰

The Hausas struck again two years later and twice in 1814. The 1809 rebellion involved mass flight from Salvador to a village in the Recôncavo, but the rebels were quickly overpowered. Here again one hundred per cent of the arrests concentrated on the Hausas.³¹ Resistance continued in the streets, however. An inspector of the King's troops wrote in 1809 that in the southern captaincy of Minas Gerais one soldier alone was enough to disperse fifty blacks, and in Bahia it used to be the same, but now one Negro would beat soldiers "in plain day light, before everyone".³² He was perhaps referring to a Hausa warrior in his Bahian exile. In February, 1814, Hausa runaways from Salvador in combination with others from nearby *quilombos* rose up in arms and killed fifty people and burned 150 houses in the nearby village of Itapoan. This time the leader was clearly identified as a Muslim preacher, a *Malomi* (or *Malami, Malam*) wrote the police scribe. In all these occasions the Hausas fought alone, but not all of them were clearly Muslims. One of the 1814 leader, for instance, was described in the trial records as "president of the dances of his nation", a description that fits a Bori possession cult priest better than a Muslim preacher.³³

However, in the minds of Bahian authorities Hausa and Muslim became synonyms. Even when they ceased to rebel in the late 1810s, as their numbers dwindled in the slave trade, they were still considered the typical literate Africans, the amulet makers *par excellence*. That is how they appear in the documents related to the 1835 Malê revolt. But the main force behind the conception, inception, and the making of this uprising were

³⁰ João José Reis, "La révolte Haoussa de Bahia en 1807: résistance et contrôle des esclaves au Brésil", *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 61: 2 (2006), 383-418.

³¹ Relação dos pretos do levantamento, Jan. 7, 1809, Arquivo Nacional (AN), IG¹, 122.

³² Inspector de tropas ao Rei, June 26, 1809, AN, IG¹, 112.

³³ Cópia do acórdão proferido contra os confederados homens pretos naturais da costa da Mina de nação haussá, BNRJ, II, 33, 21, 72.

undoubtedly Yoruba Muslims who sunk in considerable numbers in the currents of the Bahian slave trade as the war between Oyo and Ilorin reached new heights in the 1820s. At that point in time Ilorin had become a refuge to Yoruba Muslims escaping Oyo Ile, the kingdom's capital. Very few individuals of the Hausa and Tapa nations participated in the 1835 movement, and the Muslim prayer groups that witnesses identified as active before the uprising were with one exception Nagô. Only one Hausa preacher, a certain Dandarâ or Elesbão do Carmo, was said to have Nagôs among his pupils – actually I could only identify one -- , and no Nagô preacher counted with Hausa pupils. Only one Hausa, whose ethnic affiliation was in any case polemical – he also declared to be a Mina -- confessed participation in the movement. And of the 31 Hausa defendants only three were found guilty. As I just said the Hausas had been arrested in 1835 because they were known Muslims, not because there was proof of their participation in the uprising. Even the aforementioned Dandarâ was not even indicted. In other words, the contribution of the largest African Muslim nation in Bahia to the 1835 rebellion was truly negligible, suggesting a serious ethnic and political split within the Muslim community.³⁴

As the police investigation would reveal the revolt had been organized around a “*Malê* society”, and the term *Malê* derives from *imale* or Muslim in Yoruba. The Muslim Nagôs or Malês met in back rooms, in the *cantos*, and even in Catholic churches to learn Arabic, memorize and recite the *Quran*, pray, dine and celebrate dates of the Islamic calendar, and to conspire. The recruitment of converts among Nagô nation was intense in the months that preceded the uprising, but one needed not be a follower of Allah to join in, and many “pagans” responded positively to invitations made by their Muslim ethnic “relatives”. While non-Nagô Muslims gave a very modest contribution to the rebellion, Nagô Muslims and non-Muslims alike participated in it, at least in the conspiratorial phase. Two of them, for example, were sons of Iya Nassô, or Francisca da Silva, the founder of the famous *candomblé* Casa Branca. “Long live the Nagô” was the ethnically demarcated war cry heard in the streets of Salvador during the uprising.³⁵

The experience of Hausas and Nagôs suggests an ethnic rationale guiding their collective action. Islam did not work as a strong enough force to overcome ethnic boundaries. On the contrary, ethnicity seems to have been in the roots of these two great nations' inability to unify around a common political project. For the smaller nations, of course, the choice was

³⁴ Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, chap. 10.

³⁵ Castillo and Nicolau Parés, “Marcelina da Silva e seu mundo”.

again absorption into these and other larger groups. One of the main Muslim leaders in 1835 was a Tapa man, Luis Sanin, who led a one hundred percent Nagô group. This man, however, spoke the language of the Nagôs fluently.³⁶

Taking together what has been said thus far about residential and marital arrangement, labor groups, credit institutions, the religious experience in brotherhoods, Candomblé, and Islam, the conclusion is that ethnic identity around the notion of nation, which resonated both African continuity and local change, was a strong force shaping the lives of enslaved and freed Africans in Salvador, but not that a completely hermetic ethnic frontier existed among them. Identity frontiers demarcate “cultural communities”, as the African nations in Bahia were, but they do not necessarily build insurmountable “barriers to the transit of people, goods or ideas”, as Marshall Sahlins suggests.³⁷ It can be said, on the other hand, that in each one of these social spheres and spaces different degrees of fluidity subsisted, although more detailed data is needed for a more refined discussion. Apparently, residential patterns and membership in *cantos* and Muslim groups seemed more rigid in terms of ethnic loyalty than brotherhoods and Candomblé houses.

Just as there were variations according to the kinds of sociability and institutional forms, as I have previously hinted here and there, things also changed with the passage of time and varied in terms of personal experience. Change in the African demography of Salvador represented a major impact on ethnic formations in the city. The Nagô were everywhere from the 1840s, and came to constitute at least 80 percent of Africans in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their language became the *lingua franca* among the Africans by mid-century.³⁸ Entire neighborhoods became their almost exclusive territory, which is evidenced by the existence of a Nagô Alley in the port district, and a Nagô Street (this one to this day) in the Santana parish. They were now the typical local African, so to speak, and did not need to mobilize too much energy to be accepted as such nearly anywhere in the African community of Salvador. Other Africans were the ones in need to accommodate to a world increasingly dominated by the Nagôs who, on the other hand, having seen the

³⁶ Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 291-3.

³⁷ Marshall Sahlins, “Two or Three Things that I Know About Culture”. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 5, n° 3 (1999), 415. I am not convinced by the arguments against the use of the concept of identity advanced in Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity’”, *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000): 1-47.

³⁸ Yoruba seems to have become a *lingua franca* among Africans in Bahia in the 1840s. Francisco Adolfo Vanhagen, *História geral do Brasil*, 6th ed. (São Paulo: Melhoramentos, 1956 [orig. 1854]), I: 224.

number of other Africans shrunk, would perhaps reduce their need for a more active ethnic politics. The proliferation of Candomblé-houses in Salvador that I mentioned before was in fact the proliferation of the Nagô Orisa devotion. In the meantime black brotherhoods declined due primarily to the Romanization of the Brazilian Catholic Church in the second half of the nineteenth century, a doctrinaire movement that represented an assault on lay institutions like brotherhoods. On the Islamic front, Muslims had been badly hit by repression in 1835, the religion became strictly prohibited, while hundreds of Muslim slaves were sold to the South, freed Muslims were deported or left spontaneously to Africa, while others migrated to Rio de Janeiro and other Southern cities. Although a few Muslims in Bahia were still active in the second half of the century, Islam was unable to recruit among creoles, and eventually disappeared as an organized religion with the death of the last Africans at the turn of the twentieth century. What was happening in the religious front had parallels in the labor market. The Nagôs became close to 80 percent of the street workers by the end of the 1850s - - probably more later on --, but thirty years later they shared this activity in almost equal numbers with Brazilian-born workers, blacks in their vast majority, with whom they now mixed in the *cantos*. In 1887, only 45.7 percent of African street workers belonged to all-African *cantos*.³⁹

Of course, ethnic identifications did not disappear altogether only because the Nagô prevailed demographically and politically over other Africans, and the number of Africans in general decreased dramatically with the end of the slave trade in 1850. Anthropologist Nina Rodrigues, who investigated the remnants of the African population in the 1890s, interviewed Nagôs, Jejes, Hausas and other Africans who still embraced notions of ethnic belonging.⁴⁰ African nations turned out to be inscribed in the predominant symbolic apparatus of Candomblé houses, which are to this day generally referred to as Nagô, Jeje, or Angola.⁴¹

Memories of origins as part of ethnic configurations can also be found in the experience of African individuals. Domingos Pereira Sodré is a case in point. In 1881, when he was in his mid-eighties and dictated his will, he said he was born in Onim (or Lagos), while the majority of Africans who produced the same kind of documents at this point in time would simply say they were “Africans”. Maybe this had something to do with the fact that Sodré was a Candomblé man, and the Bahian/Lagos ritual connections ran high in the second

³⁹ Reis, “Street Labor in Bahia”, 155-7.

⁴⁰ Rodrigues, *Os africanos*, esp. chap. iv.

⁴¹ Lima, *A família de santo*.

half of the nineteenth century.⁴² Sodré had been arrested in 1862 under the accusation of divining – he was probably an Ifa priest, a *babalawo* -- and of producing witchcraft to tame his slave clients' masters. However, this man so much involved with Candomblé values also belonged to a black brotherhood of the Rosary, in which cemetery he said he wished to be buried accompanied by his devotional brothers. In addition, Sodré married twice in the Church, and baptized numerous creole children and adult African-born slaves. At the same time that he owned five Nagô slaves, he led an African manumission society that congregated primarily Nagô members. But he did not appear as a Nagô in any document related to property he bought, police or trial records in which he was named, and had friends, clients and supporters that belonged to different African nations, besides local whites, blacks, and mulattos. He befriended two Hausa freedmen, he attended a Candomblé led by a Jeje woman, he was assisted in the manumission society by a mulatto accountant, whites served as witnesses to his marriages, he baptized slaves owned by white masters. The man from Onim fought in the war against the Portuguese in Bahia in the early 1820s, and he proudly wore his veteran of war green uniform when he was arrested as a *babalawo* in 1862 by policemen dressed in blue uniforms. He knew very well how to manipulate the codes of both the African and the local cultures. Sodré was a truly *ladino* African.⁴³

The trajectory of another individual, this time a Malê priest of the Nagô nation, is also a fascinating tale of change and continuity of African significations in the Atlantic. His master-given Christian name was Rufino José Maria, and his Muslim name Abucare (maybe Abdul Karim), he was born in Oyo in a Muslim family, his father was an alufá or alfa, was captured by Hausas– probably allies of the Ilorin leader Afonjá -- in the early 1820s, enslaved and sold to the coast. He served eight years as a slave in Bahia, where he was trained as a cook, and then taken to the southernmost Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul by his young master, who sold him there to a merchant who bankrupted. Abuncare was auctioned and purchased by the local chief of police, José Maria de Mendonça Peçanha, from whom he bought his freedom and borrowed his freed person's name – José Maria -- in December, 1835, some months after the Malê revolt in Bahia. From Rio Grande do Sul he went to Rio de Janeiro where in embarked in a slave ship bound to Luanda and established himself as a cook and a small-time slave trader in the Pernambuco-Angola slave trade circuit until his ship was

⁴² See J. Lorand Matory, *The Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), esp. chap. 1; Del Castillo and Nicolau, “Marcelina da Silva e seu mundo”; and Castillo, “?????”.

⁴³ Reis, *Domingos Sodré*.

captured and taken to Sierra Leone. Abuncare eventually returned to Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, to live as a diviner, a witch doctor, and a Muslim preacher.

Rufino José Maria, alias Abuncare, told the story I summarized above when he was arrested in 1853 in Recife as suspect of involvement in a slave conspiracy. When policemen searched his house they found a large amount of subversive material, consisting of books and loose papers written in Arabic, including a copy of the *Quran*, a book of sermons, an Arabic language primer, amulets, and so on. The Bahian revolt came immediately to Pernambuco authorities' mind. When interrogated Abuncare told that it was true that he was a devout Muslim, was born and would die one, but did not fit the description of a social rebel, and the Police believed because there was no sign of rebellion in his papers – a sample of which was translated in Rio de Janeiro –, actually no sign of any African conspiracy in Recife. He was released. In his deposition Abuncare never mentioned the word Nagô, concentrating his identity discourse in religion. His narrative, however, contains one important piece of information that reveals his Yoruba-ness: while his ship was being tried by the Mixed Commission in Sierra Leone in 1841-2, he spent his time among Yoruba Muslims – the *Aku imale* -- in their Fourah Bay community. His boat having been released from accusation of slave trade due to a technicality, he return to Recife for a couple of months, and then went back to Fourah Bay to study Arabic and Islamic doctrine for another nineteen months, a continuation of his education which had began in Oyo before being kidnapped by Hausas and sold to slavery in Bahia.

Unlike Domingos Sodré, there is no evidence that Abuncare was ever involved with Catholicism, but he was involved with Catholics. He declared that he had clients among blacks of his own nation, as well as of other African nations, besides Brazilian mulattos and whites, for whom he divined, found lovers, cured from witchcraft and so on. In other words, he did the same things that Domingos Sodré was accused of doing when he was arrested in Salvador ten years later. In addition he was an *alufá* with a specifically Muslim following, details of whom we do not know. Although Abuncare's experience was more strictly Muslim, his circulation through different social, geographical, linguistic, occupational landscapes makes him a typical "Atlantic creole" to use Ira Berlin's term, but again I prefer to say he was a *ladino* African.

I prefer the expression *ladino* for people like Sodré and Abuncare, as well as for the collective experience of African nations such as the Nagô, and *ladino* not only as a descriptive, "native" term, but as an interpretive tool as well. In recent years the term *creole*

or the composite “Atlantic creole” has become current in the historical and anthropological literature to identify African individuals with experiences similar to that of Sodré, and Abuncare. The processes of culture formation and social relations discussed by creolization theorists no doubt apply to these individuals and millions of other Africans who circulated through the Atlantic basin. However, creole has perhaps become a reductionist expression that does not depict the subtleties of life experiences such individuals, or collectivities. To put it differently, as far as Africans are concerned “creolization” created the *ladino* not the *creole* in the sense that Africans never ceased to see themselves and be seen as Africans by others. In Brazil in particular, the use of the term *crioulo* for an African-born individual is especially problematic, because it implies a very specific meaning: a *dark skin*, locally born person with all the cultural and social implications embedded in this circumstance. The addition of the qualifier *Atlantic* to creole does not solve the problem. The Brazilian *crioulo* differed not only from the African. Mixed bloods, or *mestiços*, were never referred to as creoles, but as *cabra*, *mulato*, *pardo*, sometimes *moreno* and other “racial” terms. The position of *crioulos* – and *cabras*, *pardos* etc -- in the economy, society, politics, and culture diverged often substantially from that of the African-born person. No one born in Brazil, including *crioulos*, ever joined Africans in the slave revolts that shook Bahia in the first half of the nineteenth-century, for instance, and revolts such as the one in 1835 were unleashed by seasoned slaves and freed persons, *ladino* people. During the same period one rarely finds creoles working side by side with Africans in the streets of Salvador, marrying each other,⁴⁴ and none – that I know -- joining Muslim groups. Of course, first generation creoles and their parents had common experiences, and shared institutions such as brotherhoods and Candomblé houses that eventually became spaces of African/creole sociability. But the two groups never became one. As much “creolized” Africans were in Bahia, they never ceased to be *ladinos*.

It could be argued that the expression has the defect of referring to Africans who had some degree of control over the “master’s culture”, particularly those who could speak the local language, disregarding the intra-African cultural borrowing, hybridity, or dynamics. But I would suggest that, as an interpretive tool, the term *ladino* be expanded to include both fronts of cultural and social formation experienced by African individuals and collectivities.

⁴⁴ In a sample of 71 marriages involving African freed persons, 62 were between Africans, five between Africans and creoles, two between Africans and mulattos, and two between Africans and whites. See Maria Inês C. de Oliveira, *O liberto: seu mundo e os outros* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988), 55.

What I can say from years of archival research is that, in Bahia, despite these changes, people like Domingos and Rufino/Abuncare never ceased to be Africans, and were reminded daily of such condition. Moreover, they did not ceased to think of themselves as belonging to a specific African nation, even when they in due course came to be recognized as “Africans”.