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RECREATING AFRICA: RACE, RELIGION, AND SEXUALITY IN
THE AFRICAN-PORTUGUESE WORLD, 1441-1770

by

JAMES H. SWEET

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Preface

In the past ten years or so, the study of the African diaspora has received a great deal of attention in scholarly circles. As studies and programs on the so-called "Atlantic World" have come into vogue, the notion of a singular African diaspora has become a sexy way for those studying peoples of African descent to situate themselves in the broader debate over the emergence of a "creolized" Atlantic world. Unfortunately, theoretical conceptualizations of the African diaspora have not kept pace with the books, conferences, scholars, and academic programs that label themselves as such. The African diaspora has been mechanically superimposed on the Atlantic World, allowing anyone who studies peoples of African descent to claim that they are diaspora scholars. Indeed, there seems to be a general consensus that the so-called "Black Atlantic" is synonymous with the African diaspora. Recently, several historians have published strong theoretical statements that depart from this widely-held view of the African diaspora.¹ Paul Lovejoy, John Thornton, Colin Palmer, and Michael Gomez

¹ See, for example, Paul E. Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery," Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation 2 (1997), 1-23; Colin Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," Perspectives 36, no. 6 (September 1998); James H. Sweet, "Teaching the Modern African Diaspora: A Case Study of the Atlantic Slave Trade," Radical History Review (forthcoming).

are among a new generation of diaspora scholars that Lovejoy calls the "revisionist" school. These scholars have attempted to shift the focus of African diaspora studies away from the explicit study of "creolization," toward an emphasis on placing Africans and their descendants at the center of their own histories. In theory, this means making Africa the starting point for any study of Africans in the diaspora, particularly during the era of the slave trade. From a methodological perspective, the "revisionists" argue that students of the diaspora must avoid static, homogenized notions of an essential "Africa." In tracing the slave trajectory from Africa to the diaspora, the student should attempt to chart the processes of social, cultural, and political change from specific African ethnic homelands to enslavement in the European colonial worlds. This requires not only a familiarity with the major trends in African historiography, but also an acute sensitivity to the differences in various African world views as compared to those of their Western oppressors. The goal of the "revisionist" school is to bring some degree of specificity to what have previously been termed African "survivals."²

² Though Fernando Ortiz, Nina Rodrigues, Manuel Querino, and Artur Ramos all did pioneering work on the African backgrounds of African-American cultures at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not until the publication of Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past (New York, 1941) that American scholars began to debate the merits of "survivals" or "Africanisms." American readers were quickly exposed to a Brazilian interpretation of

The African impact in the diaspora went far beyond culturally diluted "survivals;" Africa arrived in the various destinations of the colonial world in all of its social and cultural richness, informing the institutions that Africans created and providing them with a prism through which to interpret and understand their condition as slaves and as free peoples.

This dissertation represents one attempt to reclaim the African diaspora, concentrating its focus on African peoples and the cultures they created in the Portuguese colonial world between 1441 and 1770. The geographic center of the work unquestionably is Brazil. As the final destination of almost 1.75 million Africans, Brazil took in more slaves than any other European colony during the period.³ As such, the overwhelming emphasis of the study is Brazilian slave society. Still, African-Portuguese slavery was not restricted to the sugar plantations and gold mines of Brazil. African workers could be found in all corners of Portugal's far-flung empire--from settlements in North Africa at Ceuta and Mazagão to the colonial possession at

African "survivals" with the English-language edition of Gilberto Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York, 1946). The study of "survivals" continues to flourish. For instance, see Roger Bastide, African Civilizations in the New World (New York, 1971), and more recently, the series of essays edited by Joseph E. Holloway, ed., Africanisms in American Culture (Bloomington, 1990).

³ Philip D. Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census (Madison, 1969), 207, 268.

Goa on the west coast of present-day India.

On the surface, it may appear overly-ambitious to attempt a study of Africans in the entire Portuguese world, or even a study of Africans in all of Brazil, but this is a study of the beliefs and practices of peoples; not a study of captaincies, colonies, or nation states. By using specific African peoples as the starting point for the study, geographic boundaries have far less meaning. The flux and reflux of African slaves, from Lisbon to Madeira to Bahia and back to Lisbon, was not at all unusual. What concerns me are the social and cultural practices that these African slaves carried with them across the Portuguese world. Indeed, the tenacity of certain core beliefs actually can be measured more effectively across time and space. The pervasiveness of specific African beliefs and practices across the Portuguese world illustrates the essential oneness of peoples, despite the temporal space that separated them.

The chronological watersheds that I use in the dissertation are a reflection of the shifts in the various African "ethnic" streams that I see contributing to the African-Portuguese diaspora. I use the term "ethnic" very generally here to mean any of three broad cultural/linguistic areas along the Atlantic coast of

Africa--Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and Central Africa.⁴ But where possible, in the text, I refer to the very specific ethnic backgrounds and the recreation of distinct practices of that particular people in the diaspora.

The first "ethnic" stream that I discern is the Upper Guinea stream. From 1441, when the first African slaves arrived on Portuguese soil via the Atlantic, until around 1580, slaves from the Upper Guinea coast dominated the slave communities of the Portuguese world. A significant number of these slaves were Islamic, and it is on this facet of their identity that I focus. Around 1580, Upper Guinea was supplanted by Central Africa as the leading producer of Portuguese slaves. As early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, Central Africans were already appearing in Portugal and the Atlantic islands of São Tomé in significant numbers, but it is not until the latter part of the century that we can really begin to talk about a Central African community emerging in the African-Portuguese diaspora. The Central African influence eventually became overwhelming, particularly in seventeenth-century Brazil. From the arrival of the first large shipments of slaves to

⁴ Historian John Thornton has argued persuasively that despite the myriad ethnic groups that existed in the primary slaving areas of Africa, these three cultural/linguistic zones shared much in common, resulting in mutual understandings--shared beliefs, values, etc.--in the slave communities of the Americas. John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680 (Cambridge, 1992), 184-192.

Brazil in the middle of the sixteenth century until the end of our study in 1770, as many as two out of every three slaves who arrived in Brazil were of Central African origin. During the seventeenth century, the percentage was even higher. For that reason, Central African slaves figure more prominently in this study than any other African peoples.

Despite the overall dominance of Central African slaves, around 1700, a significant number of slaves from Lower Guinea began pouring into the northeast of Brazil, and their cultural impact was felt across the Portuguese empire. In places like Bahia, Pernambuco, and even Coimbra, "Mina" slaves significantly changed the complexion of slave communities. Though the Central Africa stream never ceased to be important, by the middle of the eighteenth century, Lower Guinea slaves were asserting their distinct cultural influences in certain areas of the Portuguese world.

The terminal point of this study occurs around 1770, when the "Mina" trade shifted slightly eastward toward the coast of present-day Nigeria, bringing increasing numbers of Yoruba and Hausa slaves to Brazil. The year 1770 also marks the end of the period in Brazilian slave history about which we know the least. Though there is an abundance of work on the African presence in Brazil during the nineteenth century, very few scholars have done work on the years when African slaves were being introduced, first to Portugal and later to Brazil. And even fewer scholars have attempted to

examine the cultures of those Africans who were dispersed across the Portuguese world. Stuart Schwartz's work on sugar plantations in Bahia is perhaps the most important study of early colonial Brazil, and is certainly the most well-known to American readers; but Schwartz's focus is primarily on the economic aspects of sugar production and slavery rather than on the transmission of African cultures to the Americas.⁵

Among the few scholars who have written on the African dimensions of slave culture in Brazil prior to 1770, Luiz Mott, Ronaldo Vainfas, and Laura de Mello e Souza have made the most important contributions.⁶ Mott and Vainfas have done pathbreaking works on the sexuality of African slaves in early colonial Brazil. Mott's work, in particular, does an exemplary job of tracing the same-sex practices of slaves from Africa to Brazil. Mott has also done important studies on slave religion, but he stresses Portuguese-African

⁵ Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 1550-1835 (Cambridge, 1985). For Schwartz's finest work on African culture, see "Rethinking Palmares: Slave Resistance in Colonial Brazil," in Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Urbana, 1992), 103-136.

⁶ See, for instance, Laura de Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz: feitiçaria e religiosidade popular no Brasil colonial, 4th edition (São Paulo, 1994); Luiz R. B. Mott, Escravidão, homossexualidade, e demonologia (São Paulo, 1988); O sexo proibido: escravos, gays, e virgens nas garras da Inquisição (Campinas, 1988) and Ronaldo Vainfas, Trópico dos pecados: moral, sexualidade e Inquisição no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1989).

"syncretism" over specific African beliefs.⁷ Mello e Souza's O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz provides a useful, though one-sided, comparison of Portuguese and African perceptions of witchcraft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Mello e Souza demonstrates clearly that Africans made important contributions to witchcraft discourse in colonial Brazil, but, like Mott, she stresses the syncretism of slave practices, ignoring the continuing centrality of the African past.

By raising questions that originate in Africa rather than in the diaspora, this study departs from most of the works that have been done on the African presence in early slave communities. The central, and most obvious, question that I am raising is: To what extent were specific African cultural practices transferred across the broader diaspora? For our purposes, "culture" includes the customs, ideas, and institutions shared by a particular people--family and kinship formation, childrearing practices, sexual roles, gender roles, language, and especially religious beliefs and cosmologies. Most would agree that religion is one of the most important facets of any culture, revealing the values,

⁷ Luiz R. B. Mott, "Acontundá: raizes setecentistas do sincretismo religioso afro-brasileiro," Revista do Museu Paulista 31 (1986), 124-147; Rosa Egípcia: uma santa Africana no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1993); "Cotidiano e vivência religiosa: entre a capela e o calundu," in História da vida privada no Brasil: cotidiano e vida privada na América Portuguesa, vol. 1, ed. Laura de Mello e Souza (Rio de Janeiro, 1997).

mores, and overall world view of a given community. But this was particularly true for most of the African societies under study here, where the dialogue between the spiritual world and the secular world was continuous and unbroken. Political, social, economic, and cultural ideologies were all animated by a cosmology that bridged the world of the living with the world of the spirits. The relationship between living beings and the spirit world explained temporal conditions and dictated codes of behavior, including responses to misfortunes like slavery.

One of the central arguments made here is that resistance among African slaves did not always manifest itself in the ways that scholars have typically understood such challenges. Africans and their descendants frequently addressed the institution of slavery and its attendant uncertainties and pressures with the most potent weapons at their disposal--not muscle and might, but religion and spirituality. I argue that Africans in seventeenth-century Brazil utilized a variety of specific "Angolan," and especially Mbundu, ritual practices and beliefs--divination, ordeals, ritual burials, dietary restrictions, cures, spiritual cults, and so on--as a way of addressing their oppression. These findings challenge widely-held notions that African slaves were unable to replicate specific African "institutions" in the Americas. African religions were not "syncretic" or "creolized," but were independent

systems of thought that were practiced parallel to Catholicism. When significant "creolization" did occur among Africans beginning in the eighteenth century, it was most salient among Ganguelas and Minas, or Ndembus and Ardas; not between African religions and Catholicism. Finally, I have found that given the difficult nature of life in colonial Brazil, whites were sometimes quick to adopt African religious practices in order to address the secular and temporal needs that prayer and faith could not immediately address. Whites were deeply ambivalent in their acceptance of these African religious practices. African forms were widely embraced for their effectiveness and power, but were publicly repudiated as the work of the Devil. Ultimately, whites accepted certain African religious practices even as they maintained their essential Catholic cores. Like African slaves, whites engaged in parallel religious practices in accordance with their specific spiritual and secular needs.

The dissertation is divided into three sections. In the first four chapters, I discuss slavery and slave life in the Portuguese colonial world, with a particular emphasis on Brazil. I argue that despite the re-creation of African kinship structures and some kin-like institutions, the temporal conditions of slavery--breaks in lineage, stolen childhood, death, disease, hunger, low fertility, and physical abuse--were overwhelming and inescapable. Slaves

re-created communities and kinship structures where they could, but for the most part, they were constrained by their masters' hunger for power and wealth.

The second section addresses the ways Africans used religious beliefs and practices to respond to the abuses and uncertainties that they encountered in their everyday lives. Chapter five looks at the ways Wolof slaves used the oneness of their Islamic faith to forge paths of resistance against their masters in sixteenth-century Portugal. The chapter also examines the contradictions in Portuguese policies toward the religious conversion of African slaves, demonstrating how the Church uncritically accepted conversion to Catholicism as "normal," while rejecting African desires to convert to other religions (Islam, Anglicanism) as "criminal." Chapter six sets a theoretical framework for the chapters that follow it, providing an overview of Central African religious beliefs and world views. Chapters seven, eight, and nine demonstrate how Central Africans actually practiced their religions in the Portuguese world, using divination, curing, and "witchcraft" rituals to address slavery and its attendant misfortunes. These chapters also begin to show how the beliefs of Central Africans continued to flourish, even as new beliefs and practices of Lower Guinea slaves were being introduced into some areas, notably northeast Brazil and parts of Portugal.

Finally, section three attempts to step back and look

at the broader impacts of African religious practices in Brazil during the colonial period. Chapters nine and ten show that Africans and their descendants were very slow to embrace the Catholic faith, and where they did, they often created a distinct brand of African Catholicism. At the same time, I demonstrate that whites, including some priests, were adopting certain African religious practices, in spite of the Church's insistence that African rituals and beliefs were the work of the Devil. These conflicting messages reflected a fracture in the philosophy and teachings of the Catholic Church in Brazil. Some priests remained devoutly orthodox, demanding that their adherents obey the laws of the Roman Church. Other priests encouraged their flocks to engage in parallel African and Catholic religious practices. And still other priests "Africanized" Catholic rituals in order to meet the African religious challenge.

Several words of caution are in order regarding sources and methodology. First, the reader should be aware of the challenges in finding documentation that captures the African cultural past in the early colonial world. Much of the African slave past remains hidden, since the majority of Africans were illiterate, and whites rarely found elements of African culture that they believed were deserving of commentary. This paucity of source material is compounded by the disappearance and deterioration of documents over the

hundreds of years. The passage of time and nature's elements have not been kind to papers that were written three- and four-hundred years ago. The problem of water-damaged, insect-ravaged source materials is particularly acute in Brazil, where the tropical climate has accelerated the process of deterioration. Hence, I think, the greater number of scholarly studies that concentrate on the slave societies of nineteenth-century Brazil.⁸ I have attempted to cast my net as widely as possible in searching for possible sources, but ultimately, this study relies upon a fairly narrow set of documents.

The second caveat involves the types of sources used in this project. The backbone of this study are the records of the Portuguese Inquisition. Scholars of Europe have noted the inherent problems of working with Inquisition records. The atmosphere of hostility and mistrust that was fostered by the various Inquisitions led to numerous false accusations. As a result of these personal attacks, innocent people were sent before the inquisitors, where they often were tortured and forced to confess to crimes that

⁸ Even for the nineteenth century, research on slavery can sometimes be quite difficult. Many of the documents were destroyed after emancipation. In 1890, the abolitionist, Rui Barbosa, ordered that all documents pertaining to slavery housed in the Ministry of the Treasury in Rio de Janeiro be burned. On what survived the conflagrations, see Robert W. Slenes, "O que Rui Barbosa não queimou: novas fontes para o estudo da escravidão no século XIX," Estudos Econômicos 13 (1983), 117-149.

they did not commit. These forced confessions call into question the depth and extent to which certain practices, like witchcraft, actually occurred.

While these concerns are not unimportant to us, we must recognize that many of the very specific African practices described in Inquisition cases can be verified through other sources, both in Africa and the broader diaphora. For instance, by comparing African missionary reports with the Inquisition cases, we can show that Portuguese "witchcraft" charges were actually very specific African religious practices. In addition, we should also recognize that the Inquisition provided African defendants with a forum to speak for themselves in denunciations, confessions, and interrogations. Often, we see Africans making direct references to their African pasts. Finally, we must recognize that African practices were not a particular concern for the Inquisition in Portugal. Indeed, the primary focus of the Inquisition was converted Jews, who were called New Christians. Though many African religious practices were denounced to the Inquisition, especially in Brazil, very few cases were actually turned into *processos* and brought to a full trial. Torture and coercion were rarely a part of the equation in those Inquisition cases where Africans were named.

I should stress that this is not a study of the Inquisition or the institutions of the Catholic Church. Nor

is it a study of any of the other prominent players in the Portuguese world during this period--Native Americans, Indians, Gypsies, Moors, New Christians, etc. These are important topics, to be sure, but they are not my primary concern here. I discuss the Inquisition and the Church insofar as they impact the lives of Africans and their immediate descendants, but I am more interested in the religious practices of Africans themselves. I examine other people's practices where they intersected with those of Africans, but only through an African lens. The reader should not take my neglect of these Western institutions and other peoples to be a statement on their inferior place in the formation of the colonial world. I am simply trying to tell the story of my subjects, as far as possible, from an African perspective, revealing their joys, their pains, and their fears through their own very distinct cultural prisms.

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Chapter 1

Demography, Distribution, and Diasporic Streams

For most historians of the Portuguese colonial world, African slavery begins and ends in Brazil. Little has been written about Portuguese involvement in the enslavement of African peoples for the period prior to 1550.¹ However, any study of the large-scale slave economy which emerged in Brazil in the seventeenth century must first seek an understanding of the economic and social antecedents that facilitated this growth. The enslavement of African peoples was not a phenomenon peculiar to the Americas, and neither was the form of racism that became part and parcel of those societies. Plantation slavery and the racist attitudes that legitimized it had their roots in Europe and the Atlantic islands of Madeira, São Tomé, Cape Verde, and the Canary Islands. In order to fully appreciate the evolution of the economies and attitudes that became fixed in the Americas, we must first understand their origins. This chapter outlines the broad contours of European and Atlantic variants of racism and slavery and provides a general portrait of slave society in colonial Brazil. Throughout the chapter, suggestions are made as to how shifts in

¹ The one outstanding exception is A.C. de C.M. Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441-1550 (Cambridge, 1982).

demography and the nature of slave work affected and shaped the production of African cultures.

In the medieval period, Portugal found itself at the intersection of two competing worlds. From as early as 711 the Iberian peninsula was the battle ground of Muslim and Christian warriors, not only a pugilistic battle ground, but also an ideological one. During the almost 800 years of struggle, however, there were long periods of relative peace in which the competing factions shared scholarship, ideas, and broad cultural understandings. Among the ideas that appear to have been shared were those relating to the meanings and uses of slavery. The Portuguese needed no instruction on the utility of slavery. Indeed, the enslavement of Muslim prisoners of war was a common feature of Portuguese medieval society. Nonetheless, there is some evidence which suggests that the Portuguese slowly began to adopt the prototypical image of the Muslim slave--the black African.

By the ninth century, Muslims were making distinctions between black and white slaves. These invidious distinctions are best reflected in the two Arabic words for slave. The word *'abd*, the traditional word for slave, embodied its legal meaning, but in the popular dialect, European slaves came to be called *mamluks*. The white *mamluk* commanded a higher price than the black *'abd* because he could bring a substantial Christian ransom or be exchanged

for a Muslim captive.² The differing treatment of white and black slaves reflected their relative worth. The *mamluk* was viewed as an investment to protect, whereas the '*abd*'s value was based on his labor as an expendable means of production. Wherever there was back-breaking work to be done in the Arab world, black slaves were made to do it. From ninth-century Iraqi land reclamation projects to fourteenth-century Saharan salt and copper mines, black Africans toiled under the worst conditions.³ White slaves were rarely assigned to such arduous tasks; they were usually household servants. This early distinction, which identified blacks as subordinate Others, was not limited to slaves. Free blacks were also known as '*abid* (the plural form of '*abd*'). For the emancipated slave, '*abd* no longer carried its legal stigma, but the color distinction was no less pernicious.

² Bernard Lewis, Race and Color in Islam (New York, 1971), 63-64; Leon Carl Brown, "Color in Northern Africa," in Color and Race, ed. John Hope Franklin (Boston, 1968), 193.

³ For a study of a slave revolt involving thousands of black slaves used in the land reclamation projects of Iraq, see Alexandre Popovic, La Révolte des esclaves en Iraq au III/IX siècles (Paris, 1976). For a report of 30,000 blacks slaves engaged in agricultural pursuits in eleventh-century Bahrain, see Nassiri Khosrau, Sefer Nameh, trans. Charles Sefer (Paris, 1881). For a description of black slaves mining gold and precious stones in the northern Nilotic Sudan from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, see Yusuf Fadl Hasan, The Arabs and the Sudan: From the Seventh to the Early Sixteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1967), 44-58. For black slaves in the salt and copper mines of the Sahara during the fourteenth century, see Ibn Battuta, Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, ed. and trans. Said Hamdun and Noël King (London, 1975), 23, 32, 56, 58.

Opportunities for free blacks were limited to such lowly occupations as butchers and bath attendants. Thus, even in freedom the black African performed the tasks of a social and ethnic inferior. From North Africa to Persia, blackness was equated with slavery ('*abid*) and the degradation that slavery implied.⁴

The racial imagery created by Muslim thinkers only served to reinforce the subordinate position of Africans in Muslim society.⁵ The curse of Noah was invoked by several Muslim scholars as justification for their position in society. Islamic interpretations of Noah's curse varied, but the tenth-century Persian historian, Tabari, presented a typically racial response. In what is considered the major Arabic historical work of the period, Tabari wrote:

Ham begot all blacks and people with crinkly hair. Yafit [Japheth] all who have broad faces and small eyes (that is, the Turkic peoples) and Sam [also called "Shem" or "Sem," the mythical ancestor of the "Semites"] all who have beautiful faces and beautiful hair (that is, the Arabs and Persians); Noah put a

⁴ William McKee Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the 'Sons of Ham,'" The American Historical Review 85 (1980), 29-31.

⁵ For examples of this, see James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Series, LIV (1997), 146-148.

curse on Ham, according to which the hair of his descendants would not extend over their ears and they would be enslaved wherever they were encountered.⁶

In Muslim cosmology, the sub-Saharan African emerged as the son of Ham, destined to perpetual servitude. The Hamitic curse provided justification for the increasing debasement of sub-Saharan Africans. Muslim vilification of blacks was constantly being refined as blackness and slavery became synonymous.

Muslims came to view slavery as the condition that best suited sub-Saharan Africans. It had been an integral part of Islamic society since the religion's beginnings. Even the Prophet Mohammed was a slaveholder, and Muslim teaching associated slavery with nonbelief, making the "heathen" condition an excuse for enslavement. The black pagans of sub-Saharan Africa were the most vulnerable to Muslim conquest and enslavement for several reasons. First, Islamic law prohibited the enslavement of freeborn Muslims. Moreover, no Christian or Jew living under the protection of an Islamic government could be legally enslaved. Sources of servile labor had to be found outside of those lands living peacefully under Islamic rule. Until the late Middle Ages,

⁶ Abu-Ga'far Muhammed b. Garir a-Tabari, Ta'rih ar-rusal wa'l-muluk, ed. J. De Goeje (Leiden, 1879), 223, quoted in Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea," 33.

captives were taken from north of the Mediterranean and south of the Sahara. When European political stability and military organization began to provide a formidable threat to Muslim dominance after the eleventh century, the ethnically fragmented nations of Africa were a more inviting target for human exploitation.⁷ Blackness quickly became a metaphor for servitude, and the curse of Ham legitimized the continued subjugation of black Africans.

Over time, Iberian Christians became acquainted with the Muslim system of black slavery and adopted the same sets of symbols and myths, with additional arguments. Not only were blacks not Christians, but they were the Muslims' servants, the heathen's heathen, doubly cursed by their status as nonbelievers and by their servile condition. The blackness of the sub-Saharan Africans contrasted more sharply with white Iberians than it did with tawny-colored Muslims, who constituted the majority of the Muslim population in Iberia and North Africa. The invidious perception of difference, expressed in language that

⁷ By the eleventh century, the decline in the numbers of Slavic slaves arriving in Iberia might have precipitated a steady shift to African slavery. In addition, some scholars suggest that the Saharan trade in black Africans shifted toward Morocco during this period, thereby significantly increasing the number of sub-Saharan Africans available for purchase in Muslim Iberia. See Olivia Remie Constable, Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain: The Commercial Realignment of the Iberian Peninsula, 900-1500 (Cambridge, 1994), 206, and Michael Brett, "Ifriqiya as a Market for Saharan Trade from the 10th Century to the 12th Century AD," Journal of African History 10 (1969), 347-364.

suggested black inferiority, became refined and sharpened by Muslims, Jews, and Christians of Iberian origin.

During the period of Muslim domination of Spain and Portugal, Christians, who already equated color with religious infidelity, were well disposed to adopt the color prejudice of neighboring Muslims. The enslavement of black Africa's children was so well-established among Andalusia's Muslim community that, in the thirteenth century, the poet Ibn Sahl welcomed the beginning of spring with the following verse: "Spring has come, with his whites and his blacks; Two classes, his lords and his slaves."⁸ How much of the racist ideology Iberian Christians actually internalized is difficult to measure. We do know that Latin texts of this early period adopted the Muslim distinction between light-skinned and dark-skinned slaves, thereby distinguishing the black as the Other. Light-skinned Muslim slaves were referred to as *sarracenus*, and dark-skinned ones were called *maurus*.⁹ In addition to the religious and cultural

⁸ Ibn Sahl al-Andalusi, Diwan, vol. 10 (Cairo, 1344/1926), 108, quoted in Bernard Lewis, Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry (Oxford, 1990), 90.

⁹ Charles Verlinden, The Beginnings of Modern Colonization: Eleven Essays with an Introduction, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Ithaca, 1970), 37. *Sarracenus* sometimes referred to all slaves including blacks; seventh-century Catholic scholar and archbishop of Seville, Isidore, wrote that *maurus* meant black. James E. Brunson and Runoko Rashidi, "The Moors in Antiquity," in Golden Age of the Moor, ed. Ivan Van Sertima (New York, 1992), 27.

differences between Christians and Muslims, Christians now made distinctions based strictly on "race" that appear with increasing frequency after the beginning of the fourteenth century. As early as 1332, documents relating to the sales of slaves show Christians differentiating white from black Moors.¹⁰ Combined with a growing literature that described Africa and its inhabitants as lacking in government, religion, and "civility," these distinctions clearly marked the African as an inferior Other.

While Christian Iberia inherited and embraced many of the negative Muslim perceptions regarding the capacities of black Africans, other factors also contributed to the growth of the African slave trade to Iberia in the second half of the fifteenth century. When the Christian conquests came to an end in the 1260s, so too did much of the supply of Muslim slaves captured as prisoners of war along the frontier zones. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the Portuguese Reconquest was completed with the absorption of the Algarve into the southern part of the country, and Portugal no longer shared a border with its Muslim enemies.

¹⁰ One document describes the sale of a "*moro negro de color e capel crespo*." Another document, also from 1332, describes the sale of a "*moro branco de color*." Arquivo Nacional do Torre de Tombo, Convento de Almoester, livro 5, nos. 19, 26. From José da Silva Horta, "A imagem do Africano pelos portugueses antes dos contactos," in O Confronto do Olhar: O encontro dos povos na época das Navegações Portuguesas, Séculos XV e XVI (Lisbon, 1991), 66 n. 23.

Thus, other than the occasional foray across Castilian territory into Granada or into North Africa to purchase or abduct Muslims, the Portuguese were unable to secure a steady supply of slaves. Exacerbating Portuguese isolation, the labor pool was significantly diminished by the Black Death, which ravaged Europe during the middle of the fourteenth century.¹¹

Political shifts in Europe and in Asia also played a small role in Portugal's movement toward Africa. Because the Iberian peninsula was not an integral part of the Mediterranean trade until the fifteenth century, white slaves (as well as other trade goods) were difficult to obtain in Castile, and even more so in Portugal. Though some Caucasian slaves from Russia and the Black Sea were purchased through trade with Aragon, via Castile, the Portuguese were mostly left to their own devices in their search for sources of labor. In any case, the trade in Caucasian slaves from the east was curtailed when the only remaining bastion of Christian control over the Black Sea fell to the Ottoman Turks at Constantinople in 1453 and Ivan the Great rose to power in Russia in 1462. The Turks restricted the sale of light-skinned Muslims to western traders on religious grounds, and the emergence of a strong

¹¹ Charles Verlinden, L'esclavage dans l'Europe Médiévale Péninsule Ibérique--France, vol. 1 (Bruges, 1955), 546-548.

leader in Russia ultimately translated into state protection from slave raids.¹²

Before the mid-fifteenth century, the Portuguese showed no clear preference for either white or black slaves. The majority of Portuguese slaves were tawny brown, reflecting the Arab, African, and European genetic composition of Muslim North Africa. But the subordination of blacks due to racial and cultural factors had long been a feature of Portuguese life. In Portuguese thinking, blacks were suited for slavery. An emerging racial ideology combined with inadequate supplies of servile labor to make sub-Saharan Africans the choice for Portuguese workers.

Responding to the decline in the Portuguese servile population, Portuguese kings began commissioning slavers as early as 1317. In that year, King Diniz granted command of the kingdom's maritime fleet to the Italian slaver Manuel Pesagno, a Genoese captain licensed to course the Moroccan coast and entitled to one-fifth of all persons captured.¹³ By 1341, five years after the Genoese sailor Lanzarote Malocello first landed on the island that now bears his name, King Afonso IV of Portugal declared that the Canary Islands were subject to Portuguese rule, and he dispatched

¹² Evans, "From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea," 37-38.

¹³ Charles Verlinden, L'esclavage dans l'Europe Médiévale Ibérique--France, 593.

a slave-raiding expedition to the islands. By the beginning of the sixteenth century the indigenous Guanche of the Canary Islands were practically extinct due to the ravages of warfare, disease, and slave-raiding, but not before they were dispatched in large numbers to the Algarve (1404) and the Madeiras (1440s) to work on Portugal's burgeoning sugar plantations.¹⁴

The introduction of sugar cane cultivation, first to Portugal and then to the Atlantic islands, further stimulated the Portuguese search for slaves. In 1441, after a series of exploratory missions down the West African coast sponsored by the Portuguese crown, Antão Gonçalves and Nuno Tristão met near the coast of Mauritania and decided that they must not return home without some sort of profitable cargo. Their decision to take human captives marked the beginning of the nearly 450 year history of the Atlantic slave trade. Landing near Cape Blanc, they led a party of men who made a night attack on a Berber settlement. Four Africans were killed and ten others were taken prisoner. The Portuguese royal chronicler, Gomes Eanes de Zurara, described the people as "barbarous and bestial...cunning."¹⁵

¹⁴ George E. Brooks, Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630 (Boulder, CO, 1993), 122.

¹⁵ Gomes Eanes de Zurara, Conquests and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator, trans. Bernard Miall (London, 1936), 149.

The ten captives were taken to Portugal, where one of them promised that if he were returned to Africa, the Portuguese would receive five or six slaves in exchange for his freedom. He also promised that the same rate of exchange would apply to two of the other captives. Gonçalves ultimately received ten slaves and a small amount of gold in exchange for the three men, the first negotiated trade of slaves between Europeans and peoples from the west coast of Africa.

Lançarote de Freitas's delivery of 235 Berber and "blackamoor"¹⁶ slaves from Guinea in 1444 was the first large cargo of black slaves to arrive on Portuguese soil. Zurara commented at length on the condition of the human cargoes. As the slaves disembarked,

it was truly a thing astonishing to behold; for among them were some wellnigh white, who were handsome and well made in body; others were black as Ethiopians, and so uncomely, as well as countenance as in body that those who were guarding them thought they beheld the creatures of the lower hemisphere...Some held their heads bowed down and their faces were bathed with tears; others were groaning grievously, lifting their

¹⁶ Leslie B. Rout, Jr., The African Experience in Spanish America, 1502 to the Present Day (New York, 1976), 10.

eyes to the heavens, fixing them upon the heights, and raising an outcry as though imploring the Father of Nature to succour them.¹⁷

Though Zurara was clearly troubled by what he observed, his juxtaposition of white beauty and black repulsiveness was a precursor to his explanation for the enslavement of Africans:

having left the country in which they were dwelling to the perdition of their souls and bodies, they had now all things to the contrary. I say perdition of their souls, because they were pagans without the light or flame of the holy faith; and of their bodies, because they lived like beasts, without any of the customs of rational creatures, since they did not even know what were bread and wine, nor garments of cloth, nor life in the shelter of a house; and worse still was their ignorance, which deprived them of knowledge of good, and permitted them only a life of brutish idleness.¹⁸

Zurara employed a European measure of morality and civility,

¹⁷ Zurara, Conquests and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator, trans. Miall, 169-170.

¹⁸ Zurara, Conquests and Discoveries of Henry the Navigator, trans. Miall, 173.

declaring that the West Africans "lived like beasts" in part because of their blackness. Equating the black body with bestiality was necessarily pejorative. Zurara's extended definition of the beast provides enormous insight into the cultural judgments Iberians applied to black Africans. According to Zurara, slavery liberated the Africans from their bestial condition, introducing them to Christianity and European "culture."

After the spectacle described by Zurara, slaves were taken from Africa with increasing regularity. Rising demand in Portugal, Spain, and especially the Atlantic islands meant increasing profits for merchants and traders, and settlements expanded along the African coast to support the trade. After several military defeats at the hands of coastal African nations, the Portuguese abandoned armed action in favor of peaceful trade as a means of obtaining slave labor.¹⁹ By 1448, the first permanent trading post was established on the island of Arguim, just off the coast of Mauritania. In 1466, Santiago in the Cape Verde islands had become a center of trade with Upper Guinea from Senegal to Cape Palmas. And in 1482, the first slave fort, São Jorge da Mina, on the coast of present-day Ghana, allowed the Portuguese to extend the boundaries of their trade in

¹⁹ For a recent analysis of the Portuguese trade in Africa, see Ivana Elbl, "Cross-Cultural Trade and Diplomacy: Portuguese Relations with West Africa, 1441-1521," Journal of World History, 3 (1992), 165-204.

human cargoes as far south as Kongo and Angola.

During these formative years of the slave trade, the Portuguese undoubtedly were influenced by the attitudes of their Muslim trading partners along the Saharan littoral. Not an insignificant number of sub-Saharan Africans toiled in salt mines, worked in fields, and tended herds on the Saharan frontier.²⁰ The diminished status of black Africans must have been clear to the Portuguese in both the cultural and religious practices of the Muslims. We have already discussed some of the negative racial stereotypes that characterized Muslim thought regarding black "pagans." In addition, light-skinned Muslims along the West African coast ignored their own religious canon by enslaving black Muslims. In 1392, the black king of Bornu (in present-day northern Nigeria) wrote the sultan of Egypt protesting against the pillage of this land and the enslavement of his people. Even though his people were free Muslims, the Arabs took his "people as merchandise" and sold them to slave dealers. In his appeal, the king noted that his nation was

²⁰ Estimates of the average number of sub-Saharan slaves that flowed from south to north and west to east along the trans-Saharan trade routes from 700-1500 range from 1000-6000 per year. Admittedly, these approximations are based on spotty literary and commercial records. Ralph A. Austen estimates that over four million slaves were transported across the Sahara during this period. Austen, "The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade: A Tentative Census," in The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, eds. Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (New York, 1979), 23-76.

founded by an Arab, thereby proving his people's Muslim authenticity.²¹ The problem of Arab Muslims illegally enslaving black Muslims persisted throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and even into the nineteenth century in West Africa, provoking commentary from Islamic jurists and historians alike.²² That some of these captured Muslims were sent to Portugal via Arguim seems likely given the diversion of the trans-Saharan trade to Arguim by the 1450s and the Portuguese reliance on Arab trading partners. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the Portuguese saw the maltreatment of blacks (Muslim or pagan) by Muslims and acted similarly, even adopting the same racial justifications as their Muslim trading partners along the West African coast. In their attitudes toward blacks, the Portuguese followed where Arab Muslim slavers had led.

Despite all of this, the crucial difference between Muslim and Portuguese variants of racial ideology was that Muslim racism was constantly subject to scrutiny by jurists and scholars. In addition, Islamic law prohibited the enslavement of other Muslims, including blacks. Despite the recurrent enslavement of black adherents to the Islamic faith, there were numerous examples of autonomous black

²¹ Al-Qalqashandi, Subh al-A'sha, vol. 8 (Cairo, 1313-1319/1895-1901), 116-117, quoted in Lewis, Race and Slavery in the Middle East, 53.

²² Lewis, Race and Slavery in the Middle East, 57-58.

Islamic kingdoms in West Africa. The Muslims created a plethora of racist ideas, but it was the Iberians who, in conjunction with a rising demand for slave labor, turned these ideas into a coherent ideology.

The Demography of Slave Culture in the Portuguese Colonial World, 1441-1770

During the period under study, there were four distinct phases of the slave trade to the Portuguese world which shaped the cultural production of African slaves. Each coincided roughly with the turn of a new century. During the initial phases of the Portuguese slave trade from 1441 to 1521, scholars are now suggesting that as many as 156,000 slaves were exported from the African coast to Iberia and the Atlantic islands.²³ The trade experienced a remarkable growth during the period, with the annual volume more than doubling between 1450-1465 and 1480-1499, from 900 slaves per year to around 2,200. The volume doubled yet again in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The majority of the slaves came from Mauritania during the first 25 years of

²³ It should be noted that the Portuguese were also facilitators of the slave trade within Africa during this period. Between 1500 and 1535, the Portuguese transported 10,000 to 12,000 slaves across the Bight of Benin, selling slaves from the Slave Coast to the Akan peoples of the Gold Coast. In return for these Igbo and Benin slaves, the Akan offered gold, ivory, and pepper, which Portuguese traders carried on to Portugal. John Iliffe, Africans: The History of a Continent (Cambridge, 1995), 129.

the trade, but by around 1465, Mauritania was overtaken by the Upper Guinea coast as the primary source of Portuguese slave labor.²⁴

The second phase of the slave trade commenced around 1518, when the trade began to shift from Europe and the Atlantic islands to the Americas. In August of 1518, the king of Spain granted Lorenzo de Gomenot the right to transport 4,000 Africans to Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico "direct from the isles of Guinea and other regions from which they are wont to bring the said negros."²⁵ Prior to this time, slaves were required to pass through their respective metropolises--Spain and Portugal--to be taxed and "seasoned" before being sent to the Americas. Though the Portuguese would not begin shipping large numbers

²⁴ Ivana Elbl, "The Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade, 1450-1521," Journal of African History 38 (1997), 31-75. The volume of the slave trade up to the early part of the sixteenth century has been the subject of a great deal of guesswork on the part of scholars. Philip D. Curtin's classic study, The Atlantic Slave Trade suggests that only 78,000 slaves arrived in foreign ports before 1525, half of the volume suggested by Elbl. Elbl's is the first study to utilize quantitative archival sources in an attempt to estimate the volume of the trade. Using customs records and tax records, she provides the most convincing argument yet posited on the volume of the early trade. For other estimates, see Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, Os Descobrimentos e a economia mundial, vol. 4 (Lisbon, 1981), 161; Charles Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825 (London, 1969), 31; José Ramos Tinharão, Os Negros em Portugal. Uma presença silenciosa (Lisbon, 1988), 80.

²⁵ Elizabeth Donnan, ed. Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, 4 vols. (Washington, 1930-1935), vol. 1, 42.

of Africans to their colony in Brazil until the second half of the sixteenth century, this shift in trade directly to the Americas represented a profitable new focus in the trade in human beings, one which would see more than 100,000 slaves arriving in Spanish America before 1600.²⁶

Paralleling the rise of slavery in Spanish America was the growth of the slave population on the Portuguese island of São Tomé. Philip Curtin has estimated that more than 75,000 slaves were imported into São Tomé during the sixteenth century.²⁷ But unlike those slaves arriving in Spanish America, the overwhelming majority of those arriving in São Tomé were from Central Africa. Though slaves from the Senegambia and the Upper Guinea coast still continued to dominate the overall trade, small numbers of Central Africans began making their way to the Americas. By the last decade of the sixteenth century, Central Africa had become the primary source of America's slave labor.

The third phase of the slave trade began in the 1580s with the entry of large numbers of Central Africans, a trend which continued well into the eighteenth century. This

²⁶ Colin A. Palmer, Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650 (Cambridge, MA, 1976), 13-30. Also see Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "The large-scale introduction of Africans into Veracruz and Cartagena," in Vera Rubin and Arthur Tuden, eds., Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies (New York, 1977), 267-280.

²⁷ Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, 116. Curtin estimates that 76,100 slaves entered São Tomé prior to 1600.

shift can be attributed primarily to a series of wars in that region that were first initiated by the Portuguese army and its allies. The first great wave of slave exports from Angola came during the Portuguese battles with the Ndongo in 1579-1580, a series of skirmishes in which the Portuguese were nearly driven out of the region. As the Portuguese established a foothold over the Ndongo around the turn of the century, these wars expanded to the east and eventually included the participation of various combinations of Portuguese, Matamba, Kasanje, Ndembu, Mbwila, Kisama, and Benguela soldiers. Warfare resulted in large numbers of prisoners of war who were sold into slavery. This eastward expansion continued through the 1680s and eventually included Lunda slaves by the 1700s. In addition to those slaves captured in the Angolan wars, the Kongo civil wars (1665-1718) also contributed large numbers of captives who were shipped to the Americas.²⁸

The impact of these captives on Brazilian society was immeasurable. During the seventeenth century Curtin estimates that 560,000 slaves arrived in Brazil, the vast

²⁸ David Birmingham, Trade and Conflict in Angola: The Mbundu and their Neighbors Under the Influence of the Portuguese, 1483-1790 (Oxford, 1966); John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 100-101, 114-115, 120-122; Joseph C. Miller, Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830 (Madison, 1988), 140-169. For the Kongo civil wars, see John Thornton, The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718 (Madison, 1983).

majority coming from Central Africa, and especially the port of Luanda. Brazil became the world's largest sugar producer during the period, and the colony's association with sugar and slavery was memorialized in the common expression, "whoever says sugar says Brazil and whoever says Brazil says Angola."²⁹ Angolan primacy in the Brazilian slave trade was not threatened until the 1680s and 1690s when the supply of slaves reaching the port of Luanda was slowed by an unusually severe period of drought, famine, and disease.³⁰ Brazilian merchants from Bahia and Pernambuco reacted by shifting the focus of their trade to the so-called Costa da Mina centered at present-day Benin. There, they initiated a trade in Bahian tobacco that brought large numbers of Mina slaves to Bahia in the first decades of the eighteenth century. This trade became more regular after gold was discovered at Minas Gerais and captives were needed to mine the ore. Mina slaves continued to be the preferred labor force in the northeast of Brazil until well into the eighteenth century.

The introduction of significant numbers of Mina slaves to Brazil beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century constitutes the fourth phase of the trade and marks an important watershed in the history of Brazilian slavery.

²⁹ Stuart B. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 339.

³⁰ Miller, Way of Death, 452.

Until this time, with the exception of a brief period in the sixteenth century, slaves from Central Africa dominated the servile population in Brazil. During the first three decades of the eighteenth century, imports of Mina slaves outnumbered those of Angola slaves 246,600 to 192,400, with the majority of Minas destined for Pernambuco, Bahia, and Minas Gerais.³¹ In terms of overall numbers of Africans in the Brazilian slave population, Angolans continued to dominate through 1770 and beyond. Even in the northeast of Brazil during the eighteenth century, better than one-quarter of slave imports continued to come from Central Africa.³² Nevertheless, the Mina stream of the African slave trade would leave an indelible cultural imprint on the Brazilian landscape and begin the process of creating a creolized "African" population. Not until around 1770 would the Mina trade shift further down the African coast toward Porto Novo and Lagos in present-day Nigeria. Increasing numbers of Yoruba (Mina-Nago) slaves were sold as a result of the civil wars in Yorubaland, introducing yet another cultural stream to Brazilian slave society.

In summary, the history of African slave trade in the Portuguese colonial world until 1770 can be broken down into

³¹ Curtin, The Atlantic Slave Trade, 207. From 1730-1770, Angolan imports recovered, outnumbering Mina imports 488,800 to 196,400, a rate of better than 2:1.

³² Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 341.

four distinct periods. The first, from 1441-1521, was characterized by the importation of slaves from Senegambia and Upper Guinea to Iberia and the Atlantic islands. The second period, beginning in 1521 and ending in the 1580s, continued to be dominated by slaves from Senegambia and the Upper Guinea coast of Africa, but the trade began a rapid shift toward the Americas. In addition, the Guinea stream was joined by a pronounced stream of Central Africans to the island of São Tomé. The third period, beginning in the 1580s and continuing until the 1690s, was characterized by the overwhelming presence of Central Africans, and particularly Angolans, in the Brazilian slave population. During the final period, from the 1690s until around 1770, parallel streams of slaves from Central Africa and the Mina coast contributed to the social and cultural landscapes of slave society in Brazil, sometimes creating an "African" oneness from shared understandings of broad core beliefs.

Having defined these trading watersheds, we should post several words of caution. First, the markers outlined here should not be viewed as fixed. Since we are most interested in measuring the process of social and cultural changes over time, it must be recognized that most of these processes took place gradually, defying any neat chronological compartmentalization. The second cautionary note applies to the terms employed to describe various African ethnic groups. While I am keenly aware of the enormous diversity

in language and culture represented by the numerous ethnic groups which comprised the Brazilian slave population, I am not prepared to view these differences as barriers, or even major obstacles, in the re-creation of African cultural forms in the Americas. John Thornton has demonstrated convincingly that despite the myriad ethnic groups that make up West Africa, the Atlantic coast of the continent can be divided into just three distinct cultural zones with shared linguistic and cultural understandings. The first of these cultural zones, the Upper Guinea, stretches from the Senegal River down to an area just south of Cape Mount in present-day Liberia, and includes among other ethnic groups the Wolof, Fula, Mandinga, and Biafara, precisely those ethnic groups that dominated the slave populations of sixteenth-century Portugal and Brazil. The second zone, known as Lower Guinea, extends roughly from Cape Palmas to the Bight of Biafra. This zone can be further split into two sub-groups: the Akan, in the west, and the Aja, in the east. The majority of slaves from the region who arrived in Brazil in the eighteenth century came from the Aja group (Ardas, Yoruba, Edo, and Igbo). But for our purposes, I have adopted the contemporary term "Mina," unless a more narrow ethnic designation is given. Finally, the third zone was the "Angola" coast of Central Africa, the area from which the largest number of Brazilian slaves originated. Thornton stresses that the cultural and linguistic similarities

within this region were greater than in any other part of Africa from which slaves were drawn. Indeed, contemporary observers noted that the differences between the major linguistic groups, Kikongo and Kimbundu, were no greater than those between Spanish and Portuguese. Only in matters of politics were the peoples from the Angola region truly diverse.³³

The Contours of Slavery and Work in the Portuguese World

Before beginning our examination of African cultures in the Portuguese world, we will look briefly at the texture of everyday life and work for slaves, using Portugal, São Tomé, and Brazil as our primary examples. The first slaves who arrived in Portugal in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, though small in number and usually not subject to the arduous rigors of plantation labor that American slaves would experience, still suffered many of the same indignities that their descendants would endure in the Americas. Growing steadily throughout the period, the slave population of Portugal was confined mostly to the southern

³³ Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 184-192. While adhering to Thornton's conception of African cultural zones throughout this work, I will try, with as much precision as is allowed by the documents, to narrow as many ethnic definitions as possible. It should be noted that even in those cases where colonial authorities delineated a more narrow ethnic identity for a slave, these ethnicities were often reflective of the ethnic group from whom the slave was purchased, and not necessarily the ethnic group from which the slave derived.

and urban areas of the country. By 1550, Lisbon was estimated to have a population of nearly ten thousand slaves, around ten percent of the city's population, the majority of whom came from the Senegambia region. The city of Évora and the Algarve region also had slave populations of around ten percent, while other areas had fewer slaves.³⁴ African slaves engaged in a wide range of coerced work, from personal body servants to land clearers and marsh drainers. Urban slaves worked as apprentices in trades such as barber and shoemaker, earning money for their masters, while rural slaves worked as herdsmen, grape pickers, and in the production of olive oil.³⁵

The level of discomfort in the daily lives of Portugal's African captives varied according to the nature of their work and the attitudes of their masters; however some were treated quite cruelly. Chaining, whipping, and burning with hot wax were not unusual punishments for those accused of being derelict in their duties. Africans were particularly susceptible to European diseases and were no doubt among the first to succumb during periods of plague. Africans' lives were further restricted by laws which prohibited the gathering of groups of slaves and imposed

³⁴ A.C. de C.M. Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 47-61.

³⁵ Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 62-88.

night-time curfews. In short, slaves' lives were severely circumscribed.³⁶

While slave life in Portugal was by no means benign, the rigors of life there paled in comparison to the hardships that African slaves were beginning to encounter on Portugal's new sugar islands. Since the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had been exploring the possibilities of sugar production on their Atlantic island colonies. Attempts to produce sugar in the Azores in the 1440s were largely a failure due to variations in climate, but the islands of Madeira proved to be far more fruitful. Using a mixed labor force of Africans, mulattoes, and Guanches (Canary Islanders), planters on Madeira became the largest sugar producers in the western world by the end of the fifteenth century. Though plantation sizes remained relatively small compared to the *engenhos* which would emerge in São Tomé and Brazil, it was quickly understood that sugar production, on the backs of slave laborers, had a promising future in the Portuguese colonial world.³⁷

Attempts also were made to foster sugar production in the Cape Verde islands in the latter part of the fifteenth century, but poor climate and raids by Castilians insured

³⁶ Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 105-112, 120-122.

³⁷ Virginia Rau and Jorge de Macedo, eds. O açúcar de Madeira nos fins do século xv (Funchal, 1962).

that the Cape Verdes would remain small players in the production of sugar. During the sixteenth century the islands emerged as an entrepôt in the Atlantic slave trade, provisioning slave ships destined for the African coast and serving as a market for slave exports from the Guinea coast. Unfazed by the relative failures of the Azores and Cape Verdes, the Portuguese forged ahead in their search for a colony more conducive to the production of sugar. During the sixteenth century, São Tomé became the first true "sugar society" whose very creation and economic sustenance rested solely upon the backs of African slaves.

Sugar was introduced to São Tomé in the late fifteenth century by growers from Madeira. Unlike Portugal's other island colonies, São Tomé's hot, damp, climate was conducive to large-scale sugar production. By the 1550s, the island had between sixty and eighty engenhos which produced a total 150,000 arrobas (2,150 tons) of sugar per year.³⁸ The average sugar *fazenda* (farm) had between 100 and 300 slaves, for a total slave labor force of as many as 12,000 for the entire island.³⁹

The slaves, the majority of whom came from Central Africa, were subject to arduous conditions, especially in the latter part of the sixteenth century when competition

³⁸ Robert Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island, 1470-1655" (PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 1971), 52.

³⁹ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 59.

from Brazilian sugar planters forced São Tomé's planters to maximize the production of their labor force. In the early part of the century, each slave "family" had its own wooden hut. Slaves were required to provide their own housing, food, and clothing, with only Saturdays free for these pursuits.⁴⁰ By the end of the century, these conditions had deteriorated to such a degree that slaves were locked in their houses at night and were not even granted the free day to tend to their own affairs. Such treatment prompted one witness to comment that the slaves were treated "worse than cattle."⁴¹

In addition to poor material conditions, slaves suffered extreme forms of abuse at the hands of their masters. Since slave labor was so inexpensive and the supply on the nearby African coast was seemingly endless, it was not unusual for slaves to be killed by their masters. The expendable nature of the African labor force is best illustrated by one planter who simply threw his disobedient slaves into the sea to drown.⁴² In law, these murders were to be treated as crimes, but in practice, most were simply

⁴⁰ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 60-62.

⁴¹ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 64, quoted from J. Cuvalier and Louis Jadin, "L'Ancien Congo d'après des archives Romains," Memoires du Institut Royal Colonial Belge; section des sciences morales et politique 36 (1954), 154-155 (report of Bishop Ulhoa, c. 1590).

⁴² Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 29.

ignored until the middle of the sixteenth century when Bishop Gaspar Cão instituted a 2\$000 fine for each murdered slave.⁴³

Health conditions were also abysmal. The diets of slaves were limited largely to small portions of bread, corn, oil, and herbs. Slave huts were infested with fleas and lice. As a remedy for the various fevers, venereal diseases, and pox that plagued the island, Africans resorted to drinks of alum and lime plaster mixed with the "juices of certain roots." Slaves also adopted the Portuguese habits of bleeding and purging. Despite the constant threats to the health of African slaves, they still apparently fared better than the white residents of the island. One observer in the middle of the sixteenth century noted with some hyperbole that "few are the inhabitants who pass the age of fifty years, being an extraordinary thing to see a white man with a white beard: but the negros reach 110 years because the climate is appropriate to their nature."⁴⁴

The response of São Tomé's slave population to the daily hardships that they faced are difficult to measure due

⁴³ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 86. The fine was essentially the equivalent of a slave's purchase price on the coast of Africa at the time.

⁴⁴ "Navegação de Lisboa á Ilha de S. Thome escrita por hum Piloto Portuguez," in Collecção de Noticias para a Historia e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas, que Viven nos Dominios Portuguezes, ou lhes São Visinhas, Vol. 2 (Lisbon, 1812), 102-103.

to a lack of documentation; however, we know that when given the opportunity, slaves often fled to the *mattos*, or densely wooded forests, of the island. One of their favored destinations was the community of *Angolares* on the southeastern end of the island. According to legend, the *Angolares* were ship-wrecked just off the coast of the island on their way from Angola in 1544. The survivors of the wreck swam ashore and settled in the southern hinterlands of the island, building several small villages on Mount Cambumbé. There they continued to speak the language of their Angolan ethnic group, Kimbundu, and to live according to Angolan customs. Almost thirty years passed before the *Angolares* and the island's other inhabitants became aware of one another's existence. The first contact came when runaway slaves sought refuge in the *mattos* and encountered the *Angolares*, who apparently welcomed the runaways into their communities. As the populations grew, they could no longer provide their own resources, and in 1574 the *Angolares* began a series of raids against the Portuguese in order to find food and other provisions, burning plantations and capturing arms in the process. The Portuguese attempted to eradicate the *Angolares*, conducting military expeditions against the villages, but the *Angolares* were never vanquished. Even as late as 1690 they were still conducting

raids against Portuguese towns on the island.⁴⁵ Though the Angolar communities received a steady stream of creolized and West African slaves as they ran away from the fazendas, the linguistic and cultural imprint of Angola persisted in the communities at least until the late nineteenth century.⁴⁶

Despite its rapid development into a slave-based "plantation" society, São Tomé's importance as a sugar producer was short-lived. Though São Tomé easily overtook Madeira as the West's largest sugar producer in the sixteenth century, it simply could not compete with Brazil by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Brazil could produce far greater quantities of sugar than could São Tomé. Where peak production in São Tomé reached 250,000 arrobas a year in the 1580s, Brazil was already producing 600,000 arrobas by 1600.⁴⁷ To make matters worse for São Tomé, the quality of Brazilian sugar was far superior to that produced

⁴⁵ Francisco Tenreiro, A Ilha de São Tomé (Lisbon, 1961), 72-73; Fernando Castelo-Branco, "Subsídios para o estudo dos 'angolares' de S. Tomé," Studia 33 (1971), 149-159; Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 56-57.

⁴⁶ Almada Negreiros, História Ethnographica da Ilha de S. Thomé (Lisbon, 1895), 296-300. Negreiros notes that in the late 1800s the Angolar was still a "fetichist and superstitious like the negro from Angola," and that their language was a mix of São Tomé dialect and Kimbundu. The community also held property in common and elected a king and a number of chiefs.

⁴⁷ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 126. For Brazil see Stuart Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 165.

on the island. Because of a more favorable climate for drying the sugar, Brazilians could produce a fine, white sugar, while the São Toméans could only manufacture a sticky, brown variety full of impurities. Finally, social unrest and political instability on the island, as well as attacks by the Dutch, undermined many of its economic initiatives.⁴⁸

Even as São Tomé was driven from the market as a major sugar producer, it continued to play an important role in the African slave trade. More so than Cape Verde, it became a major entrepôt in the trade, emerging as the primary holding point for slaves waiting to be shipped to the Americas. Initially utilized as a provision point in the trade between Portugal and the Congo, by the 1530s São Tomé was beginning to export slaves directly to the Spanish West Indies; and by century's end, slave trading had become more profitable than sugar production. Ironically, one of São Tomé's most important partners in the slave trade was the very colony which was forcing it out of the sugar business--Brazil. Slaves purchased by São Toméan traders on the African coast for 2\$000 sold in Brazil for as much as 20\$000.⁴⁹ The trade in São Toméan slaves was interrupted by

⁴⁸ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 53-56.

⁴⁹ Garfield, "A History of São Tomé Island," 127, suggests that slave prices in Brazil were 10\$000, however Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 70-71, shows that the average price of African

Dutch invasions in the first half of the seventeenth century, resulting in increased shipments of slaves directly from the African coast to Brazil. Still, some slaves from Central Africa continued to pass through São Tomé until well beyond the period of our study.⁵⁰

As sugar production accelerated in Brazil in the late sixteenth century, so too did the pace of the African slave trade. The first Africans working in sugar production in the northeast of Brazil were, for the most part, employed as skilled workers--sugar masters, purgers, kettlemen, and so on; there were only a few African field workers. Slaves from the agricultural and iron-working areas of the Guinea coast were skilled in many of the activities required for sugar making, and were therefore favored over Indian laborers for these positions. Africans were also less likely to succumb to disease than were Indian workers, who had no immunological resistance to many European and African pathogens. Gradually, black slaves replaced Indians as field servants. By the second decade of the seventeenth century Africans constituted the majority of plantation

slaves in Brazil in the 1570s was 20\$000.

⁵⁰ For São Tomé slaves in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, see Mary C. Karasch, Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850 (Princeton, 1987), 27.

slaves in most places.⁵¹

Most slaves who worked in the production of sugar spent the bulk of their time in the fields, while smaller numbers of skilled slaves worked in the mills processing the cane into grain sugar. Field slaves usually worked from sunrise to sunset, with short breaks for breakfast and lunch. Slaves were expected to meet a daily quota of cane cuttings. These quotas varied according to time and place, but in seventeenth-century Bahia reached as high as 4,200 canes per day. Once the day's quota was met, slaves were usually free to engage in their own economic pursuits--raising crops, poultry, and so on, on small plots allotted to them by their masters. During the eight or nine months when the *safra* (sugar harvest) was taking place, field laborers were also required to work a six- to eight-hour shift at night in the sugar mills, thus extending the work day to upwards of twenty hours. The physical and mental exhaustion that accompanied such a demanding work regimen resulted in a high number of "accidents" that left slaves sick and maimed.⁵²

Labor in the mills, though carrying a certain amount of

⁵¹ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 65-72. For the rise and fall of Indian labor in northeastern Brazil, see Stuart Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations: European Demands and Indian Responses in Northeastern Brazil," American Historical Review 83 (1978), 43-79.

⁵² This description of sugar labor comes from Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, chapters 5 and 6.

prestige among masters and slaves because of the skills involved, was no less rigorous than work in the fields. The *moedeiras*, who fed the cane stalks between the heavy rollers for crushing, were often crushed themselves. The furnaces and boiling kettles of sugar cane juice provoked the Jesuit Father Antônio Vieira to comment that even though one "may have seen Vesuvius or Mount Etna that [the sugar mill] is the same as Hell."⁵³ Industrial-type accidents such as maiming, burning, and even death were not unusual occurrences. From the perspective of the master, slaves were simply units of labor whose production was to be maximized, with the human consequences only a distant concern.

The daily living conditions of plantation slaves also contributed to their overall miserable state. The *senzalas* (slave quarters) consisted of row-houses shared by a number of families. These buildings were usually poorly constructed with earthen floors and lacking windows. Slaves dressed in minimal amounts of clothing. Men most often wore nothing more than a loincloth around their waists and a bandana around their heads, while women wore skirts and blouses. Slaves were also poorly nourished, eating a high-starch diet that consisted primarily of manioc flour. This was sometimes supplemented with small portions of cured fish

⁵³ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 144.

or beef, but masters denied their slaves even this meager diet on occasions. During the early seventeenth century, colonial authorities recognized that the constant pilfering by slaves was a result of starvation and ordered masters to provide sufficient amounts of food to their slaves. Finally, further aggravating the condition of an overworked, undernourished slave labor force were the brutal and sadistic punishments that were levied against many of them.

Until the last decade of the seventeenth century, the vast majority of Africans imported to Brazil were employed in the production of sugar; however, with the discovery of gold, and later diamonds, in Minas Gerais, the Brazilian economy was transformed, and slave labor became more complex and diversified. With the prospect of instant wealth in the mines of Brazil's central plateau, many small planters along the coast abandoned their holdings and carried their slaves to Minas Gerais. In 1698 there were no slaves in Minas Gerais, but by 1738, there were over 100,000.⁵⁴ Though the mining boom was relatively short-lived, lasting only about fifty years, it would have profound effects on the nature of slave work and slave culture in Brazil.

The work of mining was no less dangerous than that of sugar production. Panning for gold required slaves to stand

⁵⁴ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom in Colonial Brazil (New York, 1982), 109-110. The total number of slaves entering Minas Gerais between 1698 and 1770 was 341,000.

waist-deep in bitterly cold spring waters. The long hours of immersion in sometimes stagnant waters led to high incidences of disease--malaria, dysentery, and so on. Those working in underground mines were the frequent victims of cave-ins and a variety of lung infections. Food and clothing allowances for mining slaves were similar to those of slaves on the sugarcane plantations. Under such conditions, slave mortality was extremely high, with most estimates of a slave's working life hovering around ten years.⁵⁵

One of the byproducts of the mining boom was the growth of large urban areas where Africans, slave and free, comprised significant portions of the overall population. In Minas Gerais, the gold fields around the cities of Vila Rica do Ouro Preto and Vila do Carmo attracted large concentrations of African slaves. In 1719, as many as 4000 slaves worked a single hillside outside of Vila Rica, representing 52 percent of the city's total population.⁵⁶ Slaves generally worked in small groups with little or no supervision by their masters and were able to move freely and quickly to the next great strike of ore. Their only obligation was to pay a fixed amount of gold dust to their

⁵⁵ Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom, 117-118.

⁵⁶ Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom, 110.

masters. The combination of a concentrated urban population of Africans, along with almost unrestricted mobility, facilitated the survival of many African social and cultural forms. At the same time, with a mixed labor force of Mina and Angola slaves, the pace of creolization among Africans probably was quickened, as specific ethnic identities were slowly shed and those who once viewed themselves simply as Arda or Libolo began to see themselves as "African" as well.

The discovery of mining zones on Brazil's central plateau also shifted the economic and demographic center of the colony from the north to the south-central region. Though Brazilian slave society had grown around Bahian and Pernambucan sugar in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the more southerly port of Rio de Janeiro emerged as the metropole that supported eighteenth-century mining. As a result, Rio de Janeiro quickly surpassed Bahia in international trade, and its population blossomed. Affirming its growing importance, in 1763, the Crown moved the capital of Brazil from Salvador to Rio. This further boosted Rio's prominence, and by the end of the eighteenth century, it was one of the two largest cities in the Americas (Mexico City being the other), with a population of over 100,000.

The expansion and diversification of the Brazilian economy, which resulted from this rapid urbanization, had a great impact on slave life. While sugar and mining remained

important throughout the period until 1770, slaves found themselves engaged in many other tasks as well. As noted earlier, Bahian tobacco became an important unit of trade on the Mina coast during the eighteenth century, and slave labor was utilized to raise the crop. The growth of cities required an increase in agricultural and pastoral pursuits to feed the populace. Small groups of slaves labored on cattle ranches, manioc farms, and fruit and vegetable fazendas. Urban slaves worked in various trades, such as blacksmithing, shoemaking, and barbering, earning money for their masters. Slaves worked the mule trains that transported food, supplies, and other slaves from the ports at Rio de Janeiro and Salvador to the mines of Minas Gerais. Other slaves found themselves employed in whaling, the whales being used for meat and lamp oil. And still others worked in various skilled and semi-skilled manufacturing jobs including brick and tile making (*olarias*), hammock making, and the production of *aguardente*, a strong rum made from sugar.

One of the most salient features of these secondary occupations was the smaller number of slaves required to work them. While large sugar plantations commonly employed over a hundred slaves, small holdings rarely had more than fifteen bondsmen. The implications for the transmission of African cultures in these settings seems obvious. Where there were fewer numbers of Africans, the more isolated

these slaves were, and the more likely they were to begin to embrace the cultures and religions of their masters. Such cases were especially likely in situations where the slave worked in close proximity to his master, for example as an apprentice shoe maker or a body servant. On the other hand, we should not underestimate the extent to which these atomized slaves were able to connect with other Africans in the course of their work and social lives, especially in urban areas where others of their cohort were within easy reach. The cosmopolitanism of the African diaspora is often overlooked when we assume that Africans were prisoners of particular localities or work sites. Some Africans not only sought cultural affirmation across cities like Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, but they also managed to find their cultural kin across the Portuguese world.

To cite just one example, Luís de Lima, a slave born around 1704 in Judá on the Mina Coast, named over a dozen other Mina slaves with whom he exchanged a variety of cures, charms, and so on. Luís learned about the charms and their associated rituals from Mina slaves in Pernambuco. He then took this knowledge to the city of Porto in Portugal, where he sold charms and ritual formulas to other Mina slaves until he was jailed by the Inquisition in 1729. Interestingly, the majority of Luís's Mina clients in Porto were either the body servants of people who once lived in Brazil (surgeons, priests, etc.) or the slaves of ship's

captains.⁵⁷ Normally, we would assume that body servants and mariners would be among the most culturally creolized slaves; yet these, and many others like them, actively sought cultural sustenance from their ethnic peers. As we will see in the chapters that follow, despite the diversity of work environments encountered by African slaves in Brazil and the broader Portuguese world, many were able to create passageways to their African pasts.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 1630.

⁵⁸ The term passageways is borrowed from Colin Palmer, Passageways: An Interpretive History of Black America, 2 vols. (Fort Worth, 1998).

Chapter 2

Links that Break; Chains that Bind: African Kinship Relations and the Impacts of Slavery

One of the most obvious ways in which slaves forged connections with their African pasts was through the formation and/or continuation of kinship or "family" ties. Unfortunately, many studies of the slave family have been limited to Western understandings of the meaning of family. Instead of analyzing the variety of arrangements created by slaves on their own terms, scholars have tended to search for Western norms of Christian marriage, monogamy, and nuclear family in the slave communities. As a result of this approach, the nature of African family arrangements becomes obscured, and the majority of residents in slave communities are characterized as living in "sin." In short, Western markers of family are insufficient for analyzing African and creole webs of lineage and kin, and it is only with the utmost of caution that the term "family" will be used in the following chapters to describe the kinship structures that Africans and their descendants created in the Portuguese colonial world. Although some slaves apparently embraced Western familial ideals, the vast majority of African-born slaves created kinship structures that were more closely related to those that they knew in their homelands. These kinship structures, even in Africa,

were never completely stable and were always subject to negotiation and change.

The African Meanings of Family

In most African societies, the joining of lineages and kinship units almost always took precedence over individual relationships between a man and his wife. As such, the Western/Christian understanding of the nuclear family had very little meaning. When a man and woman were married, their marriage was seen primarily as a social and economic arrangement that joined two different lineages, expanded the network of kin, and empowered the entire community. Marriages were often arranged by parents, uncles, and community elders. In accordance with the communal imperative, these marriages were expected to produce as many children as possible. A woman's essence was defined by her ability to bear children, and fertility was therefore highly esteemed. If a woman could not perpetuate the lineage, she could be forced from her husband's home and sent back to her parents' kinship group. Male infertility was rarely, if ever, considered a possibility in the failure to conceive.¹

¹ Anthropologists have been more critical of the concept of "family" in Africa than have historians or sociologists. See the essays in Jack Goody, ed., The Character of Kinship (Cambridge, 1973); Jane I. Guyer, "Household and Community in African Studies," African Studies Review, 24 (1981), 87-138; and Wyatt MacGaffey, "Lineage, Structure, Marriage, and Family Amongst the Central Bantu," Journal of African History, 24 (1983), 173-187.

The fundamental importance of procreation in African societies had a profound impact on the slave trade. Since women of childbearing age were at such a premium in African societies, they were less likely to be offered for sale into the Atlantic slave trade. In addition, buyers in the Americas preferred male workers over female ones. According to the statistical series that are available, for every slave woman who entered an American port, there were two to three slave men who accompanied her.² As we will see, this pattern certainly held true for Brazil.

The implications of this extreme gender imbalance for patterns of marriage in Africa and the Americas were significant. As more and more men were sold into the Atlantic slave trade, a gender imbalance in favor of women was created in many parts of Africa. By the late eighteenth century, women outnumbered men two-to-one in parts of Angola, nearly the same ratio as men to women in the slave population of Brazil.³ Angolans adapted to this imbalance because of a well-established tradition of polygyny. Men

² On gender ratios among slaves in various parts of the Americas, see Herbert S. Klein, "African Women in the Atlantic Slave Trade," in Women and Slavery in Africa, eds. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, (Madison, 1983), 29-38.

³ On the impact of the slave trade on gender ratios in Angola, as well as in seventeenth-century Upper Guinea, see John Thornton, "Sexual Demography: The Impact of the Slave Trade on Family Structure," in Women and Slavery in Africa eds. Claire C. Robertson and Martin A. Klein, (Madison, 1983), 39-48.

simply took additional wives and reproduction continued apace. But the exact opposite was occurring in Brazil, where the dearth of female slaves was one factor in keeping the rate of reproduction extremely low. For Angolan males who entered the Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century bound for Brazil, cultural expectations regarding marriage and kinship were turned completely upside down. Uprooted from their homelands, where even the poorest might expect to have more than one wife, the majority of Angolan males were now faced with the prospect of having no wife at all.

African lineage structures were also altered by the slave trade, as well as by various other internal disruptions in Africa. The majority of Brazilian slaves derived from African societies that utilized matrilineal descent systems. The villages in these matrilineal societies were comprised of a senior group of brothers and a middle-aged group of their nephews, the children of their sisters. Adult females from other lineages lived in the village as the wives of the nephews, and the offspring of these marriages usually constituted the youngest portion of the village's population. These children belonged to the mother's lineage group and were therefore not a part of the village's lineage core. Finally, widowed or divorced women, the sisters of the village's eldest men, often returned to live out their remaining years with their brothers. This pattern of bringing together the lineage's eldest members in

their waning years tended to elevate the status of elders and crystallize lineage identity.⁴

Despite a broad understanding of matrilineal descent among the the majority of Brazil's slaves, even in Africa these structures were highly variable and subject to alteration as a result of local social change. For example, Kongolese kinship terminology of the seventeenth century reveals that the elite possessed a matrilineal pattern of descent; however, in practice descent flowed in a bilateral pattern, through both fathers and mothers.⁵ Similarly, the Wolof of Upper Guinea abandoned their system of matrilineality in the seventeenth century for one which was more accommodating of the rapidly changing conditions in that region.⁶ In Mbundu society, as well as in many other societies, there existed professional social institutions that transcended the dominant structures of lineage. These professional institutions of diviners, healers, hunters, and so on, served as a "supra-descent group network of contacts and served to transmit skills and knowledge widely throughout the society."⁷ In short, anthropologists and

⁴ Joseph C. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola (Oxford, 1976), 42-44.

⁵ Anne Hilton, The Kingdom of Kongo (New York, 1985), 19-23, 87-90, 212-214.

⁶ Jean Boulègue, Les anciens royaumes wolof: Le Grand Jolof (Paris, 1987), 58-60.

⁷ Miller, Kins and Kinsmen, 50.

historians now recognize that African kinship systems were extremely fluid and adapted well to social volatility, a trait that was eminently useful for those caught up in the Atlantic slave trade.

Perhaps the best-known example of kinship disruption and reformation in Central Africa during the period of the Atlantic slave trade is the rise of the Imbangala warrior society known as *ki-lombo*. The origins of the Imbangala are shrouded in uncertainty, but they appear to have emerged in the central highlands of Angola in the late sixteenth century.⁸ The *ki-lombo* referred to a warrior society which not only cut across lineage boundaries, but actually erased lineage ties based on natal descent. These lineageless warrior cults were a practical solution to the ruptures in natal lineages that were created by the wars, droughts, and famine that tore through the central highlands during the latter part of the sixteenth century.

The members of the Imbangala *ki-lombo* underwent

⁸ On the origins of the Imbangala, see Joseph C. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen, especially pp. 112-175. Miller linked the rise of the Imbangala to the westward migration of Lunda peoples to the central highlands of Angola. Miller's hypothesis was challenged by John Thornton, "The Chronology and Causes of the Lunda Expansion to the West c. 1700 to 1852," Zambia Journal of History, 1 (1981), 1-5. Miller has subsequently modified his earlier argument, suggesting that the Imbangala emerged in the central highlands as a result of political and ecological crises that ravaged the area. See Miller, "The Paradoxes of Impoverishment in the Atlantic Zone," in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin, eds. History of Central Africa, 2 vols. (London, 1983), I:139-143.

elaborate initiation ceremonies in which they severed ties with their natal lineage and cemented their allegiance to the warrior cult of superhuman soldiers who were reputed to be impervious to the weapons of their enemies. The warrior cults perpetuated themselves by means of conquest and absorption. They were quick to adopt orphans into their ranks but strictly forbade women from giving birth inside the confines of the *ki-lombo*. Indeed, European observers commented that the Imbangala maintained their strict warrior status by killing babies born inside the *ki-lombo*, thereby erasing any chance of natal lineage formation.⁹

The Imbangala gained a fierce military reputation and by the early seventeenth century had overrun most of the Mbundu territory. Designed explicitly for war, the *ki-lombo* functioned as a merit-based warrior society that integrated large groups of strangers, unrestricted by ties of common ancestry. Any man who proved his valor as a soldier and a leader, and who could garner the support of enough followers, could break free from existing authorities and create his own Imbangala kingship, claiming the title through "lineage" descent from another *ki-lombo* chief. Thus, small fragmented groups of Imbangala warriors created a wide-ranging, centralized web of corporate alliances based

⁹ See, for instance, Andrew Battell, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, ed. E.G. Ravenstein (London, 1901), 28-35.

on kin-like patterns of descent. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Imbangala consolidated their power in the region and founded a new set of Mbundu states, including Matamba and Kasanje, two of the most formidable powers of the region during the second half of the seventeenth century. Though the Imbangala kings continued to wield enormous power in the region, many of the customs of the original *ki-lombo* were abandoned, as the Imbangala merged with local lineages and returned to matrilineal patterns of kinship.²

The adaptations in kinship patterns caused by war, migration, disease, drought, and other ruptures in African societies had a direct impact on the forms of kinship patterns that emerged in the slave societies of the Americas. In Brazil, the Imbangala *ki-lombo* was replicated as the *quilombo*, a term that came to mean any community of runaway slaves in Brazil. The archetypical Brazilian *quilombo* was the community known as Palmares, which at its height was populated by as many as ten thousand runaway slaves. Located in the interior of Pernambuco, Palmares existed from the first decade of the seventeenth century until it was destroyed in 1694.³

² The role of the *ki-lombo* is extremely well chronicled in Joseph C. Miller, Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola (Oxford, 1976). See especially pp. 112-175.

³ The classic study of Palmares is Edison Carneiro, O quilombo dos Palmares, 3rd Edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1966).

Though our knowledge of Palmares is limited mostly to its final years, it appears that Palmares shared many features in common with the Imbangala *ki-lombo*. Like the *ki-lombo*, Palmares was comprised of a number of settlements knit together under a centralized hierarchical leadership. Because it was a runaway community, its inhabitants were usually unencumbered by the obligations of natal descent, a coincidence that facilitated its corporate social structure. Also like the Imbangala, the residents of Palmares were constantly on a war footing, as the Dutch and then the Portuguese mounted an unrelenting assault against the settlements throughout the seventeenth century. By the 1670s, the political and spiritual leader of Palmares was called Ganga Zumba, a creolization of the Kimbundu-language *nganga-ia-nzumbi*, which means priest of the spirits. Polygyny appears to have been widely practiced within the *quilombo*, with Ganga Zumba possessing three wives, two *negras* and a *mulata*.⁴ Symbolically, the residents of Palmares had taken to calling their community *angola janga*, or little Angola. Even the name Palmares was reflective of the Imbangala affinity for settling in areas where there were great stands of palm trees, from which the Imbangala "delight[ed] greatly in the wine and in the fruit of the

⁴ Carneiro, O quilombo dos Palmares, 27.

palm..."⁵

It should be noted that the residents of Palmares probably adapted some of the structures of the Imbangala *quilombo* to suit the Brazilian setting. For instance, it appears that the ritual cannibalism practiced by the Imbangala was absent in Palmares. The presence of creoles, mulattoes, Indians, and even whites at Palmares suggests that other social and cultural ideas also might have been introduced within the *quilombo*. Nonetheless, despite these differences, it remains abundantly clear that the structural core of Palmares was based largely upon the Imbangala *quilombo*, and the institutional idea of a lineageless society was conveniently transferred to at least one runaway slave community in the Americas. In the world view of the residents of Palmares, the temporal conditions of Brazil were strikingly similar to those that were encountered by the Imbangala in Africa.⁶

While the *quilombo* of Palmares was an exemplary case of the transfer of Central African corporate kin-like arrangements to Brazil, it was not the only African kin-like

⁵ Battell, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, 28-35.

⁶ For a provocative comparison of the institutions created by Imbangala and those created by the residents of Palmares, see Stuart B. Schwartz, "Rethinking Palmares: Slave Resistance in Colonial Brazil," in Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery (Urbana, 1992), 122-128.

arrangement that made its way across the Atlantic. It must be stressed that for the majority of Africans who entered the Atlantic slave trade, natal kinship ties were already broken by war, drought, disease, forced migration, and enslavement in Africa. The creation of new kin-like ties was a phenomenon that was already occurring prior to embarkation for the Americas. Perhaps more important than the professional kin-like arrangements of soldiers, hunters, healers, and so on, that have already been mentioned, in many African societies, slaves were integrated into the fabric of village life using the idiom of kinship. This fundamental difference between European and African forms of slavery allowed many African slaves to conceive of themselves not as chattel, but as inferior members of the kinship group. Outsider status sometimes could be overcome as slaves became more fully integrated into the kinship community. Though slavery broke natal kinship obligations, obligations of "fictive" kinship were created with the community in which one was enslaved.⁷ While European chattel slavery radically transformed the relationship between master and slave, those who were enslaved continued to understand their place in the world through the prism of kinship, and the malleability of African kinship structures

⁷ Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers, "African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality," in Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives, eds. Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (Madison, 1977), 3-81.

allowed them to construct new networks of kin even as they were making the dreadful crossing of the Atlantic.

Conscious of their isolation and the uncertain prospects for their futures, enslaved shipmates called one another "malungo," a term which in Brazil came to be understood as "comrade," or perhaps "brother."⁸ Though this term of adoptive kinship might simply be representative of the shared horror and triumph of surviving the Middle Passage, we should not lose sight of the broader symbolic meaning that such a title might suggest. The Portuguese translations of the Kimbundu *malunga* apparently did not capture the full meaning of the term. According to Joseph Miller, the *malunga* was an Mbundu symbol of authority, brought from the sea by the original ancestors, which could establish a new hierarchy of lineages in a given territory.⁹ Because of the *malunga's* close association with the sea, one can easily see why those who shared the misery and death of the Middle Passage would embrace such a term, but one should also recognize that by adopting "malungo," the newly enslaved were aware of their role in establishing new sets of kinship groups that reflected the vital social structures that sustained them in Africa. Whether these new kinship groupings were patterned after African corporate structures

⁸ Stuart B. Schwartz, Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery (Urbana, 1992), 124.

⁹ Miller, Kings and Kinsmen, pp. 55-56.

or based upon the belief that they were creating altogether new natal lineages, the fact remains that nearly all enslaved Africans regarded themselves as part of a larger kinship collective capable of affirming their place in the world.

The Creation of Slave Communities

So far in this chapter we have emphasized very broadly the process of recreating African kinship structures in moments of upheaval. We have also pointed to similarities in certain specific kin-like structures that were transferred from Central Africa to the Americas, particularly in the seventeenth century. Though we can talk broadly about shared African understandings of kinship and lineage, the relative ethnic homogeneity of Brazil's seventeenth-century slave population should not be overemphasized. For example, the structures, customs, and practices of Palmares certainly would not have resonated in the same way with a Mina slave as they would have with an Angola slave.

As outlined in chapter one, prior to the seventeenth century Brazil's slave population derived primarily from Upper Guinea. The seventeenth century was dominated by Central African slaves. And beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a steady stream of Mina slaves joined those from Central Africa. By this later date,

masters made efforts to dilute ethnic homogeneity on their properties. In 1711, Father André João Antonil wrote that the slaves who came to Brazil were "Ardas, Minas, Congos, from São Tomé, Angola, from Cape Verde, and some from Mozambique, who come in the ships from India." Antonil noted that newly purchased slaves of diverse nations were divided "with notice and selection, and not blindly."¹⁰ In this section we will examine the ethnic composition of slaves in a variety of settings in Brazil from the end of the sixteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century, noting major shifts and trends over the entire two-hundred-year period and suggesting the implications for kinship sustenance and development. We will also look at gender distribution of slaves and the impacts of gender imbalance on choice of sexual partners and the prospects for creating new lineages.

Though we can speak broadly about the shifts from Senegambia slaves, to Angola and Congo slaves, and finally to Mina slaves, the fact is that the Brazilian slave population never approached ethnic homogeneity at any time during the period being studied here. In general, the ethnic composition of particular properties followed the

¹⁰ André João Antonil, Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas (1711), ed. Andrée Mansuy (Paris, 1968), 120-123.

broader trends of the slave trade. As much as masters may have wanted to maintain an ethnically diverse labor force, their choices were usually limited by the uncertainties of supply on the African side of the trade. But at the same time, even during periods when one area of Africa was dominating the trade to Brazil, there were usually representatives of other African ethnicities on most properties.

Using the property inventories of particular *engenhos* over the *longue duree*, we are able to get some sense of how the composition of slave society changed over time. Unfortunately, there are very few series of inventories that survive which allow us to trace the evolution of slave holdings on individual properties, especially for the early colonial period. Among the most assiduous record keepers of the colonial period were the members of the various religious orders residing in Brazil, particularly the Jesuits and the Benedictines. Unlike most secular property holders, their records survive in several European archives.

Required to submit regular reports on the activities of the orders to their superiors in Portugal and Rome, the Jesuits and the Benedictines have left us with the most complete series of accounts on the everyday activities--economic, social, and cultural--of their various estates. These include slave inventories, daily accounting records, and a wide range of letters and reports. These records are

by no means complete for the entire period of this study, nor are they consistent in the kind or quality of information that they reveal. In addition, because the records come from peculiarly large, corporate, religious holdings, they are sometimes less than representative examples of what was going on in the broader secular society. Where differences with secular properties arise, I will try to point these out, and where possible, I will try to corroborate my micro-level findings on the religious properties with those from the broader secular world.

The number of slave inventories that have survived from the sixteenth century is indeed quite small, but even during this period we can see a diverse slave population emerging. In 1572, the slave force of the Jesuit property, Engenho de Santana in Bahia, consisted of only 5.3% Guinea slaves, with the remainder being enslaved Indians.¹¹ Similarly, on the Jesuit estate, Engenho de Sergipe, Guinea slaves represented just 6.3% of the labor force.¹² But African slave labor gradually overtook Indian labor in the last years of the

¹¹ Documentos para a história do açúcar (Rio de Janeiro, 1954-1963), vol. 3, 89-96. Throughout the period of the Atlantic slave trade, masters often referred to their slaves simply as "escravos de Guine." The term "Guine" was extremely imprecise. Sometimes it referred quite literally to the Upper Guinea coast. At other times it referred to the entire west coast of Africa from Senegambia to the Angolan coast.

¹² Documentos para a história do açúcar, vol. 3, 40-49, 54-55, 63-64.

sixteenth century, as large segments of the Indian labor pool were wiped out by European diseases and as the Portuguese began to perceive Africans as superior workers.¹³ By 1591, Engenho Sergipe's population of African descent was greater than 26%, with Angolas, Congos, Mocanguas, and Anziquos--all Central Africans--well represented in the cohort.¹⁴ And by the 1630s, the Africanization of Sergipe was complete, with the estate's slave population being entirely African or of African descent.¹⁵

Though it appears that most properties shifted from Indian to African labor only gradually, there is evidence that the pace of change was quicker in some places. As early as 1585, the fazenda of Bahian planter Vicente Monteiro was nearly seventy percent African.¹⁶ And unlike its sister property of Sergipe, which only became completely Africanized some time between 1623 and 1638, the Jesuit Engenho Santana was entirely African and Afro-Brazilian by 1616, with Angolas, Calabars, and Ardas listed in the

¹³ The transition from Indian to African slaves is outlined in Stuart B. Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations."

¹⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 13, No. 3. Of 29 African adults, 13 are listed with West Central African ethnicities. One is called "Guine." And the remaining 15 are listed by their first names only.

¹⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 30, No. 3, ff. 1040.

¹⁶ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 17, No. 49.

inventory.¹⁷ In the 1580s, most observers agreed that the population of Bahia included around 3000 Guinea slaves and 8000 "Christian" Indians, indicating the still gradual shift to African labor.¹⁸ But in Pernambuco for the same period, several observers believed that Africans outnumbered Indians by a ratio of five to one.¹⁹ Relying upon the smaller numbers of Africans counted by Father Fernão Cardim and Gabriel Soares de Sousa, scholars have long discounted Father Joseph de Anchieta's figure of 10,000 slaves from Guinea and Angola as being overly inflated for a Pernambuco which had, at the most, only 66 engenhos.²⁰ But Jesuit Father Christovão Gouveia, writing in 1583, two years before Father de Anchieta's estimates, found "46 sugar *ingenios* and each one of them with a great population, and for the service of these and more haciendas they have almost 15,000

¹⁷ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 12.

¹⁸ Frédéric Mauro, Portugal, o Brasil e o Atlântico, 1570-1670 (Lisbon, 1988), 239. A number of contemporary observers came up with similar numbers for Bahia, including Father Joseph de Anchieta, Father Fernão Cardim, and Gabriel Soares de Sousa. The same figures were also cited by Father Christovão Gouveia in ARSI, Brasília 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

¹⁹ Padre Joseph de Anchieta, S.J., Cartas, Informações, Fragmentos Históricos e Sermões do Padre Joseph de Anchieta, S.J. (1554-1594), ed. Afranio Peixoto (Rio de Janeiro, 1933), 410; Padre Christovão Gouveia, *Enformacion de la Provincia del Brasil para Nuestro Padre* (1583), ARSI, Brasília 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

²⁰ Cardim estimated only 2000 Africans for Pernambuco, while Soares counted between 4000 and 5000.

slaves from Angola and Guinea, and almost 3000 Indians..."²¹ Certainly all of these slaves were not employed on the sugar engenhos, and it seems likely that the numbers are inflated; however, both Anchieta and Gouveia found that Pernambuco's servile population was dominated by Africans as early as the 1580s, findings which merit closer scrutiny in future studies of Brazil's transition from Indian labor to African labor.

While the pace of change from Indian to African slaves is not altogether certain, there is no doubt that Brazil's slave labor force was thoroughly Africanized in most places by the first decades of the seventeenth century. The ethnic flavorings of particular properties varied, but the overall landscape was clearly dominated by Central Africans. Engenho Santana, whose 1616 African population was a mix of Angolas from Central Africa, and Calabars and Ardas from the Bight of Benin, apparently shifted to an African population composed entirely of Central Africans by 1674.²² And at Engenho Sergipe, of 23 identifiable Africans in the inventory of 1638, 19 were from Central Africa, while there were two Mandingas from Upper Guinea, and an Arda and a

²¹ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

²² The ethnicities listed in this inventory include Mabanga, Mandongo, Amboella, Zenza, Monjolla, Quibinda, Quibagua, Casumba, Robollo, Gangella, Bondo, and Congo.

Lecumi from the Bight of Benin.²³ In order to maintain a steady supply of servile labor during the period that the Dutch occupied Angola (1641-1648), Sergipe was forced to continue to rely on Guinea and Mina slaves to some extent. For instance, during the *safra* (sugar harvest) of 1643-1644 sixteen *peças* (prime slaves) from Cape Verde were purchased for use on the *engenho*, as well as twelve other *peças* from "guine."²⁴ But by the *safra* of 1669-1670, Sergipe purchased twenty adult Africans, all but one of them from Central Africa.²⁵ It was during the period after 1654, when Portuguese and Brazilian buyers freed themselves from Spanish rule (1580-1640) and regained control of Angola and the Brazilian northeast (1654), that the Central Africa trade went practically unchallenged in its supremacy of slave shipments to Brazil, a trend which went unbroken until around 1690.

Beginning in the 1690s and extending over the first three decades of the eighteenth century, the Mina coast briefly replaced Central Africa as the largest exporter of slaves to Brazil. And even though Angola again asserted its supremacy by the 1730s, the Mina stream remained pronounced throughout the century. This trend is clearly reflected in

²³ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 30, No. 3, f. 1040.

²⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 30, No. 3, ff. 1214v.

²⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 17, No. 24. The solitary slave who was not from Central Africa was Mozambican.

the records of slave purchases and plantation inventories from Brazil. From 1704 to 1716 on Engenho Sergipe, 83% of the African slaves purchased were either Mina or Arda, while just 17% are listed as Angolas.²⁶ Stuart Schwartz's examination of inventories from nine Bahian engenhos in 1739 finds similar Mina dominance, with 82% Minas and 18% Angolas on these properties.²⁷ The 1730 inventory from Engenho Santana reveals both Minas (Gejes) and Central Africans (Angolas, Congos, Ganguellas, Gagos), with Gejes and Angolas even sharing the same household in at least one instance.²⁸

Even though the Mina contribution to Brazil's slave population would remain important, by the middle of the eighteenth century, Central Africans were again being imported in larger numbers than their Mina counterparts, especially outside of Bahia. The slave trade from Angola to Rio de Janeiro grew rapidly during the 1740s.²⁹ By the 1750s, Central Africans made up the majority on even the smallest slave properties in Rio. A typical olaria, or brickmaking facility, had five Central Africans and three

²⁶ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 17, Nos. 28 and 29.

²⁷ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 348. The sample includes 469 African slaves.

²⁸ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 23.

²⁹ Miller, Way of Death, 463.

Minas, as well as two creoles in its work force.³⁰ An *engenhoca*, which produced *aguardente* (rum), had six Central Africans and three creoles residing on the property.³¹ And finally, a *fábrica de rede*, or hammock/net manufacturer, had a total of thirteen slaves in its employ, all of whom were males from Central Africa.³²

Another notable trend in the ethnic makeup of Brazil's slave population during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the increasing creolization of some slave communities. Using slave inventories from Engenho Santana, Dauril Alden recently has argued that Jesuit properties were almost completely creolized by the second half of the seventeenth century. While there is no doubt that there was a slow trend toward a more creolized slave community on many of the ecclesiastical estates, none of them appear to have become completely creolized, even by the middle of the eighteenth century. Of 28 adult slaves who are readily identified as either creole or African on Engenho Sergipe in 1623, nine were creoles and nineteen were Africans.³³ On Engenho Santana in 1674, there were ten creoles and twelve

³⁰ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 123, ff. 98v.-99v.

³¹ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 121, ff. 168-168v.

³² ANRJ, Segundo Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 65, ff. 110v.-111v.

³³ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 30, No. 3, f. 1057.

Africans among the identifiable adult slaves.³⁴ And on Engenho Santana in 1730, of 178 slaves listed in the inventory, only seventeen were clearly identified; ten were creoles or mulattoes and seven were Africans.³⁵ Thus we can see the slow movement toward a more Brazilian-born population, but nothing approaching the level of creolization that Alden seems to suggest.

Although one can glean important ethnic data from the inventories, they sometimes obscure more than they reveal.³⁶ As a result of his findings, Alden suggests that by the 1670s Jesuit managers preferred to purchase creole and mulatto slaves rather than Africans.³⁷ But an examination of the actual purchase records of slaves proves otherwise. Between 1704 and 1716 on Engenho Sergipe there were 95 new

³⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 7. Dauril Alden has suggested that Santana was completely creolized by 1674, but this simply cannot have been the case with ethnic signifiers like Mabanga, Quibinda, Ambuella, Gangella, Congo, and so on, scattered throughout the inventory. Dauril Alden, The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, It's Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750 (Stanford, 1996), 520.

³⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 23.

³⁶ The majority of slaves listed in the Santana inventories have no ethnic signifier, and those that do are often difficult to discern. As noted in note 34 above, Alden missed a number of Africans in his reading of the 1674 inventory for Santana. For the 1730 Santana inventory, he claims that there were only two Africans on the property. By my count there were at least seven--three Gejes, one Angola, one Congo, one Ganguella, and one Gago. Alden, The Making of an Enterprise, 521.

³⁷ Alden, The Making of an Enterprise, 523.

slaves purchased. Of these, only 43 are clearly identified in terms of their ethnic background, with better than two-thirds of these coming from Africa. Only 14 are identified as either creole or ladino. No mulattoes appear to have been purchased.³⁸

Another indicator of the number of Africans who were bought for the estate is the purchase price of slaves. Since Africans usually cost significantly less than Brazilian-born slaves, we can estimate the number of Africans versus Brazilian-born based on their purchase prices. While these numbers are admittedly uncertain, even the most conservative estimate suggests that nearly seventy percent of the total slaves purchased for Engenho Sergipe between 1704 and 1716 were African born.³⁹ The records for Engenho Santana appear to confirm similarly large numbers of Africans purchased during the eighteenth century. Even as late as the 1750s, the Jesuit estates of Petinga and Sergipe were still purchasing only Africans in the years for which we have records.⁴⁰

³⁸ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 17, Nos. 28 and 29.

³⁹ I come to these estimates in slave prices using Dauril Alden, "Price Movements in Brazil Before, During, and After the Gold Boom, with Special Reference to the Salvador Market, 1670-1769," in Essays on the Price History of Eighteenth-Century Latin America, eds. Lyman L. Johnson and Enrique Tandeter (Albuquerque, NM, 1990), 343.

⁴⁰ During 1750-1751 Petinga purchased five Geje men, one Geje woman, and one Angolan man. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 36. And during 1753-1754 Sergipe purchased only three Mina

One significant way in which the large ecclesiastical estates did become more creolized was through the inheritance of *ladino* (acculturated) and Brazilian-born slaves. Unlike most secular properties, the religious orders were the beneficiaries in the wills of various property holders, receiving slaves as well as other property. The orders also received slaves as alms. While these bequests are mostly obscured in the Jesuit records, we know that they occurred. For instance, in 1700, Padre Manuel Fernandes, 65 years old and ailing, donated twelve slaves to the Jesuit College of Rio de Janeiro.⁴¹

On the Benedictine estates, the documents show more clearly that inheritance and alms represented a significant proportion of slave acquisitions over long stretches of time. Between 1620 and 1772, the Benedictine monastery of Our Lady of Monserrate in Rio de Janeiro inherited at least 181 slaves, a remarkable 29% of all slave acquisitions (see Table 2-1). Similarly, between 1660 and 1749, inheritances represented 33% of slave acquisitions at the monastery in Olinda.⁴² Sketchier evidence for the monasteries at Bahia and Brotas reveals similar trends.

men. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 57.

⁴¹ ARSI, Brasilia 4; VFL Roll 157, ff. 75-75v.

⁴² ADB/UM, CSB 138.

**Table 2-1. Slave acquisitions of the Benedictine
 Monastery Our Lady of Monserrate in Rio de
 Janeiro (1620-1772)**

Dates	Slaves Purchased	Slaves Inherited or Received as Alms
1620-1623	9	
1648-1652	57	
1652-1657	41	2
1657-1660	55	1
1663-1666	27	30
1720-1723	37	1
1726-1731	12	
1733-1736	10	22
1737-1739	17	2
1739-1743	23	7
1743-1746	30	60+
1747-1748	10	
1748-1750	16	
1760-1763	25	
1763-1766	24	
1766-1770	28	17
1770-1772	15	39
TOTALS	436	181

 Source: ADB/UM, CSB, 134 and 135

A number of these inherited slaves were probably African-born, but because the slaves usually represented the legacies of well-established Brazilian slaveholders, there were probably fair numbers of creoles and even larger numbers of ladinos who were parts of the bequests. Though

the fathers had little control over the quantity or quality of the slaves that they received through inheritance and alms, they clearly maximized the opportunities presented by these windfalls. Those slaves that they did not want or need could be sold away. In their trade in slaves, the Benedictines proved to be shrewd businessmen. To cite just one example, during the 1736-1739 triennial, the fathers of the monastery in Olinda bought eight slaves from the product of five who were sold, and they still had 120 milreis left over with which they intended to purchase two more slaves.⁴³ While some slaves were sold away for large profits, certain creoles and skilled Africans, like the two master carpenters inherited by the monastery in Rio de Janeiro between 1737 and 1739, were considered indispensable and were maintained for use on the order's own properties.⁴⁴

As a result of this constant stream of human gifts that were bestowed upon the monasteries, the Benedictines had access to an artificial supply of slaves that most secular property holders did not. The priests had the luxury of manipulating these slave gifts to their maximum benefit, culling off difficult or unwanted slaves and keeping those

⁴³ ADB/UM, CSB 138, ff. 261. This 2:1 ratio in slaves received to slaves sold is probably also an indicator of the degree to which Benedictine properties were creolized, since creolized slaves possessing some skills were more valuable than their newly-arrived, "unskilled," African counterparts.

⁴⁴ ADB/UM, CSB, 134, ff. 187.

who met their most pressing needs. From an economic standpoint, the Benedictines not only received large numbers of slaves at zero cost, but they also were able to stock their properties with slave artisans and technicians in positions that otherwise would have required salaried employees.⁴⁵ The priests also likely retained as many inherited slave women as possible, since the Benedictines were keen to maintaining gender balance on their properties. But even with inheritances, gender balance was always difficult to achieve. In 1747-1748, on Engenho da Ilha in Rio de Janeiro, the priests purchased seven Mina women "in order that they marry with the slave men of the said fazenda."⁴⁶ Clearly, the acquisition of slaves as charity could not by itself result in efficient slave regimes.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Most engenhos spent upwards of 20-25% of their annual outlay on salaries, while the Benedictines spent only around 14% of their annual budget on salaries for skilled employees. For the comparatively small amounts that the Benedictines paid for salaries, see Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 222-223.

⁴⁶ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 274.

⁴⁷ Likewise, the "ameliorationist" policies of the Benedictines cannot be pointed to as the primary reason for their success. The Benedictines have been hailed by both their contemporaries and recent scholars for their progressive attitudes toward their slaves. While there is some element of truth to these arguments, I would suggest that just as much of the Benedictine success can be attributed to the charity which flowed in their direction, especially in the form of slaves. For the ameliorationist arguments, see Schwartz, "The Plantations of St. Benedict: The Benedictine Sugar Mills of Colonial Brazil," The Americas 39 (1982), 18-22.

One of the primary reasons that slave owners were required to continue replenishing their slave regimes with fresh African imports was the severe gender imbalance in Brazilian slave society. Slaves simply could not reproduce themselves in numbers sufficient enough to sustain the population. Because African suppliers were often reluctant to part with female slaves and because Brazilian buyers preferred strong, young males, the Brazilian slave population remained overwhelmingly male throughout the colonial period. Sex ratios (calculated by dividing the number of males by the number of females and multiplying by 100) on Bahian engenhos in the seventeenth century ranged between 115 and 336, with the average falling somewhere around 200.⁴⁸ Even on the Benedictine properties, which carefully sought to maintain gender balance, the sex ratio in the 1660s ranged from 114 at Engenho Guaguasú in Rio de Janeiro to 149 at Engenho Musurepe in Pernambuco.⁴⁹

On the large secular engenhos the sex ratio hovered around 200 well into the eighteenth century, and the ratio

⁴⁸ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 347.

⁴⁹ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 75-76; ADB/UM, CSB 138, ff. 66-67. On Benedictine efforts to maintain gender balance and encourage "family" formation see Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Plantations of St. Benedict."

was often higher outside of the sugar industry.⁵⁰ In the mines of Vila Rica in 1719, males represented 91% of the servile population.⁵¹ The sex ratio on three *olarias* in Rio de Janeiro in the 1750s was three males to every female. In Maranhão, the Jesuits presided over five different cattle ranches, which were staffed by a total of 18 slaves--17 males and only one female.⁵² And a typical manioc fazenda in Rio in the 1750s had ten men and only four women.⁵³

This overwhelmingly African, overwhelmingly male slave population had a major impact on kinship formation in Brazil. For African men, whose sex ratios were even higher than those in the broader slave population, the extreme gender imbalance must have transformed many of their understandings of family and sexuality. Those who were accustomed to having more than one wife, especially those who were put to work on small holdings where there were few women in close proximity, were now faced with the likelihood that they would not find female partners. And without

⁵⁰ For sex ratios on eighteenth-century Bahian engenhos, see Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 348.

⁵¹ Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom, 112.

⁵² ARSI, Brasilia 28; VFL Roll 157, ff. 29v. Similarly, in Piauí in 1697 there were 203 male slaves and only 7 females on 129 cattle ranches. Luiz Mott, Piauí colonial: População, economia e sociedade (Teresina, 1985), 75.

⁵³ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 121, ff. 147v.-149.

female partners, they could not procreate. The gender imbalance certainly stifled the prospects of creating new natal lineages in Brazil and no doubt reinforced the Africans' sense of having suffered a social death.

Same-Sex Relationships Among Male Slaves: Responding to Demography; Affirming African Identity

One way in which African men sought emotional sustenance under these conditions of extreme social dislocation was to seek out relationships with other men. Scholars, including those who study the slave "family," have long recognized the gender imbalance in almost all American slave regimes, but no American scholar has explored the possibility that same-sex relationships might have been fostered in slave communities where there were few women. Nor have they investigated the extent to which "homosexual" men might have made the crossing from Africa to Europe and the Americas. In the Portuguese colonial world, there is evidence of at least two types of consensual same-sex relationships involving African slaves, one born of the unfavorable sex ratios in the slave setting and the other arising from institutional gender inversion in Africa.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Though American scholars have neglected this aspect of slave "family" and sexuality, the Brazilian scholar, Luiz Mott, has written pioneering works on homosexuality in the Brazilian slave community. See for instance, Luiz Mott, Escravidão, homossexualidade, e demonologia and O sexo proibido, as well as numerous articles.

In areas where sex ratios among slaves ran as high as ten men to every woman, it should not surprise us that male slaves sought out other males to satisfy their sexual impulses. Since the personal and private lives of slaves remained largely hidden from the master class, few of these encounters were ever recorded; yet we should not let the silence of the records keep us from asking how gender-isolated men either maintained or reformulated their sexual and gender identities. Some no doubt remained steadfastly heterosexual, resorting to celibacy and/or self gratification. Others became so desperate in their quest for sexual satisfaction that they resorted to bestiality.⁵⁵ But what we would suggest here is that, because their isolation was so acute, significant numbers of male slaves were forced to recast their sexual identities as they reached out to their male peers for a combination of sexual and emotional sustenance.

Inquisition records from the seventeenth century show several instances of homosexual behavior on the part of slaves in the Portuguese world. We should concede from the outset that the records on African "sodomites" are quite sparse. For Brazil, of the 85 sodomites who appeared before

⁵⁵ See, for instance, the case of the slave named João, who lived in the Portuguese countryside outside of Évora. In 1574, he was accused of having sex with three goats, three sheep, two donkeys, a mare, and a mule. Luiz Mott, O sexo proibido, 38-39.

the visits of the Inquisition in the years 1591-1769, only 23 were Africans.⁵⁶ And of these 23, only a few of the cases provide us with enough information to make any tentative conclusions regarding same-sex behaviors among Africans in Brazil. But by also utilizing cases from the tribunals of Lisbon and Évora, as well as an important chronicle of a Portuguese soldier/slave trader along the Angolan coast, we can at least begin to gain a fuller understanding of the African perception of same-sex relationships in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The most common types of sodomy cases involving men of African descent were those in which the men were apparently seeking the emotional and sexual satisfaction that was absent in many slave settings. While some of these men may have been predisposed to same-sex behaviors in Africa, others were probably reaching out, searching for self-affirmation in a lonely and violent world. There is sparse evidence that male slaves were having sexual liaisons with one another as early as the 1580s. In 1583, Father Christovão Gouveia lamented the sexual imbalance at the Jesuit College of Bahia. In describing the conditions of slave men, he noted that "it is necessary to buy them women so that they not live in an evil state."⁵⁷ This "evil

⁵⁶ These visitations include Bahia, Pernambuco, and Pará. Luiz Mott, O Sexo proibido, 40.

⁵⁷ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

state" might have been polyandry, but Father Gouveia was most likely referring to same-sex practices among the slaves. Indeed, one of the first recorded cases of same-sex practices among slaves in Brazil occurred at the same Jesuit College only eight years later.

On August 21, 1591, Matias Moreira appeared before the visitation of the Portuguese Holy Office in Bahia to denounce the African, Joane, a "negro" slave from "Guiné." Matias, a resident laborer in the Jesuit College of Bahia, saw Joane de Guiné and another "negro de Guiné" as they entered his place of work in the middle of the night. Matias could not identify the second "negro de Guiné," but described him as having a grossly swollen leg. The African with the swollen leg told Matias that Joane brought him to the college to sodomize him. Joane responded to the man's charge by calling him a liar in an African language that Matias claimed to understand.⁵⁸

Though Matias did not actually discover Joane and his friend in the act of committing the *pecado nefando*, or "nefarious sin," it seems that Joane had a long history of sexual relations with other men. Prior to his encounter with the man with the swollen leg, Joane at one time had been the property of the Jesuit College. When the fathers discovered that Joane had committed sodomy on numerous

⁵⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Denuncias, Livro 779, ff. 128-129v.

occasions with an Angolan named Duarte, "without Duarte's consent," they sold Joane to one Bastião de Faria. On the basis of his familiarity with the setting, Joane no doubt thought that the Jesuit College would be a safe haven for his rendezvous with the man with the swollen leg.

While it appears from Matias's testimony that Joane was forcing his partners to have sex with him, a closer reading reveals that both the swollen-leg man and Duarte were probably consensual partners. There is no suggestion of how Joane forced the swollen-leg man to enter the college with him in the middle of the night. Since the man knew he was being brought there to have sex with Joane and since it appears that he willingly entered the college with Joane, we must conclude that he was complicit. As for Duarte, he claimed that Joane was the passive partner in their sexual encounters.⁵⁹ If this was the case, Duarte clearly did not resist Joane's advances, and, given their numerous encounters, Duarte probably welcomed Joane's invitations. It seems clear that all of the parties involved in these trysts were consenting partners.

Similar cases of consensual same-sex behavior among peoples of African descent were recorded across the Portuguese world. In Rio de Janeiro in the 1620s, a "negro from Angola and the other from Brazil," were denounced by

⁵⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Denúncias, Livro 779, ff. 129v.-130v.

two witnesses who claimed that they saw the Angolan mounting the Brazilian from behind.⁶⁰ Similarly, in Bahia in 1645, the slaves Jerónimo Soares and Bugio were denounced when it became publicly known that they performed oral sex on one another.⁶¹ In Lisbon in 1647, Doctor Francisco Vaz de Gouveia overheard two slaves, António and Francisco, discussing their sexual relationship, and he subsequently denounced them to the Inquisition. In his confession, made on October 14, 1647, António described how he and Francisco met. He stated that around June of 1647 Francisco propositioned him, asking if he wanted to spend the night with him. António accepted his offer and the two had anal sex with one another. According to the record, this relationship continued, with the two men having sex on several occasions. It appears that their relationship ended only when the Inquisition intervened, ultimately sending António away to the king's galleys for two years.⁶²

Even though many same-sex relationships were clearly enduring emotional attachments, others had less to do with loneliness and the search for affection than with flexible

⁶⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 24, Livro 224, ff. 313-316. The term "negro de Brasil" was a term usually used to describe Indians during this period, so the couple described in this case were probably an Indian and an African.

⁶¹ Mott, O sexo proibido, 41.

⁶² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 4815.

gender categories that apparently existed in various parts of Africa. The first of these cases occurred in the middle of the sixteenth century in the Azores and in Lisbon. Ant3nio, slave of Paulo Manriques, arrived on Ilha Terceira from his homeland of Benin some time in 1556. Upon his arrival, he immediately assumed the uncertain gender identity that he maintained in Benin. Refusing to wear the clothes that his master gave him, Ant3nio instead chose to dress in a white waist jacket buttoned down the front, with a vest made from an old woolen cloth that he found in his master's stables. On his head, he wore a tightly wrapped white linen, topped off by a hat. To all who saw him, he appeared to be a woman.

By profession, Ant3nio was a prostitute who went by the name Vit3ria. In order to lure men, Vit3ria made a variety of winks and gestures "like a woman." But he was also observed removing his hat and bowing "like a man." He apparently had a thriving business, since seven or eight men could sometimes be seen waiting outside of the little house where he worked. But within a year of his arrival in the Azores, Ant3nio's ambiguous gender identity became widely known and the scandal of his transvestism gained the attention of the Inquisition.

During his interrogation before the Inquisitors in Lisbon, an interpreter was needed to translate since Ant3nio/Vit3ria had not yet mastered the Portuguese

language. He admitted to sinning with five men, three in Lisbon and two in the Azores. When the Inquisitors asked him whether many people believed that he was a woman, he responded that he was a woman and that the men gave him money for his services. Antônio also claimed that he had the orifice (*buraco*) of a woman. The Inquisitors asked him if he created this orifice or if it was the result of some sickness, but Antônio claimed that he was born with it. Indeed, he stated that "there were many in his country who had the same *buracos* who were born with them." Antônio ultimately was subjected to a medical inspection to determine whether he was "man or woman or hermaphrodite." The examination showed clearly that Antônio "had the physical character of a man, without having any *buraco* nor other physical characteristic of woman." For committing the "abominable sin of sodomy against nature," Antônio was sentenced to spend the rest of his life in the king's galleys.⁶³

Antônio's admission that there were many in his country who were anatomically endowed with *buracos* is an indication that there were others like him who also took on the dress and mannerisms of women. The role of these transvested individuals in Benin society is difficult to discern from the records, but they seemingly constituted a third-gender

⁶³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 10868.

category which was completely unfamiliar to the Portuguese. Antônio's gender and sexual choices were apparently an accepted part of Benin society, an integral part of Antônio's identity which the Portuguese sought to erase because he was a "sodomite." Acts of sodomy had long been punishable by death in Portugal, but the Portuguese reserved their greatest contempt for passive partners like Antônio, the rationale being that male penetration was a "natural" act, while male reception was not.⁶⁴ These social and cultural vacuums in the Western *mentalité* affected Africans and their descendants in profound ways, confining them to sexual, gender, and family categories that were, in many cases, completely alien to them.

The narrowness of Western gender constructions is brought into even sharper focus when we examine another third-gender category, this one from Central Africa. In the same 1591 denunciation of Joane de Guiné in Bahia, Matias Moreira also denounced one Francisco Manicongo to the Portuguese Holy Office.⁶⁵ In this denunciation, Moreira

⁶⁴ Luiz Mott, "Justitia et Misericordia: A Inquisição Portuguesa e a Repressão ao Nefando Pecado de Sodomia," in Inquisição: Ensaio sobre mentalidade, heresias e arte, eds. Anita Novinsky and Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro (São Paulo, 1992), 705-709; Richard C. Trexler, Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 167-172.

⁶⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Denúncias, Livro 779, ff. 128-129v. Also see James H. Sweet, "Male Homosexuality and Spiritism in the African Diaspora: The Legacies of a Link," Journal of the History of Sexuality, 7 (1996), 184-202.

sheds further light on the gender roles played by African "sodomites." Moreira stated that he had seen Francisco walking the streets of Bahia dressed as a woman and that Francisco was renowned among blacks as a sodomite. Moreira went on to claim that he had traveled for a long period of time in the lands of Angola and Congo. And during these travels, he had witnessed some of the "pagan negros" dressing like women. According to Moreira, these cross-dressing men performed the role of the "woman" in acts of sodomy. In fact, these cross-dressers were so prevalent in Central African society that there was even a word for them in the "language of Angola and Congo," *jinbandaa*.⁶⁶

Unbeknownst to Moreira, the term *jinbandaa* in Central Africa likely did not carry the same negative moral connotations that the terms "sodomite" or "nefarious sinner" carried in Christian Europe. Instead of reflecting the negative view of Western Christian moralists, the African interpretation of *jinbandaa* actually was something quite different. The significance of *jinbandaa* apparently was to be found in the traditional religious beliefs of Central Africa. According to Bantu-language scholar Malcolm

⁶⁶ It is not at all clear from the denunciation exactly where in the Bantu-speaking world Matias Moreira encountered the term *jinbandaa*. Like many Westerners, he simply homogenized the peoples of Angola and Congo. It is also not clear how accurate the *jinbandaa* rendering is. The way Moreira reported the word, as well as the way it was transcribed, may have slightly transformed its sound.

Guthrie, the word stem *mbándá* means "medicine man," and throughout Central Africa words similar to *jinbandaa* implied religious power.⁶⁷

In fact, several revealing descriptions of the Angolan coast in the seventeenth century suggest that *quimbanda* sodomites were a discrete and powerful caste in Angolan society. Writing in 1681, Captain António de Oliveira Cadornega commented at length on the status of "sodomites" along the Angolan coast. Having been involved in the Angolan wars for a number of years, Cadornega's testimony reflects an informed, albeit Westernized, understanding of Angolan culture:

There is also among the Angolan pagan much sodomy,

⁶⁷ In some sources, these spiritually powerful cross-dressers were called *chibados*. Jesuits in Angola in 1606 described *chibados* who were "extremely great feiticeiros, and being men went around dressed as women and they had by great offense called themselves men; they had husbands like the other women, and in the sin of sodomy they are just like devils." Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas Missões do Japão, China...Angola, Guiné, Serra Leoa, Cabo Verde e Brasil nos anos de 1600 a 1609 e do processo da conversão e cristandade daquelas partes: tirada das cartas que os missionários de lá escreveram. Pelo Padre Fernão Guerreiro da Companhia de Jesus, Natural de Almodovar de Portugal, 3 vols., ed. Artur Viegas (Coimbra, 1930), 1:414. The Kikongo rendering of this word is *kimbanda*, while the Kimbundu is *quimbanda*. In some areas, for instance Lwena/Luvale, this word would sound strikingly similar to *jinbandaa* (ie "tshinbanda"). In all cases the word means "medicine man," "healer," and/or "spirit medium." Malcolm Guthrie, Comparative Bantu: An Introduction to the Comparative Linguistics and Prehistory of the Bantu Languages (London, 1971), 28.

sharing one with the other their dirtiness and filth, dressing as women. And they call them by the name of the land, *quimbandas*, [and] in the district or lands where they are, they have communication with each other. And some of these are fine *feiticeiros* (sorcerors), for they beget everything bad. And all of the pagans respect them and they are not offended by them and these sodomites happen to live together in bands, meeting most often to give burial services.... This caste of people is who dresses the body for burial and performs the burial ceremony.⁶⁸

Cadornega reveals three important points regarding the Angolan *quimbandas*. First, he suggests that they were a discrete social group that lived together in "bands." Second, the *quimbandas* were respected by others in the community. In fact, the Capuchin priest, Antônio Cavazzi, who was a resident of Angola from 1654 to 1667, wrote that "there is not a Jaga (Imbangala), whether captain in war, or peaceful aldeia chief, who does not try to keep some of them [the *quimbandas*] to watch over him, without the counsel and approval of such, he will not dare to exercise any act of

⁶⁸ Antônio de Oliveira de Cadornega, História Geral das Guerras Angolanas (Lisbon, 1942), 259.

jurisdiction, nor take any resolution."⁶⁹ The *quimbandas* were apparently the final spiritual arbiters in political and military decisions. Finally, the *quimbandas* were not only considered "fine *feiticeiros*," but they performed traditional burial ceremonies, thereby exercising a wide range of spiritual roles. Taken together, these three points produce a compelling argument for the religious power and respectability of Angola's transvested "homosexual" community, a community which clearly set itself apart from the rest of society, apparently as one of the many cross-cutting kin-like divining and healing groups discussed earlier in this chapter.

While it would be interesting to attempt an explanation of how and why transvested "homosexuals" became powerful religious figures in Central Africa, that is not our primary concern here.⁷⁰ What is important is what was maintained and what was lost when the *jinbandaa* was enslaved and sent

⁶⁹ Padre Giovanni Antônio Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica dos Três Reinos do Congo, Matamba e Angola, 2 vols., ed. and trans. Padre Graciano Maria de Leguzzano (Lisbon, 1965), 1:202.

⁷⁰ I would suggest that the liminality represented in the blurring of the male/female gender roles is symbolic of other polarities in Central African cosmology, especially the divide between water spirits and earth spirits, the world of the dead and the living, and so on. By representing both the male and the female in a single human vessel, the transvested homosexual becomes a living conduit between two vastly different worlds--male/female, living/dead, and so on, and is thus spiritually very powerful.

to the Americas. In Central Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, our sources suggest that the *jinbandaas* were a group of religious leaders who carved out their own "third-sex" (gender defined) living space in the society. But the spiritual capacity of the transvested "homosexual" was so universally known that they were referred to not by their patterns of dress or by their sexual behavior, but by their roles as religious leaders. Only when these Africans encounter the Western world do we begin to see the breakdown of the gender-defined organization of this kin-like, transvestite, religious society.

This disjuncture between the gendered, religious space in Central Africa and the lack of such a space in the West indicates several sobering things. First, those transvested "homosexuals" who were brought to the West as slaves were isolated not only according to race, but also according to their gender and their sexuality. Given the evidently small numbers of *jinbandaas* in the West, there was no way for them to replicate their gender-defined communities in their new surroundings. Second, Western/Christian prejudice and repression against the "feminine" and passive homosexual contributed to the attrition of a seemingly well-defined African gender category that defied Western "norms." And finally, the institutional foundation that gave this collection of transvested homosexuals religious power all

but disappeared. Because they could no longer meet collectively to share knowledge and affirm their religious power, their powers were extremely diluted. Indeed, in Brazil, the very meaning of the term *jinbandaa* was transformed, at least within the white community. Rather than referring to an individual with religious power, the term *jinbandaa* became synonymous with the passive "sodomite."

But in spite of the ultimate attrition of these institutional forms as a result of Western cultural hegemony, we should still recognize the lens through which someone like Francisco Manicongo, or Antônio from Benin, addressed their gender and sexual identities. Even against the riptides of Western gender, sexual, and religious "norms," Francisco and Antônio continued to see themselves in the same ways that they had seen themselves in their homelands. Just as most Westerners could not conceive of identifying themselves as anything other than either man or woman, Francisco could not conceive of identifying himself as anything other than the transvested *jinbandaa*. And Antônio could not conceive of himself as anything other than one of the many from Benin who had *buracos* like his. Thus, they each shed the clothing given to them by their masters and continued to dress and act as "women," seeking out male partners with little, if any, regard for the fact that they were committing mortal "sins." Though their individual

identities may have endured for some time, the kin-like groupings that sustained and affirmed them in their ethnic homelands were obliterated, leaving them as isolated and alone as those who left behind their natal kin.

Conclusion: The Limits of Kin-Like Constructions and the
Psychic Permeability of Natal Kin

For most of this chapter we have concentrated on the breakdown and survival of elements of African kin-like structures in Brazil, largely ignoring the construction and survival of real-kin networks. While the majority of African slaves were forced to construct new kinship, or kin-like, structures after their enslavement, we must also recognize that some Africans made the Atlantic crossing with others from their natal kin group. There is sparse evidence from across the diaspora that African family members were able to continue their ancestral relationships in the Americas. In Mexico City in 1629, Isabel Biafada appeared as a witness at the marriage of her creole nephew, Juan de Lomas, who she claimed to have known since his birth. Thus, Isabel was in Mexico with one of her brothers or sisters. Similarly, Juan Angola maintained a close relationship with his sister, Angelina, despite the fact that they were owned

by different masters in Mexico City.⁷¹ In 1669, four new slaves were purchased for the Bahian engenho of Sergipe do Conde, Miguel Bambaambuilla, his brother Pedro Bambaambuilla, their cousin Esperança Bambaambuilla, and her sister Maria Bambaambuilla.⁷² And in the late 1680s, the Remire Plantation in French Guiana owned discrete groups of Kalabari, Allada, and Whydah slaves. Evidence suggests that individuals from each of these nations probably "either knew each other before their sale in America or at the very least had common friends and family."⁷³

Manumission records of slaves in Rio de Janeiro in the eighteenth century show similar trends. In 1751, Miguel Barbara, a free black whose ethnic background is unclear from the records, purchased the freedom of Joanna Benguella for 128 milreis. Five months later he purchased the freedom of Ventura Benguella for 166\$400. Though Miguel Barbara's relationship to the two slaves he freed is not explicitly stated, the fact that the two shared Benguela ethnicity suggests that Barbara was acting upon some ethnic/kinship

⁷¹ Colin A. Palmer, "From Africa to the Americas: Ethnicity in the Early Black Communities of the Americas," Journal of World History, 6 (1995), 230-231.

⁷² ANTT, CSJ, Maço 17, No. 24.

⁷³ Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 197-205.

imperative, whether fictive or real.⁷⁴ More certain is the case of Caterina Mina who in 1754 was purchased for 200 milreis by the free black Antônio de Basto Maia, who "declared that he gave the said quantity for the love of God, the said preta being his sister."⁷⁵

Despite this handful of examples of ancestral relationships surviving the Middle Passage, as well as the potential for the reconstruction of some kin-like groups like the residents of Palmares or the *jinbandaa* religious leaders, the painful reality of slavery in the Americas was that the natal lineages of most Africans were forever broken. And no matter how successful an individual was at creating new webs of kinship, these "fictive" or corporate webs of kin-like relationships could never replace what was lost in the break from the natal kinship unit. To be removed from the kinship network was to alter the life cycle in ways that are unimaginable for most Westerners. The meanings of the markers that define the human life span--birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, childrearing, old age, and dying--were all radically transformed. To face these challenges alone, without the collective support and shared understandings of the natal network of kin, was

⁷⁴ ANRJ, Segundo Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 66, ff. 140; No. 67, ff. 16v.

⁷⁵ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 125, ff. 29v.-30.

tantamount to social death.⁷⁶ And in spite of the recreation of a variety of kinship forms in the Americas, the loss of natal kin must have loomed large in the lives of those who were enslaved and in the lives of those blood relatives who were left behind in Africa.

The remarkable case of Lucrécia de André illustrates the enduring bond of natal kinship perhaps as well as any. Lucrécia, who was born in Angola, was purchased by her master, Father João Rodrigues Pina, around 1730 in Rio de Janeiro. She had already been in Brazil for some time, the slave of one Ignácio da Silva. In 1751, Father Rodrigues Pina was given 110 milreis by Captain Manuel Rodrigues de Freitas Silva for the freedom of Lucrécia. The Captain declared that he had been ordered to pay this money by Captain Félix José Nogueira, resident of the city of Luanda. Nogueira, in turn, had remitted the money to Rodrigues Pina on behalf of one Manuel da Costa Perico, the brother of Lucrécia de André.⁷⁷

Thus, after more than twenty years of separation, Manuel da Costa Perico was able to locate his enslaved sister, save the money for her freedom, and pass it in a four-man relay across the Atlantic Ocean. Whether Lucrécia

⁷⁶ The idea of slavery as a form of social death is described in Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death (Cambridge, MA, 1982).

⁷⁷ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 121, ff. 136v-137.

de André made it back to Angola (or whether she would have had any desire to return after so many years away) is uncertain from the records, but her brother's dogged determination to free her from bondage is a testament to the importance of real kin and the attendant obligations of such ties in African societies. By purchasing his sister's freedom, Manuel da Costa Perico not only freed her from the rigors of servitude, but he rescued her from the oblivion of kinlessness. Even as they created new kinship structures and systems of support, across lifetimes and oceans, real kin could never be erased from one another's consciousnesses.

Chapter 3

The Slave Family and Household Formation

Even as the memory of real kin continued to burn in many enslaved Africans, they were confronted with the stark reality of their new isolation and solitude. Natal kin was lost, and the institutional support for the kin-like structures that existed in many parts of Africa had all but been erased. Not to be vanquished, these Africans immediately began formulating new alliances and kinship groupings based on the shared experiences of enslavement and the Middle Passage. As noted in the previous chapter, shipmates not only embraced one another as *malungos*, or brothers, but they also took on the mantle of founders of new lineages, establishing new natal kinship units in the alien environments of the Americas. In some places, these new communities would resemble those of the Portuguese, as slaves slowly embraced Western conceptions of marriage and nuclear families. But in many other places, the slave communities remained thoroughly Africanized, with the majority eschewing Christian marriage for a variety of kinship arrangements with African resonances.

In this chapter we will examine more closely the complexion of "family" and kinship development among slaves in colonial Brazil. First, we will demonstrate that most slave "families" were built upon a wide range of male/female

arrangements that were not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. We will then interrogate the meaning of Christian marriage in slave society, showing how the Western marriage ritual was alternately rejected, adopted, and transformed by peoples of African descent. Finally, we will look at patterns of household formation in a single Brazilian slave community, suggesting that even where a slow creolization was occurring, African kinship patterns continued to predominate.

One of the important markers in the lifetimes of most Africans was the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Throughout Africa, this transition was recognized through a series of ceremonies that prepared the young man or woman to become a productive member of society. While the ceremonies varied slightly from society to society, their meanings and impacts were remarkably similar. During adolescence, boys and girls were taken away from their communities and taught the duties of their respective genders. Among the many mysteries which were unraveled for these young people were the joys of sex. In parts of Angola, young women were locked in a house built specifically for the occasion. After a number of days of instruction, they emerged as "grown" women able to sleep

with men for the first time.¹ Similarly, along the so-called Mina coast, girls between the ages of nine and twelve were entrusted to a mother-teacher who began a process of enlarging their vaginas through massages, vegetable irritants, and the introduction of artificial phalluses, all of this in preparation for their first sexual encounters.²

For young men, the process was similar, but was memorialized by the permanent mark of circumcision. Across Central Africa, "masters of circumcision" were called upon to initiate boys into young men. The ceremony was attended by the young man's family and was culminated with grand celebrations of feasting and dancing. Well into the seventeenth century, Portuguese officials demonstrated their ignorance of Angolan ritual by questioning whether Africans were circumcising their male children because they were Jews.³ The reality was that without circumcision, Angolan males were thought to lack virility and were rejected as social pariahs. The scar of circumcision was an indelible marker of one's manhood, and a requirement for marriage.⁴

¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor, No. 72, Livro 266, ff. 302-303v. This rite of passage was called Guicumbe.

² Herskovits (1967), 278.

³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor, No. 20, Livro 221, ff. 392-394. April 7, 1631.

⁴ Circumcision was also considered a prerequisite for manhood in the Kongo. See Georges Balandier, Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo from the Sixteenth to the

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, even in Brazil, it was reported that Angolan slave women refused to have sex with slave men who were uncircumcised.⁵

These preparations for sexual life were not only an affirmation and celebration of the reproductive capacity, but they were also a way for adults to reveal the secrets of sexual pleasure to their adolescent children. Upon achieving adulthood, sexual activity was celebrated and encouraged between unmarried men and women, with no social stigma attached to what Westerners would call "promiscuity." Even in "marriage," sexual monogamy was not always practiced. Describing the sexual habits of Central Africans in the late seventeenth century, Father Giovanni Ant3nio Cavazzi wrote:

To maintain a great number of concubines, which is an idea to which many conform, is not contrary to the inviolability of the sacrament, nor a discredit to the nobility and good fame of man, and they say that they maintain them, not incited by lasciviousness, but by the decorum of their very greatness.

They understand that the honor of a woman is not

Eighteenth Century, trans. Helen Weaver (New York, 1968), 215.

⁵ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Of3cio Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v.

obfuscated by the variety of her loves, nor by the number of her lovers, as long as she recognizes her husband as her principal lover.⁶

The code of Christian morality that the Portuguese applied to their sexual relationships was absent in many African societies, where there was a clear distinction drawn between the communal obligations of marriage and individual carnal desires. For those who were sent to the Americas as slaves, the demographic landscape was so radically transformed that we can not draw strong parallels between African and American sexual behaviors. Nonetheless, many of the same attitudes and African-type arrangements would persist, inspiring a wide array of negative commentary and attempts on the part of European clergymen to correct this "illicit" behavior with Christian marriage.

Perhaps the clearest measure that slaves did not marry according to the custom of the Catholic Church was the high rate of "illegitimate" births in the slave community. Using the baptismal records from several Brazilian parishes, it becomes clear that the vast majority of slaves rejected Christian marriage as a way of affirming their relationships. For example, in the rural parish of Jacarepaguá in Rio de Janeiro between 1691 and 1701, 62% of

⁶ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:85.

slave children were born to parents whose unions were not recognized by Christian authorities.⁷ Though the rate of "illegitimacy" was high in all communities in colonial Brazil, it was always far higher in the slave community. In Saubara, between 1723 and 1724, 29.4% of babies born into the free population were born out of Christian wedlock, while 90.3% of the slave children were "illegitimate."⁸ Similarly, in the urban parish of São José in Rio de Janeiro, 83% of slave children were born out of Christian wedlock between 1751 and 1758, with well over half of these births to Angolan mothers.⁹ For the free population during this period, only 24.7% of newborns were conceived out of Christian wedlock.¹⁰

We should stress that even though the majority of slave women gave birth out of Christian wedlock, this does not mean that they were not involved in stable relationships. In many cases, the identity of the father is listed in the baptismal record as "uncertain," but in other cases it is

⁷ ACMRJ, N.S. do Loreto de Jacarepaguá, Batismos de Escravos (1691-1725)

⁸ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 389.

⁹ ACMRJ, Paroquia de São José, Batismos de Escravos (1751-1790)

¹⁰ Renato P. Venâncio, "Nos limites da sagrada família: ilegitimidade e casamento no Brasil colonial," História e sexualidade no Brasil, ed. Ronaldo Vainfas (Rio de Janeiro, 1986), 115.

quite obvious that Africans established stable unions in which both parents appeared for the baptism of their child. For instance, Luís and Antónia, both "Guinea" slaves, appeared for the baptism of their twins, Manuel and Maria, on June 26, 1691, even though both parents were listed as "single" slaves.¹¹ Similarly, in 1752, an Angolan-born slave named João da Silva readily acknowledged his fifteen-year-old daughter, Luísa, as well as the child's mother, Guiomar da Silva, even though João and Guiomar had never married.¹²

We can be sure that a number of enduring relationships remain obscured in the records, but at the same time, we should not assume that "single-parent" births were part and parcel of some broader pathology. As we have already noted, many African societies celebrated a sexual freedom that was unknown in the West. The offspring of these relationships were by no means marginalized. Indeed, they were readily accommodated into existing family and kinship arrangements. Commenting on the status of "illegitimate" children in Angola, Father Cavazzi wrote:

The importance of being a legitimate child, so appreciated in Europe and in other parts, still seems

¹¹ ACMRJ, N.S. do Loreto de Jacarepaguá, Batismos de Escravos (1691-1725), ff. 2.

¹² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 502.

to be completely unknown to many Ethiopes. They give as much equal consideration to the legitimate child as they do the illegitimate. Rather it seems, at times, they appreciate more the children that they procreate in the effervescence of illegal ardors than those who are the delicate fruit of Christian matrimony.¹³

Likewise, for African slaves and their descendants in the Americas, there was apparently little distinction made between those children born of "illegal ardors" and those born in "Christian matrimony." Catholic marriage was a bond that had little resonance in the kinship-based, sexually free world-view of most Africans. In the Americas, slaves created a variety of arrangements in accordance with their more pliant attitudes toward human sexuality.¹⁴ That the majority were not easily swayed by the preachings of Catholic priests should come as no surprise.

Despite the difficulty in convincing African slaves that they should embrace Christian marriage, from as early as the sixteenth century and extending until the end of our

¹³ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:85.

¹⁴ I recognize the explosive implications of such an argument; however I would suggest that these sexual attitudes were indeed healthy ones that were supported by a strong kinship structure in Africa. As kinship structures were interrupted and broken down by the institution of slavery, the kinship network was also irrevocably damaged. Familial "pathology" arose only as a consequence of slavery.

study in the 1770s, many Catholic missionaries fought the uphill battle of trying to reconcile slave couples with the Catholic Church. As early as 1583, Father Christovão Gouveia reported that around 100 Indian and Guinea slaves were married in Bahia, "removing them from their evil state."¹⁵ Between 1617 and 1619, mission priests in the Recôncavo of Bahia reported marrying 112 slave couples, despite there being no priests who could speak the necessary African languages.¹⁶ And again in 1702, missionaries in the Recôncavo reported marrying 46 slave couples who "were put on the path to salvation by means of Santo Matrimônio" and saved from "the evil state that they were in."¹⁷

Although these missions bore many fruits, the fathers were confronted with a number of formidable obstacles in their attempts to introduce slaves to the sacrament of holy matrimony. The one impediment that they could never repair was the disparity in the number of slave men to slave women. By 1619, it was quite clear that the gender imbalance among Angola slaves was already taking its toll on the stability

¹⁵ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

¹⁶ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 250-251. The language problem was a persistent one in the early years. Another letter from 1620 notes that the fathers in Bahia were awaiting the arrival of two young priests who were relocating from Angola who could minister to the Angolan slaves in their own language. ARSI, Brasilia 8 II; VFL Roll 159, ff. 311v.-312.

¹⁷ ARSI, Brasilia 10 I; VFL Roll 160, ff. 19-21v.

of slave relationships, turning African expectations completely upside down. On their mission to the Recôncavo of Bahia in 1619, two Jesuit fathers reported that Angolan men were poisoning other male slaves because these men were carrying on "illicit" relationships with their wives.¹⁸ With such high male to female sex ratios, it could only be expected that some women would attract the attention of more than one man. But the violence that resulted from these affairs was a function of false expectations. Angolan men came from societies where they were often the possessors of numerous concubines; and now that the tables were turned, their virility and manhood were threatened. Frustration inevitably erupted into jealousy and violence against their fellow slaves.

Another obstacle that stood in the way of clergymen in their quest to marry slaves were the slave masters. For a variety of reasons, most masters were not quick to endorse Church marriages for their bondsmen. In their mission to the Recôncavo, the Jesuit fathers reported that "for some reasons and inconveniences by the Devil's art," masters refused to order their slaves to marry.¹⁹ One of the most obvious reasons that masters objected to Church-sanctioned marriages was that these marriages often complicated

¹⁸ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 270-270v. During this mission, 308 slave couples were married.

¹⁹ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 270-270v.

economic decisions. The relocation or selling away of a slave who was a member of a Church-recognized family destroyed the integrity of that family, and separation was widely recognized in Brazil as one of the primary reasons that slaves ran away. To make matters worse for the masters, canon law compelled them not to separate members of slave families. The masters' solution to this conundrum was to discourage Church marriages and leave the slaves to their own devices in terms of the relationships that they forged.²⁰ Of course, given the divergent cultural meanings of marriage in Africa and the West, slaves probably welcomed this lack of intervention.

Masters sometimes attempted to use the gulf between Christian and African understandings of marriage to their advantage. In arguments against sanctioning unions between slaves, masters claimed that Africans, unacquainted with the notion of permanent unions and unable to procure divorces, often resorted to killing their spouses with poison or "witchcraft" when they tired of the marriage.²¹ Though probably apocryphal, this argument illustrates the master's awareness of the incongruence of Catholic morality and the types of arrangements that Africans created.

At times, even priests had difficulty reconciling the

²⁰ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 385.

²¹ Antonil, Cultura e opulência do Brasil, 124-125.

problem of slaves as property and slaves as members of Christian families. For the most part, priests cajoled, coerced, and even forced their slaves to marry. In 1584, Father Joseph de Anchieta wrote that the slaves of the Jesuit College of Bahia were "separate[d]...from their concubines and subject...to the laws of matrimony."²² But fifty years later on Engenho Sergipe, Father Sebastião Vaz complained that the majority of the engenho's slaves were single and living in sin. The situation remained unchanged at Sergipe in 1733, when Father Jerônimo da Gama lamented that most of the property's slaves were still unmarried. In the same year, on Engenho Santana, Father Pedro Teixeira exhorted the engenho's slaves "to give up their evil state and marry," but to little avail.²³ The rhetoric of encouraging slave marriage was one thing, but the real-life difficulties of supporting slave families offered little incentive for the Jesuits to actually force the issue of family formation.

The fact was that fostering slave families could be exasperatingly expensive, not to mention socially disruptive for the masters. Difficult pregnancies often incapacitated able-bodied female slaves for extended periods of time.

²² Anchieta, Cartas, Informações, Fragmentos Historicos e Sermões do Padre Joseph de Anchieta, 399.

²³ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 354-355.

According to the slave inventory of Engenho Santana in 1674, Antônia Criolla was out of work for eight months as a result of an illness that arose from a difficult childbirth.²⁴ If mother and child lived through the birth, there was no guarantee that the child would survive the exposure to the numerous diseases that plagued slave communities. And finally, the cost of raising children to productive adulthood simply did not pay off in the same way that purchasing new Africans did. We have already mentioned the social difficulties arising from marriages in areas where the gender imbalance was extreme. This type of unrest was apparently rather common. Indeed, in 1745, the Capuchins took the radical step of prohibiting their Brazilian slaves from marrying, "in order to avoid some disorders that have followed" such marriages.²⁵

Unlike the Jesuits or the Capuchins, the Benedictines forced their slaves to marry and encouraged them to form families. Widely regarded as among the finest plantation administrators in colonial Brazil, from as early as the seventeenth century Benedictine properties were relatively balanced in terms of gender, and there were few single slaves. But for the slaves, forced marriage came at a

²⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 7.

²⁵ Venâncio Willeke, "Atas capitulares da Província Franciscana de Santo Antônio do Brasil (1649-1893)," Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro 286 (1970), 128-129.

price. In 1751, Padre Antônio de Jesus Maria reported that he found a number of slaves living in concubinage at the monastery in Bahia. Among the women, there was one who was "most scandalous" who told the Father that she did not want to marry, this after the Father had already ordered that a *senzala* (slave quarter) be built for her and her prospective husband. When the Father asked her why she did not want to marry, she replied that she was still a young girl. The Father rebuked her telling her that "for that very reason she should want to marry and that she should open her eyes." He then proceeded to threaten her, warning that "the monastery did not want a single and scandalous female slave and that she should choose a husband from the eight male slaves that the monastery had. Otherwise, she should search for someone to purchase her because poorly behaved and scandalous slaves did not serve the priests." In the days that followed, the woman acquiesced and was married to the man to whom she was originally betrothed, all to the great satisfaction of Father de Jesus Maria, who claimed that the slaves "do not cease in thanking me for removing them from the path of doom and putting them on that of salvation."²⁶

The Benedictines were not alone in forcing their slaves to marry. Those masters on secular properties who took the admonitions of mission priests seriously were often quick to

²⁶ ADB/UM, CSB 37.

make marriage choices for their slaves. Father Antonil wrote that masters would matter-of-factly tell their slaves, "You so-and-so, in your time will marry so-and-so," and the slaves were forced to obey.²⁷ Marriage records seem to affirm Antonil's claim, as it was not unusual for a master to have three or even four pairs of his slaves married in the same ceremony. In some cases the slaves may have chosen to marry in this communal fashion, but in others the master was clearly in control. For instance, it seems unlikely that four females from the Mina coast of Africa would have chosen to marry three Angola males and one creole male, let alone all in the same ceremony. But this was the case when their master, João de Figueiredo, sent them forth to be married in Rio de Janeiro in the middle of the eighteenth century.²⁸

The negative impacts of these unwanted interventions could present great difficulties for the slaves. Forced marriages were a recipe for a wide range of adulterous "crimes." Slaves simply ignored the hollow wedding vows that were forced upon them and carried on with relationships that were meaningful to them. Most masters turned a blind eye toward the "extra-marital" affairs that resulted from coerced marriages, affairs which provided extra ammunition

²⁷ Antonil, Cultura e opulência do Brasil, 124-125.

²⁸ ACMRJ, Nossa Senhora da Candelária, Casamentos (de pessoas livres) e escravos (1751-1761).

for their arguments that Africans were lascivious heathens. The consciences of the masters were clear because they met their Christian duty by joining their slaves in holy matrimony, and they were free from the harassment of missionaries and Church officials. But when these adulterous crimes came to the attention of the Church, the slaves themselves were forced to pay for their masters' sins.

In January 1746, Lourença Correia da Lapa, the 30-year-old slave of the Sargento-Mor António de Figueiredo de Almeida, was incarcerated for the crime of bigamy. A resident of Rio de Janeiro, Lourença was remitted to Lisbon for questioning by the Portuguese Holy Office. There, she confessed that it had been seven years since she worked in the house of her master, whose wife, Dona Isabel, forced her to marry an elderly slave named Pedro Banguer. The marriage was only "celebrated at the will of their masters," and the two slaves never consummated the marriage. Because Dona Isabel "punished her with supreme rigor," Lourença's master gave her permission to leave his house, and she went to the village of São João de Meritim. There, she lived for some time in the house of one Estevão Rodrigues, where she determined to marry again. Uncertain how to deal with her first marriage, Lourença consulted a widowed friend named Clara Gata. Clara advised Lourença that she "could marry again since the first marriage was not a true one."

In accordance with Lourença's wishes, Clara organized her second wedding. First, she introduced Lourença to a suitable mate, 50-year-old Amaro de França Cordeiro, slave of Estevão Rodrigues. Next, Clara found four witnesses who were prepared to testify that they knew Lourença to be single and fit to marry. Two of these witnesses were unaware of her first marriage, but the other two knew that she was already married. All four apparently were persuaded by the cash bribe given to them by Clara Gata. On the strength of these four witnesses, Lourença and Amaro were married and lived together happily for four years before Clara was jailed for bigamy.

Under examination by the inquisitors, Lourença was asked why, if she was so certain that her first marriage was not valid, did she not declare this fact to the priest who married her the second time. Lourença said that she wanted to speak the truth, but that her friend Clara Gata told her "to keep her mouth shut because it was not necessary to speak." Unimpressed by her pleas for mercy, the inquisitors ultimately sentenced Lourença to be publicly humiliated in the Auto da Fé, whipped in the streets *citra sanguinis effusionem*, and exiled to Castro-Marim for five years.²⁹

²⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 11283. The Auto da Fé was a public spectacle, usually held in the main square of Lisbon, in which those found guilty by the Inquisition were paraded in front of thousands of people. The accused, who wore penitential clothing, went barefoot and carried candles. The alleged crimes of each person were

The case of Lourença Correia has multiple layers, some of which raise questions that can not be easily answered by the documents. For instance, why did Dona Isabel insist on the marriage between Lourença and Amaro? And why did she continue to abuse her slave? Was Dona Isabel jealous because her husband was having an affair with his slave, Lourença? One must also question why Lourença felt compelled to validate her "true" marriage with the Catholic Church. Though lacking a thorough understanding of Church doctrine, she still embraced Christian marriage as a way of affirming her relationship with Amaro. Perhaps she believed that by marrying for a second time, she could erase the horrible experience of her first marriage.

Another interesting aspect of this case is the part played by Clara Gata. Her role as the wise elder matchmaker has strong African resonances. Older slaves, both male and female, were accorded a great deal of respect and authority in the slave communities, and Lourença seems to have relied upon Clara as a trusted, older "family" member, one who knew how to negotiate the minefields of Christian customs and laws. Clara's ability to rally other slaves around an "illegal" marriage was ingenious, but not unusual. From as

read aloud by officials of the Inquisition for all to hear. *Citra sanguinis effusionem* was a Latin term meaning "until the blood flows," usually around fifty lashes. Castro-Marim is a Portuguese town in the extreme east of the Algarve, near the border with Spanish Andalusia. See Mott, "*Justitia et Misericordia*," 719-721.

early as 1616 in Lisbon, a priest noted that the "preto" witnesses at the marriage of Francisco and Maria, pretos, "deceived me because none of them were from my parish."³⁰ Africans and their descendants found numerous ways to circumvent the bureaucratic obstacles that were placed in their paths, especially when these hurdles interfered with how they wanted to arrange their interior lives.

In short, peoples of African descent sometimes manipulated the loopholes in the marriage contract to suit their own needs, ignoring Christian strictures in order to marry multiple times. On the one hand, multiple marriages affirmed the growing cultural importance of Christian marriage; but on the other hand, these marriages indicated an unwillingness on the part of blacks to accept the requirements of monogamy. Some Africans and their descendants transformed the marriage contract so that it would be more aligned to their own cultural understandings.

This is not to suggest that polygyny was a widespread phenomenon among Africans in the diaspora.³¹ As we have already noted, the dearth of females tempered any desire

³⁰ ANTT, Registos Paroquiais, Concelho de Lisboa, Sé, Casamentos, Livro 1, Part 2, f. 28v. (May 18, 1616).

³¹ Some scholars point to high incidences of polygyny in other parts of the Americas. I did not find similarly large numbers of polygyny cases for the Portuguese world. See, for instance, Colin A. Palmer, "From Africa to the Americas: Ethnicity in the Early Black Communities of the Americas," Journal of World History 6 (1995), 236.

that slaves may have had to replicate African patterns of behavior. Indeed, the jealousies and disorders among male slaves that were caused by female infidelity suggest that polyandry may have been as prevalent as polygyny. But where possible, some African men carried on relationships with multiple female partners, sometimes even going through the trouble of having these relationships endorsed by the Church.

In the mid 1620s, Francisco da Fonseca, a Mina slave in the city of Seville, Spain, married a slave woman named Joana Morena. He was married to her for eleven years, during which time he fathered two daughters with another Sevillian slave woman named Francisca. Francisco gained his freedom, and eventually left for Lisbon, leaving behind his wife, his mistress, and two daughters. He was in Lisbon for eighteen years before marrying the free woman, Antónia Nogueira. In order to effect this marriage, Francisco convinced three other free blacks to swear that he was single and born in Lisbon. Francisco was married to Antónia for eight years, and they had a daughter together before Francisco was denounced to the Inquisition in 1660.³²

Similarly, Manuel de Souza, a Benguela slave who resided in Pernambuco, was married on his master's engenho to Maria Cardoso (Arda) in 1732. Shortly after his

³² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 39, Livro 238, ff. 1-13v.

marriage, Manuel struck up a relationship with another slave named Maria Correia (Mina), who was the property of one the engenho's tenant sharecroppers. Because of "the great love that he had for...Maria Correia," Manuel also wanted to marry her. Consulting some Gypsy friends, Manuel was told that he should leave his first wife and marry Maria Correia. The Gypsies persuaded Manuel that his first marriage was of no concern and that "he would not be the first person to marry for a second time." In 1738, only six years after his first marriage, Manuel married Maria Correia, with one of the Gypsies appearing as a witness to lie that Manuel was single. Manuel's ruse was soon discovered and he was jailed by the order of the Bishop of Pernambuco. Eventually, Manuel was forced to pay the ultimate price for his "sin." In addition to being sentenced to appear before the Auto da Fé and being publicly whipped *citra sanguinis effusionem*, Manuel was banished to the king's galleys for five years. He went to the galleys on November 20, 1742, but died less than three years later on April 25, 1745.³³

While the great majority of peoples of African descent chose to join together in a diversity of unions that the Portuguese labeled as sinful, others voluntarily embraced the sacrament of Holy Matrimony and married in the Catholic Church. But even in the rare instances where this occurred,

³³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 9110.

we should not assume that all of these slaves were adopting the Christian notion of marriage. Indeed, the evidence from the parish records suggests that "marriage" was just one more way of crystallizing African ethnic alliances and perpetuating shared understandings of kinship, child rearing, and so on.

An examination of eighteenth-century parish records from Rio de Janeiro gives us some insight into the importance of African ethnicity in the forging of slave communities. In a sample of marriages from the urban parish of Nossa Senhora da Candelária, a total of 222 Africans were joined in Holy Matrimony (Table 3-1). Of these 222 individuals, 186 married other Africans. In other words, 89 percent of the Africans in the sample married other Africans. In addition, 61 percent of the Africans in the sample married partners who came from the same broad cultural areas of Africa. Thirty-six Africans married crioulos, pardos, and whites, representing just 11 percent of all Africans who were married.

**Table 3-1. Marriages Involving Africans in the Parish of
Nossa Senhora da Candelária, Rio de Janeiro
(1751-1761)**

Guiné with Guiné

47

Table 3-1, continued.

Mina with Mina	15		
Angola with Angola	4		
Benguela with Benguela	2	= 146	A f r i c a n s
Ganguela with Ganguela	1		married to
Benguela with Ganguela	1		partners from
Benguela with Angola	1		the same
Mina with Cabo Verde	1		cultural area
Mina with São Tomé	1		(61%)
Angola with Mina	5		
Benguela with Mina	2		
Angola with Cabo Verde	1	= 40	A f r i c a n s
Massangano with Mina	1		married to
Monjollo with Cabo Verde	1		partners from
Guiné with Cabo Verde	4		different
Guiné with Mina	6		cultural area
			(18%)

		=	186 Africans
			married to
			other Africans
			(91%)
Mina with Crioulo	14		
Mina with Pardo	4		
Mina with White	1		
Guiné with Crioulo	11	= 36	Africans
Guiné with Pardo	4		Married to
Cabo Verde with Crioulo	1		Non-Africans
Congo with Crioulo	1		(9%)
		= 222	TOTAL AFRICANS

Source: ACMRJ, Nossa Senhora da Candelária, casamentos de pessoas livres e escravos, 1751-1761

In the rural parish of Guaratiba, Africans were even more likely to marry their ethnic peers (Table 3-2). In a sample of 41 Africans who married in that parish between

1763 and 1770, 38 married other Africans (93%). Of these 38, all were married to people of the same or similar ethnic background. The remaining three Africans married crioulos.

Table 3-2. Marriages Involving Africans in the Parish of São Salvador do Mundo de Guaratiba, Rio de Janeiro (1763-1770)

Guiné with Guiné	10			
Angola with Angola	3	=	38	Africans
Benguela with Benguela	2			married to
Benguela with Angola	2			partners from
Benguela with Bambambuira	1			the same
Cabo Verde with Guiné	1			cultural area
				(93%)
Guiné with Crioulo	2	=	3	Africans
Motema with Crioulo	1			married to
				Non-Africans
				(7%)
		=	41	TOTAL AFRICANS

Source: ACMRJ, Freguesia de S. Salvador do Mundo de Guaratiba, Casamentos de Escravos (1763-1794)

Though the marriage registers provide us with a snapshot of African marriage patterns, they tell us little about the nature of the family arrangements that grew out of these marriages. In fact, one must remember that at least

some of the marriages between Africans were probably unions forced by the master. One way of peering beyond the marriage ceremony itself is to give a close reading to the baptismal records. Africans who brought their children to the baptismal font were also identified by their ethnic backgrounds. Thus, we not only get a glimpse of the ethnic alliances that were forged by these marriages, but we begin to see how marriages between Africans were cemented through the celebration of child birth.

Table 3-3. Marriages Involving Africans in the Parish of São José, Rio de Janeiro (1751-1758)

Fathers with Mothers

Angola with Angola	36		
Guiné with Guiné	11		
Benguela with Benguela	1	=	110 Africans
Mina with Mina	1		married to
Congo with Congo	1		partners from
Cobú with Cobú	1		the same
Guiné with Cabo Verde	1		cultural area
Ganguela with Angola	1		(77%)
Congo with Benguela	1		
Benguela with Congo	1		
Angola with Mina	3		
Mina with Angola	1	=	18 Africans
Angola with Cabo Verde	1		married to
Cabo Verde with Angola	3		partners from
Angola with São Tomé	1		different
			cultural area
			(13%)

Table 3-3, continued.

		=	128	Africans married to other Africans (90%)
Crioulo with Angola	6			
Pardo with Angola	1			
Crioulo with Guiné	1	=	14	Africans married to Non-Africans (10%)
Cabra with Guiné	1			
Angola with Crioula	3			
Angola with Parda	1			
Mina with Crioula	1			
		=	142	TOTAL AFRICANS

 Source: ACMRJ, Paroquia de São José, Batismos de Escravos
 (1751-1790)

The sample taken in Table 3-3 confirms the patterns of ethnic endogamy demonstrated in the earlier samples. Of 142 Africans who brought their children to be baptized in São José between 1751 and 1758, 128 (90%) were married to other Africans, and 110 (77%) of these were married to partners with the same ethnic affinity. The children of these unions were born "creoles" and were baptized in the Catholic Church, but their childhoods were lived mostly in the worlds of their African parents. The decision of these parents to marry a partner from the same African ethnic group was not a random or abstract choice. Africans who shared similar cultural understandings gravitated toward one another in the

Americas and found ways to reconstitute their common cultural ground through language, religion, childrearing practices, and so on. In this respect, Africans were not unlike migrants in any other diaspora who sought to maintain social and cultural relations within ethnic boundaries. Endogamous marriage, whether endorsed by the Church or not, was a first step in the attempt to recreate specific social and cultural forms in the Americas. Where the demographic situation allowed, Africans built upon these alliances, forming distinct groups of slaves who shared cultural understandings, built broad kinship units, and passed on knowledge to their creole offspring.

Unfortunately, the sources for colonial Brazil provide us with precious little material with which to reconstruct specific household and community arrangements for Africans and their descendants. There are only a few series of slave inventories that survive, and the majority of these lack information on family arrangements that can be traced across time. One set of exceptions are two slave inventories for the Jesuit Engenho Santana, one compiled in 1731, and the other in 1752.³⁴ Each of these inventories divides Santana's slaves into household groupings, with the social relationships of each person and their approximate ages also included. From these two documents, we get a brief glimpse

³⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 23 (June 30, 1730 to June 30, 1731); ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 52 (November 13, 1752).

at the nature of household arrangements and kinship formation on a large sugar engenho.

The 1731 inventory from Engenho Santana is an outstanding example of African-type kinship structures being replicated in a predominantly creole society. Engenho Santana, which began to produce a self-sustaining core of creole slaves in the 1670s, was a mature creole environment by the 1730s.³⁵ Though African imports continued to be necessary as a result of attrition, a solid creole core always survived, with the Africans being integrated and slowly socialized into the core.³⁶ Because the administrators of Santana supposedly took a benign, if not hostile, attitude toward marriage in the thirty years before 1730, the households were ones made by the slaves, with little interference from their masters.³⁷ And these households reflected a variety of arrangements that defy any

³⁵ By mature here I simply mean a society which had several generations of creolization behind it.

³⁶ The ecclesiastical estates were exceptional in this regard. As we have already noted, the majority of slave holdings were overwhelmingly African and male, with very few "marriages." At least four of the 17 marriages on Santana in 1674 were between Africans and creoles. There were also 25 children under the age of 16 on the property. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 7.

³⁷ When Father Pedro Teixeira took over Santana in 1731, he was exasperated to learn that his predecessor, Father Manuel de Figueiredo, opposed slave marriages. This had produced a slave population that was living in "sin." Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 355.

neat summary or categorization.

Of 57 distinct households, only ten were ones in which a male, a female, and their shared children lived together alone. The residents of these ten households represented 26% of the property's entire slave population. There were five households where a couple lived with a child who belonged to only one of the partners. Thus, the child was either "illegitimate" or born of a previous relationship. Such was the case with Antônio, his wife Joana Geje, and her "illegitimate" son Ignácio. Several households included a married couple with the siblings of one of the married partners. There were also several households composed of old women and single young men. Another household included the widower, 70-year-old Antônio Congo, his adult children Martinho and Josepha, and the mulata children of his deceased wife, Jerónima and Antônia. Finally, there were other units which were apparently made up of diverse unrelated individuals. For example, Manuel, age 50, and his wife, Severina Geje (30), lived together with five single slaves--Mariana (24), Rosa Geje (25), Marcella Angola (50), Agostinho (65), and Maria (30).³⁸

The willingness of households to adopt non-kin "outsiders" was a prominent feature of African societies and

³⁸ For statistical details on the household structure of Santana from 1731 to 1752, see Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 394-406.

allowed for the development of a mixed web of kinship on certain large Brazilian properties like Santana. This does not mean that core relationships between males and females, or marriages if you will, were unimportant. Indeed, it was these enduring relationships that were the bulwark of the community and the mechanism that drove creolization. It was no coincidence that Joseph Passube, who was the father of seven living children on Engenho Santana in 1731, was celebrated as "the honor of the married men." By 1752, significant numbers of children from the 1731 inventory appear "married" in cross-cutting relationships that knit the community even more tightly together. In addition, despite the 21 years in distance between the two inventories, nine of the 57 couples who were together in 1731 were still together in 1752. Even though there is evidence of growing demographic stability on Santana, we must bear in mind that Christian marriage was not a prerequisite for the process of creolization. As has been well-illustrated by the baptismal records, the majority of slave women gave birth outside of the boundaries of Christian marriage. In the right demographic and health circumstances, slaves would reproduce regardless of whether their unions were endorsed by the Church.

Despite fragments of information on polygynous and polyandrous relationships, as well as more ample information

on out-of-wedlock births and Christian marriages in the slave communities, we are still able to make only tentative conclusions regarding "family" life in Brazil. Unfortunately, the family patterns that Africans and their descendants established in the colonial Portuguese world remain mostly obscured to us. Clearly there were a variety of arrangements, which were as much shaped by the temporal and demographic conditions of the slave community, as by African survivals. We know that two out of every three slaves who arrived in Brazil were men. When we also take into account that only around one in four slave women was "married" when she gave birth, we can estimate that between 80 and 90 percent of all slaves remained unmarried, at least in the Christian sense of the term. This vast group of "unmarried" slaves created family and kinship groups where they could, with many of these arrangements resonating with their African pasts. We must stress that these arrangements were the "norm" in most Brazilian slave communities; Church marriages remained the "alternative" model for Africans throughout the colonial period. Even when they sought the endorsement of the Catholic Church, Africans aligned themselves with their ethnic peers more often than not, with some no doubt viewing "marriage" as a façade behind which to carry on with a variety of African-inspired kinship arrangements. "Marriage," both in Africa and the Americas, was gloss for a diversity of male/female alliances--

temporary and permanent relations, single and multiple partners--all aimed at building broader kinship units. But in spite of constant efforts to maintain and re-create links to their African pasts, the burdens of slavery, demographic decline, and master abuse all took their toll on slave "families" and kinship formation in the Portuguese world. It is to these subjects that we now turn.

Chapter 4

The Limitations of Family: Disease, Mortality, and Master Power

In 1749, a slave by the name of Gaspar Gonçalves ran away from the Jesuit Engenho Santana to the town of Rio das Contas in order to be with his lover, a slave woman named Jacinta Ramos. Gaspar was captured in Rio das Contas and held in the jail there for nine days before he was reclaimed by the Jesuits. Since most slave owners did not recognize the unions that their slaves created outside of Christian marriage, flight to visit loved ones or kin in far-away places was viewed by masters as both a loss of valuable labor and a possible threat to public safety. Punishment was a common response, especially for habitual offenders. But instead of punishing Gaspar for his attempt to flee Santana, the Jesuits made the extraordinary gesture of purchasing Jacinta Ramos at auction in Rio das Contas "in order to marry with the said slave [Gaspar], who ran away because of her."¹ The union between Gaspar and Jacinta was quickly sanctioned by the Jesuits, and the married couple

¹ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 42. The capture and incarceration of Gaspar cost the Jesuits 10\$860--10\$000 for his actual capture, 320 reis for his jailing, and 540 reis for his food during the nine days of incarceration. Jacinta was purchased for 100 milreis at auction. Thus, the Jesuits spent 110\$860 to appease the runaway slave, Gaspar.

established their own household on Santana.² Gaspar's resistance to the forced separation from his lover paid off in a fashion that was unheard of on most slaveholdings.³

Yet despite Gaspar and Jacinta's apparent triumph in being able to carve a small space of happiness and love in their lives--to validate their humanity--their relationship was doomed by an institution that was never lacking in ways to maim and torture its victims. Almost immediately upon her arrival at Santana, Jacinta encountered hardship. In 1750, she was bitten by a venomous snake.⁴ Even though she survived this initial scare, the ravages of disease and the unhealthy work environment ultimately took their toll on Jacinta. By Lent of 1753, Gaspar Gonçalves was listed as a widower on an inventory of the engenho's slaves.⁵ During the six months between November 1752 and Lent 1753, Jacinta Ramos died, leaving behind a heartbroken husband who had

² ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 52. In this 1752 inventory of Santana, Gaspar and Jacinta are listed as a married couple occupying a single household.

³ There was, however, precedence for uniting separated slave couples on Jesuit properties. In the 1630s, the Jesuits on Engenho Sergipe purchased the "wives" of two male slaves. Each of the men was accused of fleeing the estate dozens of times per year in order to be with their loved ones. According to the Jesuits, the women were bought "in order to appease and serve" their respective mates. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 14, No. 1.

⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 43. The Jesuits paid 440 reis to have Jacinta cured.

⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 56.

only four years earlier risked punishment, and even his own life, when he ran away to be with her.

The tragic story of Gaspar and Jacinta is merely one incident in a broader demographic calamity that claimed the lives of thousands of slaves in Brazil. No matter how successful Africans and their descendants were at creating new "families" and kinship networks, they were still subject to the vagaries of disease, hunger, and physical abuse that were characteristic of Brazilian slave society. All of these maladies severely circumscribed the formation of stable "family" and kinship units. In this chapter we will examine more closely how demography, disease, and master intervention adversely affected the formation of slave "families." We will also look at the violent world that characterized the Brazilian slave community, and we will suggest ways in which the psyches of slaves were permanently damaged by the institution. Finally, we will raise the question of how Africans and their descendants responded to the constant assaults that were waged, not only against their "families," but against their very lives.

Disease, Malnutrition, and Mortality Among Brazilian Slaves

For the majority of Africans who were enslaved in Africa, bound for Brazil, slavery meant one thing--death. Despite the overwhelming emphasis in scholarly literature on the institution of slavery in the Americas, the fact is that

many Africans never survived to become slave laborers in the Americas. In the late eighteenth century, as many as half of those who were enslaved in the interior of Central Africa never set foot on American soil. For the earlier periods, mortality rates were even higher.⁶ Thus, the real story of African slavery ends rather inauspiciously, long before most slaves even caught sight of the Americas. Of course, our concern here is with those who survived the journey to the Americas. Nevertheless, we must recognize that even for the survivors, death was a constant presence in their lives, a shadow that followed them and their loved ones even in the Americas.

To become a slave in the interior of Africa was to enter a world teeming with death, disease, and starvation. If the march to the African coast, incarceration in the coastal barracoons, or the Middle Passage did not claim one's life, disease would.⁷ For an African-born slave to arrive in Brazil and live for more than four years was a remarkable achievement indeed. During this four-year window known as the "seasoning" period, over forty percent of those African slaves who survived the Middle Passage succumbed to

⁶ Miller, Way of Death, 440-441.

⁷ For the best description of African enslavement and the Portuguese Middle Passage, see Miller, Way of Death, 379-442.

various diseases in Brazil in the late eighteenth century.⁸ Smallpox and measles were the most efficient killers, wiping out large numbers of slaves in single outbreaks. More pernicious were various intestinal disorders, including dysentery, cholera, and intestinal parasites--roundworm, hookworm, threadworm, and tapeworm. Slaves also suffered from tuberculosis, malaria, tetanus, and pulmonary disorders. Perhaps the most offensive illness commonly acquired by African slaves was an intestinal disorder known as "*mal de bicho*." Literally meaning "evil of the small beast," the sickness began with a bout of strong diarrhea, but the afflicted rapidly developed "in the anal orifice, both internally and externally...little ulcers containing maggots." The disease was characterized by an inability to control the bowels. Gangrene soon set in and the sufferer quickly died.⁹

Hunger and malnutrition were also aggravating factors in the poor health and physical deterioration of slaves. Beginning in the early seventeenth century, there were reports that Brazilian slaves were dying of hunger. By the

⁸ Thus, from capture in the interior of Africa until fully seasoned in Brazil, only about 30% of Africans survived. Miller, Way of Death, 440-441.

⁹ Quoted from Joachim John Monteiro, Angola and the River Congo, 2 vols. (1875; reprint, London, 1968), 2:252-253 in Karasch, Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 151. Karasch suggests that *mal de bicho* might have been schistosomal dysentery.

end of the century, it was common practice among many planters to allow their slaves one day per week, usually Saturday, to cultivate their own foodstuffs. Still, in times of drought or economic hardship, slaves could not produce enough to feed themselves. And the food rations of slaves were among the first expenditures that masters cut.¹⁰ Commenting on the obligations of masters to feed their slaves, in the 1760s, the Benedictine Father Superior commented that, "Gravely sins the master who avoids spending by not feeding the slave; there must be established in him the necessity of breaking this belief."¹¹

Young children were particularly vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, since they were incapable of planting their own subsistence crops. In times of famine, slave parents took extraordinary measures in order to ensure that their children were fed. In the 1760s, slave mothers on the Benedictine properties were so desperate that they apparently prostituted themselves in order to meet their children's needs.¹² Children also engaged in the practice of "dirt eating," sometimes with lethal consequences. Slave masters and commentators on Brazilian slavery believed that this practice stemmed from some sort of self-destructive

¹⁰ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 137-139.

¹¹ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 55-56.

¹² ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 55-56.

habit of Africans and their descendants. Writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Englishman Henry Koster noted that masters believed that slaves ate lime and dirt "for the purpose of destroying themselves." Koster goes on:

it is strange that the habit of eating lime and earth should be contracted in some instances by African and likewise by Creole children, and as frequently by free children as by those who are in slavery. This practice is not created as if it were a disorder, but it is accounted a habit, which, by attention from those who have charge of the children--in watching and punishing them, may be conquered without the aid of medicine. I know some instances in which no medical treatment was deemed necessary: but the individual recovered by means of chastisement and constant vigilance.¹³

We now know that dirt eating is one of the primary symptoms of the disease known as pica, an illness that results from deficiencies in potassium, iron, calcium, and magnesium.¹⁴ In other words, childhood "dirt eating" was a symptom of

¹³ Henry Koster, Travels in Brazil (London, 1816), 213.

¹⁴ Kenneth F. Kiple and Virginia H. King, "Slave Child Mortality: Some Nutritional Answers to a Perennial Puzzle," Journal of Social History 10 (1977), 287, 298.

extreme malnutrition, a desperate biological response to a lack of essential minerals. The child who survived his bouts of dirt eating likely soon succumbed to starvation or some other vitamin or mineral deficiency.

Mission reports and plantation-level data confirm that large numbers of Africans succumbed to disease, starvation, and various other maladies in Brazil, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As early as 1582, the Jesuit Engenho Santana was forced to cease operations for five months due to a plague which killed 83 "Guiné and Indian peças," more than half of the estate's entire work force. Only the leasing of African slaves from Bahian merchant Francisco da Costa salvaged the sugar crop, but even with this stop-gap measure, the cost of the leased slaves exceeded the profits from the harvested sugar.¹⁵ Plagues continued to devastate the non-white population through the end of the sixteenth century. In 1597, Padre Ignácio Tholosa reported that between May and August of that year, 2,000 Indians, Africans, and creoles died in Bahia. Protected from the overwork, undernourishment, and pestilent conditions that killed Africans and Indians, Europeans were apparently less likely to perish.¹⁶

By the seventeenth century, Brazil's slave population

¹⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 9.

¹⁶ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 433.

was overwhelmingly African, and the death toll continued to mount. Between 1617 and 1638 on the Jesuit Engenho Sergipe, more than 250 "Guiné" slaves were purchased, but more than 150 of these died, leaving the engenho with fewer than 100 slaves in 1638.¹⁷ At this rate of loss, the engenho's slave population was replaced almost twiceover during the 21-year period. One of the outcomes of this extraordinarily high death rate among Africans was that very few creoles were born into the slave population. That Brazilian slaves could not reproduce themselves is spelled out further in a mission report from the Bahian Recôncavo in 1617. The priests reported that "almost all of the people who are put on the fazendas and engenhos are new, and the majority of the *ladinos* (acculturated slaves) and old ones are dead from smallpox and measles, which like a branch of plague prevails with great fury..."¹⁸

Table 4-1. Crude Death and Birth Rates on Various Brazilian Properties, 1617-1778

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Places	Dates	Crude death rate	Crude birth rate

¹⁷ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 14, No. 1.

¹⁸ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 250-251.

Table 4-1, continued.

1.	Engenho Sergipe (Bahia)	1617-1638	70-80	
2.	Jesuit College (Rio de Janeiro)	1646-1649	83.3	
3.	Engenho Guaguasú (Rio de Janeiro)	1648-1652	70.5	
4.	Engenho Santana (Bahia)	1674-1676	40	53.3
5.	Engenho Musurepe (Olinda)	1726-1730	26.9	
6.	Engenho Santana	1730-1731	39	
7.	Engenho Sergipe	1730-1733	66.6	
8.	Engenho Petinga (Bahia)	1744-1745	115	
9.	Engenho Santana	1748-1752	27	28
10.	Fazenda Saubara (Bahia)	1750-1760	115 males 81 females	17-26
11.	Engenhos Musurepe, São Bernardo, Goitá (Olinda)	1766-1769	7.5	19.6
12.	Engenhos Musurepe, São Bernardo, Goitá	1772-1778	18.7	
13.	Central Africa	1700s	48	
14.	United States	1994	8.8	15.3

 Sources: 1. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 14, No. 1. 2. ARSI, Brasilia 3 I; VFL Roll 161, ff. 273-274. 3. ADB/UM, CSB 134. 4. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 7. 5. ADB/UM, CSB 138, ff. 170. 6. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 24. 7. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 431. 8. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 25. 9. ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 52. 10. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 366. 11. ADB/UM, CSB 139. 12. ADB/UM, CSB 139. 13. Miller, Way of Death, 381. 14. National Center for Health Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

There was apparently little improvement in slave mortality levels in Brazil until the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Plantation-level data is relatively scarce and crude mortality rates (calculated as the number

of deaths per 1,000 slaves in a given year) are an imperfect measure of overall mortality, since stillbirths and the deaths of small babies were not included in most plantation reports. Still, Table 4-1 demonstrates that the crude mortality rates of slaves on ecclesiastical properties in Bahia and Rio never fell below 70 per 1,000 during the first half of the seventeenth century, a rate far higher than the 48 that has been estimated for stable populations in Central Africa during the same period.¹⁹ In Rio de Janeiro, the rector of the Jesuit College, Antônio Rodrigues, reported that more than 150 slaves died on Jesuit fazendas between 1646 and 1649. He went on to note that the deaths occurred "during the time that Angola was occupied by the rebel Dutch and it was not possible to put others in their place."²⁰ But even after the slave trade from Angola resumed, newly-arrived Africans continued to perish at a staggering rate. The Benedictine monastery at Rio de Janeiro acquired 57 slaves during the 1663-1666 triennial, 30 by inheritance and the remaining 27 through purchase. Of these 57, 15 were

¹⁹ These findings correspond closely to Katia Mattoso's estimate that the annual replacement rate for slaves on Brazilian plantations prior to 1640 was 6.3%. Katia M. de Queiros Mattoso, To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550-1888, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick, NJ, 1986), 42-43.

²⁰ ARSI, Brasilia 3 I; VFL Roll 161, ff. 273-274. The Jesuit College of Rio owned more than 600 slaves in 1640. Boxer, Salvador de Sá and the Struggle for Brazil and Angola, 1602-1686 (London, 1952), 134.

already dead by the end of the triennial.²¹ During the same triennial, the slave population of the Benedictine monastery at Olinda declined 19 percent. In 1663 the monastery reported that they possessed 126 slaves. By 1666, this number dropped to 102, despite the acquisition of 16 new *peças* during the three year period.²²

A steady improvement in the mortality rates of slaves can be seen beginning in the 1670s, particularly on Engenho Santana, where we have already noted a significant pattern of creolization beginning in this period (see Chapter 3). But just fifteen years earlier in 1659, Father Filipe Franco complained that Santana was in dire need of more slaves, "because, of those that I have on the engenho, some die; others are of no service because of incurable diseases, and of those I bought, there are also some who died."²³ Father Franco's prayers were answered the following year when Angolan Governor Salvador de Sá remitted 40 *peças* directly

²¹ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 95. There is no indication as to how these deaths were distributed among the inherited and newly purchased, but it seems safe to assume that the majority of these deaths occurred among the newly purchased.

²² ADB/UM, CSB 138--Estados do Mosteiro de Olinda, 1657-1756. The net loss of 40 slaves, while not taking into account slave sales, runaways, manumissions, or infant mortality, would result in a 93.9 crude mortality rate.

²³ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 68, No. 306.

to Santana at only minimal cost to the Jesuits.²⁴ Relieved, Father Franco gave thanks to God, commenting that "in Brazil one cannot make a fazenda without negros."²⁵ From this cargo of Angolan slaves that arrived at Santana in 1660 emerged the creolized and Brazilian-born core that began to appear in the inventories of the 1670s.

Despite slow creolization in some places, in the middle of the eighteenth century epidemics still wiped out significant portions of many slave populations. The high mortality rate at Petinga in 1744-1745 was symptomatic of one such outbreak. It was reported that "there was generally on all of the engenhos and slaveholdings of Brazil a great ruin with a universal epidemic that arrived in a ship of negros from the Mina Coast...many with measles, causing a great deal of damage, losses, and expense to these engenhos."²⁶ Likewise, the first three years of the 1730s were especially difficult on Engenho Sergipe, where 36 slaves died. In 1731, Father Mateus de Sousa complained that "this engenho is very much lacking in slaves; some have died and others are very old and just not able to work. Many little creoles have been born but many also die..."²⁷

²⁴ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 68, No. 307. Of the 40 slaves, there were 28 males and 12 females.

²⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 68, No. 308.

²⁶ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 15, No. 25.

²⁷ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 390.

To make matters worse, the infirmary of the engenho served as a breeding ground for the numerous contagions that slaves passed to one another. Surrounding houses blocked fresh air from passing through, and the building had no windows for ventilation. Commenting on the dangerous and dilapidated conditions, Father Jerônimo da Gama wrote that "it is not enough to make a great amount of sugar; to save the fazenda is a better way to have sugar."²⁸

The Jesuits were not alone in their neglect of the living conditions of their ailing slaves. The houses that comprised the infirmary of the Benedictine monastery in Rio de Janeiro were so overcrowded in the 1740s that the slaves were forced to build a subordinate house for the overflow.²⁹ Thirty years later, it was reported that the same houses were "little apt for the cure of the sick," because they had earthen floors and open roofs that exposed sick slaves to the elements.³⁰

Slaves who survived the brutalities of disease, overwork, and malnutrition had an extremely difficult time reproducing themselves during the period of our study. The creole population increased on ecclesiastical properties during the eighteenth century as mortality rates fell below

²⁸ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 428. (September 20, 1733)

²⁹ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 244.

³⁰ ADB/UM, CSB 135, ff. 148.

birth rates, but birth rates were still quite low. Prior to the regular use of birth control, crude birth rates usually ranged between 35 and 55 per 1,000 in most stable populations.³¹ The birth rates of slaves on the Jesuit and Benedictine estates hovered below 28 for most of our period (see Table 4-1). The 53.3 birth rate on Santana between 1674 and 1676, though truly exceptional for Brazil's slave population, was merely average when compared to levels of procreation in other societies. Disease was clearly one factor in keeping the birth rate so low. Malnutrition and overwork also contributed to low levels of fertility among women. Finally, extended lactation and post-partum sexual abstinence among certain African ethnic groups also may have contributed to the low number of births among slave women.³²

While statistics on mortality and birth rates give us some insight into general trends in the demography of Brazil's slave population, we should not lose sight of the

³¹ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 367. The regular use of birth control devices pushed down birth rates in many societies, including the United States. See Table 4-1 for the low birth rate among Americans in the 1990s.

³² Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, "Fertility Differentials Between Slaves in the United States and the British West Indies: A Note on Lactation Practices," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d series, 35 (1978), 357-374. Extended lactation has a contraceptive effect lasting for the duration of the period that the child breastfeeds. J.C. Caldwell and Pat Caldwell, "The Role of Marital Abstinence in Determining Fertility: A Study of the Yoruba in Nigeria," Population Studies 31 (1977), 193-217.

personal tragedies that arose from demographic decline. Even on an apparently "stable" engenho like Santana, which in the 1670s was steadily creolizing, death and disease were a pervasive presence. Over the course of this period, Santana had a total of around 85 slaves who worked on the plantation. Even though "only" six slaves died during the two years between 1674 and 1676, 15 others suffered from debilitating illnesses or injuries. Thus, nearly one quarter of Santana's slaves were faced with assaults on their health. Among the illnesses was that of Antônia Criolla, who was idle for more than eight months after a difficult childbirth. Her newborn did not live to see her recover. Also afflicted was Pedro Mobanga, who received twenty bleedings and three purges as treatment for his "difficult sickness." Vitória had a wound on her leg that incapacitated her for more than five years. Antônio Criollo fell "crippled" between 1674 and 1676. And Duarte Tacheiro had a deep wound on his leg. Nevertheless, he continued to work.

Young children were particularly vulnerable to the ravages of death and disease in the slave environment. As we have already noted, in most places, slave men outnumbered slave women by a margin of two to one, so fertility was always low. A range of negative health factors also militated against normal birth rates. Thus, live births were generally a rare phenomenon, and there were few

children to be found on most properties, especially prior to 1650.³³ As early as 1586 the Jesuits expressed concern over the high mortality rates among children on their Brazilian properties. In that year, it was ordered that female slaves with children not be allowed to work more than four or five hours per day, "because one has seen that many die because they are not able to raise them well, walking with them in the wind...working for long periods of time."³⁴ Whether plantation administrators complied with these orders is uncertain, but child mortality rates remained high.

Even where the slave population included relatively large numbers of children, these children suffered the effects of death, disease, and dislocation more acutely than any other sector of the slave population. Of the 73 slaves on Santana in 1674, 29 were children under the age of 16, a solid 40% of the engenho's slave force. Four of these children were dead by 1676, meaning that the annual mortality rate among children under 16 was a disturbing 69, more than one and a half times the rate of the engenho's

³³ Stillbirths were apparently quite common among the slave population. In Maranhão in 1798, the ratio of stillbirths to total births in the slave population was 10.3. The ratios among whites and free pardos were 5.7 and 6.3 respectively. Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 370.

³⁴ ARSI, Brasilia 2; VFL Roll 161, ff. 142-142v.

overall population.³⁵ Three more children lived with relatives or adopted kin because their birth parents were dead.³⁶ And three more were young Africans whose parents were apparently left behind in their homelands.³⁷ Thus, in 1674, 34% of Santana's children were either orphans or soon to be dead themselves.³⁸

The Impacts of Slavery on Children

The physical and psychological effects of childhood slavery have been grossly understudied aspects of the slave experience, especially by Latin American historians.³⁹ In

³⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 7. The four who died were Maria, 11 and a half years old, Anna, 6 years old, Andre, one and a half years old, and Bastião moleque.

³⁶ These were Anna, 7 years old, Agustinho, 3 years old, and Joaquim mulato, 3 years old.

³⁷ Francisco, small moleque, João small moleque, and Maria small molequa.

³⁸ Death, disease, and orphanage also took a steep toll on the rice plantations of nineteenth-century America. Between 1833 and 1855, an astonishing ninety percent of slave children who were born or imported into Gowrie plantation in South Carolina did not live to see their sixteenth birthday. Of children who survived, only one in four reached adulthood with both parents still living. See William M. Dusiaberre, Them Dark Days: Slavery in the American Rice Swamps (Oxford, 1996), 50-56, 118-121, 235-247, 410-416, 445-451.

³⁹ For the experiences of slave children in the United States, see Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington, 1995) and William Dusiaberre, Them Dark Days. Also see the various articles of Richard H. Steckel, "A Peculiar Population: The Nutrition, Health, and Mortality of American Slaves from Childhood to Maturity," Journal of Economic History 46

a brief but provocative passage of The Masters and the Slaves, the venerable Brazilian anthropologist, Gilberto Freyre, was one of the first scholars to suggest ways in which the institution of slavery warped people from a very tender age. Freyre contended that the young slave was both "a playmate and a whipping-boy" for his young master. "His functions were those of an obliging puppet, manipulated at will by the infant son of the family; he was squeezed, mistreated, tormented just as if he had been made of sawdust on the inside--of cloth and sawdust...rather than of flesh and blood like white children."⁴⁰ In their games, white children pretended that slave children were their beasts of burden--"cart-oxen, saddle-horses, beasts for turning the millstone, and burros for carrying litters and heavy burdens. But especially cart-horses...A bit of packing-twine serve[d] as the reins and a shoot of the guava tree as a whip."⁴¹ Freyre suggested that "the psychic repercussion upon [white] adults of such a type of childish relationship should be favorable to the development of sadistic and masochistic tendencies." But he ultimately concluded that

(1986), 721-741; "A Dreadful Childhood: The Excess Mortality of American Slaves," Social Science History 10 (1986), 427-465; "Birth Weights and Infant Mortality Among American Slaves," Explorations in Economic History 23 (1986), 173-198.

⁴⁰ Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves, 349-350.

⁴¹ Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves, 350.

it was mostly white women who "displayed this sadistic bent, owing to the greater fixity and monotony in the relations of mistress and slave girl."⁴² The adult relationship between male masters and their slaves was supposedly more benevolent and paternal.

Though many of his arguments on the topic were not fully developed, Freyre's assessment of childhood experiences under slavery in Brazil endures as the fullest treatment of the subject. Freyre's halcyon views of Brazilian slavery as a benign institution have long since been refuted, but his emphasis on the damaging psychological impact that slavery had on children--white and black--is an area of slave studies that deserves to be revisited. The ways in which children were coded to understand their place in the world are sometimes difficult to grasp in historical documents, but attempting to decipher the psychological damage that occurred at various stages of childhood development can be particularly revealing for those engaged in slave studies.

Childbirth, and its cultural meanings, were radically transformed as African slave women shifted from African natal kinship member to Brazilian slave. As natal kinship structures disintegrated and freedom of movement disappeared in Brazil, women could no longer expect to give their

⁴² Ibid.

children to their fathers and brothers in accordance with matrilineal practices. Where fertility and childbirth were once viewed as causes for communal celebration, enslavement threw many African practices into question. This extreme break from past understandings led to a variety of responses on the parts of slave women in the treatment of their children in Brazil. As we have seen, some created new kinship structures, replicating as much as possible what they knew in their homelands. Indeed, slave births on Jesuit properties were celebrated with food and drink in much the same manner that births were celebrated in Africa. The custom became so entrenched among slaves on Jesuit properties that slave fathers would threaten the overseers with running away if their demands for chickens and wine were not met on those occasions.⁴³

While some slave mothers celebrated the appearance of a baby, others could not cope with the perceived kinlessness and physical abuse that awaited their newborns under slavery. Although evidence is slim and the practice would have been out of keeping with African celebrations of fertility, abortions were not unheard of either in Africa or in Brazil. Under certain dire circumstances, it was

⁴³ For the custom of giving chickens, wine, and other sought-after foods to the parents of newborn slaves, see the numerous entries in the account books of the engenhos in ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54. For slave fathers threatening Jesuit administrators with flight, see ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 55.

apparently acceptable for an African woman to abort her fetus. In December 1730, a widow named Mariana Fernandes was jailed in Luanda for practicing "witchcraft." Pregnant, she drank an unnamed mixture to effect an abortion.⁴⁴ Similarly, on Engenho Sergipe in 1623, slave women who were impregnated by white men, rather than facing the wrath of the slave men, drank "some things" that resulted in abortions.⁴⁵ In both of these circumstances, the facts dictated that the children of these women would have been born into marginal, kinless situations. Communal support was clearly an important prerequisite for a socially acceptable birth among Africans and their descendants across the African-Portuguese diaspora.

For slave women who had little communal support in raising their children, or who recognized the likelihood that their babies would succumb to disease and malnutrition, abandonment of their newborns was also an option. Anthropologist, Alice Scheper-Hughes has argued forcefully that in areas of extremely high infant mortality, women reject the "motherly instinct" to nurture and protect their young. With survival of the children unlikely, attachment to the newborn is viewed as a futile, psychically costly

⁴⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 96, Livro 289, ff. 412-end (unnumbered)

⁴⁵ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 89. Also see Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 353-354.

endeavor.⁴⁶ Though there is little direct evidence to support the argument that Brazilian slave women adopted such attitudes, the conditions of Brazilian slavery sometimes encouraged the abandonment of young children. For instance, in 1692, a newborn baby emerged from the *mato* (forest) of Jacarepaguá in the arms of a "negro" runaway. The runaway was returning to Jacarepaguá after passing a year and a half in the *mato*. The baby's mother, who had also fled to the *mato*, gave up her child and told the man to return the baby to town, perhaps believing that her daughter's chances for survival would be greater in the town rather than in the dangerous and uncertain world of the fugitive slave. Upon arriving in the town, the child was baptized and given the name Jacinta, but the rest of her life remains a mystery.⁴⁷ Unless her mother returned to claim her, Jacinta joined the

⁴⁶ Alice Scheper-Hughes, Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil (Berkeley, 1992). The benign resignation to the loss of newborn children was also evident among the slave populations of America's rice swamps. In 1839, Frances Kemble described the reaction of slave parents whose newborn had just died on Butler Plantation in Georgia:

The father and mother, and old Rose, the nurse, who was their little baby's grandmother, all seemed apathetic, and apparently indifferent to the event. The mother merely repeated over and over again: "I've lost many; they all goes so"; and the father without word or comment, went out to his enforced labor.

As quoted in Dusiinberre, Them Dark Days, 245.

⁴⁷ ACMRJ, Nossa Senhora do Loreto de Jacarepaguá, Batismos de Escravos (1691-1725), ff. 6.

legions of other uprooted, orphaned, and abandoned children who grew into adulthood as kinless slaves in Brazil.

Orphanage and abandonment of slave children occurred in a multiplicity of ways. Parents fell ill and died. Parents ran away, leaving behind their young. And children were stolen away from their families and kinship communities in Africa. The number of African children who entered the slave trade increased steadily over the history of the trade, as supplies of prime male slaves became scarcer and scarcer on the African coast. By the eighteenth century, the slaves boarding ships at Luanda consisted largely of younger males.⁴⁸ Though precise figures are difficult to come by, in part because of underreporting of the numbers of slave children packed onto slave ships, it is clear that there was a significant presence of African youth in Brazil from as early as the first part of the eighteenth century.

We must keep in mind the ages of these children when we attempt to measure the impact of their orphanage. In general, the younger the child was orphaned, the less likely he would have remembered his natal kin, cultures, and so on. There are a number of Inquisition cases in which African-born slaves who were taken from their parents as very young children stated that they did not have any memories of their

⁴⁸ Miller, Way of Death, 387.

parents.⁴⁹ As children reached the age of reason and understanding, though, memories of the homeland became indelibly etched in their consciousness. And Africa would arrive with them at their various destinations across the diaspora.

Those who were taken from Africa as children between the ages of eight and twelve were perhaps the hardest hit by the institution of slavery. Almost simultaneously these children were faced with the loss of their parents, dislocation from their kinship unit, enslavement, and the difficulties of adjusting to a new social and cultural milieu--not to mention the dangers of a new disease environment. The miseries of those who survived defy explanation, but it is clear that memories of Africa shaped the social and cultural identities of many well into adulthood.

In 1734, Carlos, a 16-year-old slave living in Lisbon, recounted his capture and enslavement in harrowing detail. At the age of ten or twelve years, he and his brother were sleeping in their house in Cacheu, Guinea. During the night, he was kidnapped by a "preto from Cape Verde" and later sold to the captain of an English ship. Presumably, he was separated from his brother and the rest of his

⁴⁹ See for instance, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, Nos. 254, 348, 502, 8464, 9110, 11767, 11970; Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 54, 7840.

family. He was taken to the island of Faial in the Azores, where he was again sold to another Englishman. Finally, he was sold to the Consul of England in Lisbon.⁵⁰

Similarly, in the 1720s Caterina Maria was enslaved in the Angolan hinterlands and marched to the shore. By the time she was loaded onto a Rio-bound slave ship, she was ten years old. She spent three years in Rio de Janeiro in the house of her first master, before being sold to her second master who took her with him to Lisbon. There, at the age of 15, she was brought before the Inquisition to answer witchcraft charges. Among other things, Caterina Maria confessed that "her [Angolan] parents taught her some words in order to do evil to whoever she might want, and the words were--Carinsca, Casundequê, Carisca." She used these spells against her masters and fellow slaves. She also was accused of "night flying." As she slept, her spirit returned to Angola so that she could converse with friends and relatives.⁵¹ Caterina Maria no doubt felt the deep loss of her parents when she was separated from them in the Angolan hinterlands. But their cultural legacy lived on, as Caterina Maria traversed the African-Portuguese diaspora,

⁵⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 6600.

⁵¹ In many Central African societies it was believed that the spirit left the body at night and wandered freely. See Chapter 6.

both literally and spiritually.⁵²

Once children became a part of the slave community in Brazil, they were confronted with a new set of bitter realities. As toddlers, they were already becoming aware of the harshness of slave life. Instead of passing their days in the comfort of their mothers' care, young children often were supervised by elderly slaves who could no longer perform more strenuous labor.⁵³ Only when the children's mothers returned from their daily labors would they be reunited with their young ones.

Toddlers also began to experience the crushing physical and psychological control that their masters exerted over them. Not only were young children forced to witness the daily humiliation and degradation of their parents at the hands of their masters, but they were themselves sometimes the victims of the master's sadistic whims. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Garcia de Avila Pereira Aragão, one of Bahia's wealthiest residents, committed a series of atrocities against dozens of his slaves, including young children. The youngest was a three-year-old girl named Leonarda. Pereira Aragão "called her and ordered that she should be lowered, placing the little face of the poor

⁵² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 6286.

⁵³ See for instance the 1743 inventory from Engenho Sergipe, which states that: "The old people serve to watch over the children while their mothers go to work." ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 109.

little girl over a fire of hot coals...putting his hand on her face so that she would not be able to turn away from the fire, and he began to fan the fire with his other hand..." On another occasion, he ordered a four-year-old boy named Archileu to guard a fig tree so that birds would not make off with the fruit. When Pereira Aragão found a fig bitten by the birds, he stripped the boy naked and "whipped him rigorously with a horse whip about the shoulders, legs, and all the body." Finally, he tortured a six-year-old boy by dripping hot candle wax on him, "such that the pain from the fire made him jump up in the air, accompanied by a scream of pain...and the Mestre de Campo laughed at this with great happiness."⁵⁴

As children entered adolescence, their labor burdens and the extravagance of their tortures increased. By the ages of twelve to fourteen, slaves were already considered adults by many masters, and were therefore assigned the

⁵⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16687. Also see, Luiz Mott, "Terror na Casa da Torre," in João José Reis, Escravidão e Invenção da Liberdade (São Paulo, 1988), 17-32. Some children succumbed to their beatings, even on supposedly well-run plantations like those of the Benedictines. For instance, see the case of Pedro, who Father Bento de Santa Barbara of the Benedictine monastery in Bahia "visibly killed with the great punishment that he gave him, inappropriate not only for a man, but even more so for a child." ADB/UM, CSB 322, ff. 324-333. (December 9, 1800)

tasks of full-grown workers.⁵⁵ Sometimes this premature leap to adulthood led to horrific workplace accidents. Inexperience was no doubt a contributing factor in the death of a young mulatta on Engenho Musurepe in Olinda, "who being obliged to crush cane without having the age or the strength became stuck in the crusher (*moenda*) and the crusher milled her with the very cane."⁵⁶ Other young girls were forced into prostitution, with all profits going to their masters. It was not unusual to see slave girls ten and twelve years old walking the streets of Brazil's biggest cities.⁵⁷ The mostly male frontier of Minas Gerais was a particularly popular destination for Brazil's enslaved prostitutes. In 1733, fourteen-year-old Rosa Egipcíaca, a Courana slave born on the Mina coast, began to sell her body in Minas Gerais. There, she prostituted for fifteen years before being converted to Christianity, eventually becoming a spiritual sage to dozens of followers.⁵⁸

Adolescence not only exposed slaves to the rigors of

⁵⁵ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 377. The term *moleque* applied to those slaves up to the age of adulthood. Though flexible, it usually meant a child between the ages of twelve and sixteen.

⁵⁶ ADB/UM, CSB 322, ff. 191; Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 143.

⁵⁷ Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves, 454.

⁵⁸ For an account of the remarkable life of Rosa Egipcíaca, see Luiz Mott, Rosa Egipcíaca: Uma Santa Africana no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1993).

adult labor, but the teenage years also marked the introduction of slaves to the vilest of sexual abuse and tortures. Among the many slaves tormented by Garcia de Avila Pereira Aragão was sixteen-year-old Hipólito. During one brutal session, Hipólito was whipped for three hours by two other slaves. He was then bound by his wrists and raised about nine feet above the floor. A cord was tied around his testicles with a 7.5 kilogram weight tied to the end of it, pulling the boy's scrotum toward the floor "such that the miserable one gave screams."⁵⁹

Adolescent slaves, male and female, were also the targets of rapists.⁶⁰ Rosa Egipcíaca, the Courana prostitute in Minas Gerais, was repeatedly raped by her first master in Rio de Janeiro, all prior to her fourteenth birthday.⁶¹ Similarly, in 1618, Pêro Garcia, the owner of

⁵⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16687. Mott, "Terror na Casa da Torre," in João José Reis, Escravidão e Invenção da Liberdade (São Paulo, 1988), 17-32.

⁶⁰ Because of the Portuguese aversion to male sodomy, the documentary evidence of male rape is actually richer than that for female rape. Females were probably sexually assaulted more frequently than males, but the cultural legitimacy of female rape insured that the perpetrators would not be prosecuted in the same way that male rapists were. The regularity of female rape has been noted by Gilberto Freyre, who wrote that "girls of twelve or thirteen years...were given to white lads already rotting with...syphilis." According to Freyre, it was widely believed that sexual intercourse with a young virgin slave girl could cure venereal disease. Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves, 324-325.

⁶¹ Mott, Rosa Egipcíaca, 20.

four engenhos in Bahia and master of hundreds of slaves, was denounced for repeatedly raping two of his slaves, fourteen-year-old Joseph and fifteen-year-old Bento.⁶² Other rapes occurred more spontaneously. In the 1720s, a pardo soldier named Manuel de Faria attacked a twelve-year-old boy on the streets of Rio da Prata in Minas Gerais. The slave boy was selling sweets on the streets when Faria threw him "violently to the ground...laid over him and copulated with him from behind." Both the soldier and the boy were imprisoned for some time, but the boy was eventually released to the custody of his master.⁶³

Even priests were guilty of taking sexual liberties with slave boys. In 1626, a priest known simply as Father Antônio, was making the Atlantic crossing from Rio de Janeiro to Lisbon. Also on board was a fourteen-year-old Angolan-born slave named Cristóvão. Father Antônio repeatedly attempted to seduce the boy, offering him clothes, candy, and other enticements, but Cristóvão refused the Father's advances, telling him flatly that "he was a negro and he did not want to sleep with a white man in his bed." But Father Antônio would not give up. One night he

⁶² Segunda visitação do Santo Ofício às partes do Brasil pelo inquisidor e visitador o Licenciado Marcos Teiceira. Livro das Confissões e Ratificações da Bahia--1618-1620, Intro. Eduardo d'Oliveira França and Sonia Siqueira. Anais do Museu Paulista, volume XVII, 444-446.

⁶³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 98, Livro 291, unnumbered pages (October 9, 1727).

entered the boy's bed and attempted to penetrate him as he slept. The boy awoke screaming. As he kicked Father Antônio to the floor, two other young slaves awoke and also began screaming. This commotion drew the attention of the ship's captain, who had Father Antônio bound in chains for the remainder of the journey.⁶⁴

In 1646, a similar case occurred in Bahia, where Father Antônio de Serisa sexually assaulted a *moleque* named Domingos, or Banyo by his Angolan name. One night as they were preparing to sleep, the Father grabbed Banyo's private parts and asked him to show them to him. The priest also pulled out his own penis, placing it in the hand of the boy. Banyo threatened to scream if the priest did not immediately open the door. Fleeing the room, the boy told one Manuel Faya that Father Antônio "was not a priest but a devil."⁶⁵ During the same year, a number of priests in the Benedictine monastery in Bahia were accused of raping young male slaves. Like new prisoners arriving at a penitentiary, young, freshly-arrived Africans were the favorite targets of rapists.⁶⁶ Antônio de Vasconcelos, a student at the

⁶⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 12, Livro 213, ff. 429-434.

⁶⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 83-83v.

⁶⁶ Luiz Mott suggests that newly arrived (*boçal*) slaves were preferred because they were unfamiliar with white customs and were more likely to accept "sexual seduction" as part of their duties as slaves. Since *boçal* Africans did

Benedictine monastery, confessed that one priest ordered him to bring a newly arrived *boçal* slave to him. Vasconcelos, "suspected that the priest, whose name is Frei Domingos, took the negro away in order to sin with him since he was bought on that day."⁶⁷

The journey from childhood to adulthood was painfully quick for most slaves, and childhood innocence was often corrupted by death, disease, hunger, rape, and torture. We now know that traumatic childhood episodes can lead to irreversible psychological damage that persists into adulthood.⁶⁸ For most slave children, their lives were a series of traumatic episodes that were tantamount to the worst forms of child abuse. To deny that many slave children sustained permanent psychological damage would be to deny their very humanity. Unfortunately, maturing to adulthood did not result in an escape from these traumas. All of the fears that haunted slaves as children continued

not know that sodomy was a crime and were unable to speak Portuguese, the masters ran little risk in seeking to have their way with newly arrived slaves. Mott, O sexo proibido, 44.

⁶⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 93-93v.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Leonard Shengold, Soul Murder; The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation (New Haven, CT, 1989); Linda Tschirhart Sanford, Strong at the Broken Places: Overcoming the Trauma of Childhood Abuse (New York, 1990); Gail Elizabeth Wyatt, "The Aftermath of Child Sexual Abuse of African-American and White American Women: The Victim's Experience," Journal of Family Violence 5 (1990), 61-81.

to loom large in their adult lives. On a purely physical level, adult slaves were better equipped to endure the assaults of disease, hunger, and physical abuse, but the repressive power of the master continued to take a steep psychological toll on them. As slaves matured and attempted to create families, masters constantly intervened, threatening to erode or dissolve their most intimate relationships.

Physical and Sexual Abuse and its Effects on the Slave "Family"

So far, we have discussed the demographic difficulties faced by those slaves attempting to form families and communities. Gender imbalance, death, and disease militated against the creation of stable family units across the African diaspora. Nonetheless, where possible, slaves succeeded in creating a variety of long-term relationships that resulted in the formation of slave "families." Yet even under the best of circumstances, slave families could be fractured by sexual abuse, manumission, and the sale of family members. No matter how successful slaves were at creating spaces in their interior lives, they were never completely outside the reach of their masters. Masters regularly intervened in the lives of their slaves in ways that could be both personally disruptive and psychologically devastating.

Sexual abuse of women by masters and free men was one of the major disruptive forces in the slave quarters, and slave "families" were deeply affected by these unwanted intrusions. Many slave masters believed that their right to slave ownership included the right to sexual exploitation. Manuel Nunes Pelouro, who was accused of forcing his slave, Clara, to commit acts of sodomy in Rio das Mortes in 1755, summed up this sentiment when he told Clara that "being his slave, she had to serve him in everything."⁶⁹ Across the Portuguese diaspora, whites acted on this assumption. In Bahia in 1623, white men were apparently raiding the slave quarters of Engenho Sergipe at night in order to rape slave women, including some women who were married.⁷⁰ One year later in 1624, the São Toméan planter, Francisco d'Almeida, was accused of carrying on "illicit relationships" with a slave mother and her two daughters. As a result of these forced sexual encounters, one of the daughters, Pascoela, ran away from her master, leaving her mother and sister behind.⁷¹ In 1702, it was reported that Carmelite priests in Goiana were impregnating slave women who were married.

⁶⁹ ANTT, Cadernos do Nefando No. 20, ff. 149; Mott, O sexo proibido, 55-56.

⁷⁰ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 89; Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 353-354. Father Matias reported that the white men were removed from the plantation.

⁷¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 24, Livro 224, ff. 96-125v.

The husband of one of the women complained bitterly about the mulatta daughter his wife bore, fathered by Padre Manuel de São Gonçalo. In order to pacify the angry slave man, the mulatta baby was sold away to a surgeon.⁷² Finally, in 1741 on the Benedictine Engenho São Bernardo in Olinda, it was reported that Father Vitoriano was hiding an "illicit relationship" that he was having with a slave woman. When the male slaves on the engenho heard about this relationship, they were apparently quite upset. It was rumored that some of them armed themselves with knives in order to stab the man "presumed to have had a relationship with a negra."⁷³

While some cases of forced sexual relations between masters and slaves were clear disruptions to family and community, other sexual encounters could be a threat to the slave's very life. Some of these "relationships" were consummated literally at the end of a whip or at the barrel of a gun. For example, in 1703, João Carvalho de Barros, a resident of the Bahian Recôncavo, was accused of sexually assaulting a number of his slaves. Among them was a woman named Domingas, who confessed that when she refused to submit to anal sex with Carvalho, she was severely

⁷² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 75, Livro 269, ff. 201-203.

⁷³ ADB/UM, CSB 321, ff. 116-120.

whipped.⁷⁴ Similarly, a Benguelan slave named Joseph claimed that he always resisted the acts of sodomy that were imposed on him by Carvalho. Carvalho responded by threatening, and at times, giving "rigorous punishments" to his slave. In addition to Domingas and Joseph, at least three other male slaves suffered sexual assaults at the hands of Carvalho.

Carvalho's favored method of assault was to force himself on a male and a female slave at the same time. According to Joseph, on four or five occasions, his master came looking for him and took him to the bed of the female slave, Domingas. There, with all three in the bed, Carvalho told Joseph that he should have intercourse with Domingas. Joseph always resisted, but acquiesced to his master's wishes when he was threatened with punishment. As Joseph was having sex with Domingas, his master mounted him from behind, "wounding him with the force with which he penetrated him." Under questioning by the Inquisitors, Joseph said that he knew that sodomy was an "abominable sin," and that "in his land [Benguela] that sin is punished with penalty of blood and fire." Despite his pain and suffering at the hands of his master, as well as his candid confession, Joseph was eventually sentenced to public

⁷⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15097.

whipping and five years in the king's galleys.⁷⁵

The fact that Joseph was punished, after being repeatedly victimized by his master, was one of the cruel ironies of Portuguese custom and law. As noted earlier in chapter two, the passive partner in acts of sodomy was assumed to be the "criminal." Thus, slaves who were anally raped could be subject to prosecution by the Inquisition. The sexual objectification of male and female slaves was, therefore, unwittingly reinforced by canon and civil law. To make matters worse, masters could confess to sodomizing large numbers of slaves and be absolved by the Church. They could then go on raping their slaves without fear of reprisals.

This was the case in 1739 when Manuel Álvares Cabral confessed to sodomizing six of his male slaves in Minas Gerais. When the slaves were questioned about the incidents, the majority said that they did not resist for fear that their master would punish them, although one Angolan slave pleaded ignorance, stating that he was "without knowledge of the ugliness of that sin."⁷⁶ Cabral's confession "cleansed" him of his sin, but his slaves continued to suffer. Four years later in 1743, Manuel

⁷⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 6478. Also see the above cite Processo No. 15097 and Cadernos do Promotor No. 77, Livro 271, ff. 240-242v.

⁷⁶ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Nefando, No. 20, ff. 364; Mott, O sexo proibido, 47-48.

Álvares Cabral had relocated to the village of Boavista in Pernambuco. There, a Mina slave named Luís da Costa, confessed that one day while he and his master were out in the woods (*mato*), his master forced him to submit to anal sex. Cabral threatened to kill his slave with his rifle if he did not comply. Luís unwillingly surrendered to his master on this one occasion, but claimed that it never happened again because he fought against his master's continued advances.⁷⁷

Perhaps the most violent sexual assaults of slaves occurred in Pará in the late 1750s and early 1760s. Francisco Serrão de Castro, heir to a large sugar engenho, was denounced for sodomy and rape by no less than 19 male slaves, all Africans. Among those who were assaulted were teenage boys and married men. As a result of these sexual attacks, a number of the victims suffered from "swelling and infusions of blood from their anuses." Francisco Serrão de Castro apparently infected his slaves with a venereal disease that eventually took more than a quarter of his victims to their graves.⁷⁸

The violence and coercion that characterized the rape of male slaves were symptoms of a broader pattern of

⁷⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 45.

⁷⁸ Livro da visitação do Santo Ofício da Inquisição ao Estado do Grão-Pará--1763-1769, ed. José Roberto Amaral Lapa (Petrópolis, 1978), 261-265. Five of the Africans died from their wounds.

violence aimed at forcing male slaves to submit to their master's power. Slaves constantly challenged their roles as Brazil's beasts of burden by slowing the pace of their work, running away, and more rarely, violently rising against their masters. One of the many tools of pacification at the master's disposal was rape. To rape a male slave was to feminize him--to conquer him both physically and psychologically. Slaves were not unaware of their masters' attempts to emasculate them. One of Francisco Serrão de Castro's victims, João Marimba, a 30-year-old Maxicongo, attempted to rebuff his master's advances, asserting that "he was not a negra for him to sin with, but a man..."⁷⁹ In large sugar-producing areas where slaves often outnumbered whites by a ratio of two to one, the sexual subordination of male slaves was not an unimportant instrument in maintaining social and political order. Only with some level of submission on the part of the male slave population could patriarchal order be ensured.

Though sexual abuse was one method of subduing the adult slave population, the most common forms of slave control were beatings and physical torture. The whip was used liberally by many masters, so much so that in the seventeenth century an often-repeated refrain among slave holders went as follows: "Whoever wants to reap benefit from

⁷⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 17759.

his negros must maintain them, make them work well, and beat them even better; without this there will be no service nor any profit."⁸⁰ Confirming this axiom, one seventeenth-century observer in Paraíba noted that the majority of the slaves were from Africa, "especially from Angola, and they do all of the agricultural service day and night, always maintained with many whippings."⁸¹ In addition to beatings, slaves suffered other forms of physical torture including burning with hot wax, branding, castration, and amputations of breasts, ears, and noses.⁸² Attempting to rationalize such cruelty, one master claimed that the punishments were necessary because the slaves were "like devils."⁸³

The frequency of excessive punishments compelled the Crown to issue laws protecting slaves from master brutalities. In 1688, the King extended slaves the right to denounce cruel masters to civil or ecclesiastical

⁸⁰ Joannes de Laet, "História ou anais dos feitos de companhia privilegiada das Indias Ocidentais," Anais da Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro 41 (1925), 86, cited in José Alípio Goulart, Da palmatória ao patíbulo (Rio de Janeiro, 1971), 82.

⁸¹ Goulart, Da palmatória ao patíbulo, 99.

⁸² Many of these punishments and tortures are chronicled in Goulart, Da palmatória ao patíbulo. For contemporary commentaries on the severity of slave punishments, see Jorge Benci, Economia cristã dos senhores no governo de escravos, ed. Serafim Leite, 2nd edition (Oporto, 1954), 136.

⁸³ Nuno Marques Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America (1728), 6th edition, 2 vols. (Rio de Janeiro, 1939), 1:158.

authorities. Any master who was found guilty of excessive cruelty could be ordered to sell his slaves.⁸⁴ Despite the legal mandate, slaveowners continued to exert almost untrammelled physical power over their human chattel. The laws were rarely enforced.⁸⁵

No class of slave holder was exempt from the cruel treatment of their bondsmen. Poor whites, wealthy sugar planters, and even men of the cloth were known to beat and torture their slaves. In 1678, Francisco Jorge was incarcerated for whipping a slave to death in Bahia but was released when he pleaded that he was a poor man with a wife and children. In similar fashion, Pedro Pais Machado, the owner of Engenho Capanema in Bahia, was arrested in 1737 for killing two slaves and a freedman who allegedly injured one of his oxen. Machado murdered one of the men by hanging him by his testicles until he was dead. After a judicial inquiry, Machado was released, in part because he was "a noble person with family obligations."⁸⁶ For white Brazilians, maintaining the patriarchal social and political order always took precedence over justice for slaves.

On the properties of the Jesuits and the Benedictines,

⁸⁴ Documentos históricos. Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro. 32 (Rio de Janeiro, 1936), 393-395.

⁸⁵ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 134-135.

⁸⁶ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 134.

slave punishments were no less harsh. In 1633, it was reported that the overseer on Engenho Sergipe governed the slaves "with the devil in his mouth and the stick on the backs of the poor creatures." Father Antônio Roiz, who submitted the report, concluded that the overseer "knows how to treat the bulls better than the negros."⁸⁷ In similar fashion, several priests testified against the cruelty of Father Salvador dos Santos, who was abbot of the Benedictine monastery in Olinda from 1746 to 1749. Various priests claimed that under the leadership of Father Salvador, many slaves ran away because of the beatings that they suffered. Among the slaves injured by Father Salvador was Pedro, who was in chains for so long that his foot became "mutilated" with infection. Another slave, Ventura, was so fearful of the whipping that he was due to receive that he cut his own throat while awaiting punishment in the *tronco* (stocks). Ventura was unsuccessful in his attempt to end his life. The Benedictines called a doctor who was able to staunch the bleeding, "which cost a great deal." For the Benedictines, Ventura's humanity was not the concern. Rather, it was the prospect of losing a valuable piece of property that drove them to save his life. Even on the most fundamental question of human existence--whether to endure life miserably or end it mercifully--slaves sometimes had little

⁸⁷ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 69, Nos. 75 and 83 (same document).

control over their own bodies.⁸⁸

Other Disruptions to "Family" and Community: Slave Sales and Manumission

The slave master's interventions into the lives of his slaves were not limited to overt physical intrusions like beatings, torture, and sexual abuse. More benign, but no less devastating, were those interventions that underscored the slave's position as a piece of moveable property. The separation of slaves from their families and communities was one of the many pernicious ways in which masters diminished the humanity of their bondsmen. Families were shattered as husbands, wives, and children were sold away to different masters. Africans and their descendants coped with these losses the best they could, sometimes creating new families in their new locales, but the memories of loved ones left behind must have endured.

⁸⁸ ADB/UM, CSB 321, (unpaginated)--Treslado da sindicaco que se tirou do M.R. Pe. Me. ex-Abbe Fr. Salvador dos Santos (October 20, 1750). Complaints against the Benedictines continued through the end of the eighteenth century. During the last three years of the century, the friars in the monastery of Bahia were accused of a series of atrocities. A creole child named Pedro was beaten to death by Father Bento de Santa Barbara. Another slave, Cristvo was beaten to death, even as he was suffering from a fever. And the slave Joo Ramos was confined to the tronco without clothes for four years, even though he was suffering from smallpox. He eventually "lost his mind." ADB/UM, CSB 322, ff. 324-333--Sindicaco do M Rdo Pe ex-Abbe Fr. Joo da Trindade Soares do tempo em que governou este Mosteiro (December 9, 1800).

On August 28, 1643, António da Costa and Margarida de Sousa were married in Lisbon. Both were the slaves of Francisco de Sousa, and both were born in São Tomé. António and Margarida lived together as man and wife for four years, during which time Margarida gave birth to a daughter. After the death of their master, the master's widow sold António to Brazil, informing Margarida only after António had already departed. Margarida tried to write letters to her husband, but she and her daughter never received any reply. For more than ten years Margarida waited patiently for some news of her husband. Finally, in the 1650s, two free blacks, who had recently returned from Brazil, reported that António died while serving on a sugar engenho.

Assuming that she was a widow, Margarida married a free black named Fernão Mendes, also born in São Tomé. Margarida and Fernão were married for six years, and they had two daughters before Margarida was informed that her first husband was still alive. A man arriving in Lisbon on a ship from Brazil told her that António da Costa had sent him to call on her and that António was working on an engenho in Rio de Janeiro. Margarida, who likely never saw António again, was compelled to immediately separate from her second husband, Fernão Mendes. The Catholic Church maintained that her second marriage was invalid since her first husband was

still alive.⁸⁹

From this single case, we can see three generations of Margarida's family being permanently altered, all with bitter effects. First, we know from the Inquisition record that Margarida was taken away from her parents in São Tomé when she was eight years old. She was effectively orphaned in the same instance that she was enslaved. Then, each of her two marriages was dissolved, one because António was sold away, and the other because the Catholic Church forbade her from marrying a second time. Finally, the three daughters, who were the products of Margarida's two marriages, were forced to suffer the difficult consequences of broken families.

For Margarida, and others like her, the Christian concepts of marriage and family were a cruel delusion. The sacrament of marriage raised a fundamental contradiction between slaves as thinking, feeling human beings and slaves as partible property. Supposedly unbreakable bonds between husband and wife were routinely broken by the laws governing property. No matter how much slaves tried to adhere to canon law, their relationships were undermined by the larger society's belief that they were nothing more than chattel.

As we think about master interference in the slave "family," we must bear in mind that the majority of slaves

⁸⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 54, Livro 251, ff. 293-302v.

created family structures that were not in keeping with European norms. Still, the deep meanings of family and community were no less real among those who created their own arrangements than among those who were married in the Catholic Church. Thus, the removal of a slave from any community likely had wider implications for friends, family, and kin. Even in those cases where families were sold away intact, we must take into account the strong kin-like ties that were broken by removing a family from the larger slave community. The web of kinship ties that defined slave community was permanently transformed. And the sense of loss was keenly felt, not only by the family removed, but by all in the community.

Slave families and communities were not only divided by the sales of kinsmen; they could also be broken apart by manumission. Though manumission was clearly seen as a blessing by most slaves, the tensions that arose when one family member was freed and others remained enslaved were extremely difficult to overcome. Freedom completely transformed one's life chances, opening new opportunities to move, to earn, and to love. For a newly freed person to remain tied to an enslaved loved one required a level of commitment that not all were willing to make. The flush of freedom and its attendant temptations were often too great to resist.

To cite just one example, in 1767, Pedro de Oliveira

Lima (Angola) and Juliana Maria (Creole), both servants in the Carmelite Convent of Rio de Janeiro, were joined in holy matrimony. They already shared a young son, João, who was born prior to their marriage. When Juliana was three months pregnant with their second child, Pedro took advantage of his recent manumission and departed for Lisbon. Perhaps he was fleeing the horrors of his slave past, or perhaps he was merely seeking new opportunities. In any case, Pedro cut all ties to his Brazilian past and started a new life in Lisbon. There, he married for a second time to a Cape Verdean woman named Domingas do Amor Divino. Juliana anxiously awaited her husband's return to Rio, but fourteen years passed before she learned of his new life in Portugal. Pedro eventually was sentenced to seven years in the king's galleys for the crime of bigamy.⁹⁰

Manumission could also force freed persons to choose between one of the several "families" that they created during their servitude. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Isabel Angola and José Angola, slaves of Estevão Pais, were married. Isabel, who gained her freedom, left her master's engenho to live with her slave daughter, Águeda, who was born before she met José. Isabel lived with her daughter for several years before hearing rumors that José was dead. Wanting to substantiate the rumors, Isabel

⁹⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 2780.

returned to the engenho of Estevão Pais to learn the truth about her husband. There, Pai Antônio, a Congolese slave, confirmed that her husband was dead. Isabel then returned to the engenho where her daughter lived, marrying a slave named Antônio Ribeiro.⁹¹

Using manumission as an incentive, some masters even coerced their slaves to become masters of their own children. This was the case in 1751, when João Rodrigues Alvares, resident of Carahí, outside of Rio de Janeiro, freed his Angolan slave, Maria de Ramos. João freed Maria because she was his wife "and it was not just that his wife should be under subjection of slavery." Apparently, Maria's son was not deserving of the same familial consideration. In Maria's *carta de alforria* (letter of manumission), João noted that when Maria came into his power, she brought with her a son named Francisco Rodrigues, a "crioullo from Angola who is today ten years old." Rather than freeing Maria's son, João Rodrigues required that the boy "serve them as their slave for as long as they are alive." Only upon both of their deaths would the boy gain his freedom.⁹²

Of course, many slaves remained loyal to their families after they gained their freedom. Some even went to extraordinary lengths in raising funds to free their

⁹¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 13264.

⁹² ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 121, ff. 162-162v.

kinsmen. Masters were not hesitant in exploiting a free person's obvious affections for one of his slaves, and the master would often demand well above market value in exchange for the loved one's freedom. In 1749 in Rio de Janeiro, Maria de Encarnação traded two houses and a small tract of land for her husband's freedom. These were apparently the only properties that Maria owned since it was stipulated in the *carta de alforria* that as long as Maria continued to stay in the houses, she would be "obliged to pay...the rate of 800 reis per month."⁹³ Similarly, in 1753, Rita da Silva purchased the freedom of her husband, Antônio Mina. Antônio, who was a barber by trade, was probably worth no more than the 350 milreis that his wife paid for him. But in addition to the 350 milreis, paid over two years, Rita also had to give Antônio's master an Angolan *moleque* named Mateus. Thus, she paid nearly twice her husband's market value.⁹⁴

⁹³ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 117, ff. 112-113.

⁹⁴ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 123, ff. 130-131. The granting of manumission in exchange for other slaves was not unusual and was one way of actually increasing the master's wealth. In a case similar to the one cited here, Mariana Mina was freed by her master, Antônio dos Reis Franco, in exchange for two Mina women. ANRJ, Quarto Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 49, ff. 132-132v. (1753). For the exchange of slaves for freedom papers in Bahia, see Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Manumission of Slaves in Colonial Brazil: Bahia, 1684-1745," Hispanic American Historical Review 54 (1974), 625-626.

For those African slaves who lived to old age or who came down with life-threatening illnesses, manumission was no longer the aspiration that it was in their youth. Rather, manumission loomed ominously, threatening to cut off their food supply, evict them from their shelters, and remove them from the loved ones who cared for them in their waning years. One way for the master to rid himself of economic liabilities was to free old and emaciated slaves. No longer economically productive, these slaves were a drag on the profitability of the master's business. In 1728, the Bahian writer Nuno Marques Pereira noted that rather than incur the cost of curing their sick slaves, many masters simply threw them off the property when they fell ill.⁹⁵ Further evidence from manumission records bears out Pereira's claim. Of 180 Africans who were manumitted in Rio de Janeiro between 1749 and 1754, 18 were listed as "already very old" and/or "with various ailments."⁹⁶ The majority of these old and infirm slaves, with few resources and no place to go, were essentially put out to die.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:157.

⁹⁶ ANRJ, Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, Nos. 117-121; Segundo Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, Nos. 62, 65-68, 70; Quarto Ofício de Notas, Nos. 44, 46-49.

⁹⁷ Such practices were widespread across the Americas. Father Alonso de Sandoval, a Jesuit priest residing in Cartagena from 1605 to 1617, wrote that masters would free their sick slaves for the period of their illness, just so

Thus, like so much else in the slave's life, even the joy of manumission was tempered by the corrosive reality that freedom was earned under the master's terms. Broken families, ownership of children, insolvency, and even death were among the many compromises of freedom. Whether within the institution of slavery or on the way out, Africans and their descendants could not escape the transformative power of their masters. Slaves were subjects, property, units of production; and if their human concerns were acknowledged at all, they always remained only a distant concern.

Conclusion

The foregoing descriptions of the horrors of slavery are by no means exhaustive. Nor do they take into account the daily rigors of work on Brazil's sugar plantations, mines, cattle ranches, and so on. Rather, these descriptions are meant to demonstrate the impotence of slaves in controlling many facets of their day-to-day lives. At every stage of the human life cycle, death and disease were very real threats. From early childhood until death, the slave master exerted an enormous amount of power over his human chattel, often times disrupting the slaves' most

that they would not have to incur the cost of curing the slave. Once the slave regained his health, he was required to return to service. Padre Alonso de Sandoval, S.J., De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute: El Mundo de la Esclavitud Negra en America (Bogotá, 1956), 197.

intimate family and kinship bonds. Slave holders also believed that in order to maintain the white, male-dominated social and political order, mental, physical, and sexual abuse were acceptable tools of repression. Though the experiences of slaves no doubt differed, and some suffered more than others, it seems almost inconceivable to suggest that there were slaves who went untouched by these damaging forces.

For those who grew into slavery from childhood, these assaults were particularly acute, sapping their innocence and dreams at a very tender age. As these young slaves grew into mature adults, they reacted to their childhood traumas in a variety of ways. Some were most certainly broken by the accumulation of suffering that they were forced to endure. We can never know the rate of psychological disorder among slaves, but it must have been abnormally high. Notations of "crazy" (*louco/a*) slaves in property inventories are not unusual. For scholars to acknowledge that some slaves were psychologically damaged by their experiences under slavery is not to suggest that slaves, *writ large*, were vanquished by the institution. Rather, it is an acknowledgement that slaves suffered the same human frailties as those in the larger society. By embracing the notion that Africans and their descendants were impervious to the slings and arrows of slavery, there is a grave danger of reifying the slave holders' beliefs that slaves were

inhuman savages who could endure almost any assault on their persons.⁹⁸

On the other end of the psychological spectrum, there were also slaves who, as adults, repeated the patterns of violence and abuse that were carried out against them as children. Violence begot violence, as slaves struck out physically against their masters, overseers, and especially their fellow slaves. During the early colonial era, there are only sporadic references to individuals or small groups of slaves rising against masters or overseers. Most of these were quick strikes made in the heat of anger; they were not larger attempts to overthrow the institution of

⁹⁸ Many of the works on American slavery written in the past 25 years provide a sanitized view of the institution. Slaves have been depicted as overwhelmingly resilient in avoiding the pain and cruelty of slavery. These works have stressed the vibrancy of slave culture, economy, and society, largely neglecting the physical and psychological tolls that the institution took on the majority of the enslaved. See, for instance, Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York, 1974); Leslie Howard Owens, This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South (New York, 1976); Charles Joyner, Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community (Urbana, 1984); and more recently, Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America (Cambridge, MA, 1998). Several recent works have begun to assault the idea of "teflon-coated" slaves who used culture to defend themselves from the brutalities of slavery. See, for instance, Colin A. Palmer, "Rethinking American Slavery," in The African Diaspora, eds., Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (College Station, TX, 1996), 73-99. William Dusiinberre's, Them Dark Days demonstrates the bitter physical effects suffered by slaves on America's Low Country rice plantations. Dusiinberre's work implicitly refutes many of the assertions made by Joyner, Down by the Riverside.

slavery. The two slaves who killed the overseer on the Benedictine Engenho Guaguasú in Rio de Janeiro between 1711 and 1714 are a typical case. The administrators of the fazenda commented that the two perpetrators "deserve[d] to be well punished for their brazenness..." Recognizing the dire consequences of their actions, the two slaves immediately ran away from the engenho.⁹⁹ The overwhelming threats of master and societal retribution were usually enough to prevent overt challenges to the plantation hierarchy. Therefore, physical challenges were extremely rare.

Slaves were far more likely to strike out in violence against their fellow slaves. Scattered throughout the colonial records are references to slaves maiming and killing one another. Some of the rivalries were rooted in jealousies between lovers. This was the case in 1731 on Engenho Santana in Bahia when a male slave found his wife in the company of another man. The man beat his wife, prompting her to fatally stab him in the chest.¹⁰⁰ The motives for other acts of slave violence remain largely hidden. But not wanting to lose their labor, masters always tried to protect their slave property from prosecution. In Rio de Janeiro in 1678, Bento de Araujo ordered two of his

⁹⁹ ADB/UM, CSB 134, ff. 112.

¹⁰⁰ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 425; Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society, 405-406.

African slaves to deliver a message to the Island of Flamengo, owned by Anna Bernaldes and her son Nicolão Soares. Once the slaves arrived at the island in their canoe, they were assaulted with knives and swords. Both of Araujo's slaves were killed, and nobody was ever prosecuted for the crime. Araujo was certain that Anna Bernaldes and her slaves were responsible for the murders. He claimed that Bernaldes induced her slaves to lie to the judicial inquiry in order to cover up their involvement.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in the 1740s in the Bahian township of Santo Amaro, Jesuit priests were forced to pay a surgeon to cure a slave who was stabbed in the chest by one of Engenho Sergipe's slaves. Included in the 24 milreis expenditure was the promise that the "aggressor of this libel" would not be remitted to justice.¹⁰² In cases where slaves were prosecuted for their crimes in Portugal, masters could make a donation to the crown in order to receive a royal pardon. Such was the case in Lisbon in 1633, when Gonçalo de Paiva paid the Portuguese *mesa* a thousand reis to pardon his slave Manuel Alguão, who had nearly killed another slave named Domingos.¹⁰³

While some slaves were broken by the institution of

¹⁰¹ ANTT, CSJ, Maço 82, No. 14.

¹⁰² ANTT, CSJ, Maço 54, No. 34.

¹⁰³ ANTT, Chanceleria D. Filipe III, Perdões e Legits (Proprios), Livro 12, f. 5v.

slavery, and others fought back with violence, the majority of Africans who made up the Brazilian slave population in the early colonial period fell between these two extremes, responding to the violence and uncertainty of slavery in more subtle forms of resistance. Many Africans ran away to join their brethren in the runaway communities in the heavily forested areas around Brazil's largest cities, but life in the *quilombos* could sometimes be as uncertain as on the master's property. Food and provisions were always in short supply. And the frequent raids on the masters' villages usually invited the firepower of military and mercenary groups. Slaves also negotiated small spaces within the confines of the institution--gifts for newborns, provision grounds to raise their own crops, and so on. To some extent they were also able to control the nature and pace of their work, breaking tools or slowing down their work pace when masters demanded too much of them. But even with these small pin pricks to the hard exterior of the institution, slaves still could not escape the death, disease, and violence that were at the core of Brazilian slavery.

Despite their inability to escape these pernicious forces, as a group, slaves still never gave in to their masters' desire that they become pliant and docile. Breaks in lineage, stolen childhood, death, disease, hunger, low fertility, and physical abuse could not be overcome on a

temporal level. Overt physical violence was an impractical solution to these difficulties. The tenuous and uncertain nature of the slave's existence in the Portuguese world necessitated a different kind of response on the parts of Africans and their descendants. As we will see in the chapters that follow, Africans and their descendants addressed the institution of slavery and the attendant threats to life with the most powerful weapons at their disposal, weapons far stronger and seemingly more effective than physical resistance. The great leaveners of power in the slave societies of the African-Portuguese world were not muscle and might, but rather, African forms of religion and spirituality.

Chapter 5

Contested Terrain: Catholic vs. "Other" in the World of "Believers"

Across the Portuguese empire during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Africans were thrust into a spiritual world that was dominated by the Catholic Church. In spite of apparent Catholic hegemony, the Church and its adherents perceived themselves to be under constant assault by a variety of religious groups including Muslims, Jews, Anglicans, and Lutherans. Before discussing the various "traditional" religious beliefs of African slaves in the African-Portuguese diaspora, we must first provide some background on the atmosphere of religious intolerance that pervaded the Portuguese world during the period. Looking through the prism of Muslim and Anglican slaves in Portugal, we will examine the complex and contradictory defense of Portuguese Catholicism put forth by the Church and the Portuguese Holy Office of the Inquisition.

The Portuguese Religious World, 1350-1550

The genesis of Portuguese religious paranoia antedated the fifteenth century. The Iberian peninsula had long been the primary battleground in the religious wars between Muslims and Catholics. Though the Muslims were expelled from Portugal by the middle of the thirteenth century, they

continued to control portions of the Iberian peninsula until the eve of the sixteenth century. And with the rise of Muslim power in Eastern Europe in 1454, Catholic control over the Mediterranean was threatened anew. Throughout this period, Portuguese Catholics vilified the Muslim as the stereotypical heathen whose aim was to overthrow both God and country.

The second great "menace" to Catholic hegemony was Judaism. For the most part, Jews were protected by the Portuguese Crown during the late Middle Ages. Even though they were considered to be inferior as a consequence of their religion, Jews were given control of the royal treasury by Kings Dom Diniz and Dom Fernando. Unlike Castile and Aragon, Portugal was able to benefit from a relatively centralized and stable monarchy during the period. In the wake of the bubonic plague that ravaged Portugal in 1348, the Crown centralized legal authority in royal officers, many of them Jews. These officers supervised the property of the Crown and protected the lower classes from the nobility. They also ensured the collection of royal taxes. Finally, they prevented abuses of justice in noble courts.¹

These measures not only strengthened the judicial authority of the Crown, but they began helping to build an

¹A. H. de Oliveira Marques, A History of Portugal: From Lusitania to Empire, Vol. I (New York, 1972) 120-123.

alliance between the Crown and the growing merchant class. The bitter rivalry between the nobility and the merchant class only served to strengthen the Crown further. By the time of the revolution of 1383-1385, Portugal's nobility was so alienated that they fought on the side of the Franco-Castilians instead of the Anglo-Portuguese. With the defeat of the Franco-Castilians, the Portuguese nobility lost considerable strength and the merchant-royal alliance was crystallized.²

Since many of the thriving merchants and royal tax collectors were Jews, they increasingly became the targets of noble antipathy and hatred. Responding to popular protest against Jewish economic policy makers, Dom Duarte forbade Jews from holding the office of minister of the treasury. Though removed from the highest offices of government, Jews continued to work for the Crown as tax collectors. Resenting the rising number of Jewish tax collectors and commercial managers, the Portuguese analog to the 1391 riots in Spain occurred in Lisbon in 1449, albeit on a much smaller scale. King Afonso V attempted to intervene on the behalf of the Jews, but the rioting public turned against him too.

The rise in anti-Jewish sentiment also began to infect the clergy and the Portuguese Cortes. With the expulsion of

² Ibid., 128.

Jews from Spain in 1492, a new wave of immigrants flooded across the border, heightening Portuguese anxieties. Compounding Portuguese fear and xenophobia was the fact that some of the Jewish immigrants brought with them the plague that was at the time raging in Castile. In 1497, Jews were ordered to convert to Christianity, or be expelled from the country. Those who continued to practice Judaism in Portugal would be executed. In order to avoid persecution, most Jews converted to Catholicism. These so-called New Christians embraced the Christian faith in varying degrees. Some became devout Christians, while many others continued to practice Judaism in the secrecy of their own homes. Obsessed with enforcing Christian orthodoxy, between 1450 and 1530, the Portuguese Church began calling for the creation of a structure of permanent persecution of Jews and other heretics.

Officially established by papal edict in December 1531, the Portuguese Inquisition only began to function in 1547. In the period between 1531 and 1547, the Portuguese Crown resisted efforts by the Church to begin the Inquisition. Dom João III wanted the Inquisition to be free from papal interference. Nonetheless, in 1547 a third papal bull finally created an autonomous Catholic institution free from all secular interference. The Inquisition functioned without interruption until 1768, when the Marquis de Pombal subjected the Holy Office to the authority of the Crown.

This brief interlude lasted until 1777. The institution was abolished completely by decree of the Portuguese Constituent Assembly on April 5, 1821.³

The scope and scale of the Portuguese Inquisition were far smaller than the better-known Spanish variant. Where the number of tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition at one time reached a total of 21, the Portuguese Inquisition never had more than six, and it functioned for some time with only two tribunals. Unlike the Spanish, the Portuguese never set up tribunals in their American colonial possessions.⁴ There were numerous attempts to set up a local tribunal in northeastern Brazil, but these attempts never came to fruition. Despite the absence of a formal tribunal, the inquisitors made several *visitações* to Brazil during which they took hundreds of confessions and heard just as many denunciations. There were also permanent officials of the Holy Office (*comissários* and *familiars*) located in Brazil who sent periodic reports to Portugal. At times, the denunciations sent by these Brazilian-based officials drew the attention of the inquisitors in Portugal, and the

³ The classic account of the establishment and functioning of the Portuguese Inquisition is Alexandre Herculano, História da Origem e Estabelecimento da Inquisição em Portugal (Lisbon, 1858). For more recent work, see Francisco Bethencourt, História das Inquisições Portugal, Espanha e Itália (Lisbon, 1994).

⁴ The Portuguese did create a tribunal in the Indian colony of Goa.

suspect was remitted there for trial.

In spite of their obvious differences, the Spanish Inquisition served as an important model for the Portuguese. The Spanish already had nearly a hundred years of experience administering inquisitorial justice. In addition, the two countries shared similar religious "problems" in the Jews and Muslims. Finally, there was the political reality of a single monarch who ruled both countries between 1580 and 1640. In terms of their hierarchy and day-to-day structure, the two Inquisitions were remarkably similar. One only needs to read the denunciations and trials of the two to recognize the connections.⁵

Just as the Portuguese were creating their own version of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, the Church was commencing a series of reforms aimed at creating a strict new Catholic orthodoxy. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) sought to bring about a rigid uniformity of Church ritual and doctrine, centralizing power and authority in Rome. Responding chiefly to the Protestant Reformation, the Council was designed to cleanse the Church of its impurities and stem the Protestant tide. Portugal, which was untouched by the Protestant threat during this period, had only one representative at the Council when it opened in 1545, and

⁵Charles Amiel, "The Archives of the Portuguese Inquisition: A Brief Survey," The Inquisition in Early Modern Europe: Studies on Sources and Methods eds. Gustav Henningsen and John Tedeschi (Dekalb, IL, 1986), 79-99.

remained a minor player until the Council closed in 1563.

Not only was Portugal on the periphery of the Council's concerns. In many respects, the conservative reforms posed by the Council of Trent were in direct opposition to Portuguese political interests. While the Council was seeking uniformity of Church rituals and beliefs, Portugal was expanding to Asia, India, Africa, and the Americas, drawing peoples with a wide range of religious beliefs into its growing empire. In order to integrate these colonial subjects into the Church, missionaries were forced to adapt Church doctrine to fit a variety of world views, or at least to be tolerant of religious creolization. Still, the impact of Trent would be felt across the Portuguese world, as missionaries and priests divided over the question of whether to enforce the new orthodoxy or provide spaces for the religious practices of Portugal's colonial subjects.⁶

Islamic Jolof Slaves in Portugal

Against this backdrop of religious upheaval and intolerance, the first waves of African slaves began arriving in Portugal in the second half of the fifteenth

⁶ In chapter 3, we have already discussed some of the contradictions and changes to the sacrament of marriage that African slaves and their masters imposed in Brazil. For a similar discussion of the transformation of baptisms of African slaves, see chapter 10. For Trent's impact on Portugal and its overseas colonies, see A. da Silva, Trent's Impact on the Portuguese Patronage Missions, trans. Joaquim da Silva Godinho (Lisbon, 1969).

century, many of them Muslims from the Senegambia. As early as the tenth century, there was a Muslim presence on the northern fringes of the Senegal River. By the thirteenth century, the Jolof Confederation was firmly established, extending Muslim hegemony across a vast geographic area from the Senegal River in the north to the Gambia River in the south. Included in the Confederation were the Mandingo, Fulani, Wolof, and Tukulor peoples. The Portuguese first made contact with the peoples of the Senegambia in the 1440s, and by 1455, Alvise da Cadamosto, a Venetian merchant-trader in the hire of the Portuguese, wrote that the religion of the Jolof kingdom of Senegal was, "Muhammadanism: they are not, however, as are the white Moors, very resolute in this faith, especially the common people."⁷ Many converted Wolofs continued to adhere to a variety of pre-Islamic beliefs. Though Cadamosto viewed these traditional beliefs as a break in Islamic orthodoxy, the two belief systems probably existed simultaneously, fulfilling different spiritual needs as the context required.⁸

The arrival of Portuguese traders along the Senegambia

⁷ Alvise da Cadamosto, The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents..., trans. and ed. G.R. Crone (London, 1937), 31.

⁸ Even today, these two belief systems co-exist among the Wolof of the Senegambia. Nancy E. Gratton, "Wolof," Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara, ed. John Middleton (New York, 1997), volume 4, 381-382.

coast had a profound impact on the Jolof Confederation. The coastal provinces of Kajoor, Waalo, and Baol had direct contact with the burgeoning Atlantic trade, while the Jolof were landlocked. The economic prosperity of the coastal provinces transformed the balance of power in the Confederation. No longer willing to subject themselves to Jolof rule, the coastal provinces began to break away. During the middle of the sixteenth century, a series of wars wracked the Jolof territories, as the coastal provinces began asserting their independence. The disintegration of the Jolof Confederation produced large numbers of Muslim slaves who were funneled toward the coast and sold to Portuguese traders.⁹ Many of these Muslim captives ended up serving as slaves in Spain, Portugal, and the Americas, where they continued to worship Allah. Not surprisingly, these Islamic slaves from the Senegambia drew the attention of the Portuguese Inquisition. Between 1549 and 1554, at least eight Africans--seven Jolofs and one Fulani--were accused of practicing Islam near Lisbon. The majority of the Africans simply asserted the superiority of Islam over the religion of their Catholic masters, pointing out, among other things, that the Christians did not bathe before prayers. Several others expressed the belief that God had

⁹ These wars and their outcomes are chronicled in Boubacar Barry, Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade, trans. Ayi Kwei Armah (Cambridge, 1998) and Jean Boulègue, Les anciens royaumes du Sénégal.

no son and that Jesus was the servant of Mohammed.¹⁰

Islamic practices among African slaves continued well into the latter half of the century. In 1566, a Jolof who was called Zambo (before being baptized António), attempted to run away from his master in Lisbon. When he was caught, Zambo declared that he originally was enslaved by the "Moors," who captured him in the wars that they carried out against the Jolofs.¹¹ The "Moors" later sold him and other enslaved Jolofs to a Portuguese merchant on the coast of Senegal. The group of Jolof slaves was then taken to Lisbon where they were "sold to diverse parts." Zambo confessed that prior to his enslavement, he was an adherent of Islam, often reciting the *shahada* and making other Islamic ceremonies.¹² Even after being baptized in Lisbon, Zambo re-committed himself to Mohammed. He also continued to

¹⁰ Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 161-162; ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Denúncias, Livro 2, ff. 124v.-125v.; Livro 3, ff. 94v.-95v.; Livro 4, ff. 18-18v.

¹¹ Zambo, who arrived in Portugal around 1561, was probably enslaved in the wars that led to the collapse of the Jolof Confederation. His reference to the "Moors" who enslaved him might be a specific reference to the Kajoor Moors, or could be a more general reference to peoples from any of the Muslim provinces under the former rule of the Jolof. See Barry, Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 35, 82.

¹² The *shahada* is the First Pillar of Islam, and any person reciting it with sincerity is considered a Muslim. Zambo recited it in the Arabic: "*La-ilaha ill'l-Lah Muhammadan rasul-ul-lah.*" The English translation would be: "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

carry out various Islamic ceremonies.¹³

Not only did Jolof slaves continue practicing their religion, but many transformed their African military expertise into a sustained challenge to their servitude. In the 1540s, runaway communities of Jolofs in the Spanish Caribbean battled against their masters, using the same cavalry skills that they had learned in the wars of the Senegambia.¹⁴ In urban areas like Lisbon, cavalry skills and horsemanship were not so useful, but the organizational and planning skills of Jolof soldiers no doubt helped them in their plots to hire and steal boats in order to return to Africa. Throughout the sixteenth century, many small groups of Muslims challenged their enslavement by attempting to flee to Africa. A number of these attempts were unsuccessful, but they demonstrated the refusal of Jolof slaves to submit to Christian servitude.

The failed attempts at flight can be attributed to a number of logistical problems, including navigational errors. In 1516, a group of four blacks from the fishing village of Peniche stole a boat and attempted to sail for Africa. After traveling only a hundred miles, the four men went ashore, certain that they had arrived in their homeland. In fact, they were still in Portugal. After

¹³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 10870.

¹⁴ Carlos Esteban Dieve, La esclavitud del negro en Santo Domingo, 2 vols. (Santo Domingo, 1980), 2:445-454.

walking inland, the four runaways were quickly captured.¹⁵

Other runaway plots were foiled during the planning stages. In 1554, two "Turkish" slaves, Antônio and Pedro, determined that they were going to run away to "the land of the Moors." In order to achieve this end, the two men met with a Jolof slave named Francisco, a fishing boat operator in Setúbal. Francisco decided that he too would like to escape and agreed to guide the men to freedom in his master's boat. The three men decided that the best day to leave was on a Sunday during the *feira dos negros* (party of the negros). Assumedly, the attention of the authorities would have been diverted during the weekly gathering of the city's blacks.¹⁶ But after some reflection, Francisco changed his mind. At 40 years of age, Francisco believed that he was "too old to find work in a new land" and that he would "not be able to eat as a free man." For Francisco, pragmatism ultimately won out over the seductive lure of freedom.¹⁷

Another plot that fell apart in the planning stages

¹⁵ Saunders, Black Slaves and Freedmen, 137; ANTT, Chancelaria D. Manuel I, 46, f. 146.

¹⁶ During the *festas dos negros*, blacks sang, danced, played instruments, ate, and drank wine. In 1559, these parties were effectively outlawed when blacks were prohibited from gathering within a 4.5 kilometer radius of the center of Lisbon. Saunders, Black Slaves and Freedmen, 106.

¹⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 7565.

occurred in 1564 when a Jolof slave named António joined two "Turks" in attempting to return to "the land of the Moors." António, despite being baptized, declared that he never truly became a Christian, and that it was his will to return to a Muslim nation. He procured a boat for their passage, but the plot was discovered before the three men could set sail.¹⁸

Still other Jolof slaves were caught just as they were making their departure. In 1565, two Jolofs, the aforementioned Zambo and a slave named António, discussed the possibility of escaping to the land of the Moors. The two men had numerous conversations, with António trying to convince Zambo that their condition was too miserable to endure. António complained that his master did not give him clothing, food, or shoes. Finally persuaded that they should abandon their suffering, Zambo responded to António, "Brother, let's go." António told Zambo that he would steal something of value from his master and sell it in order to pay a boatsman. The two slaves spoke to a boatsman named António Francisco, who agreed that he would drop them off on any beach in the land of the Moors. Zambo paid António Francisco 500 *vinteis* for himself and a thirteen-year-old Jolof girl named Antónia. Antónia had arrived in Lisbon the same year as Zambo. Zambo apparently felt some kin-like

¹⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 10845.

responsibility for the young girl, because he later claimed that he forced her to come with him. Another Jolof named Pedro also gave Zambo nine *vinteis* to pay the boatsman so that he (Pedro) might also make the crossing. It was agreed that all of the parties would meet at the house of the boatsman on a Saturday night and depart from there. Zambo, Antónia, and Pedro all arrived at the house of the boatsman on the appointed night. There, they waited for António until nine o'clock, but he never showed up. Finally, the three Jolof slaves left without their comrade. But just as they were entering the boat, they all were captured by two *alcaides* (justice officials), who immediately took them to jail.¹⁹

Since the majority of the records that are left for history are those that describe failed escape attempts, we can never be sure how many Jolofs succeeded in gaining their freedom in Muslim territories. But the ceaseless efforts of these Islamic slaves to shed the chains of bondage and return to their homelands reminds us that they did not willingly accept their servitude, nor Christianity. The rituals and beliefs that sustained these Africans in their Senegambia homelands were not erased when they arrived in Lisbon as slaves. On the contrary, these beliefs were so deeply held, and so fundamentally different from the beliefs

¹⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 10870.

of their masters, that they could not be abandoned or transformed. As the cases demonstrate, ethnic and religious solidarity compelled Jolofs and their Muslim compatriots to seek one another out, continue practicing their faith, and hatch escape plots, even in the face of slavery and virulent Christian hostility.²⁰

Testing the Bonds of Faith: Forced Conversions of Slaves to Islam

Not all slaves accused of practicing Islam were born into the religion. Some were creolized Christians who were forced to convert to Islam when they were enslaved by North African Muslims. One such case was that of Domingos, a 32-year-old slave who was the son of a Gujerat Indian man and an Angolan woman. In 1587, Domingos appeared at the Portuguese fort in the village of Arzilla in present-day Morocco. He was dressed in the "clothing of the Moors" and was called by his Muslim name, Mansor. Before the vicar general of the village, Domingos recounted a seventeen-year odyssey in which he was sold to North Africa, converted to Islam, and "forced" to live as a Muslim.

²⁰ The religious solidarity of Senegambian Muslims extended to the Americas as well. Father Alonso de Sandoval, the Jesuit priest in Cartagena, noted that among the Jolofs, Mandingas, and Fulanis, there were diverse languages and customs. Despite these differences, Sandoval claimed that "all of these nations" were united by their membership in "the cursed sect of Muhammed." Sandoval, De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute, 91.

Domingos grew up in Lisbon in the house of Governor Diogo Lopes de Sousa. His parents were married and were a constant presence in his life until Domingos was sold at the age of fifteen. His new master, Diogo Pires, carried him away from his family to the city of Ceuta in North Africa. Domingos suffered a difficult life at the hands of his new master, and he determined that he would run away to Spain. But before he could put his plan into action, his master sold him to a Moor. The Moor continued to treat Domingos poorly, and Portuguese officials eventually ordered him to sell him away from Ceuta.

Rather than return Domingos to a Christian master, the Moor took him to the countryside and abandoned him at a Moorish settlement near the village of Tituão. There, Domingos encountered a group of Moors who asked him who he was. He replied that he was a Christian. The Moors then asked if they could convert Domingos to Islam. Domingos said yes. Domingos was taken to Tituão, where he consented to a variety of Muslim conversion rituals, including circumcision. He lived in Tituão for two years but claimed that he never set foot in a mosque and never engaged in Muslim ceremonies. Instead, he went around in the company of Christians and renegade Muslims (*Elches*).

After his time in Tituão, Domingos left for Fez, where he volunteered to join the king's army. Domingos served in the army for some time, but "yearning for the milk of his

Mother Church, and sick of that life," he ran away with six *Elches*, destined for the Portuguese settlement at Mazagão. As the seven men fled, they were chased by Moors. Three of the runaways were captured and killed, while Domingos and the three others hid in the woods. Unable to continue on their path to Mazagão, the four survivors remained in Morocco.

Domingos received a pardon from the king, and he once again joined the army. He eventually returned to Fez and married a Muslim woman. He lived with the woman for three years, during which time they had a daughter together. Becoming "sicker and sicker of that vile [Muslim] life," Domingos abandoned his family and once again set off for Christian lands. He traveled only by night, taking shelter in thickets during daylight hours. Along the path, Christian captives directed him toward the Portuguese fort.

When Domingos finally arrived in Arzilla, he confessed his sins to the vicar general, who took it upon himself to reacquaint Domingos with Christian doctrine. Despite his many years in Muslim lands, Domingos still remembered most of the Christian teachings of his youth. He even claimed that while in Morocco, he often said the Lord's Prayer and Hail Marys. Though Domingos spent nearly twenty years in "hostile" Muslim territory, he never abandoned the religious core that he developed in his formative years in Lisbon. Domingos was thoroughly Christianized by the time he was

sold to his Muslim master at the age of fifteen, and no matter how much of a practitioner of Islam he appeared to be on the exterior, his Christian faith was never broken. The Church recognized the depths of his devotion. On March 1, 1587, Domingos stood before the parishioners at the Catholic Church in Arzilla where he was reconciled to the Church and absolved of all sins.²¹

It was not at all uncommon for creolized slaves to be caught up in the vortex of religious struggles between Catholics and Muslims in the Mediterranean and Atlantic during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Like Domingos, most of the Christian slaves who were forced to convert to Islam never completely accepted their new faith. In 1615, a 20-year-old slave named Diogo gave his confession to the Portuguese Holy Office in Lisbon. Diogo, who was born in Bahia to African parents, was taken to Lisbon at a very young age. When he was twelve years old, Diogo was ordered to return to Brazil to work on the fazenda of his master's brother. During the Atlantic crossing, Diogo's ship encountered a pirate vessel near the Canary Islands. The pirate ship was made up of a mixture of English and Moors, who boarded the Portuguese ship and kidnapped Diogo. Diogo was taken to Algiers, where he was sold to a Moor named Camarit. Camarit forced Diogo to

²¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 13006.

convert to Islam, threatening him with bodily harm. Fearing for his life, Diogo acquiesced to his master's wishes, was circumcised, and took the Islamic name Tombos. Diogo lived with Camarit for seven or eight years, working as a mariner on his pirate ship, plundering other seafaring vessels.

Eventually, Diogo found himself working on the ship of a renegade English captain. Diogo labored on the ship for four months before the captain decided to return to England. Departing from Algiers, Diogo and the rest of the crew sailed for England. There, the captain requested a royal pardon for betraying the crown of King James I. The king granted the captain's pardon, and the crew finally was allowed to disembark. Diogo lived free in England "because in that reign nobody is a slave." While in London, Diogo met some Portuguese Christians who encouraged him to confess his sins, which he did. After four months in England, Diogo boarded a ship bound for Portugal. Diogo disembarked in Lisbon and enjoyed six days of freedom before turning himself in to his original master, Francisco de Paiva. Diogo again confessed his sins, stating that all the time he was in Berbery, he never truly became a Moor. Nor did he leave the Catholic Church. He claimed that he became a Moor, only on the exterior, out of fear for his master. And he understood that in Islam he could never have salvation.²²

²² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 5964.

The loyalty that Diogo displayed in returning to his master might seem remarkable if not for the fact that he was thrust into the unfamiliar and inhospitable environment of North Africa at such a young age. The removal from his master's home and the forced conversion to Islam at the age of twelve no doubt isolated him in a way that made him yearn for the relative stability of his Lisbon childhood. With very few black faces to greet him, London was probably no more inviting than Algiers, despite the sweet taste of freedom. Diogo returned to his master because it was in his master's home that Diogo could find social and spiritual affirmation. Diogo's world view was decisively shaped during his early childhood, and his tenacious grasp to Christianity was only one symptom of that relatively "stable" past.

Domingos and Diogo were not alone in holding on to the beliefs and values of their slave childhoods, especially vis-à-vis North African Muslims. Around 1613, a baby boy was born in the Angolan city of Luanda. As a very young child he was taken from his parents, enslaved, and sold to Dutch traders. The young boy was taken to Holland where he was baptized and given the Christian name António. António's master, Gaspar Afonso Martel, taught him to recite the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. He also took António to mass regularly. After about a year in Holland, António left with his master for Brazil. There, he continued to

attend mass and say his prayers. Two years later, at the age of eight years old, António left Pernambuco with his master, bound for Porto. While at sea, their ship was overtaken by North African pirates, and António was stolen away to Algiers, where he was sold to a Moor named Mahmet. Through a variety of torments António was forced to convert to Islam, and he was given the name Monas, his third name in only eight years. Despite being "obliged to renounce God in an exterior fashion," António claimed that "in his heart he was truly Catholic and [always] guarded the faith."

António's master ordered him and other slaves to go out to sea and pillage Christian ships. One day in 1631, after ten years in the employ of his Islamic master, António and the other Christian captives rose against the Moors onboard his master's ship, killing many of them. Those Moors who survived the rebellion were thrown into the sea and left to drown. After wresting control of the ship, the Christian slaves guided the boat into the city of Porto, where they turned themselves in to Portuguese authorities. There, António revealed his familiarity with Christian doctrine. He knew that the Virgin Mary was the mother of Christ and that Christ was in Heaven and on earth. António also stated that his original master taught him that "Christ died in order to save us" and that "outside of his law there was no salvation." Even though he was kidnapped and "converted" to Islam at the tender age of eight, ten years later António

still remembered his master's teachings. The Inquisitors required Antônio to undergo further instruction in the faith, but they were convinced that he was truly a Christian.²³

In all of the cases examined, the Portuguese believed that Christian slaves were forced to convert to Islam. The Portuguese also believed that these Christians maintained their faith, in spite of their forced conversions. They were probably correct in assuming the religious devotion of these slaves, but Portuguese officials failed to see the inherent contradictions in such a formulation. It was assumed that the "conversion" of slaves from Christianity to Islam was somehow fundamentally different from the "conversion" of Africans to Christianity. Ironically, Africans were expected to abandon the religious and cultural beliefs of their youths and adopt the Christianity of their Portuguese masters; however, the same was not true of Christians who were enslaved by Muslims. Religious arrogance led Portuguese Catholics to conclude that Christian slaves would not voluntarily abandon the faith and convert to Islam, but that newly arrived Africans would quickly adopt Catholicism. What the Portuguese failed to note was that religious arrogance was a widespread phenomenon. All forced conversions, including those to

²³ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 54.

Christianity, were extremely problematic. And it was unlikely that any person would readily abandon the religious beliefs that gave structure and meaning to their everyday lives.

Africans and the Anglican Threat in the Portuguese World

While black slaves were often caught in the crossfire between Christians and Muslims during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by the eighteenth century another religious option emerged for some slaves in Portugal--Anglicanism. And the Portuguese once again exhibited their arrogance in a confounding series of contradictory Inquisition cases. But before examining these cases we must provide a brief background on the origins of the Anglican "threat" in Portugal.

After the discovery of large deposits of gold in Brazil at the end of the seventeenth century, Portugal had an abundance of cash that it sought to spend in the world market. Beginning in 1703, the Portuguese signed a series of commercial treaties with England, exchanging Brazilian gold for English goods. Portuguese domestic industry was largely neglected, and by the middle of the century, Portugal was dependent upon England as its primary supplier of vital consumer goods. As a result, English merchants and traders were a prominent presence in Portugal's port cities, and many of these Englishmen brought their human chattel

with them as they traveled to Portugal and beyond.

The Anglican Church had been a primary concern for Catholics since the Council of Trent, but it was only in the 1700s that Anglican practices appear to have drawn notice from the Portuguese Inquisition. During the first years of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese tolerated the religious practices of many of the Englishmen who resided in their country. But as Portugal's dependency on Britain became more pronounced, resentment toward English merchants grew. Though the Inquisition could not take action against the merchants themselves, they could hear the complaints of English slaves residing in Portugal.

In 1734, a 15-year-old Cape Verdean named Thomas, the slave of an Englishman who lived in Lisbon, expressed his desire to become a Roman Catholic. Thomas's master had not indoctrinated his slaves in any faith. He had instead chosen to ignore their religious desires. Yearning to be like the majority of his fellow slaves, Thomas asked another Englishman why his master had not ordered him to be baptized like the other Catholic slaves. The Englishman responded that Thomas's master "would not want [him] to live under the [Catholic] law." Thomas also reported that he and another "Christian" slave were given meat to eat on Fridays, Saturdays, and during Lent. Though the inquisitors were clearly displeased that Thomas's master prevented his slaves from freely practicing their desired faith, they apparently

did nothing to facilitate Thomas's conversion to Catholicism. The case never came to full trial.²⁴

During the same year that Thomas attempted to become a Catholic, another slave claimed that his English master "forced" him to practice Anglicanism against his will. Carlos, a 16-year-old Guinean slave of the English Consul in Lisbon, confessed that he was kidnapped from his home in Cacheu, Guinea, when he was ten or twelve years old. After passing through Cape Verde and the Azores, Carlos was sold in Lisbon. He had been living with the English Consul for three and a half years when he recounted his ordeal to the Inquisition.

After serving in the English Consul's house for a year and a half, Carlos was baptized by an Anglican minister, even though he secretly desired to join the Catholic faith. Like the aforementioned Thomas, Carlos wanted to worship in the same way as his fellow slaves. Carlos had already witnessed his master beating slaves who tried to adhere to Catholic dietary restrictions, and he claimed that he did not voice his wishes to become a Catholic for fear of similar reprisals. Even though he was baptized in the Anglican Church, Carlos continued to try to practice Catholicism. He was educated in the mysteries of the

²⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 11970. Only the denunciations and a summary of Thomas's case appear in the packet, thereby implying that the case was never turned into a processo.

Catholic faith by the other servants in the Consul's house. He learned the doctrines and the orations by memorizing a card that they made up for him. And he claimed that he awoke very early on saint's days to go to convent to hear mass.

One night, an Anglican page in the house noticed that Carlos wore some rosary beads and two veronicas around his neck.²⁵ The page dutifully reported Carlos to the wife of the English Consul, who told Carlos that if he wanted to practice Catholicism, she would sell him. The Consul's wife then told her husband about Carlos's transgression. Wanting to find out who persuaded him to wear the rosary and the veronicas, the Consul beat Carlos with a whip and locked him in a house for four days, providing him with only a small ration of food. Carlos refused to incriminate the other Catholic slaves in the house. After four days of incarceration, Carlos dreamt that he heard a voice that told him to get up and escape out the open window. The voice also told him that he was favored by the angels. Awakening from his dream, Carlos went to the window and found his way out. He fled to the beach, where he slept until morning.

²⁵ According to legend, St. Veronica wiped the bleeding face of Jesus on the way to Calvary. Catholics used white cloths with the image of Jesus and red "blood" streaks as religious relics that they carried with them. Other religious relics and medals that could be worn around the neck also were called "veronicas." For Jesuits using veronicas to reward slaves on Engenho Santana in Brazil, see ANTT, CSJ, Maço 70, No. 104.

At dawn, he returned to his master's house, collected his card of orations, and went straight to the Convento do Corpo Santo, where he declared his intent to be a Roman Catholic.

Remarkably, the Portuguese Holy Office not only allowed Carlos to convert to Catholicism, but they freed him from bondage. Citing his attendance at mass, his oration card, and his abstinence from meat on prohibited days, the inquisitors concluded that the English Consul had to relinquish Carlos with no financial compensation "because the right of religion is stronger than that of servitude and paternal power." On March 29, 1734, Carlos walked away from his master a free man.²⁶

Of course, "the right of religion" only applied to those slaves who wanted to be Catholics. Portuguese slaves who wished to practice religions other than Catholicism were subject to swift prosecution. In this respect, the Inquisition functioned as a tool of spiritual repression, not unlike the whippings and beatings that Muslim and Anglican masters meted out to their spiritually wayward slaves. This stark contradiction in the practices of the Inquisition was brought into even sharper focus by a case which arose only three years after Carlos was set free.

In 1737, an 18-year-old Angolan-born slave named Cesário was brought before the Inquisition for heresy. When

²⁶ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 6600.

Cesário was a very young child, he was taken from Angola to London. He was then moved from London to Porto, where he was sold to a Portuguese man named Guilherme Anuil. Cesário was baptized, educated in the Catholic doctrine, and confessed his sins on a regular basis. After some time, Cesário accompanied his Portuguese master back to London. While they were there, a man named João approached Cesário and tried to convince him that he should convert to Anglicanism. João told Cesário that if he were baptized by an Anglican priest, he would immediately be free from his master. João added that, as a free man, Cesário might earn as much as 30 milreis working in the house of a wealthy nobleman (*fidalgo*). Initially, Cesário rejected João's offer, noting that he had already been baptized in Portugal. But João told him that his first baptism was unimportant and that "he could be baptized four or five times." Finally persuaded, Cesário consented to the baptism. João took him to a cleric who baptized him in the form of the Anglican Church.

The next day, Cesário's master learned what his slave had done, and he set off to punish him. But the master's son requested that he should pardon Cesário because he was young and did not know what he was doing. Giving in to his son's requests, Guilherme Anuil locked Cesário in a room and ordered him to be put aboard the first ship bound for Porto. When Cesário appeared before the Inquisition one year after

returning to Porto, he attributed his Anglican baptism to "ignorance and young age." He claimed that he never set foot in the Church of England and that he continued to say the rosary. The only reason he went through with the baptism was "because of that man who harassed him, promising him his freedom."

Ultimately, the inquisitors found Cesário guilty of formal heresy. Nevertheless, they argued that he was "a boy of very few years, born and raised among pagans." They also noted that he "was still so reserved, that he barely understands the Portuguese language and speaks poorly." The Holy Office concluded that Cesário merely lacked proper instruction in the Catholic faith. He was ordered to undergo instruction in Church doctrine and the mysteries of the faith.²⁷

The Portuguese Holy Office was quick to excuse Cesário's Anglican baptism as nothing more than a youthful indiscretion, swiftly returning him to his master; but just three years earlier, they ruled that Carlos was perfectly rational when he rejected Anglicanism in favor of Catholicism. Ironically, Carlos was several years younger than Cesário when he made his decision to convert to Catholicism. Carlos was also only four years out of his African homeland, while Cesário had been raised in the

²⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 5393.

Catholic faith since he was a child. Despite Carlos's youth and recent arrival from Africa, the Inquisitors ruled that his "right to religion" outweighed his English master's property interest. The same was not true for Cesário. Clearly, the "right to religion" meant only one thing--the "right to Catholicism." In the eyes of the Portuguese Inquisition, slaves like Cesário never had the "right" to choose other religious options, especially if Portuguese masters might be threatened with the loss of their human property.

These apparent contradictions are easily understood if we remember that the Inquisition was both a religious and a political institution. The inquisitors were largely driven by orthodoxy and religious arrogance. They were also not unaware of the economic and political tensions that existed between Portugal and England. As was the case with Muslims and Jews, religious, economic, and political imperatives led the Portuguese Holy Office to rule consistently in favor of Catholics in their disputes with Anglicans. Carlos was an extraordinarily lucky beneficiary of these policies, gaining his freedom from his Lisbon-based Anglican master. But Cesário and others like him remained trapped in the Catholic vise, unable to escape the coercion of their bondage or the coercion of the Catholic faith.

From the slave's perspective, forced religious conversions were always imperfect. Muslim slaves from the

Senegambia never abandoned Islam, despite being baptized as Catholics. Similarly, among creolized Christian slaves who were forced to convert to Islam, few actually abandoned the Catholic faith, despite their lowly status under Portuguese Catholicism. Remarkably, all of the creolized slaves who appeared before the Inquisition were under the age of fifteen when they were forced to convert to Islam, yet they still held tightly to the Christian faith of their childhood years. Finally, the "Anglican" slaves who converted to Catholicism were all African-born boys who were exposed to some form of indigenous African religion before being taken to Europe. They were then converted to Anglicanism, even as they were thrust into an environment where their social peers were predominantly Catholic. It was from the influences of these slave peers that they developed a Catholic identity. In short, their religious cores were being shaped by the environment in which they were growing up.

Few people would question the allegiance of Christian and Muslim slaves to their respective faiths, even in the face of extreme torture and duress. And it would not surprise most people to learn that very young, culturally-isolated Africans were most likely to embrace the Catholicism of their social and racial peers. But scholars have had a difficult time embracing the notion that many African slaves, even those who arrived at destinations where

Africans constituted the majority of the slave population, continued to adhere primarily to indigenous, or "traditional," African religious beliefs. These scholars have made the same assumption that the Portuguese made: Since most Africans were not members of one of their recognized faiths, they were religious *tabula rasa* and were quickly converted to Christianity. But Africans who adhered to "traditional" beliefs were no different than African Muslims who were "converted" to Christianity. They largely rejected their new faith and continued to see the world through the religious prism of their African pasts. Since most Africans entered into slavery as young adults, they were even more fixed in their beliefs than were those very young Christian slaves who were "forced" to convert to Islam. We certainly can not claim that mature Africans abandoned their core African beliefs, while young Portuguese slaves of African descent held onto Christianity in the face of Muslim assaults. In the next chapter we will look more closely at the meaning of "traditional" African religions, pointing out the major differences between African and Western religious forms. We will also provide a more thorough critique of those scholars who adhere to a "devout" Judeo-Christian approach in assessing African religious principles, both in Africa and in the broader diaspora.

Chapter 6

Theory and Praxis in the Study of African Religions

Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese slave trade shifted away from Upper Guinea, moving toward the politically volatile regions of Central Africa. As a result of this shift, the number of Muslim slaves arriving in the ports of the Portuguese world diminished significantly. In the place of Muslim slaves, there arrived Africans whose religious beliefs were unlike those of most slaves previously encountered in the Portuguese world. The overwhelming majority of these slaves were from the Central African areas of present-day Angola, Congo, Gabon, and Cabinda. These Africans brought with them to the Americas certain core beliefs and practices that were undeniable products of their indigenous pasts. When we discuss core beliefs and practices, we must take care to distinguish those cultural beliefs that were central to one's sense of personhood from those that were secondary and thus more malleable. In the case of Central Africa, one might point to core beliefs and practices that included matrifocal family structures, an extended network of kin, a shared Bantu language, and a religious cosmology that recognized the universe as divided between the living world and the world of the spirits. My primary focus in the chapters that follow will be those indigenous religious

beliefs and practices that were transferred across the African-Portuguese diaspora. By comparing the ritual practices and beliefs of Central Africans in Africa with those beliefs and practices of their brethren in the Americas, we can demonstrate that certain core beliefs were not destroyed by the influences of Christianity.

Central African Cosmology

Before looking at the religious practices of Africans in the broader diaspora, we must first have a deep understanding of the actual belief systems that sustained them in the lands of their birth. There was a great deal of variation in religious practices from ethnic group to ethnic group and even kinship group to kinship group; however, there appear to be broad religious understandings that were shared by nearly all of the peoples of Central Africa. We have already described some of these beliefs in chapters two and three. One of the distinguishing features of Central African cosmologies was the belief that secular structures were intimately bound to religious ideas. Political, social, economic, and cultural ideologies were all animated by a tightly-woven cosmology that explained the origins of the universe, the constitution of the person, and the connections between the worlds of the living and the dead. This broad cosmology dictated codes of behavior and ritual practices, explained the sources of illness, infertility, or

other malevolence, and delineated the relationships between human beings and the various deities.

In more specific terms, the universe was conceived as divided between the world of the living and the world of the dead. These two worlds were separated by a large body of water through which the dead had to pass in order to reach the other world. Upon reaching the world of the dead, man was relieved from the sufferings that plagued the world of the living. It was believed that "when a man died, his soul passed from the pains of the present life to the felicities of the other world."¹ Though this depiction sounds remarkably similar to the Christian conception of Heaven, we must recognize that the two ideas differed in fundamental ways. In Central Africa, there was no judgment made by a single God-like figure in order to pass into the world of the dead. Instead, entry into the other world was determined by the ancestors, who refused to admit evil spirits.² Nor was the "world of the dead" a permanent dwelling. For the spirits, there was a fluidity between the two worlds that allowed them to remain engaged in the everyday lives of their living kinsmen, while at the same

¹ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:132.

² Balandier, Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 247. It was believed that a person who was evil in life was driven by the same spirit that survived into death. Those spirits that were refused entry into the land of the dead remained on earth, disrupting the lives of the living.

time "residing" in the world of the dead. The essential character of living spirits was maintained in death. Thus, "bad" spirits continued to plague living beings, while "good" spirits could be called upon to counteract the evil of malefic spirits.

The Central African conception of man was closely related to the model of the divided world. Human beings were considered "double beings" consisting of a visible outer shell and an inner, invisible entity that was the actual or essential person.³ The "soul" was an eternal force that acted independently of the outer being. When the outer person slept, the soul flew off to pursue its own labors and adventures, thereby explaining what Westerners understood to be dreams. Upon the death of the outer person, the "soul" continued to flourish in the land of the dead where it joined the souls of the ancestors.⁴ But the souls of the dead never completely abandoned the world of the living. They remained among the most powerful influences in shaping the fortunes of their living kinsmen. The living frequently called upon their dead ancestors to aid them in addressing the dangers and mysteries of their everyday affairs.

On earth, the most powerful people were thought to

³ Karl E. Laman, The Kongo (Stockholm, 1953-62), 3:1.

⁴ Ibid; Hilton, The Kingdom of Kongo, 9.

possess whole and complete souls. In order to maintain the well-being of the soul, humans had to rely upon the dead to hide their souls from evil spirits. These appeals would occur at grave sites where the living would make offerings to the dead in exchange for power and protection of the life force.⁵ A soul that was well hidden in an urn, a calabash, or in water was thought to be protected from death.⁶ When illness, misfortune, or other signs of weakness occurred, it was interpreted to mean that the spiritual protection of the soul was no longer effective. Because good health was viewed as a sign of social and spiritual power, sickness was interpreted as a symbol of a much broader and more general social failure. The weakening of the soul was usually attributed to witches and evil spirits who separated the soul from its body by stealing it, most often while the person was sleeping. The longer the soul was away from its shell, risk of illness and death increased as the witches continued to "eat" away at the soul.

To counteract the depletion of the life force by both living and "dead" witches, individuals might rely upon ritual healers or diviners to intervene on their behalf. The diviners, in addition to being able to predict past and future occurrences, were able to determine which malevolent

⁵ Hilton, The Kingdom of Kongo, 11.

⁶ Laman, The Kongo, 3:220.

witches or spirits were occupying the body of an individual. After determining the cause of the "illness," the healer prescribed a variety of remedies, including treatment of the witchcraft through natural medicines (roots, herbs, etc.), appeasement of the malevolent spirits with feasts in their honor, or ritual judgments of the suspected living witches. The judgments usually consisted of a "trial," or ordeal, that had to be endured by the suspected witches. In order to determine the guilty party, suspects had to undergo a rigorous physical test (often drinking poisons). The innocent always survived unharmed, while the guilty succumbed, revealing their identity as witches.⁷

Some healers, usually "normal" men and women, were chosen by the water and earth spirits to cure specific diseases or illnesses, or to protect from malevolent forces. The spirit revealed itself to the chosen individual through an unusually shaped object of the natural world--a shell, a stone, or a piece of wood. These objects were thought to contain the essence of the spirit. By manipulating the object in a ritual manner, the healer could be possessed by the spirit and be endowed with its power. Some of these fetish objects were embellished with "medicine" pockets that supplemented the power of the spirit. In other cases, the

⁷ For descriptions of Central African poison ordeals, see Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:103-106 and Andrew Battell, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell, 62.

fetish object was a manufactured statuette with medicine put into a hole in its stomach, or in a container such as a bag or a calabash. The medicine consisted of various power-saturated substances from the natural world--plants, minerals, hair, sweat, blood, and so on. These fetishes and medicines were also sold by the healers to protect against wild animals, to protect the foundations of houses, to kill thieves, to protect crops, to ensure fertility, and so on. Using the proper medicines and engaging in carefully choreographed rituals, individuals could protect themselves from a wide array of malevolent forces.⁸

The Limitations of Western Outlooks on African Culture

Broadly speaking, this was the cosmological world of Central Africans in the seventeenth century. Though this is admittedly only a thumbnail sketch of a broadly conceived Central African cosmology, the reader should be able to discern some of the differences between European and African cosmologies. The transfer of Central African ideas and their associated rituals across the Portuguese world are clearly shown in the Inquisition records and in the writings of various travelers, clerics, and merchants who resided in those areas. But reading these accounts presents difficulties. One must recognize and filter out those

⁸ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:121; Hilton, The Kingdom of Kongo, 15-18.

Western biases that flaw these otherwise useful documentary sources. Descriptions of African beliefs and practices were not only condemned and marginalized as "sin" and "idolatry." They also were misinterpreted as the work of the Devil, thereby distorting and omitting important elements crucial to understanding the ritual processes. In spite of the limitations of the sources, by setting the pejorative descriptions aside, one can clearly identify the unmistakable religious imprint of Central Africa, in some cases, in almost exactly the same forms that existed in Africa.

Unfortunately, the Portuguese were not the only ones who misinterpreted the meanings and significance of African religious forms. Even in the present day, the production of history on Africa and the African diaspora suffers from the inability of many "devout" Christian scholars to shed the dominant paradigms of Judeo-Christian thought.⁹ As such,

⁹ I have borrowed the term "Devout" scholars from Robin Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science (Cambridge, 1993), 162. Horton argues that scholars like Victor Turner, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, John Mbiti, E. Bolaji Idowu, and others have failed to capture the true essence of African religions because of the deep influence of Christianity in their approach to the scholarship. Horton also uses the term "Theologians" to describe these scholars. Horton has been widely criticized for his iconoclastic approach to the study of African religions, but his is one of the only approaches that attempts to place Africans at the center of their own spiritual world. The following theoretical descriptions draw heavily from Horton's work, in particular, chapter 6, "Judaean-Christian spectacles: boon or bane to the study of African religions?" 161-193.

the translation of African religions has largely been a failure among Western scholars. Though most scholars engage their subjects with the best of intentions, the essence of African religious meaning has withered under the tacit assumption of Christian superiority. In their attempts to reconcile progressive, anti-racist agendas with the certainty that African religions are inferior to Christianity, "devout" scholars have used a Christian template in their analyses of African rituals and beliefs, attempting to find Christianity where it often did not exist. Unfortunately, this Christian paradigm only distorts and obscures our understanding of African religious principles. Many of these "devout" thinkers have operated on the unconscious assumption that if they can demonstrate the Christian elements in African thought, they can somehow "redeem" the Africans' humanity. Ironically, these analyses not only misrepresent African religious beliefs, but they reify the same sorts of patronizing and ethnocentric attitudes that the original European colonizers exhibited toward Africans.

Among the many preconceived notions that scholars bring to the study of African religions, there are at least three important misconceptions deriving from Judeo-Christian theology. The first is the belief in a single, omnipotent, God. This assumption has led some scholars to search in vain for the Christian God in Africa. Most of these

scholars suggest that the "lesser" spirits were direct manifestations of the supreme being. These lesser spirits supposedly served as intermediaries between the worshipper and the one true God. But these theories fall apart when we recognize that in many African societies, the lesser deities were not considered an extension of the supreme being's will.¹⁰ Each deity had its own characteristics and earthly utilities, and was worshipped and manipulated in accordance with specific human needs. The supreme being had no role in these relationships between man and the other spiritual beings. For instance, in traditional Kongolese cosmology, the supreme being, *nzambi a mpungu*, was considered so remote and inaccessible that he could not be worshipped or controlled by man. Only the "inferior" deities were responsive to man's worldly needs.¹¹ Rather than seeking to reveal the Christian God in Africa, studies of African religions should attempt to understand the specific utility of the "lesser" deities and their relationship to man.

Most scholars also have failed to recognize the dynamism in African conceptions of the supreme being. While Christians adhered to a fixed, static vision of God, many

¹⁰ In at least one society, there was no supreme being at all. According to Okot p'Bitek, the Luo of Tanzania and Uganda maintain no supreme deity in their traditional religious thought. Okot p'Bitek, Religion of the Central Luo (Nairobi, 1971).

¹¹ Balandier, Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 244-245.

Africans believed in a supreme being that could be transformed in accordance with political, economic, or social change. As we have already noted, religious beliefs and everyday "secular" activities were intimately connected. Thus, change in the secular world often impacted religious beliefs and practices, including the relationship with the supreme being. For example, in Kongo, the arrival of the Portuguese resulted in a correlation between *nzambi a mpungu* and the Christian God. Gradually, *nzambi a mpungu* became more involved in the everyday affairs of many Kongoleses, especially those who identified themselves as Christians. No longer so remote and inaccessible, *nzambi a mpungu* was now the subject of frequent worship for Kongoleses Christians.¹² In other African societies, changing historical conditions initiated the complete "reinvention" of the supreme being. Among the Ewe and Fon peoples of the so-called Mina coast, historical change resulted in a variety of different supreme beings over time.¹³ This volatility in the nature of the supreme being not only illustrates the futility of attempting to find the "true" Christian God in Africa, but it also shows that African

¹² John K. Thornton, The Kongoleses Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706 (Cambridge, 1998), 114-115.

¹³ Sandra E. Greene, "Religion, History and the Supreme Gods of Africa: A Contribution to the Debate," Journal of Religion in Africa 26 (1996), 122-138.

cosmologies were not constructed around the supreme being in the same way that Christianity was. The lesser deities and ancestral spirits were the spiritual arbiters of the temporal world.

The second questionable assumption made by Christian scholars is that God is a mysterious and unknowable entity from the paradise known as Heaven. In Africa, this assumption fails on at least two counts. First, most Africans deities were well-known to their adherents--by name, by where they lived, by their personal characteristics, by what diseases they caused, and so on. Second, the notion of Heaven, in the Judeo-Christian sense, was unknown in African religions. There was no belief in Africa analogous to the Christian belief that life on earth was necessarily inferior to that which would be enjoyed in the mysterious "other world." As Ugandan anthropologist Okot p'Bitek succinctly states, "African ethics is not grounded on a promise or threat by some god that the good people will, in the future, enjoy life in heaven, while the bad will cook in a great fire."¹⁴ Instead of moving on to heaven or hell at death, African souls moved on to the world of the ancestors, where they joined their "dead" kinsmen, but they were still capable occupying the same temporal space that they occupied when they were "alive," influencing

¹⁴ Okot p'Bitek, African Religions in Western Scholarship (Nairobi, 1971) 109.

the fortunes of their living relatives and friends.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Christian scholars assume that the ultimate goal of religion is communion with and worship of the one inscrutable God. Most Africans, on the other hand, viewed their religions as a way of explaining and predicting events in the world around them. African rituals and beliefs were designed to deal with the fortunes and the dangers of the temporal realm--disease, drought, hunger, sterility, and so on. As such, religion provided many of the explanations for what Westerners call "science."¹⁵ In the Western world, "religion" and "science" evolved into two separate spheres of thought, with "science" being the preferred method of explaining and controlling the temporal world. The religious domain became a preserve for metaphysical communion with God. But in Africa, religion and "science" were inextricably bound.

To cite just one example to illustrate the potential similarities between African religion and Western science, in most African cosmologies, an herbal cure whose efficacy was proven time and again was regarded as a "strong" spriritual remedy, affirming the power of the diviners and

¹⁵ Horton views religious thought and scientific theory as operating on the same explanatory plane. Despite the value laden nature of religion and science in Western society, the two operate in remarkably similar ways in most parts of the world. For more on Horton's "Similarity Thesis," see Horton, 347-354.

curers who proffered the cure. For Westerners, a near perfect rate of herbal/medicinal success equated to a scientific "truth," with the cure being attributed to the chemical properties of the herbs or plants. Both cures operated in the same manner, but the Africans attributed the cure to the spirits, while Westerners attributed it to a supposedly more "rational" science.

One might argue that the distinctions between Western "science" and African "religion" were mere semantic differences. The African interpretation might simply be called the "science" of religion, since the outcomes ultimately were the same as in the Western world. Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that many African spiritual cures can withstand the challenges of Western science. But this approach completely ignores the religious interpretation of the remedy and implicitly reduces to the level of "superstition" all of those African beliefs and practices that do not meet the threshold of "scientific" certainty. By privileging Western science as the only valid explanation for African cures and healing rituals, scholars ignore the essential character of many African religious forms. The only way for scholars to interpret African cosmologies with any degree of accuracy is to take African beliefs and practices on their own terms.

Though African and European cosmologies were largely incompatible, some scholars are now suggesting that the key

to religious exchange had little to do with replacing one belief system in favor of another. Rather, religious exchange between Africans and Europeans depended upon a series of shared revelations, revelations that resonated within both the African and European spiritual traditions. These shared revelations occurred as early as the late fifteenth century, when the Portuguese began their efforts to convert the Kongoleses to Christianity. For instance, soon after the first Catholic priests arrived in Kongo, two Kongo noblemen dreamed simultaneously that a beautiful woman implored the Kongo to convert to Christianity. The Kongo noblemen consulted the Catholic priests to interpret this strange coincidence. The priests explained that the woman in the dreams was the Virgin Mary and that the dreams were "miracles and revelations."¹⁶ For the Kongo, dreams had long been understood to be important sources of revelations. The Catholic endorsement only served to reinforce the dream's meaning. Thus, the dream functioned as an important revelation in both systems of thought.

The recent work of historian, John Thornton, has been most persuasive in arguing for the importance of revelation in the formation of African Christianity.¹⁷ Thornton's

¹⁶ Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 257.

¹⁷ John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 255-262.

explanations for the ways in which African revelations were integrated into Catholic thought are convincing to a point. Where Catholic priests were willing to make spiritual concessions and admit the "validity" of certain African revelations, some Kongoleses were drawn into the Christian fold. In fact, one of Thornton's most brilliant contributions is the notion of a thoroughly Africanized version of Christianity arising in Kongo in the sixteenth century.¹⁸ But the Catholic priests only validated a miniscule percentage of Kongoleses' revelations, declaring all other African revelations to be the work of the Devil. While the Catholic Church considered revelations to be extraordinarily rare and miraculous expressions of God's will on earth, the Kongoleses depended upon continuous revelation for their daily survival.

By emphasizing revelation over cosmology, Thornton neglects the real essence of Central African religious thought. The cosmology of Central Africa was built upon the necessity of continuous revelation, while Christianity increasingly was becoming a religion based on communion with

¹⁸ For a wonderful articulation of Kongoleses' Christianity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see John K. Thornton, The Kongoleses' Saint Anthony. Also see, John Thornton, "The Development of an African Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1491-1750," Journal of African History 25 (1984), 147-167 and John K. Thornton, The Kingdom of Kongo: Civil War and Transition, 1641-1718 (Madison, 1983), 56-68.

the one "true" God.¹⁹ In the Christian context, sources of revelation were finite, limited to God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and various saints. The revelations that were proffered by this limited cast were so rare and extraordinary that when they did occur, they were judged to be miraculous. When the Catholic deities did reveal themselves, the validity of the revelation had to be "confirmed" by the Catholic clergy, an irritating obstacle that had no precedence in African thought. Central African revelation, on the other hand, was ordinary, continuous, and included a variety of local deities and ancestral spirits whose function was to intervene from the other world on behalf of those in the temporal world. This constant dialogue between lay people and the spirit world was the linchpin of African cosmology and became the primary target of Catholic extirpation campaigns.

As Thornton readily admits, Europeans saw "a considerable part of African religious life as being of

¹⁹ Prior to the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church was more tolerant of everyday forms of revelation similar to those found in Africa, but this changed quickly in the second half of the sixteenth century, as the Church embraced an elaborate theory of witchcraft, prosecuting those diviners and healers who were believed to be in league with the Devil. For the emergence of witchcraft in the Portuguese world, see Francisco Bethencourt, O Imaginário da magia. Feiticeiras, saladores e nigromantes no século XVI (Lisbon, 1987) and José Pedro Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição num país sem "caça às bruxas," 1600-1774 (Lisbon, 1997). As we will see in the chapters that follow, African religious forms were particularly suspect as the work of the Devil.

diabolical nature."²⁰ Everyday forms of curing, healing, and divination were considered the work of the Devil. Nonetheless, so-called African "Christians" continued to practice these rituals, prompting commentary from Catholic clergymen. In a 1612 letter to the King of Portugal, the Bishop of Congo, Manuel Baptista, wrote that the people of Kongo were "incapable" of serving God "because the vices are so old and the barbarism is so great that they can not be cured."²¹ Some years later, Father Cavazzi wrote that there were "bad Christians" from Kongo who were "apparently avowed to our religion, but, hidden, they protect the *feiticeiros*, the foundation and support of all the idolatry."²² As Cavazzi makes clear, those Kongoleses who embraced the Catholic faith clearly did so on their own terms, persisting in their beliefs of indigenous African forms.

The Catholic priests had little tolerance for the persistence of African rituals and practices. Across Central Africa, priests burned "idol houses" and "fetish objects" in grand public displays meant to demonstrate the impotence of African spirits and religious leaders

²⁰ Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 260.

²¹ ANTT, Corpo Chronológico, Parte 1, Maço 115, No. 136. Carta de Frei Manuel Baptista, Bispo do Congo e Angola dando conta a Rey estara genteo daquela terra incapaz de se esperar servissem a Deus e ao mesmo Sr. El Rey do Congo...10 July 1612.

²² Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:87.

(nganga).²³ In 1716, Father Lorenzo da Lucca, who had been in Kongo for over ten years as a missionary, complained bitterly about the proliferation of "diabolical witchcraft" in the region around Luanda. He argued that if the African healers were not punished, the city would be "boiling over in a few years swollen from the assembly [of witches]." Father da Lucca went on to complain that he alone could not "remedy these disorders" without the power to punish, and that "with the exception of a violent remedy, this open wound is almost incurable--*extremis malis, extrema remedia*. And if this precept was given to remedy the wound, there would be many more believers." Father da Lucca predicted that there would be dire consequences if African practices were not curtailed. He wrote that there was not only the "fear of losing the law of God, but moreover of His Majesty losing the Reign, because if these witches (*feiticeiros*)

²³ For the burning of African sacred objects and houses of worship from the year 1606, see Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas suas Missões do Japão, China...Angola, Guiné, Serra Leoa, Cabo Verde e Brasil nos anos de 1600 a 1609 e do processo da conversão e cristandade daquelas partes: tirada das cartas que os missionários de lá escreveram. Pelo Padre Fernão Guerreiro da Companhia de Jesus, Natural de Almodovar de Portugal., ed. Artur Viegas (Coimbra, 1930), 3 volumes, 1:413; from the year 1674, Propaganda Fide, Scrittura referite nei Congressi, Serie Africa, 1; VFL Roll 11481, ff. 302-303v.; from the year 1699, Thornton, The Kongolese Saint Anthony, 72-73; from the year 1752, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16414. The public burning of African sacred objects continued in Brazil. See, for instance, Nuno Marques Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:128.

multiply themselves they can corrupt all of these people."²⁴ The attempts to crush traditional practices and reduce the number of African revelations to acceptable Christian levels illustrates the narrowness of the Catholic conversion project in Kongo.²⁵ Ultimately, the interpretation of Christian doctrine rested in the hands of European priests and missionaries. Though the priests embraced some African revelations as "valid" in the Catholic tradition, the vast majority were rejected as being the Devil's work. Thus, the core of African religious belief--continuous, everyday forms of revelation used to explain, predict, and control the temporal world--was viewed by European priests as a "diabolical" oppositional threat.²⁶

Despite the overwhelming rejection of traditional African practices and beliefs by Catholic priests, some Kongolese still embraced a Catholic identity, especially

²⁴ Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 86, Livro 279, ff. 39-40.

²⁵ Thornton argues that Catholic priests took an "inclusive" approach to Kongolese conversion, tolerating numerous aspects of indigenous religion. Thornton, African and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 256-257. Though some Kongolese revelations were affirmed as "valid" by Catholic priests, the vast majority of Kongo revelations were unacceptable to Christian clergy. Since revelation was at the center of Kongolese cosmology, I would hesitate to label the Catholic approach as "inclusive."

²⁶ The phrase "explanation, prediction, and control" is Robin Horton's way of succinctly explaining the primary aim of African religion. I have borrowed this from him. See Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West.

vis-à-vis their "heathen" neighbors to the north and east. As noted earlier, this was a distinct brand of African Christianity, with strong influences from traditional Kongolesé cosmology. Some of the Kongolesé elite became well-versed in the commandments, prayers, and sacraments of the Church. Others were Christians "only in name." At the very least, many Kongolesé were familiar with the "broad outlines of the Faith."²⁷ But to argue that the Kongolesé were Catholic, and leave it at that, is to strip them of their spiritual core. Catholicism simply could not meet the here-and-now needs of most Kongolesé, even into the eighteenth century, after more than two centuries of practice as the official state religion.

Catholicism and traditional Kongolesé beliefs remained discrete cosmologies because their ends were vastly different. Christian revelations, when they occurred, demonstrated and validated the power of an unknowable, mysterious, other-worldly God. And this most often required blind faith--communion with an idealized apparition dwelling in the heavens. Kongolesé revelation, on the other hand, was a dialogue between the living and the world of the spirits, including the spirits of the ancestors, whose powers and foibles were familiar and well known, in real life as well as in death. Faith in a particular deity was

²⁷ Thornton, The Kongolesé Saint Anthony, 17, 28-29.

verified by the bounty, or lack thereof, that was offered by the deity. If the deity was not producing, then those in the temporal world were failing to accede to his/her wishes. The followers of the deity could either acquiesce to the demands required by the spirit, or they could seek sustenance in another spirit. In this way, African cosmology was based upon an intimate, symbiotic, dynamic relationship between the living and those in the other world.

Though John Thornton provides a nuanced assessment of the complexities and contradictions of African Christianity, he still insists on labeling the Kongoleses primarily as "Christians." Unfortunately, Thornton's emphasis on Kongoleses Christianity pushes him perilously close to the arguments made by the "devout" scholars mentioned earlier. He wants his readers to believe that Africans were "capable" of embracing Christianity. But in doing so, he dilutes their cosmological core. Thornton writes that: "Although most Americans are comfortable with the idea of Muslim Africans in the slave trade period, they seem much less comfortable with Christian Africans. A literate elite, dressing partially in European clothes, bearing Portuguese names, and professing Catholicism seems somehow out of place in the popular image of precolonial Africa."²⁸ Even

²⁸ Thornton, The Kongoleses Saint Anthony, 1-2.

Thornton's own evidence does not speak to such overwhelming Euro-Catholic hegemony. Against some of his best arguments for the complex nature of African Christianity, Thornton foresees the Kongolese spiritual core and replaces it with a Catholic one.²⁹ Certainly Thornton would not assert that the Europeans who "adopted the revelations of African diviners and mediums" were adherents *only* of traditional African beliefs.³⁰ Yet this is precisely the type of suggestion he makes when he labels the Kongolese "Christians."

I am not suggesting that there were no Kongolese Christians. There were. But they were not *just* Christians. A more plausible theoretical explanation for Kongolese beliefs is that Christianity and indigenous Kongolese religion operated in a *parallel* fashion, with the African cosmology still being the dominant religious paradigm for most Kongolese, even in the process of conversion to

²⁹ Thornton persists in referring to "African Christians" in nearly all of his most recent work. Yet, throughout The Kongolese Saint Anthony he demonstrates the distinct nature of African Christianity and the attempts by the Kongolese to recast Christianity according to Kongolese tradition. The conflict between the two traditions permeates the work. In short, I believe Thornton is correct in arguing for a distinct form of African Christianity, but his findings demand alternative terminologies or theoretical paradigms. To call the Kongolese "African Christians" simply does not suffice.

³⁰ Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 255-256.

Christianity.³¹ For example, in a late seventeenth-century mission in Kongo, Capuchin priest Andrea da Pavia lost patience with his parishioners, who persisted in visiting indigenous diviners and healers. Father da Pavia confronted his flock, demanding to know if they "wished to observe the Laws of God or their superstitious ceremonies." In a telling response, the majority responded that "they firmly believed in God and everything that was taught to them [by missionaries] but that they also believed in their ceremonies and...observances."³² Clearly, this was an indication that the Kongoleses were practicing Christianity, as well as their indigenous religion. And the two were discrete systems of belief.

Without doubt, there was some overlap in these competing traditions. The Kongoleses were quick to recognize God as *nzambi a mpungu*, the creator of all things. They also drew parallels between their ancestral deities and the Catholic saints. The Catholic priests and their superiors in Rome accepted these spiritual convergences as expressions

³¹ Parallel beliefs were not uncommon in the Portuguese world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See the examples of China and some parts of India in Charles R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825 (London, 1969), 238-245.

³² As quoted in John Thornton, "Perspectives on African Christianity," in Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford, eds., Race, Discourse, and the Origins of the Americas: A New World View (Washington, 1995), 180.

of Catholic orthodoxy.³³ But despite what the priests believed, the Kongoleses were merely drawing **their** deities out of the Christian cosmology and continuing to worship them as they always had. In one of his earliest works, even Thornton acknowledged that "[t]he Christian faith in seventeenth-century Kongo was in all its essentials simply Kongo's own religious system renamed..."³⁴

In the initial stages of conversion, just as the Europeans believed that the Kongoleses were embracing God and the saints, the Kongoleses probably believed that the Europeans were embracing their deities. Anthropologist, Wyatt MacGaffey has quite accurately called this stage of Kongoleses/Portuguese interaction "dialogues of the deaf."³⁵ The world views of Africans and Europeans were so radically different that religious meanings were misinterpreted on both sides. Over the course of several generations, the blending of various aspects of the two traditions eventually

³³ Thornton, "The Development of an African Catholic Church," 148.

³⁴ Thornton, The Kingdom of Kongo, 120.

³⁵ Wyatt MacGaffey, "Dialogues of the deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic coast of Africa," in Stuart Schwartz, ed., Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters Between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era (Cambridge, 1994), 249-267. Similar misunderstandings occurred between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. James Lockhart has called the phenomenon "Double Mistaken Identity." Lockhart, "Some Nahua Concepts in Postconquest Guise," History of European Ideas, 6 (1985), 465-482.

led to the development of a distinctly Africanized form of Christianity that began to be seen as a religious movement independent of traditional Kongolesé cosmology.³⁶ Nonetheless, the **core** elements of Kongolesé cosmology, even for those who were "Christians," remained explanation, prediction, and control. Christian "faith" was, at best, a marginal, parallel system of belief.³⁷

We should emphasize that Europeans also practiced parallel beliefs, especially when the Christian cosmology ceased to be an effective remedy to temporal concerns. When Portuguese Christians exhausted all possibilities of prayer and faith in their attempts to control their environments, they were quick to turn to African diviners and curers. Nevertheless, the core of their belief system remained communion with God. Ultimately, the differences in Christian and African cosmologies boiled down to a conflict over the hierarchy of worship, particularly when addressing temporal concerns beyond human control. Africans worshipped

³⁶ This process is beautifully chronicled in Thornton, The Kongolesé Saint Anthony.

³⁷ We are speaking very generally here, with particular regard for commoners who were most often caught up in the slave trade. There were, of course, a small number of elite Kongolesé and mixed race people who embraced the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church more broadly. But many of them also engaged in traditional Kongolesé practices. As we will see in chapter 10, there is very little evidence that Central African slaves carried Christianity with them to Brazil. I emphasize the Kongolesé core, but acknowledge some degree of fluidity in this spiritual continuum.

multiple deities in an effort to explain, predict, and control their daily environments, while Christians depended upon the mercy of the one "true" God and a finite group of saints to aid them in their daily travails.

African Culture and the "Creolization" School: A Critique

The religious conflicts discussed so far in this chapter were never limited to the African context. They applied equally to the broader diaspora. Enslaved Africans carried their religious beliefs with them wherever they were dispersed across the globe, and their beliefs consistently clashed with those of their captors. There has been little dispute that slaves carried elements of Africa with them to their various destinations, but the depth and extent of African cultural and religious diffusion has persisted as a matter of scholarly dispute.

A number of scholars have shown how African cultural and religious forms "survived" in the African diaspora. The reigning belief is that the pain and cruelty of the Middle Passage and slave life, coupled with the separation from the familiar ethnic cultural milieu, forced slaves to abandon the majority of their African pasts and create an entirely new creolized "slave society."³⁸ But as we will see, some

³⁸ This theory is most clearly articulated in Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective (Boston, 1992).

African beliefs and practices were more than just diluted, culturally detached "survivals."³⁹ As John Thornton has cogently stated, "the fact is that in the eighteenth century African culture was not surviving: It was arriving."⁴⁰ Indeed, the evidence from previous chapters on family, kinship, and Islam, as well as the chapters on religion that follow, suggest that an essential character, or world view, based on the cultural and religious values of specific African ethnic groups was transferred to the Americas.

These findings challenge widely held notions that African slaves were unable to replicate specific African "institutions" in the diaspora, and instead created slave cultures that were "syncretic" or "creolized," consisting of multiple African influences, as well as the influences of the colonial power. According to the arguments of scholars like Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, slaves were able to create institutions only "within the parameters of the

³⁹ The pioneering work on African "survivals" was Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past. The notion of broadly conceived "survivals" or "Africanisms" can also be found in Roger Bastide, African Civilizations in the New World; John W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York, 1979); and Joseph E. Holloway, ed., Africanisms in American Culture. Other scholars, like Herbert S. Klein, African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean (New York, 1986), 163-187, also describe a culturally disconnected, homogenized "African" culture.

⁴⁰ John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1998), 320.

master's monopoly of power...*separate from the master's institutions.*"⁴¹ However, as we will see, there were a number of cases in early colonial Brazil in which the master class not only ceded crucial moments of power to their slaves; they actually adopted the slaves' institutions, especially in the realm of religious beliefs and practices.

The essence of Central African religious belief-- explanation, prediction, and control--persisted in Brazil in almost unadulterated ritual forms. Because African and Portuguese cosmologies were so vastly different in their aims, many Portuguese adopted Central African religious forms in an effort to control the everyday earthly uncertainties that Catholicism could not address. During the long seventeenth century of Central African dominance in the Brazilian slave population, the spiritual terrain was hotly contested in places like Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, with "Angolan" and "Kongolese" religions often winning out over Christianity, even among the Portuguese population. Just as in Kongo, parallel beliefs were not uncommon among both Africans and Portuguese, with Central African beliefs maintaining their dominance in the slave community and Catholicism dominating the beliefs of the Portuguese population.

For Africans, indigenous religious practices became a

⁴¹ Mintz and Price, The Birth of African-American Culture, 39.

way of addressing a variety of social ills, including the institution of slavery. In this way, Central African religion emerged as a counter-hegemonic force that constantly threatened the foundation of Brazilian slave society as early as the sixteenth century. By examining the evolution of African religious beliefs and practices in Brazil across almost two centuries, we will see how "Mina" slaves, as well as "Guineas" and "Mozambiques," joined with their "Angolan" counterparts to challenge their servitude through religious means. When significant creolization did occur among Africans, beginning in the eighteenth century, the process was most salient among Ganguelas and Minas, or Ndembos and Ardas; not Africans and Catholics. The broad cosmological core (explanation, prediction, control) shared by the majority of these African peoples allowed them to forge common understandings and continue challenging their servitude.

Chapter 7

"Not a thing for white men to see": African Divination in the Diaspora

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one of the most common ways that Africans explained, predicted, and controlled the world around them was through divination. At its most basic level, divination involved communication between the world of the living and the world of the spirits. Diviners performed a variety of ritual activities to invoke the ancestral spirits and learn their intentions for those on earth. Mediating between the two worlds, the diviner could predict past and future events, uncover the guilt or innocence of suspected criminals, and determine the cause of illness.

In Africa, the diviner's primary role was to determine the causes of social fissures in society, usually leaving the restoration of balance and harmony to others, particularly village or family elders. The spirit world revealed certain "truths" to the diviner and his clients, but the diviner usually did not pass judgment on the revelation. The interpretation of the revelation was left to the broader community. In this respect, the office of diviner was generally a conservative social phenomenon, reinforcing the public's opinions and broader sense of morality. At the same time, the diviner often acted as a

balance against the power of elders, discerning their attempts to deviate from the collective well-being. Diviners also acted as mediators/translators for societies that were undergoing rapid social and political transformations, bridging the gap between tradition and change. In short, the diviner acted as the fulcrum for a balanced and peaceful society, but his/her findings were never completely sacrosanct, requiring affirmation and interpretation from the larger society.¹

Once Africans became human property and were no longer the masters of their own social and political fates, the African imperatives of divination shifted to accommodate their new condition as slaves in the Western world. On the one hand, social disruption was a common feature of chattel slavery and no doubt provoked an outpouring of appeals by African diviners seeking explanations from the spirit world. The misfortune of enslavement itself begged a spiritual explanation, as did the brutalities, famine, and disease that accompanied the institution. Within the nascent slave communities of the diaspora, Africans utilized diviners in attempts to forge the same types of communal balance that diviners had helped create in their homelands.

On the other hand, the master class often accepted the

¹ René Devisch, "Divination and Oracles," in Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara, ed. John Middleton, volume 1, 493-497.

power of African divination and attempted to co-opt that power as a way of maintaining and affirming white rule. Recognizing the widespread embrace of divination in the slave community, masters often used their African slaves to divine who stole a particular object, who "bewitched" who, or the whereabouts of runaway slaves. Because divination rituals resonated with most slaves, the divinations were almost always accepted as valid within the slave community, even though peoples of African descent were often implicated. In one respect, this reinforced the institution of slavery, aiding the master in determining the "guilt" of those rebelling against the institution. But it was also an indication of the master class embracing the institution of divination as a way of mediating social unrest. African diviners always maintained control of **what** they divined and were ultimately accountable to the slave community. Thus, in some instances, Africans were able to seize control of social/judicial inquiries that directly impacted peoples of African descent.

Central African Divinations in the Diaspora

Central African diviners were particularly adept at seizing control of "criminal" investigations in the slave community, searching for remedies that took into account the interests of both masters and slaves. These investigations usually took the form of ordeals or "trials," in which the

diviner invoked the spirit world to reveal the guilt or innocence of suspected criminals. For instance, in Bahia in 1685, a free Congo man named Simão was accused of murdering fifteen slaves through the use of "witchcraft." The majority of his alleged victims were the slaves of one André Gomes de Medina, a wealthy planter in the parish of Santo Amaro da Pitanga. The only evidence of Simão's guilt was the discovery of pans full of herbs, claws, teeth, and hairs of various animals in his house. In order to find the true identity of the "murderer," André Gomes de Medina ordered that a "trial" be conducted by a Conga diviner named Gracia.

Gracia, who was a slave in the parish of Cotegipe, arrived at the property of André Gomes de Medina and began the divination ritual. She put three large sticks on the ground and set a large pot of water on top of them. Setting a fire underneath the pot, the water soon began boiling. Gracia threw a rock into the pot and "chanted some words in her language."² With the water now at a full boil, through

² In nearly all of the Inquisition cases in which Central Africans are key figures, there are references to the use of African languages in rituals and ceremonies. Usually these references appear as "in his/her language," or "in the language of Angola." Given the large numbers of Africans who attended these divining and healing ceremonies who apparently understood the orations, it appears that a creolized Kimbundu/Kikongo lingua franca developed in the slave communities of Brazil. It is likely that this process of linguistic creolization began on the African coast. As we have already noted, the differences between Kimbundu and Kikongo were only slight. Joseph Miller suggests that Kimbundu supplanted Kikongo at the main slaving port of Luanda only during the seventeenth century and after, as

the interpreters that she brought with her, Gracia ordered each person who was present to put their hand inside the pot and remove the rock, assuring them that if they were innocent they would not be harmed. One by one, whites as well as blacks submerged their hands into the boiling cauldron, with each one walking away without so much as a burn. Finally, when it was Simão's turn, he removed his hand from the boiling water, only to find that his hand and arm were completely ulcerated from the burns. For the gathered multitude, Gracia's divination "confirmed the opinion that [Simão] was a witch (*feiticeiro*)."³

Simão vociferously denied the charges against him. In his defense, he stated that the "powders" that were found in his house were made from the heads of snakes. The powders were used as anti-venom for the bites of other poisonous snakes. Simão claimed that he was taught this remedy by his first master and that many other blacks used these powders for the same effect. Simão also asserted that the witchcraft charges were leveled against him by slaves who were "jealous of his freedom." Simão had recently gained his freedom from the daughter of André Gomes de Medina and

Europeans brought large numbers of Kimbundu-speaking slaves from the interior to the coast. Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen*, 39. Enslavement and the Middle Passage no doubt hastened the search for linguistic common ground.

³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 8464. Also see, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 130-130v.

was now a free manioc farmer (*lavrador de mandioca*).

Simão's case is a clear example of how African divination operated to achieve balance and harmony in the slave community, from the perspective of both slaves and the master. First, just as in Africa, the divination process was utilized to affirm opinions that were already widely held. Even before the "trial," Simão was the primary suspect in the murders of the fifteen slaves. Gracia's divination merely confirmed his "guilt." Second, by finding a free person guilty of the crimes, slaves were assured that one of their slave peers would not be found guilty. Finally, Gracia's ritual affirmed the likely-held belief that Simão's freedom and economic strivings were the result of some other-worldly force, perhaps even "witchcraft."⁴ Simão was keenly aware that there were slaves who were "jealous" of his freedom. From the African perspective, his rapid rise from slavery to economic self-sufficiency was not easily explained. How else could he gain his liberty and become an independent farmer, if not by some strong spiritual power? Certainly Simão was manipulating the spirit world for his own benefit, so why wouldn't he also

⁴ Wealth and prosperity were considered an indicator of religious strength, but overabundance (in the case of a slave community, a relative "overabundance") was very likely believed to be the result of malevolence or "witchcraft." See Peter Geschiere, The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa (Charlottesville, VA, 1997).

seek revenge against the master class?

As for André Gomes de Medina, the man who lost fifteen of his slaves to "witchcraft," he too benefited from Simão's "guilt." He could rest easily with the knowledge that none of his slaves were attempting to undermine his prosperity. Rather, the murders of his bondsmen were the work of a person who was a member of a particularly insidious class of people--free blacks. Throughout the colonial period, free blacks were seen as a threat to the economic and social power of whites, competing with them in business and commerce, as well as stoking the flames of revolt against white rule.⁵ Simão's acts of malice came as little surprise to André Gomes de Medina and probably confirmed pre-existing stereotypes about the "dangers" lurking in the free black community. Thus, in one deft stroke, Gracia's divination ceremony satisfied the "behavioral ideals" of both the African and the Portuguese communities, revealing a sort of "résumé of [the] whole social order."⁶ The outcome of Gracia's ritual reinforced both African religious beliefs (by revealing the malevolent source of Simão's successes) and Portuguese colonial order (by protecting the master's

⁵ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom, 45-46, 51-52, 134-135.

⁶ Henri Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe. Vol. 2: Mental Life, 2nd edition (London, 1927), 571, as quoted in African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, ed. Philip M. Peek (Bloomington, 1991), 69.

source of economic power--his slaves--and prosecuting a known "danger"--a free black).

In spite of this mutually satisfying remedy, Gracia's divination ritual should not be viewed as African capitulation to the colonial order. There clearly was an element of acquiescence in meeting certain Portuguese ideals, but this acquiescence was a pragmatic response to the Brazilian slave setting. As we have already noted, African diviners were mediators during periods of social transformation, and the oppression of chattel slavery in Brazil demanded new divination strategies. Gracia created an ingenious synthesis from the differing Portuguese and Central African socio-cultural imperatives. By finding a mutually satisfying solution for both master and slaves, Gracia was able to re-assert the importance of African divination, even under hostile circumstances. From the African perspective, this ability to adapt to changing social conditions was the hallmark of a good diviner. In the final analysis, Central African divination continued to function in Brazil just as it had in Africa--as a "dynamic reassessment of customs and values in the face of an ever-changing world."⁷

The re-casting of Gracia's divination ceremony to

⁷ Philip M. Peek, "African Divination Systems: Non-Normal Modes of Cognition," in African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing, ed. Philip M. Peek (Bloomington, 1991), 195.

address new social circumstances also should not obscure the fact that the instrument of justice used in this case was distinctly African. In fact, the ceremony conducted by Gracia was quite common across Central Africa during the seventeenth century. At almost exactly the same time that Gracia was performing her ceremony in Bahia, Father Cavazzi described the Central African divination, called *jaji*, in the following manner: "The *feiticeiro* lays a rock in a pan of water... When the water boils, the accused is obliged to remove the rock with his hand. If he is burned, he is judged as guilty; if he does not receive harm, each one of those present acclaims him innocent, without any more inquiry."⁸ By comparing Cavazzi's description with the description of Gracia's ritual in Bahia, we can see quite clearly that the religious/judicial apparatus, known in Central Africa as the oath (*juramento*) of *jaji*, made its way across the Atlantic in a nearly pure form.

Another Central African divination ordeal, similar to the oath of *jaji*, occurred in Bahia on a small island near Ilha de Maré in 1646. In order to find out who stole some *varas*⁹ of cloth on the fazenda of Duarte Roiz Ulhoa, a slave

⁸ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:109. Antônio de Oliveira de Cadornega describes the same ritual in his História Geral das Guerras Angolanas, 3:319-320.

⁹ A *vara* is a unit of measure equal to 1.1 meters. Its closest English equivalent is the yard.

named Gunza¹⁰ prepared a balm, which he mixed in a dish. When he was finished preparing the balm, he rubbed some on the arm of each person who was gathered to witness the ordeal. After the person's arm was anointed, Gunza took a needle and passed it through the arm. Gunza promised that if the person were not the one who stole the cloth, he would not be harmed. Only the guilty party would bleed. After exhausting all of the suspects who were gathered for the ordeal, including a number of whites, Gunza began conducting the ritual on himself, naming potential suspects who were absent from the gathering. Gunza inserted the needle in his arm over and over, saying "in the name of so-and-so...if he stole the cloth then my arm will put forth blood." After sitting through most of the ceremony, our only witness, a 30-year-old carpenter named Miguel Fernandes, became disturbed with the proceedings and left. As he made his departure, he scolded his white peers, telling them that the ceremony "was not a thing for white men to see." While many whites believed in the "supernatural" powers of their African slaves, they were sometimes too squeamish to remain complicit in ceremonies that seemed to be the very workings

¹⁰ The name Gunza comes from the Kimbundu and Kikongo *ngunza*, which means "prophet." Rev. W. Holman Bentley, Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language (London, 1887; reprint, London, 1967), 375.

of the Devil."¹¹

Not all of the divination ceremonies were so offensive to the devout or the faint of heart. Another Central African ritual simply involved the use of a cord and a ball. In 1634, Francisco Dembo (Ndembu), a slave on Itaparica Island in Bahia, was called to the house of Roque Antônio Barbeiro to divine who pilfered a dish. Standing up, Francisco took a cord and put it under his foot. He threaded the cord through a ball, which dropped to his feet. Holding the cord near his face, Francisco ordered each person to pull the ball up. As the suspects pulled the ball, Francisco asked the ball if that person took the dish. If the answer was "no," then the person was able to pull the ball up to Francisco's face. After some time, a slave from a neighboring property entered. Francisco asked the ball if she stole the dish. Unable to move the ball from its position at Francisco's feet, the woman was revealed as the thief, and she immediately confessed to the crime. Like many other Central African "trials" in Brazil, someone from outside the immediate slave community (in this case, a neighboring slave) was ultimately judged to be the guilty party, reinforcing the ritual as a satisfying remedy that

¹¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 10-11.

balanced the interests of both slaves and masters.¹²

Not all Central African divinations operated as "trials" or "ordeals." Some simply functioned as revelations aimed at uncovering the cause of a particular misfortune. Sometimes, these divinations revealed the most intimate and embarrassing details of people's lives. In 1721, Barbara Morais, a white woman in the city of Olinda, had exhausted all pharmaceutical remedies in trying to find a cure for her bed-ridden husband, who had been suffering from a mysterious illness for more than eight years. Determining that her husband must be suffering from *feitigos*, Morais summoned an "Angolan" named Domingos João Pereira to divine the cause of her husband's illness. Domingos began his divination by drawing a cross in the dirt with his finger. On top of the cross, he put a calabash with various objects inside of it. Domingos tapped on the calabash with his finger and cast some blessings on top of it "in the language of Angola." He then emptied several objects from the mouth of the calabash into the palm of his hand. These objects included "some things like roots" and "a silver coin."

Reading the objects that emerged from the calabash,

¹² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 18, Livro 219, ff. 305-313. This same ceremony with the cord and ball was still practiced by the Ndembu and Lunda in the middle of the twentieth century. See Victor Turner, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca, NY, 1975), 337.

Domingos informed the sick man that his ailments were "*feitiços* that were given to you by a woman who you had a relationship with before marrying this one; and the cause that she had for this was because she wanted to marry you, and since you left her and married with another, she made this for you to suffer." Skeptical of Domingos's divination, the man wanted further proof that what Domingos said was true. So Domingos prepared a dance with three little bottles, and "grabbing one, he danced with it and he showed the bottle suspended in the air." Inside of the bottle "appeared a very old black man with a red belt fastened around his stomach and a shepherd's staff on his shoulder, with some roots in one hand and some coins in the other." The roots and the coin were precisely what had spilled out of Domingos's calabash. When the sick man saw them in the hands of the man inside the bottle, he understood that "that *preto* was who gave the *feitiços*, and the roots the material from which they were composed, and the coins the payment that he received for the evil." Domingos then reached for another bottle, and again displaying it suspended in the air, there appeared inside of the bottle the mulatta, "who ordered that the *feitiços* be made for the sick man because he rejected her."¹³

All of the elements of Domingos's divination ritual

¹³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 92, Livro 285, ff. 396-401.

were classically Central African, and more specifically Kongolesse. First, the drawing of the cross in the dirt was probably not the Christian crucifix, but rather, a Kongo cosmogram. Anthropologist, Wyatt MacGaffey has stated that these cosmograms were representative of "God [nzambi mpungu] and man, God and the dead, and the living and the dead. The person taking the oath stands upon the cross, situating himself between life and death, and invokes the judgment of God and the dead upon himself."¹⁴ When Domingos set his calabash over the cross, he was invoking the spirits of the dead to reveal the origins of his client's illness. They did so by spilling out only two objects from the array of objects that Domingos had in his calabash.¹⁵ Domingos then "read" the two objects according to their prescribed meanings, determining that the man was bewitched by his former lover.

The bottles that Domingos "danced" with were also very much a part of Kongo cosmology. Various commentators in the eighteenth century noted that the Kongolesse and their

¹⁴ MacGaffey as quoted in Robert Farris Thompson, Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art & Philosophy (New York, 1984), 108. The cross is to be read as a symbol-with God at the top, the dead at the bottom, and water in between.

¹⁵ Divination by "casting lots" with various symbolic objects was, and continues to be, common throughout Central and Southern Africa. For the most detailed description of these divinations and the symbolic meanings of the objects, see Victor Turner, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual.

descendants in the diaspora used bottles to lure and trap evil spirits.¹⁶ Most of these bottles were hung from trees and were used to protect houses and crops from malevolent spirits, but Domingos used his bottles to reveal the evil spirits that were the source of his client's illness. The two evil spirits, the old, African *feiticeiro* and the mulatta, revealed themselves inside the bottles, proving their melevolence and their "guilt."

Other divinations of Central African origin proliferated in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Brazil.¹⁷ In addition to the "ordeals" and "revelations" already mentioned, Brazilian slaves conducted others, including the ordeal of *Golungo*, which was commonly used "to find out who committed some crime."¹⁸ Central African slaves were also known to divine future occurrences. Johan Nieuhof, a Dutchman who visited Brazil between 1640 and

¹⁶ Thompson, Flash of the Spirit, 142-145.

¹⁷ Several of these divination rituals, along with burial practices, healing rituals, dietary restrictions, and other practices of Angolan slaves, are described in a document written in Rio de Janeiro in 1720. The list of ten "pagan rites of Angola" and an unsigned letter, requesting more priests to help instruct the Angolan slaves in Rio, can be found in ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v., 231, 235-235v.

¹⁸ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v., 235-235v. I have found no detailed description of the ritual as it was practiced in Brazil. Likewise, there is no specific reference to the oath of *Golungo* in Central African sources. *Golungo* is probably a reference to the Angolan town by the same name, located near Ambaca, between the Lucala and Zenza Rivers.

1649, commented that it was common for Africans "to predict when the ships would arrive that had left from Holland for Brazil."¹⁹ These, and other forms of divination, demonstrate that a wide range of Central African beliefs were re-created in Brazil, always maintaining their essential form and meaning, but adjusting to accommodate the imperatives of the colonial slave environment.

Perhaps the most widespread "Angolan" divination ritual was the *quibando*, a ritual that, as it turns out, was not even of African derivation, let alone Angolan.²⁰ What came to be known as the *quibando* in the African-Portuguese diaspora in the late seventeenth century had its origins in Europe, at least as far back as the sixteenth century. In sixteenth-century England, the ritual was carried out in the following manner:

Stick a pair of shears in the rind of a sieve and let two persons set the top of each of their forefingers upon the upper part of the shears holding it with the sieve up from the ground steadily; and ask Peter and

¹⁹ Joan Nieuwhof, Memorável Viagem Marítima e Terrestre ao Brasil (1682), intro. José Honório Rodrigues (São Paulo, 1951), 309.

²⁰ The term *quibando* comes from the kimbundu word *kibandu*, which means sieve. Nei Lopes, Dicionário Banto do Brasil: repertório etimológico de vocábulos Brasileiros originários dos centro, sul, leste e sudoeste africanos (Rio de Janeiro, 1996), 212.

Paul whether A, B, and C hath stolen the thing lost; and at the nomination of the guilty person the sieve will turn around.²¹

The ritual made its way to Portugal by at least the seventeenth century and was one of several forms of divination practiced in the country during the period.²²

The first mention of the *quibando* ritual in Brazil appears in several Inquisitorial confessions made in 1687 in Bahia. In one of these confessions, Sebastião de Prado Pereira, an infantry captain, stated that some time around 1683 he saw a woman named Mariana Pinheiro and one of her young slaves perform the *quibando* divination.²³ Pereira described the ceremony in the following manner:

...holding a scissor, [Maria Pinheiro] attached the points of it on the *quibando* with the hand of the black girl (*negrinha*) on one ring of the scissor and the hand of the woman on the other. And the woman [Maria

²¹ Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in XVIth Century England (New York, 1971), 212-214.

²² Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 118.

²³ The other confession was that of Bernardo Teixeira, a 23-year-old white man, who stated that as a boy in Bahia, he took part in the *quibando* ritual, "which was popular in the said city." ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No.59, Livro 256, ff. 237-239.

Pinheiro] said these words: For S. Pedro and S. Paulo and for the Apostle Santiago, that so-and-so stole this... And the *quibando* gave a turn when they arrived at the name of a person who now he does not remember.²⁴

As one can clearly discern, the *quibando* divination is almost exactly the same as the divination of the scissor and sieve from sixteenth-century England.

The Portuguese were not unaware of the Angolan identity they were imposing on the age-old European ritual. In a 1721 Inquisition case from Recife, it was noted that in Portugal, the *quibando* was called *peneira*.²⁵ Both words mean "sieve." Nevertheless, those in the Portuguese colonial world persisted in calling this divination ritual by its Kimbundu name. From Brazil, all the way to the colony of Goa, in western India, the Portuguese used the Kimbundu signifier to identify what was clearly a European ritual.²⁶ The question is why the ritual took on an African identity in the Portuguese world in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

²⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 235-236.

²⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 91, Livro 284, ff. 535-536v.

²⁶ For a description of the *quibando* ritual in Goa, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 74, Livro 268, ff. 37-48. (November 22, 1701)

The common denominator in all of the *quibando* cases that I examined was that a slave was determined to be the "guilty" party in every instance. Also, unlike other cases of African divination, whites were overwhelmingly likely to be conducting the *quibando* ritual. The Portuguese most likely gave the scissor and sieve divination an African veneer because it fit well with the widely accepted idiom of "dangerous" and "exotic" African divination. Despite its European origins, by the late seventeenth century, many Portuguese Catholics recognized the ritual as fitting into the same category as African divination rituals, all of which were considered "diabolical" or "superstitious." The scissor and sieve ritual was, after all, remarkably similar to many of the Central African "trials" and ordeals we have already described.

By giving the familiar an African identity, the Portuguese colonists benefited in several ways. First, they transformed a European "superstition" into an African one, deflecting attention away from their own lack of Catholic orthodoxy and reinforcing the correlation between Africa and the "diabolical" world. At the same time, by re-naming the ceremony *quibando*, whites gained some modicum of control over the "superstitious" and "diabolical" world that was normally controlled by Africans. Africans probably understood and embraced the meaning of the ritual since it fit nicely with their core understandings of divination.

This enabled the Portuguese to divine "like Africans," at least during this one ceremony. Ultimately, the shift from *peneira* to *quibando* was more than a simple linguistic turn, it was an acknowledgement that Central African forms of divination were stronger and more effective than those of the Portuguese.

Divination Among Slaves From West Africa and the "Mina" Coast

Slaves from other parts of Africa also engaged in divination in the Portuguese colonial world, performing rituals that were comparable to those of slaves from Central Africa. Like Central African slaves, these slaves received paranormal messages from the world of the spirits, which were mediated by the diviner and his clients in order to address temporal concerns. Even though broad understandings of the meanings of divination were shared by almost all Africans, the nature of the ceremonies varied widely among different African ethnic groups. The rituals and symbols used to instigate the divination process and invoke the spirits differed in accordance with very specific historical and cultural resonances. Many of these deeper meanings remain hidden from view, but we should still recognize that divination ceremonies were the products of very specific African cultural backgrounds and were a manifestation of the broader social history of the various peoples.

Specific cultural meanings and divination trends are particularly difficult to discern in the ceremonies of those slaves who were not well represented in the slave populations during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We get isolated snapshots of particular rituals that were carried out in the diaspora, but there is no indication of how deeply-etched these rituals might have become in the slave communities. Nor is there any sense of how long these rituals might have been sustained.

For instance, in 1591, André Buçal, a recently arrived slave from "Guinea,"²⁷ divined using a pan in Bahia. André put the pan on the floor, and standing a short distance away from it, began reciting orations "in his language." The pan began moving furiously along the floor, and Andre touched it in order to feel the force emitted by it. The nature of the force revealed to André that one of Gaspar Pereira's slaves had run away to join "the band of Maré." As a result of André's divination, Gaspar Pereira was able to recover his missing slave.²⁸ In 1693, in Maranhão, a slave named Sebastião Mandingo divined who stole a knife. Sebastião did this by taking some herbs and rubbing them inside a cup of water. He began naming different people as he continued

²⁷ The uncertainty of ethnic background in the term "Guinea" further complicates any attempt to draw out specific cultural meanings in the divination ceremony.

²⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Denúncias, Livro 779, ff. 47v.-48v.

mixing the herbs in the water. When the herbs suddenly turned the water into a thick sauce, he knew he had arrived at the name of the thief.²⁹ Finally, in 1726, on the island of São Tomé, Francisco Benin divined using pieces of calabash and kola nuts, over which he proffered "certain words in the language of his land."³⁰

The introduction of large numbers of "Mina" slaves to Brazil at the beginning of the eighteenth century led to even further variations in the types of divination ceremonies being practiced by Africans. But with the Minas, we have a clearer notion of the deeper symbolic meanings of certain divination ceremonies, since we know that many of them came from the area around the Gulf of Benin. Perhaps the most common form of "Mina" divination involved divining in a pan of water, symbolic of the riverine bodies of water that the souls of many "Mina" slaves crossed as they passed from the world of the living to the world of the ancestors.³¹ It was believed that spirits could be invoked to enter water and proffer divinatory messages. In 1734, Joseph Mina, a slave in the town of Poincepe, outside of Rio de Janeiro, divined by putting a plate of water inside a

²⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 263, Livro 263, f. 278v.

³⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 14089.

³¹ Melville J. Herskovits, Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom, 2 vols. (New York, 1938), 2:240.

circle that he drew on the ground. Looking into the water, Joseph put a small stick in his mouth and asked the plate various questions. At this invocation, a slight voice could be heard, giving Joseph the answers to his queries.³²

Many years later in 1799, José Mina was in jail in Paraíba when he used water to divine his own fate. While still in prison, José took a coin and laid it in a plate of water. After some time passed, José looked into the water and announced that he would not be sent to the jail in Rio de Janeiro, as he had feared. In fact, José predicted that he would be freed in Paraíba on a Wednesday. In the end, everything happened just as José divined.³³

Africans from the Guinea and Mina coasts also were known to divine using snakes. Among certain "Mina" peoples, for instance the Ewe, Fon, and Yoruba, snakes were idolized as gods.³⁴ And in Upper Guinea, it was not unusual for diviners and healers to carry snakes with them to help them divine.³⁵ Across West Africa serpents were believed to be endowed with the power to bring great riches and wealth, or

³² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16753. The small stick used by Joseph was also common in Dahomean voodoo. See Herskovits, Dahomey, 2:263-288.

³³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16995.

³⁴ For a description of snake worshipers on the "Mina" coast, see Herskovits, Dahomey, 2:245-255.

³⁵ For divination with snakes to bring "goods and riches" on the Guinea coast near Cacheu, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 2079.

alternatively, terrible misfortunes. Some of these beliefs apparently carried over to Brazil. In 1725, a slave named Francisco carried a calabash with a snake in it through the streets of Olinda, Pernambuco. When called upon to divine, Francisco removed the snake from the calabash and coiled him on top of his head. The snake then "spoke" in Francisco's ear, telling him the information that was to be divined. When the divination was complete, Francisco put the snake back in the calabash and collected money from his clients.³⁶

Whether divinations were Central African, Mina, Guinea, or Mandinga, we still can not ignore the fact that many whites manipulated African divination rituals to suit their own needs. As we have shown, whites used African diviners to find thieves, suspected murderers, and runaway slaves. Despite the apparent contradiction in African slaves divining the "guilt" of other people of African descent, we must recognize the complexity of these exchanges. On many occasions, diviners found blacks from outside the immediate slave community guilty of wrongdoing, thereby meeting the collective "communal" expectations of both slaves and masters. In other instances, the transaction was strictly a financial one, with the divination being exchanged for

³⁶ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 14577. For a description of the use of snakes in divining and healing in nineteenth-century Brazilian slave communities, see Roger Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, trans. Helen Sebba (Baltimore, 1978), 132-134.

cash, cattle, or other valuable goods. In this way, some slaves and free Africans probably were able to earn some degree of financial independence for themselves, or at the very least, earn a favored place with their masters because of the financial rewards that they brought.³⁷ In all of these cases, Africans used the widespread recognition of their divination powers to seize a moment of power from their masters, using the opportunity to carve financial or judicial spaces for themselves in a community that was otherwise hostile to acknowledging the individual autonomy of Africans.

African Creolization in Africa and the Diaspora

Even though various African ethnic groups had their distinctive forms of divination based on very specific cultural resonances--"ordeals" in Central Africa, water ceremonies along the "Mina" coast, etc.--there were also a number of rituals that were similar to one another, transcending ethnic groups and wide geographic spaces in Africa. These widely-practiced rituals probably facilitated the process of creolization among Africans from various ethnic backgrounds, leading to the creation of distinctly "African" forms of slave culture. One example of these "shared" rituals is the Central African ordeal of *jaji*,

³⁷ See Chapter 8 for a fuller explication of this argument.

which was described by Cavazzi in seventeenth-century Central Africa and replicated in seventeenth-century Bahia. It seems that *jaji*, or the ordeal of the hand in boiling water, was also prevalent in Dahomey during its early history. According to anthropologist Melville Herskovits, this ritual was called *amízoka* in Dahomey. Unlike in Central Africa, the object that was to be pulled from the boiling water was not a rock. Rather, it was a "seed" that was used in playing a game called *adjí*, a game similar to the English game of draughts, or checkers. With the exception of this one difference, the divination of *jaji/amízoka* appears to have been the same.³⁸

Clearly, the use of varying implements of divination was culturally important, but the broad contours of the ceremony were remarkably similar across a vast geographic area in Africa. Although I can find no direct evidence that the ordeal of *jaji/amízoka* spread from one area of Africa to another, it seems more than coincidence that the two ceremonies would be practiced in almost exactly the same fashion in both Central Africa and Dahomey. It also seems more than coincidental that the primary difference in the Central African and Mina rituals--the use of the *adjí*--

³⁸ Herskovits, *Dahomey*, 2:18. It must be noted that there is no way of determining exactly when the *amízoka* ceremony began being practiced in Dahomey. Herskovits's descriptions are based on oral histories taken in the early 1930s.

sounds strikingly similar to the name of the Central African ritual--*jaji*. Might there have been a process of cultural exchange in Africa that preceded or coincided with the rise of the Atlantic slave trade, one in which *jaji* and *adjí* became conflated? This is a question that is better left for Africanists to answer. Still, it is clear that by the eighteenth century "Mina" slaves and Central African slaves in Brazil probably shared broad core beliefs about the meanings and significance of divination. And in some cases, these divination rituals were almost carbon copies of one another.³⁹

Another category of "shared" divination beliefs among Africans that likely made its way across the diaspora was augury, or divination through omens. These beliefs were extraordinarily diverse in nature. In Central Africa, Father Cavazzi noted that bad omens included the barking of dogs, the singing of birds at night, the crow of a rooster outside of the normal hour, and the flight of crows overhead. A bee flying around somebody indicated the imminent arrival of strangers. And the list goes on. In Father Cavazzi's view, "any little occurrence is motive for those unfortunate souls to believe in a thousand strange

³⁹ In addition to "shared" ideas regarding certain ordeals, the reader should also note that the symbolic meanings of water were similar among Central Africans and Minas, with both groups seeing water as a barrier between the living and dead. Thus, Mina water divinations probably also resonated with Central Africans.

follies and to fall on superstitions."⁴⁰ Among the Ewe speaking peoples of the "Mina" coast, many of these "signs" from the natural world operated in the same way that they did in Central Africa. Just as in Central Africa, the crow of the rooster in the middle of the night was a bad omen. The gathering of crows indicated the onset of war. And sneezing was a warning that the inner spirit might be preparing to leave the body, opening the way for malevolent spirits to take over and bring illness.⁴¹

The most important lesson to be learned in examining the "shared" divination rituals and beliefs of various African peoples is that many Africans, despite being separated by thousands of miles on the African continent, shared a single religious core. Though the means of divination sometimes varied, the ends were consistently the same--the restoration of temporal balance through spiritual intervention. When Africans were enslaved and brought together in the diaspora, they encountered other Africans who spoke different languages and who came from varying cultural and social traditions, but whose core religious beliefs were remarkably similar to their own. Language and other social structures were sometimes obstacles in the

⁴⁰ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:116.

⁴¹ A.B. Ellis, The Ewe Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa: Their Religion, Manners, Customs, Laws, Languages, &c. (London, 1890; reprint, New York, 1970), 95-96.

early creation of a cohesive slave community, but religion served as a common idiom for a variety of African peoples, allowing them to communicate across the other boundaries. Where possible, African slaves almost always gravitated toward those of their own ethnic group, but we should recognize that African spiritual affinities facilitated a process of creolization among various African ethnic groups. The essential "African" religious beliefs that emerged from this creolization stood as a direct challenge to Portuguese religious and cultural hegemony.

The process of African creolization mostly took place within the slave community. If African slaves used familiar rituals in the presence of the Portuguese, then they certainly were guided by these ceremonies in constructing their interior lives. Unfortunately, our lens on the interior practices of Africans is limited by the scarcity of sources. Most Africans did not write, and Portuguese commentators simply did not have access to the most intimate affairs of Africans. Nonetheless, there are several instances where Portuguese stumbled upon gatherings of Africans conducting their rituals. From these glimpses, it is clear that Africans and their immediate descendants utilized the talents of diviners as a matter of course.

In Bahia, in 1646, João Luis, a 30-year-old white soldier, confessed that he witnessed his neighbor, Domingos Umbáta (Mbata), conducting various divination rituals for

other Africans during the night. João claimed that Domingos threw some leaves and manioc flour into a bowl of water. He then made a cross and a circle around the bowl and threw some powders on top of it. Finally, he mixed it all up with a knife, and the contents of the bowl began boiling as if they were on fire, despite the fact that there were neither "hot coals nor fire." According to João, Domingos looked into the bowl and spoke with the other Africans "in his language...such that he [João Luis] could not understand him."⁴²

Other interior African practices were revealed by curious "spies," both whites and free people of color. In 1634, Mateus de Matos, a free mulatto who lived in Bahia, was one of several people who denounced Francisco Dembo (Ndembu). Mateus stated that one night he and a friend were trying to spy on the activities of Francisco as he was divining for other Africans on the engenho of Francisco de Abreu. When Mateus and his friend arrived at the door of the house where Francisco was divining, they heard Francisco announce their presence, even though they never entered the house. Mateus attributed Francisco's knowledge to the "art of the devil," because it was dark and there was no way Francisco could see them hiding outside.

Similarly, on another night, a 22-year-old white man

⁴² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 13-14.

named Francisco Ribeiro sneaked up to the house where Francisco Dembo was divining. Ribeiro claimed that as he was hiding near the house, he heard a hoarse voice that sounded as if it were coming from the roof. The voice said, "Look there Francisco Ribeiro, you will pay us for what you bring. I wanted to rest and the whites come to watch." Ribeiro immediately blessed himself and retired to a safer spot, further away from the house of divination. Later, he saw Francisco Dembo and "other negros" leave the house.⁴³

The nighttime divinations of Domingos Mbata and Francisco Dembo for "other negros" demonstrate the depth and resilience of African religious practices in Brazil. Even after toiling all day for their masters, rather than sleeping or trying to alleviate their physical exhaustion, African slaves passed their leisure time engaging the spirit world with their fellow slaves. These gatherings were always viewed with suspicion and trepidation by the master class. Not only were masters fearful of the "diabolical" rituals that their slaves might be practicing, but they worried that these gatherings were the precursors for rebellion. Given the acknowledged strength of the African spiritual world, it is difficult to discern which they feared more.

⁴³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 18, Livro 219, ff. 305-313.

African Divination and Slave Resistance

No matter how the functions and outcomes of many African divination ceremonies were expanded to accommodate the needs and expectations of the master class, we must remember that Africans always maintained complete control of the divination process, whether within their own communities, or in the broader colonial world. Sometimes the outcomes of African divinations did not affirm the expectations of white clients, working instead in the favor of the slaves. For instance, in 1728, many slaves were dying on the property of Domingos Alves da Costa in Minas Gerais. These numerous deaths were believed to be the work of a witch, who was infecting the other slaves on the property. In order to determine who the witch was, a slave named Joseph Mina was called to divine. Joseph arrived one evening at the house of Domingos Alves da Costa and told him that he would make his investigation on the following day. Anxious to discover the identity of the witch, Domingos Alves da Costa woke Joseph at the crack of dawn so that he could begin his divination. Joseph requested a candle and a plate of water, both of which he laid on the floor. Later, he put a metal cross and a ring into the water, where they laid for some time. Then, he took a small calabash and took it to his mouth, speaking to it three times in his own language. After speaking with the calabash, he laid it on the floor next to the plate of water and covered it with his

hat. With all of the implements in place, Joseph looked at the plate of water and then removed his hat from the top of the calabash. The calabash remained still. Joseph again stared into the plate of water and again removed his hat from the top of the calabash. And again nothing happened. Finally, after looking into the plate of water for a third time, Joseph uncovered the calabash, and it gave a half turn without anybody touching it.

Once the calabash made its turn, Joseph Mina told Domingos Alves da Costa that he did not have a witch in his house. Furthermore, Joseph told him that he should order the release of the four slaves that he had jailed as suspects in the crimes, and that he should order his other slaves back to work. According to Domingos Alves da Costa, Joseph had no way of knowing that he had incarcerated four suspects. Domingos had his other 35-40 slaves locked up in a barn so that they could not speak with Joseph. Based on Joseph's revelations, Domingos was convinced that Joseph was an agent of the Devil and denounced him to the Inquisition. Whether he obeyed Joseph's request to free the suspected witches remains unclear.⁴⁴

While some African diviners made revelations in favor of their enslaved brethren, others took advantage of their master's respect for their divining powers, manipulating the

⁴⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15484.

master's ignorance of the rituals to their own advantage. For example, in Bahia, in 1687, two sisters, Mariana de Mendonça and Julia de Carvalho, had an object of great value stolen from their house. In order to try to recover the item, they brought in a slave diviner from a neighboring property. The women told the slave that they would pay him very well "if he made the stolen thing appear." The unnamed slave scratched some wood shavings from the door of the house and from the stairs. After taking the scratchings, the slave requested some money (two patacas) from the women so that he could make the mixtures needed to divine. The women were uncertain exactly what the slave was requesting of them since they could not understand "the *boçais* words of the said negro."⁴⁵ But they nonetheless acquiesced and gave the slave his two patacas. After receiving his money, the slave left the house and was never heard from again.⁴⁶

In still other instances, African diviners delivered bad news to their masters, informing them that they or their loved ones were the "guilty" party in a criminal act. In 1618, Antônio, a "Guinea" slave in Bahia, looked into a bowl of water in order to divine who had stolen some money and a silver cross. While it is not clear exactly where in Africa

⁴⁵ The term *boçal*, plural *boçais*, was used to refer to slaves who were newly arrived from Africa. It's literal meaning is "rude, stupid, or loutish."

⁴⁶ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 237-239.

Antônio was from, many Africans believed that a body of water separated the worlds of the living and the dead. Diviners could invoke the spirits to appear by peering into water and uttering certain orations. Antônio determined that the youngest son of his master had stolen the money and the cross. He also revealed that the boy hid the cross in a certain box. When the box was opened, the cross was there, just as Antônio had predicted.⁴⁷

That African diviners sometimes implicated the master class in their ceremonies demonstrates quite clearly that the majority of these rituals did not simply become another tool of the white power structure. On the contrary, white adoption of African forms of divination was an important concession of juridical power. On one level, just by adopting the Central African forms of divination whites diminished the power of their own judicial structures. Some whites obviously found the African judgments more convincing or more efficacious than pursuing potential suspects through the colonial legal system, which was a relatively weak institution in Brazil, especially in rural agricultural areas where there were large numbers of slaves.⁴⁸ As long

⁴⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Livro 784, ff. 113-114.

⁴⁸ Stuart Schwartz has noted that colonial justice in Brazil was constantly threatened by "an unruly colonial society, great power in the hands of individuals and families, and broad sectors of the population unable or unwilling to comply with the social norms." In addition, he has written that the law applied to slaves "more as an

as Africans were finding other Africans "guilty" in these judgment ceremonies, the rituals could be viewed simply as African forms of justice, "separate from the master's institutions." But as soon as whites accepted the "guilt" of their own relatives and friends, the power structure was turned completely upside down, turning divination into a potent form of resistance, as whites became the objects of African institutional control.⁴⁹ Even though these cases may have been rare, and though whites could always resort to rejecting African religious forms as the work of the Devil, the cases demonstrate the extent to which religious and temporal power were contested in Brazil.

Summary and Conclusion

African forms of divination were recreated in the Portuguese world in a variety of forms. Very specific rituals that resonated with particular African ethnic groups were replicated, particularly in Brazil. Central Africans--Kongos, Ndembus, and Mbatas--brought various divination

object lesson than as the application of justice." Schwartz, Sovereignty and Society in Colonial Brazil: The High Court of Bahia and its Judges, 1609-1751 (Berkeley, 1973), 246-247.

⁴⁹ Such cases challenge the assertions of scholars like Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, who argue that the institutions of slaves took "shape within the parameters of the master's monopoly of power, but separate from the master's institutions." Mintz and Price, The Birth of African-American Culture, 39.

rituals with them from their homelands during the seventeenth century. Though other ethnic groups made contributions to the field of divination, it was not until the eighteenth century that Central African dominance was contested. Beginning around the last decade of the seventeenth century, so-called Mina slaves, mostly from the Slave Coast of present-day Togo and Benin, brought new forms of divination to Brazil, particularly to Bahia and Minas Gerais. While there were differences in the symbolism used in Mina divinations, many of the rituals were still remarkably similar to those of Central African slaves, probably facilitating the process of creolization in the Americas.

The institution of divination changed very little from Africa to the Americas, but the condition of slavery did transform the imperatives of many divination rituals. As we have shown, divination rituals within the slave community probably remained similar to those that were practiced in Africa. But where whites attempted to co-opt the powers of African divination, diviners were often forced to adapt ceremonies to the slave culture, balancing the communal needs of masters and slaves. This adaptation should not be viewed as a fundamental transformation forced by the white colonial power structure. Rather, it was an adjustment that was in keeping with African traditions. African divination was constantly changing in accordance with the ebbs and

flows of temporal conditions. The acclimation to American slavery was made in much the same way that acclimations were made for wars, droughts, and famines that periodically occurred in African societies. In all cases, the driving force behind divination was the restoration of communal balance and harmony. In Brazil, African diviners almost always factored slave interests into this communal equation, often finding "outsiders" guilty of various crimes. By protecting their peers in their immediate slave communities, African diviners seized a modicum of religious and juridical power from their masters.

Finally, there were cases of African divination in which slaves seized outright control of the divination process and its outcome. Some slaves took economic advantage of their masters by accepting payment without performing the divination. Others divined against the master's expectations, finding slave suspects innocent of the crimes which they were accused. And still other African diviners determined that the masters themselves were to blame for particular crimes. In all of these cases, the master class ceded judicial power to their slaves and provided the space for slaves to resist their condition.

Indeed, in every instance that whites consulted African slaves to divine for them, Africans were able to transform religious power into resistance to their enslavement. Some diviners were able to seize more temporal power than others,

but the very act of consulting Africans was an admission of African spiritual potency, resulting in small cracks in colonial power and the slave regime. In the next chapter, we will discuss yet other ways in which Africans used their divination and religious powers to address their condition, particularly in the realms of healing and medicine.

Chapter 8

Calundús, Curing, and Medicine in the Colonial World

Throughout Central Africa, illness, misfortune, and physical weakness were rarely understood to be naturally occurring circumstances. Instead, physical decline and death most often were believed to be caused by malevolent spiritual forces. These forces could come from the world of the living or the world of the dead, and were indicative of some breach between the individual and his community, or the individual and his ancestors. In order to counteract these malignant spirits and restore the balance and harmony that were integral to individual well-being, Africans consulted a variety of diviner/healers, who determined the cause of the malady and prescribed the appropriate remedy.

In Central Africa, one of the most common forms of "medicinal" intervention was human possession. Unlike the divination practices described in the previous chapter, human possession was a more direct and more spectacular form of divination. Instead of the diviner acting as a mediator for public rituals that were interpreted by both the diviner and his clients, the diviner literally personified a spirit from the other world, giving the spirit human form and allowing the client to converse directly with the other world. Once the spirit entered the body of the diviner/medium, even the medium's voice was transformed into

that of the spirit. The spirit then could be questioned and engaged in conversation, with the medium's body merely serving as the vessel for communication. In this way, clients could learn not only the sources of their discontent, but the remedies needed to correct them.

Luca da Caltanissetta, an Italian priest who traveled throughout Central Africa at the end of the seventeenth century, described the process of human possession in some detail. Caltanissetta noted that when the Kongolese wanted to know the cause of "death or sickness or a lost item," they went to the *nganga ngombo* (spirit medium). The onlookers circled around the *nganga ngombo*, singing and praying "for the Devil to enter the head of that priest," since it was believed that spirits entered their hosts through their heads.¹ Once the spirit took possession of the diviner, the onlookers began asking questions about who poisoned whom, or how someone died, or the location of a lost object. The spirit responded to their queries, reciting "a thousand lies through the mouth of that witch and if their desire is to have a sickness treated, he also

¹ Similar descriptions can be found for Brazil. A 1694 Inquisition case from Bahia describes a free black named João who called "his children who came to his head to speak to him to make the cures that he wanted." ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 85, Livro 278, ff. 132-149.

gives them the remedy for it."²

Father Cavazzi described the *ngombos* of Kongo in much the same way that Father Caltanissetta did, observing that "it is the custom of the devil to enter into him...turning him into a tireless speaker and saying through his mouth extraordinary things in diverse languages." Cavazzi added that "in order to augment the reputation of his excellency, he frequently walks turned upside down, with his hands on the ground and his feet in the air, making, in the manner of prestidigitators, extravagant things and great obscenities."³ Cavazzi witnessed similar forms of human possession among the peoples of Angola, whose *xinguila* was a "diviner possessed by a spirit that speaks through his mouth."⁴ In short, from Kongo to Angola, spirit mediumship functioned in much the same fashion, with clients directly contacting the spirit world to learn the roots of their

² Caltanissetta as quoted in Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 243.

³ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:93. Though the term "*ngombo*" never appears in any of the documents that I examined for colonial Brazil, there is evidence which suggests that the Kongolese *ngombo* continued to ply his wares in the diaspora. For instance, in the early 1780s, a free black in Rio de Janeiro was accused of various acts of "witchcraft," including human possession. In one of the denunciations, the free black is described as walking through the streets "with his head toward the ground and his feet in the air, jumping and running about and speaking in the language of his land." ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3641.

⁴ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:204.

problems.

The transfer of Central African forms of spirit mediumship to Brazil was frequent and sustained during the colonial period. The first clear reference to African spirit mediums occurs in Bahia in 1618, when a denunciation was made describing the "negros from Guiné" who "call[ed] the dead to hear them." These slaves were alleged to have used animal blood to help invoke the spirits. They also played musical instruments, sang, ate, and drank "with much excess."⁵ Central African forms of human possession remained a common feature of Brazilian slave life even past the end of our study in 1770, but there was a dramatic increase in the documentation of cases of human possession between 1685 and 1740. During this period, one can find dozens of references to human possession rituals in Inquisition cases, letters from missionaries, and even in popular poetry and literature. It is during this period that we will concentrate our examination of human possession in Brazil.

Central African Forms of Human Possession: Calundús

Divination ceremonies that involved human possession were referred to in Brazil by the corrupted Kimbundu word,

⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Livro 784, ff. 81-82v. Also see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Livro 784, ff. 65-66v. Although the ethnic description of these slaves is "Guiné," their ceremonies appear to be Central African in origin.

calundú. In Angola, "*quilundo*" was a generic name for any spirit that possessed the living.⁶ These spirits of deceased ancestors possessed the living for a variety of reasons, but usually as punishment for a lack of proper veneration and respect. The punishment was believed to manifest itself in any number of illnesses that could debilitate and even kill the person who was possessed, eating away at his soul until he was dead. Because the term *quilundo* had a universal meaning, describing **any** spirit who possessed the living, it probably became a widely recognized term for human possession across all of Central Africa. Certainly this generic quality made it a recognizable term for Central Africans in Brazil, as *calundú* quickly became the shared idiom of human possession in the slave and free black communities.

Once *calundú* took root in Brazil, its African meaning was broadened somewhat. Not only did *calundú* describe the actual spirits that possessed the ill person, but it became the preferred way of describing the ceremonies and dances that preceded the human possession and divination. Despite

⁶ Cavazzi, *Descrição Histórica*, 1:209. These Central African possession rituals also occurred in other parts of the African diaspora. In St. Domingue, they were known as *calenda* and were widely practiced among that island's slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, trans. Hugo Charteris (New York, 1972), 32-35; Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, 1990), 40-41.

these cosmetic changes, Brazilian *calundú* ceremonies were scripted in much the same manner as possession rituals in Central Africa, with the medium invoking the spirit to enter his body, followed by a direct conversation between the spirit and the client. Contrary to the claims of some historians, the *calundú* was not a syncretic practice in Brazil.⁷ As we will see, very specific ceremonies and implements of divination were transported from Central Africa to Brazil.

The vast majority of *calundú* ceremonies were conducted in order to determine the cause of illness. As we have already noted in chapter four, African slaves suffered tremendous losses to disease, malnutrition, and overwork in Brazil. Since most Central Africans did not believe in any "natural" causes of physical deterioration outside of old age, these slaves often turned to spirit mediums to learn the origin of their maladies. In the first part of the seventeenth century, it appears that most of these

⁷ See Laura de Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 263-269. Instead of recognizing *calundú* as a Kimbundu word describing a very particular type of spirit possession, Mello e Souza sees *calundú* as a broad category of possession ritual, into which she places some ceremonies that "seem to be *calundú*." There is no attempt on her part to unravel the specific African backgrounds of particular ceremonies. Mello e Souza also claims that *calundús* "thrived in Minas [Gerais] more than in any other point in the colony in the 18th century," but of the dozen Inquisition cases that I examined for the eighteenth century, only two were from Minas Gerais. Nine came from Bahia.

possession ceremonies were confined to the black community. In a 1618 denunciation, it was noted that witchcraft and human possession "serve[d] all of the Guiné slaves in Bahia."⁸ There is no mention of whites taking part in these earliest possession rituals.

Over time, whites, too, began to adopt Central African forms of curing, seeking out *calundeiros* (practitioners of *calundú*) to heal their illnesses. The process of white acknowledgement of the power of African cures was a gradual one. At first, whites used Central African diviner/curers only to cure their slaves. In the 1630s, Francisco Dembo cured a number of "sick negros" in Bahia, apparently only on Wednesdays. During these meetings, "the souls of the little children...from his land" would possess him and give remedies to the gathered slaves. Many of these slaves and free Africans went to Francisco on their own accord. Whether they paid him is unclear. But other slaves were taken to Francisco by their masters, who paid him for his services. For example, Cosme da Costa paid Francisco six *patacas* to cure his slave Juliana, who "they said was sick from poison."⁹ The practice of whites using African healers to cure other blacks apparently became widespread. In the 1660s, even the Benedictine monastery at Olinda paid "negro

⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Livro 784, ff. 81-81v.

⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 18, Livro 219, ff. 305-313.

curers" to heal their ailing slaves.¹⁰

Whites sought out African curers to heal their sick slaves, perhaps rationalizing that African "witchcraft" would respond only to African cures. In the late 1730s, several slave masters in Bahia took their ailing slaves to a Carmelite priest named Luís da Nazaret. The slave masters hoped that Father Luís would be able to exorcise the demons that were making their slaves ill. Father Luís examined the slaves and determined that they were infected with *calundús*. Instead of trying to cure the slaves in the manner prescribed by the Church, Father Luís ordered the masters to take their slaves to African *calundeiros*. He admitted that "exorcisms did not remove that cast of *feitiços* because they were a diabolical thing," and that "only the negros were able to remedy" the *calundús*.¹¹

This admission by a Catholic priest was as startling as it was revealing. Not only was an official of the Church acknowledging the power of African spirits, but he conceded that the Church's most powerful weapon against witchcraft--exorcism--was impotent against the strength and power of "diabolical" African spirits. As this reputation for African spiritual strength grew, even some whites became

¹⁰ ADB/UM, CSB 138, ff. 49, 87. Between 1660 and 1666, the monastery paid 144\$120 for "medicines and negro curers."

¹¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3723. Also see the discussion of Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 263-264.

impatient with the ineffectiveness of exorcisms, as well as with the bleedings and purgings that were the common medicinal remedies for most ailments in the Western world. Looking for stronger remedies, whites also began to tap the strength of African healing powers, especially *calundús*.

Knowledge of Angolan *calundús* was widespread among the Portuguese in Brazil by the end of the seventeenth century, provoking negative commentary from a variety of observers. Even poets were compelled to comment on the "satanic" rituals of the Angolans. Gregório de Mattos, perhaps the most famous poet of colonial Brazil, wrote the following verse describing the white adherents to *calundú*:

All these quilombos,
With peerless masters,
Teaching by night
Calundus and fetishism

Thousands of women
Attend them faithfully.
So does many a bearded man [a Portuguese]
Who thinks himself a new Narcissus.

This much I know: in these dances
Satan's an active partner.
Only the jovial master

Can teach such ecstasy.¹²

Despite the occasional acknowledgement of African spiritual powers by Catholic clergymen, most priests viewed the white embrace of *calundú* with a great deal of scorn. In 1685, the Bahian priest, Father Domingos das Chagas, wrote to the Holy Office stating that "many white persons cure themselves with [*calundús*] with such little unease of conscience as if they worked a very moral thing..."¹³ In January 1715, Father Antônio Pires wrote from Bahia complaining about the proliferation of "Lundus."¹⁴ Seven months later, Father João Calmon noted that the Lisbon Tribunal was "very distant from this Bahia, where the witchcraft and merriment that the negros make, which they call Lundus or Calundus, are scandalous and superstitious, without it being easy to avoid them, since even many whites can be found in them..."¹⁵ And finally, in 1720, an anonymous report from Rio de Janeiro complained about "various Ambunda [Mbundu] cures, which are not effective

¹² From Mattos' Satirica, as quoted in Roger Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 134-135.

¹³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 130-130v.

¹⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 82, Livro 275, ff. 421-422.

¹⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 276, ff. 202. Calmon made a similar complaint the following year in 1716.

except by art of magic, to which the whites give great credit, [and] they consult the negros..."¹⁶ In the view of many Catholic priests, the "great credit" that whites gave to Central African *calundeiros* was an indication that some whites were not only conceding medical superiority to Africans, but they were also acknowledging the religious strength of their African slaves.

Perhaps the most famous description of *calundú* comes from the travel narrative of a pious "pilgrim" on his way from Bahia to Minas Gerais at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The "pilgrim" was sleeping one night on the property of a certain slave master when he was awakened by what he described as "a horrendous clamor...that seemed to be the confusion of hell." The next morning the "pilgrim" lodged a complaint with the master, who assured him that he would order his slaves not to perform their *calundús* that evening. The "pilgrim" asked the master, "What are *calundús*? And the master answered that "they are entertainment or divinations that the slaves are accustomed to making in their lands...for learning various things, like from where illnesses arise; and for divining some lost things; and also for having luck in their hunts and agriculture; and for many other things." The "pilgrim,"

¹⁶ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v. (Two copies of document in same Livro.)

shocked at this revelation, reprimanded the master for consenting to his slaves' performance of such "superstitious" rituals. The "pilgrim" also accused the master of having mortally sinned by breaking the First Commandment.

Wanting to set himself right with the Church, the master called for his slaves to gather and meet with the pilgrim. The pilgrim immediately challenged the Master of the Calundús (*Mestre dos Calundús*). The pilgrim describes the following exchange:

I asked the Master of the Calundús: Tell me, son, (better to call him [son] than father of evil) what are Calundús? He said to me with great embarrassment and shame that they were used in his lands when having parties, recreation, and divination. You don't know, (I said to him) what this word "Calundús" means in Portuguese? The slave told me that he did not. Then I want you to explain, (I said to him) the etymology of the name, what it signifies. Explained in Portuguese and Latin it is the following: that it hides the two: *Calo duo*. You know who these two are that are hidden? It is only you all and the devil. The devil hides and you all hide the great sin that you make by the pact that you have made with the devil; and you all are teaching it to others and making them sin in order to

carry them to hell when they die.¹⁷

Having sufficiently frightened the master and his slaves, the pilgrim repeated the Catholic orations and litanies with his new converts. He also ordered the master to burn all of the musical instruments (*canzás*, *tabaques*, *tamborines*, *castanets*, and so on) used in the *calundús* so that there could be a full "restoration" of their collective souls.

Brazilian *calundú* ceremonies varied somewhat from curer to curer, but the broad contours were the same for all practitioners. And despite the fact that some of the cures were made for whites, all of the ceremonies remained distinctly Central African in form and philosophy. For instance, on August 12, 1701, Felícia Pires, a 40-year-old white woman from Rio Real, Bahia, appeared before an official of the Inquisition to confess her sins. Felícia declared that she had been stricken with blindness for a number of years, when one day, her husband, Mateus Nunes, told her that he knew of a man named Pedro de Sequeira who possessed a slave who could restore her vision. Felícia sought out Pedro de Sequeira, who told her that she would have to give a cow for the cure that his slave Branca would perform for her. Felícia agreed to these terms, and a time was scheduled for her cure.

¹⁷ Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:123-126.

On the appointed night, Felícia was accompanied by a young mulatta, who guided her by the hand to the house of Pedro de Sequeira. When they arrived at the house, they were led to a smaller auxiliary house on the same property, where they were greeted by a large group of slaves, as well as by Pedro de Sequeira. Some of the gathered slaves began playing instruments--*canzás*, *tabaques*, *engomas*--while Branca danced and sang in "the language of Angola." She wore only a white loincloth, and on her torso were stripes of white clay that she called "pemba." After a great deal of dancing and singing, Branca gave a great leap and suddenly fell to the ground as if she were asleep. Soon, she rose, and in a voice that the others said was that of *nganga*, called for the spirit of her deceased eldest son. Branca claimed that the spirit would not appear to her because he was "ashamed" by the great number of people who were witnessing the invocation. In order to sate the spirit's hunger and earn his respect, a table had been arranged with food and drink, including one drink called "aluá" (beer). Apparently pleased with the offerings, the spirit finally appeared and offered an herbal remedy for Felícia's blindness, a remedy that ultimately did nothing to alleviate her lack of sight.¹⁸

Though the broad outline of this case may be clear, it

¹⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 81, Livro 274, ff. 239-248.

might be helpful if we provide a little background and explanation for some parts of the ceremony. Felícia Pires consulted Branca in the hopes that Branca could remove the *calundús* that were causing her blindness. When Felícia entered the room, she heard the musical instruments of spiritual invocation--*canzás* (scrapers), *tabaques* (little drums), and *engomas* (larger cylindrical, conical drums)--all instruments of Central African origin. As Branca danced, the music, her gyrations, and her Kimbundu orations were all designed to invoke the spirits of her children to enter her body. The white clay, or *mpemba*, that Branca anointed herself with was to make her more accessible to the spirit world. It was believed that the spirits of the dead went to *mpemba*, or the underground world of the white clay, when they left their coffins.¹⁹ White clay came to be understood as a symbol of the "good" dead and was used widely in Central Africa as a protective balm against malevolence.

When the spirit finally entered Branca's body, she fell to the floor in a comatose state. As she recovered, she was no longer Branca, but took on the identity and the voice of her deceased son. Hearing the altered voice and speech pattern of Branca, the other Africans immediately knew that she had been possessed, or become the *nganga*. The *nganga*

¹⁹ Anita Jacobson-Widding, Red-White-Black as Mode of Thought: A Study of Triadic Classification of Colours in the Ritual Symbolism and Cognitive Thought of the Peoples of the Lower Congo (Uppsala, 1979), 50.

was a spirit medium who could communicate with those in the other world. In Branca's case, the *nganga* (Branca) was possessed by Branca's deceased son. In order to facilitate the ceremony, offerings of food and drink were made to the spirit, who through Branca's body, ate and drank the offerings, including the *ualuá*, a Kimbundu word for a fermented beverage similar to beer. Food and drink were a common way of placating angry or uncooperative spirits. Branca's son ultimately offered a remedy for Felicia's blindness, a remedy of herbs and roots that Branca later retrieved from the woods.

The *calundú* ritual described by Felícia Pires is remarkably similar to descriptions of Imbangala divination ceremonies from seventeenth-century Angola. In describing the *xinguilas* of Angola, Father Cavazzi explained that this "riffraff" were extremely numerous and very esteemed among the Imbangala (Jaga), as well as other peoples of the region. Cavazzi described the possession ritual of the Imbangala as follows:

The man or woman puts himself in the middle of the multitude and orders that all obey him, since the function is promoted not by his caprice, but by the interior impulse of the consulted spirit. Meanwhile, the musicians play their instruments and excite those present with appropriate songs and shouting, capable of

frightening even the wild beasts. They sing some diabolical songs with invocations, judged efficacious for persuading the Devil to enter into the body of the person. The person, for his part, swears an oath to the Devil and invites him to take possession of him. At the sound of these supplicants, the Devil gives himself to the intervention...Then the *feiticeiro* (witch) gets up with much seriousness, and remaining still for several moments, immediately begins to agitate, moving his eyes in their sockets, laying himself on the ground, contorting furiously, bending all of his members...The *feiticeiro* then begins proffering extravagant words, confused and metaphoric, not without previously having forewarned those present that they are not his words, but of the spirit of such deceased Jaga, whose name he then assumes, conserving [that name] until the end of the function...The Jagas go to this possessed person because they judge that he knows everything that happens in the other life, and they use the forms of respect and reverence that they would use with a demigod, interrogating him and receiving answers as if he were the consulted spirit. The possessed threatens misfortune, predicts misadventure, curses, reprimands the avarice of relatives, requests new sustenance, new foods, new

human blood and new victims.²⁰

When compared with Inquisition cases like Branca's, the ethnographic descriptions from Central Africa, such as those of Cavazzi, Caltanissetta, and Cadornega, provide strong evidence that specific "Angolan" and "Kongolese" religious institutions were reproduced in Brazil.

Other Brazilian *calundú* rituals varied somewhat in the types of materials used for invocation of the spirits, but they still conformed with Central African practices. For instance, in the 1680s, an Angolan slave named Lucrécia performed *calundús* in Bahia, wearing ribbons and a crest of feathers on her head. When she entered her trance, flour was sprinkled on her face. Just like the white clay (*mpemba*) that Branca used to invoke the spirits, so too did the ribbons, feathers, and flour invoke the spirits for Lucrécia.²¹ In other cases, the blood of chickens, cows, or other animals also was used to induce the spirits to possess the curer.²² Once Lucrécia finally divined the cause of her

²⁰ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:204-205.

²¹ The headdress of feathers and ribbons was common among Central African diviner/healers until very recently. The feathered crest was probably symbolic of those worn by the great chiefs. See Turner, Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual, 146, 291.

²² For instance, in 1712, a free Angolan woman named Angela Vieira was denounced for performing *calundús* in Bahia. In order to invoke the spirits Angela anointed herself with the blood of a calf. She later divined various

client's illness, she applied medicinal herbs to achieve the cure.²³

Similarly, in the 1680s, a slave named Caterina cured with *calundús* in Rio Real, Bahia. Dressed in the skins of wild animals and anointed with white clay on her face, Caterina sang and danced to the playing of the *canzás*. In the language of her homeland, she spoke in the voices of her deceased relatives, who provided her clients with explanations for their illnesses. Later, Caterina went to the woods to search for roots and herbs to cure her clients.²⁴

Still other *calundús* resonated more clearly with the slaves' specific ethnic pasts. In 1721, in the town of Rodeio, Minas Gerais, whites and blacks gathered at seven o'clock every Saturday night to consult a Central African woman named Gracia. Accompanied by three other African dancers, Gracia invoked the spirit to enter her body. But Gracia did not invoke just any ancestral spirit. She invoked Dom Filipe, who the denouncing priest "suppose[d] was a King of Kongo." There was no Dom Filipe among the

illnesses and used roots to cure them. ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 80, Livro 273, ff. 29-29v.

²³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 130-130v. For similar practices in Central Africa, see Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:201.

²⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 67, Livro 261, ff. 311-320v.

many people contesting the Kongolese crown during the early eighteenth century. Nor was there a Dom Filipe who was King of Kongo in earlier years. There was, however, a Dom Filipe who was King of Ndongo from 1626 to 1664. More than likely, Gracia was being possessed by the former Ndongo king. Once Gracia was possessed, some of her clients fell to their knees in front of her, "speaking to her as if she were Dom Filipe, giving her lordship [and] making great reverence to her." Among other things, Gracia/Dom Filipe attempted to cure blindness and divine the location of runaway slaves.²⁵

While it is important to note that specific ethnic rituals, like Gracia's Ndongo invocation, were replicated in Brazil, it is more vital that we recognize the deeper meanings of these rituals. Just like the divination rituals discussed in the previous chapter, *calundú* was Central African religion in action. It was not the "diabolical superstition" or "witchcraft" that some Portuguese observers would have us believe that it was. Remembering that the core of Central African religion was explanation, prediction, and control of the temporal world, we can see clearly how Central Africans maintained their religious essence in Brazil through rituals like *calundú*.

This Central African religious core remained strong in Brazil, even as large numbers of whites began embracing

²⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 91, Livro 284, ff. 41-41v.

elements of an African world view, seeking African spiritual remedies to their everyday problems. In the face of Catholic, and even secular, persecution, Central African religious forms maintained their resiliency, catering to the medico-spiritual needs of African slaves, while at the same time offering a spiritual alternative for those whites seeking remedies to their worldly ills. Though white adherents to African beliefs sometimes had different temporal imperatives than their African co-religionists (i.e. finding runaway slaves), they were nonetheless embracing a world view in which explanation, prediction, and control took precedence over prayer and communion with the Christian God.²⁶ White adherents also became dependent upon the undisputed arbiters of religious power in the temporal world--Africans. By endowing Africans with enormous religious power, *calundú* and other Central African religious forms posed themselves as direct challenges to white Portuguese Catholic hegemony.

Calundú and the Forging of Economic Passageways

While *calundú* clearly had entered the consciousness of all Brazilians by the beginning of the eighteenth century,

²⁶ Again, I would argue that African religions and Catholicism operated in a parallel fashion. Whites never abandoned Catholicism. They embraced African forms of spirituality only at those points where their most pressing temporal concerns could not be addressed by the Church.

its actual practice remained the preserve of Central Africans, who used its powers to improve their daily conditions, not only from a divining/curing perspective, but also from an economic perspective. Among economic historians of Brazil, there has been a great deal of debate over the degree to which slaves were able to negotiate economic spaces within the slave regime. Some scholars have argued that master exploitation and social control left little room for slaves to create their own economic passageways, while others have suggested that slaves grew and sold their own crops, resulting in a "peasant breach" of Portuguese economic control.²⁷ In addition to earning money by selling various foodstuffs, a small number of slaves and free Africans also were able to create economic inroads for themselves by selling their religious services, requiring whites to pay for their divinations and cures, as well as for those of their slaves.

For instance, in the 1630s, Francisco Dembo was called to diagnose the illness of a slave named Caterina, who belonged to one Francisco da Almeida. Almeida wanted to know if Caterina was truly ill, or whether she was just

²⁷ For the view that masters wielded unmitigated control over their slaves, see Jacob Gorender, "Questionamentos sobre a teoria econômica do escravismo colonial," Revista de Estudos Econômicos, 13 (1983), 7-40. The idea of the "peasant breach" is most clearly articulated in Ciro Flamarion S. Cardoso, Escravo ou campônes. O protocampesinato negro nas Americas (São Paulo, 1987).

pregnant. Francisco confirmed Caterina's suspicion that she was sick with *feitiços* (witchcraft), and he subsequently removed some powders from under her arm that were the source of her illness. Francisco de Almeida paid Francisco a pataca and a half for his cure, but was later angry to learn that Caterina was indeed pregnant and probably would have healed "without [Francisco] curing her." Since Caterina would have been forced to work through her pain if she were diagnosed as pregnant, Francisco's divination not only paid off for him financially, but it relieved Caterina of some toil and hardship, at least in the short term. Again, we see slaves using their religious power to ameliorate their collective condition, undermining both the social and economic order.²⁸

Francisco certainly was not alone in using his religious gifts to earn a living. In 1698, Gracia, a slave on Ilha de Maré in Bahia, performed *calundús* to divine various things. In addition to curing a number of people, Gracia divined the location of a stolen canoe, as well as whether a woman's husband was being faithful to her. Despite the fact that Gracia was a slave, witnesses said that she "had fame as a diviner and that this was how she earned her living."²⁹ Whether Gracia kept all of her

²⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 18, Livro 219, ff. 305-313.

²⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 12658.

earnings, or whether she was a *negra de ganho* (slave for hire)³⁰ who split her earnings with her master, is unclear from the record. Either way, she was probably able to build a modicum of economic independence with her religious skills.

Other slaves clearly worked as *negros de ganho*, selling divinations and cures to a variety of clients and then splitting their earnings with their masters. In 1705, a man named Domingos Coelho was accused of hiring out his slave Domingos to divine and cure "in the houses of many white men" in Bahia. Several people testified that Domingos "cured and divined with the favor of his master and he split with him his earnings."³¹ Using the proceeds from their cures, slaves like Domingos, Francisco, and Gracia could begin to gain some degree of financial freedom, perhaps eventually earning enough money to purchase their way out of bondage.

Even though slaves made economic inroads using their religious powers, masters also profited handsomely. We have already seen how the Angolan slave, Branca, attempted to cure Felícia Pires of her blindness. Before Felícia was able to consult Branca, Branca's master, Pedro de Sequeira,

³⁰ The *negro de ganho* was "free" to seek out his own labor arrangements as long as he paid his master a set percentage of his earnings.

³¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 76, Livro 270, ff. 86-87.

required that Felícia give him a cow as payment for the cure. Apparently, Pedro de Sequeira made quite a handsome profit off the African curers that he owned. Several years earlier in 1694, he received payments for the cures of yet another of his slaves, a woman named Luzia, who also performed *calundús*.³²

Whites even went so far as to purchase slaves for the explicit purpose of earning money from their cures. In the 1680s, in Bahia, Pedro Coelho Pimentel admitted that he purchased the married couple, Lucrécia and André, "because they would always give him some earnings from their cures." Pimentel knew their reputation because Lucrécia had been owned by several other masters who had named her as a curer. Just as Pimentel planned, both slaves earned money for him with their divination and healing skills.³³ As potential investments, some masters viewed diviners and curers as valuable economic commodities. That masters were confident enough to purchase slaves solely on the premise that they would earn money from their cures demonstrates that there was a high "market" demand for African diviners and healers, providing us with further evidence of the widespread embrace of Central African religious power.

³² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 67, Livro 261, ff. 311-320v.

³³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 135-145.

Some masters probably did not share the earnings of their diviner/curer slaves, but these slaves still benefited from their religious powers. Because they were such valuable money-makers for their masters, they likely were treated differently than common slaves. At the very least, *calundeiros* reaped the benefits of the offerings that were made to the spirits--foods and wines that the majority of undernourished slaves could only wish to have. The *calundeiros* also opened up culturally resonant moments of "freedom" for their enslaved brethren. Every *calundú* ceremony included a small entourage of helpers who aided the *calundeiro* in his invocations--dancers, musicians, and so on. By including other slaves in the proceedings, the *calundeiro* ingratiated himself to others in his community, reinforcing not only the religious importance of *calundú*, but also the social "freedoms"--music, dance, and food--that came along with it.

Other Forms of Medicine and Curing

In addition to the various generic *calundús* that were performed in Brazil, there were several specific types of *nganga* who divined with human possession rituals. The *nganga-ia-nzambi* was a "priest of the spirits" whose specialty was the treatment of illness, particularly those illnesses that were due to the retributions and punishments

made by the forgotten spirits of the dead.³⁴ In 1721, a Portuguese priest, Father Joseph de Modena, returned to Lisbon from Angola and was questioned about his mission in Central Africa. In the process of his interrogation, he was asked what "Zumbi" was. The priest responded:

Zumbi is an illness that comes naturally that the witch (*feiticeiro*) attributes to diabolical arts because the sick person is suffering from the soul of one of his dead relatives. And the sick person gives many edible things to the *feiticeiro*, who says that the soul of the dead person requests these things, and that for not giving him the referred things, the dead person entered the body of the sick person and caused him this illness. And the *feiticeiro* is called in order to cure from the Zumbi and they give him banquets and parties with the food he requested...³⁵

The *nganga-ia-nzambi* sated the hunger of malevolent spirits all over Central Africa, from Angola to Benguela, curing numerous people of illnesses caused by their dead

³⁴ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:203.

³⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 94, Livro 287, ff. 371-374.

ancestors.³⁶ Given the prevalence of disease and illness in the slave communities of Brazil, it is not surprising that Central Africans continued curing in this fashion even after they were enslaved. Central Africans who performed the role of the *nganga-ia-nzambi* apparently were not uncommon across Brazil during the early eighteenth century. A 1720 report from Rio de Janeiro noted that there were "various witches who they all call *Ganganzambes* [who] kill or give life...and in this there enter many Brazilian-born whites (*brancos filhos da terra*)."³⁷ Though we have no specific descriptions of the *nganga-ia-nzambi* at work in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Brazil, we know that they were practicing their art, most likely hidden behind the more generic term for those who practiced spirit possession--*calundeiros*.

The second specific *nganga* who operated in Brazil was the *nganga wisa*. *Nganga wisa* literally means "priest of power." I can find no description of how the *nganga wisa* operated in Central Africa, but there is one tantalizing description from Brazil. In the 1690s, a slave named Luzia cured various people in a "public house" in Rio Real. Luzia called for her assistants to play *canzás* and sing to her in

³⁶ For cures using "Zumbi" in Benguela in 1722, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 92, Livro 285, ff. 250-283.

³⁷ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v.

the language of Angola. She emerged dancing and carrying animal skins in her hands. Luzia began to tremble and then suddenly leaped up into the air. Just as she made her leap, the doors to the little house were closed and the candles were blown out. As the crowd waited silently in the darkness, a rattling noise could be heard on top of the roof. Without warning, something fell from the ceiling and there was a loud smack on the table in the middle of the room. Then a voice announced, "I am gangahuiza." Subsequently, through *nganga wisa*, Luzia was able to effect her cures.³⁸

Human possession was not the only Central African form of divining/curing that made its way across the Atlantic. The Kongolese influence, in particular, contributed other cures to the Brazilian slave communities. For instance, in 1789, a slave named Ant3nio Congo was denounced for "making *calund3s* with two dolls" on Fazenda Santa Guiteria in the town of Itatiayo. Using his two dolls to divine and cure, Ant3nio healed many patients who could not be cured by Portuguese surgeons or herbalists. Some of Ant3nio's clients paid as much as ten *oitavos* for their cures.³⁹

The two dolls referred to in Ant3nio's denunciation were probably *kitekes*, wooden statues (or "dolls") that

³⁸ ANTT, Inquisi33o de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 67, Livro 261, ff. 311-320v.

³⁹ ANTT, Inquisi33o de Lisboa, Processos, No. 14723.

served as representations of the ancestors among the Kongolese. These "dolls" were apparently common in eighteenth-century Brazil. Seventy years earlier in 1720, a priest in Rio de Janeiro reported that Central Africans possessed "various images that they call *Quitecles* to which they give cult, saying, this is my son; this is my father; this is my brother. And just like [the image] is alive, they offer it sustenance."⁴⁰ As in the case with human possession, the spirits of deceased ancestors could be invoked to possess the *kiteke* and proffer advice, remedies, and so on. In order to facilitate the possession, the diviner made offerings of food and liquor to the statue. The *kitekes* were apparently not as common in colonial Brazil as were the more generic *calundús*, but the *kitekes* were prevalent enough to draw the attention of Church authorities, and their mere presence in Brazil demonstrates the tenacity of certain specific Kongolese beliefs.

By the end of the seventeenth century, Mina slaves were also beginning to make medical/religious contributions in the Portuguese world. The cures of Mina slaves differed markedly from those of Central Africans. Instead of relying primarily on human possession to determine the cause of illness, Mina slaves used other rituals, divinations, and herbal cures to heal the ill. One of the more common

⁴⁰ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Officio Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v.

implements of Mina divining and curing was a large basket, which might contain powders, shells, bones, hair, teeth, feathers and other powerful substances from the natural world, all of which might be endowed with spiritual power. Using the basket and its contents, the diviner could perform various rituals to determine the cause of illnesses.

For example, in 1692, a free Mina named Mateus carried his basket with him when he went to cure a white man named Manuel Pacheco de Araujo in Moribeca, Pernambuco. Mateus removed a basin from inside his basket and put it on top of his head. Speaking to the basin "in his language," he then removed a small stick from the basket. He took the stick and licked it with his tongue. Still reciting orations, he ran the stick from his left hand to his forehead. Finally, he told Manuel Pacheco de Araujo that he did not have *feitiços* (fetishes), but that "a woman had made something to make him want her." This item that the woman made was making him ill. In order to free Manuel from the ailment, Mateus gave him some roots and powders. He told Manuel that he should take the medicines to the river and lie backwards, against the current. With equal amounts of the substances in each hand, he was to utter certain words and scatter the powders. Presumably, the symbolic gesture of letting the substances wash down the river would also "wash" away his

ailment.⁴¹

Another case of a Mina slave using a basket to carry his instruments of divination occurred in Recife in 1692. A slave named Gonçalo went to the house of Joana de Souza, promising that he could cure her ailment. Gonçalo entered Joana's house, and removing the top from his basket, he began speaking to it. To Joana's great surprise, "some voices like little birds responded to [Gonçalo]." Fearing that this was "an evil thing," Joana quickly fled from the scene. Gonçalo tried to calm her down, assuring her that the ceremony was to determine the cause of her illness and to help her find a cure. But Joana could not be convinced. Ultimately, she refused to consent to the divination.⁴²

Baskets were not the only vessels for collecting the tools of Mina divination. Some Minas carried their medicines in calabashes. Domingos Álvares, who was born in Nangon on the Mina Coast, was denounced in the 1740s for, among other things, making various cures for people in Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro. Using purgatives, enemas, and ointments, in various ritual fashions, Domingos cured many people, including whites and pardas, but "mostly

⁴¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 66, Livro 260, folios are unnumbered, but between ff. 256 and 257.

⁴² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 66, Livro 260, folios unnumbered but between ff. 256 and 257.

negros." Domingos carried his roots, herbs, powders, and leaves in a large calabash. After drinking a mixture made by Domingos, one parda woman "ran to her house...and vomited up some hairs, and [expelled] from her rectum some bones that seemed to be from chickens and the talons of a hawk." Once the woman expelled the malevolent substances, she was relieved from her suffering, "which was like pin pricks" all over her body. Domingos also was reputed to cure colic, cancer, and paralysis with his arsenal of medicines.

In his confession and examination, Domingos admitted that "he was publicly procured by various persons in order to remove diverse maladies that they understood to be *feitigos*." He claimed that his remedies were "natural" and that they were taught to him by various people in his homeland. Familiar with the virtues of various roots and herbs (fennel, juniper, rosemary, and so on), Domingos said that if he applied a cure and it was ineffective, he would continue using others until the sick person recovered from his or her illness. The inquisitors, who were convinced that Domingos's cures were the result of a pact that he had made with the Devil, wanted him to admit that his cures were the work of Satan. But Domingos would not confess. He maintained that his cures were "natural" and that this was "the way they heal" in his country. Refusing to concede that he was in league with the Devil, Domingos was tortured on the *potro*, a device used to inflict excruciating pain,

pulling the body's joints, slowly dislocating shoulders, elbows, knees, etc. Ultimately, Domingos was sentenced to appear before the Auto da Fé and exiled to the Portuguese Algarve for four years.⁴³

On the surface, the differences between Central African and Mina healing rituals that we have outlined here are fairly stark. In order to divine the source of illnesses, Central Africans in Brazil relied heavily upon human possession, while Minas utilized objects that captured and harnessed spiritual power (baskets, calabashes, pans of water, etc.) But the common denominator in all of these cases was the ultimate treatment of the disease or illness. Using powerful substances from the natural world, such as roots, herbs, leaves, and so on, Africans of all ethnic stripes attempted to control the malevolent spirits that were believed to be racking their bodies. Despite the differences in forms of divination, Minas and Central Africans found common ground and began to weave together distinctly "African" forms of curing in Brazil.

One example of these African "hybrid" forms of healing occurred in Olinda in 1770. On the evening of August 30, the priests of the Convento de Nossa Senhora do Carmo were busily removing floodwaters that had inundated their convent. As they were taking buckets of water to the woods,

⁴³ ANTT, Inquisição de Évora, Processos, No. 7759.

the priests found two Africans engaged in what was apparently a healing ritual. The Africans, a Mina slave named Isabel and a free Angolan named Francisco, were both nude. When the priests walked up on the two Africans, Francisco was beating Isabel on the shoulder blades with several live chickens, reciting some orations after each stroke of the chickens. Isabel then laid in a tub of water. Beside the tub was a large stone jug that Isabel told the priests was full of holy water. But the priests said that the jug could not contain holy water because of the "bad smell which emanated from it." Near the river's edge, the priests found two baskets, one large and one small. Inside the baskets were roots, a candle, a strip of red cloth with a rattle attached to it, a ribbon with more rattles attached to it, and the "rib of a dead person." Finally, Francisco carried a sack that contained a variety of substances--anise, lavender, black pepper, African pepper, ginger, orange peels, lime navals, pits of the African palm fruit, cumin, Brazil wood, a pig's tooth, a tanning needle with a cotton thread, and various beans, some from Brazil and others from Angola. The sack also contained a black powder box that had two apples in it.⁴⁴

Though it is difficult to discern exactly what was taking place between these two Africans, the mixture of

⁴⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 14158.

"Mina" and Central African healing traditions is evident. The rituals themselves were apparently "Mina" rituals. The flagellation with chickens was very much in the tradition of Dahomean voodoo. In Haiti, this practice became known as *passer poulet* and was used literally to sweep away bad luck. When the ritual was complete, the chickens were supposed to be shaken "like dusty feather-dusters" in order to remove the evil spirits.⁴⁵ The bath that Isabel took also appears similar to the curative baths of herbs, plants, and alcohol that were common among Dahomeans and voodooists in the broader diaspora.⁴⁶ Finally, the presence of the two baskets also suggests a strong "Mina" influence; but at the same time, Francisco's sack of various objects, including palm fruit and Angolan beans, point to Central African influences.⁴⁷ The internal dynamics of the process of "creolization" in African communities in colonial Brazil are

⁴⁵ Métraux, Voodoo in Haiti, 172.

⁴⁶ For the significance of herbal baths in curing physical and social illness, see Herskovits, Dahomey, 2:263; Métraux, Voodoo in Haiti, 309-312.

⁴⁷ Among some Angolans, particularly the Imbangala, the palm tree (along with its fruit and wine) were considered sacred. On the importance of palm trees, see Andrew Battell, The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell, 28-35. For worship of palms and Catholic priests cutting them down in Angola, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 96, Livro 289, ff. 412-end (unnumbered). Stuart Schwartz has suggested that Brazil's most famous *quilombo* (slave runaway community) was called Palmares because of Imbangala influence in Brazil. See Schwartz, Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels, 127.

very difficult to unravel, but we should recognize that as this process gradually took place over time, the broader core religious beliefs that were shared by all Africans-- explanation, prediction, and control--were never abandoned. Indeed, this shared core was the mechanism that brought together Mina and Angola, especially vis-a-vis the rituals and beliefs of the Catholic Church.

Predictably, the priests who found Isabel and Francisco judged that all of their healing implements were "against the honor of God." As a result, they apprehended the two Africans and "all of the composition of their evil" and carried them to jail. As they were making their way to the city lockup, Isabel refused to walk, so the priests commenced beating her with some pine branches. In a bold display of courage, Isabel told the priests that if they continued to beat her, she would "make something that would make them fall dead right there, and then she would retaliate against her master." The priests later learned that Isabel had been put out of her master's house on suspicion that she was using malevolent forms of "witchcraft."

Isabel's acid response to the priests who were beating her, as well as the threat to her master, were the elements of African religious power that whites feared most--the malicious infliction of injury or illness by disgruntled or unhappy Africans. These were not idle threats. In 1745,

Domingos Álvares, the Mina curer who was exiled to the Algarve for cures that he made in Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco (see above), was denounced for "bewitching" a white couple in Castro Marim. António Viegas called Domingos to cure the paralysis of his wife, Domingas de Andrade, who could not move from the waist down. Domingos determined that she was suffering from *feitiços* and provided her with a cure that led to her quick recovery.

Not satisfied with the payment he received for his cure, Domingos resorted to his religious powers to punish his delinquent clients. Less than a month after proffering his cure, Domingos placed a number of objects at the door of António Viegas and his wife, Domingas de Andrade. Among the objects was a doll with 39 pins in it, hairs, bones, snake skin, pieces of glass, kernels of corn, and some grave dirt, all things intended to do harm to the couple. Domingos told Domingas de Andrade that the *feitiços* were for her and all the people in her house, as well as for their cattle. Domingos Álvares was denounced and again sentenced by the Inquisition. He was eventually ordered to appear before the Auto de Fé, publicly whipped, and exiled for four years to the city of Bragança in the far north of Portugal.⁴⁸

The line between the diviner/curer and the so-called "witch" was precariously thin. The same slave diviner who

⁴⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 7759.

one day found runaway slaves or a cure to an illness could, on the following day, inflict injury and mayhem on the master, his family, and other slaves. The masters were acutely aware of the "diabolical" power of African religions, and many lived in constant fear of the "witchcraft" that their slaves might cast upon them. Some responded, like Isabel's master, by simply throwing suspected witches off their property. But others suffered the wrath of their slaves, slowly deteriorating away in painful deaths. From the perspective of the African slave, religious power became one of the fiercest tools of resistance, a stealthy, silent killer of the hated master, and a very real threat to the colonial status quo.

Chapter 9

Controlling the Temporal World: Witchcraft, Ritual, and Resistance in the African-Portuguese Diaspora

Any discussion of "witchcraft" in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must begin with several cautionary words on the deeper meanings of the term, especially as it applied to the African context. From the Western perspective, "witchcraft" was a fixed set of concepts, implying evil, malevolence, and sin. Witchcraft was widely understood to be the Devil's work. In most of Africa, on the other hand, the terms used to describe what Westerners call "witchcraft" were much more ambiguous.¹ In many societies, there was no discrete term that distinguished good rituals from malevolent rituals. The practice of "evil" was just one component of what might better be understood as a bundle of hidden religious powers. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, these powers could be used in a variety of positive ways--divining, curing, and so on--that restored harmony and balance to both individuals and communities. But the special power to uncover malevolence and heal could also be used to create malevolence and cause harm. Africans rationalized that if

¹ The idea of "witchcraft" was usually captured in words and concepts that meant "religious powers." See, for instance, the description of Kongolesse *kindoki* (religious powers/"witchcraft") in Simon Bockie, Death and the Invisible Powers (Bloomington, IN, 1993), 43-57.

a diviner/curer had the power to "see" evil spirits and expel them with his powers, then certainly he/she was capable of creating similar forms of evil for his/her own nefarious purposes. This circularity between the "bewitching," the divination, and the remedy demonstrates the extraordinarily ambiguous nature of religious discourse in African societies. Those endowed with religious powers could be both "good" and "evil" at the same time.²

Unfortunately, by using the pejorative term "witchcraft" to describe African religious practices, Western observers implicitly have reduced African religious expressions to their potential for evil. The positive aspects of African religions often remain hidden behind this "evil" veneer. A more balanced assessment would recognize malevolence as just one aspect of a complex set of religious powers. As we noted in chapter six, understandings of religious malevolence were tied to temporal misfortune, especially that misfortune caused by hidden human powers. Those who used their religious powers to harm other people or to insure their own successes, rather than for the

² Much of this theoretical framework is drawn from the brilliant works of Peter Geschiere on witchcraft discourses in modern Cameroon. Though the changing variables of "modernity" certainly transform meanings over time, the basic theoretical foundation of Geschiere's work applies equally to parts of pre-colonial Africa, and as we shall see, even to the diaspora. See Geschiere, The Modernity of Witchcraft and "Witchcraft and Sorcery," in Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara, ed. John Middleton, 4:376-381. Also see Simon Bockie, Death and the Invisible Powers.

advancement of the common good, were deemed to be malevolent. One of the outcomes of malevolent religious behavior was a growing social and/or economic inequality between the spiritual tormentor and everyone else in the community. Thus, two of the classic symptoms of religious malevolence were unjust suffering on the parts of the victims and rapid, unexplained social/economic wealth on the parts of the spiritual tormentors. From the African perspective, enslavement and economic exploitation by Europeans fit both of these criteria, but the impacts of these strong and unfamiliar new forms of malevolence radically transformed religious meanings in Africa and the diaspora.

Evidence of Portuguese spiritual malevolence was abundant all along the Central African coast. It was widely understood that Europeans carried away black bodies in order to "eat" them.³ The "profits" from these black bodies were returned to Africa in a variety of trade goods. Cooking oil was believed to have been pressed from African flesh, and

³ See, for example, a letter written by four Jesuits describing slave baptisms in Luanda in 1622. Some slaves believed the baptismal ceremony was "a thing of witchcraft in order for the Spaniards to eat them;" Sandoval, De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute, 348. For another description of the Angolan belief in white cannibals, see Manuel Correia Leitão, "Uma viagem a Cassange nos meados do século XVIII," ed., Gastão Sousa Dias, Boletim da sociedade de geografia de Lisboa, 56 (1938), 20-21. As we have already noted in chapter 6, religious tormentors and evil spirits in Central Africa were believed to "eat" away at the souls of their victims.

the red wines that Portuguese traders sold were said to be the blood of their African victims.⁴ European cheeses were African brains.⁵ And gunpowder was thought to be the ashen residue of African bones that were burned by the Europeans.⁶ The evocative imagery conjured up by the emerging dialectic between the slave trade and European wealth demonstrates just how deeply the slave trade impacted African discourses on malevolence. Europeans used their hidden powers to enslave Africans and commodify their bodies for their own enrichment.

The arrival of Europeans in Africa marked a significant shift in the meaning of malevolence in Africa. Some scholars are now suggesting that African understandings of the Western concept of "witchcraft" were **products** of the slave trade, rather than the result of some timeless African "tradition."⁷ Prior to contact with Europeans, Africans

⁴ Gabriel Debien, "La traite nantaise vue par un Nantaise," in Enquêtes et documents (Centre de Recherches sur l'Histoire de la France Atlantique) 2 (1972), 210; Gabriel Debien, "Le journal de traite de la Licorne au Mozambique, 1787-1788," in Etudes africaines offertes à Henri Brunschwig (Paris, 1982), 105-106.

⁵ Francisco Damião Cosme, "Tractado das queixas endemicas, e mais fataes nesta Conquista (Luanda, 1770)," ed., Luís de Pina, Studia 20-22 (1967), 264.

⁶ Affonso Escragnolle de Taunay, Subsídios para a história do tráfico africano no Brasil (São Paulo, 1941), 139-140; Sandoval, De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute, 348.

⁷ See the provocative works of Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, eds., Modernity and its Malcontents (Chicago, 1993); Rosalind Shaw, "The Production of

viewed religious malevolence through a micropolitical prism that allowed for familiar religious antidotes. "Good" and "evil" were part of the same cosmological continuum, and both could be controlled with familiar religious rituals and practices. Europeans introduced a new form of social and economic "malevolence"--the slave trade--that transformed this cosmological balance. Wars, disease, forced migration, and other misfortunes that were instigated by Europe's appetite for slave labor all were understood to be symptoms of this unprecedented misery.

If the slave trade and economic exploitation were the impetus for transforming certain forms of religious malevolence into "witchcraft" in Africa, then actual enslavement by Europeans must have been understood as the most virulent form of witchcraft, one that required a powerful religious counterattack in order to be freed from the curse.⁸ Ironically, this defensive posture on the part of the enslaved thrust them to the forefront of witchcraft discourse in the Portuguese world. The Portuguese already had a well-established history of dealing with witchcraft

Witchcraft/Witchcraft as Production: Memory, Modernity, and the Slave Trade in Sierra Leone," American Ethnologist, 24 (1997), 856-876. For Central Africa, see Wyatt MacGaffey, Religion and Society in Central Africa, 62.

⁸ For one of the first arguments describing American slavery as a form of witchcraft, see Monica Schuler, "Afro-American Slave Culture," Historical Reflections 6 (1979). Also see Colin A. Palmer, Passageways, 1:243, 251.

and "fetishism" long before they encountered ethnic and racial "others" in their imperial ventures. During the Renaissance, Europeans of all stripes believed that devils and witches operated freely in the temporal realm. Numerous books and treatises dealt with the subjects of witchcraft and superstition. Indeed, witchcraft discourse became so detailed and refined that one scholar has recently labeled the phenomenon "the science of the devil."⁹

For their part, the Portuguese were content to follow the philosophical and literary leads of English, Spanish, and Italian writers on the subject during most of the sixteenth century. Lacking an indigenous intellectual discourse on witchcraft, the Portuguese Church adhered to the broad contours of European witchcraft constructions. It was widely understood that God used witches and the Devil to punish sinners and test man's faith. The use of diabolical power to counter diabolical power was prohibited by the Church, because that necessarily meant invoking the Devil. Only prayer and faith in God could counteract the Devil's powers in a safe and Christian way.

Not until the seventeenth century did Portuguese Inquisitorial theologians begin commenting at length on the

⁹ Sophie Houdard, Les sciences du diable. Quatre discours sur la sorcellerie (Paris, 1992).

nature of witchcraft.¹⁰ In the view of Portuguese witchcraft philosophers and "scientists," rituals, orations, and symbols used to counteract evil all were evidence of a pact with the Devil. Even those rituals that involved Christian prayers and the use of sacred objects were suspect, because they most often were applied by "profane" people who were "contrary" to the sanctity of the words or objects being used. In the Portuguese context, these profane people were generally understood to be "ignorant," "rustic" peoples, and particularly single women.¹¹ By the seventeenth century, Portuguese witchcraft discourse was becoming fused with an emerging discourse on social class, one in which a literate, educated, and "civilized" male elite tried to distance itself from the popular masses, who were allegedly mired in the vile world of superstition and

¹⁰ In particular see Manuel do Vale de Moura, De incantationibus seu ensalmis (Évora, 1620) and Manuel de Lacerda, Memorial e antídoto contra os pós venenosos que o Demônio inventou e per seus confederados espalhou, em odio da christandade (Lisbon, 1631). The two were deputies of the Inquisition in Évora and Lisbon respectively. Both of these treatises are discussed at length in Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 25-36.

¹¹ Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 26-30, 162-163. Women were the overwhelming targets of malefic witchcraft accusations in Portugal. Between 1600 and 1774, Paiva found that women were the accused in 83% of malevolent witchcraft cases heard by the Inquisition. Single women were especially suspect. Because they were not attached to a man, they were suspected of being morally lax and therefore vulnerable to the Devil's vices.

magic.¹²

Predictably, clerics and priests were not the only ones who believed that witches were agents of the Devil. Judges, doctors, and other Portuguese elites also believed in the power of the Devil through witches.¹³ Yet, despite this widespread belief in witchcraft, the Portuguese never viewed the witch as a threat to Christian order and reason. Since most Portuguese witches operated alone, rather than in groups, none of the witchcraft panic or terror that infected other European countries made its way to Portugal. The Portuguese were much more concerned with maintaining religious orthodoxy vis-à-vis Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism than they were with prosecuting witches. It was believed that using God's remedies--baptism, confession, holy water, the sign of the cross, and exorcisms--individual witches could be reclaimed from the Devil's grasp.

The Portuguese carried these witchcraft beliefs with them when they began to encounter African religious practices on a sustained basis in Brazil beginning in the late sixteenth century. Just as class and gender were becoming fused with witchcraft discourse in Portugal, so too did race and ethnicity become fused with witchcraft discourse in Brazil. All African religious practices were

¹² Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 66-70.

¹³ Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 37-38.

suspected of being the work of the Devil. The major difference between the Portuguese and Brazilian settings was that the African "witches" were present in large numbers and were capable of using their religious powers to harm their masters and threaten colonial order. African religion emerged as one of the strongest weapons used by Brazilian slaves to address their servile condition.

Thus, the religious battle ground was set--"witch" versus "witch." Africans, who understood their enslavement to be the result of Portuguese religious malevolence, countered with their strongest, most powerful religious antidotes, which were recognized and feared by the Portuguese as "witchcraft." In their attempts to counter the slings and arrows of slavery--master abuse, disease, malnutrition, kinship instability, and so on--African slaves (and free blacks) mounted a steady religious assault against the white witches who were causing them such grave misfortune. In its most benign forms, African religious power was used simply to protect slaves from their master's assaults. In 1646, a free Angolan named Domingos Umbáta (Mbata) was denounced for helping two "negras" improve their relationships with their mistresses. In order to protect the slaves from the wrath of their mistresses, Domingos had them bathe themselves in a tub of water that contained crushed leaves, a rattle, and the tooth of a jaguar. Presumably, the bath would shield them from their

mistresses' venom.¹⁴

The attempts of slaves to insulate themselves from their master's power was apparently a widespread practice across Brazil. In a 1702 report on the Jesuit missions to the Recôncavo of Bahia, Father João Pereira noted that because Angolan slaves were not able "to endure the rigor with which [their masters] shackle them, they use many mixtures in order to make their masters (as they are accustomed to saying) have a good heart for them."¹⁵ Slaves in Minas Gerais believed that wheat root taken from a swamp had the power to free them from punishments. Still others in Minas Gerais performed rituals with the scrapings from the soles of their master's shoes as a way of protecting themselves from beatings.¹⁶ And in Alagoas, slaves chewed on roots and small sticks to prevent their masters from beating them.¹⁷

These practices were not confined to Brazil. In Lisbon, in 1688, a Mozambican slave named António heard that

¹⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 4-4v.

¹⁵ ARSI, Brasilia 10 I; VFL Roll 160, ff. 19-21v.

¹⁶ Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 206-207. ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 11163. The rubbings from the soles of the shoes was a common European superstition, even as early as the sixteenth century. Africans and their descendants probably learned these rituals from Europeans and Moorish slaves.

¹⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 1630.

there was a slave named Agostinho who could prescribe him an herb that would "impede the ires and passions of his master." Antônio sought out Agostinho, who agreed to share his herb with Antônio. Agostinho told Antônio that in order for the herb to be effective, he had to enter his master's house with the herb in his mouth. After chewing it with his teeth, he had to spit on the ground and rub the saliva with his foot. If he followed this prescription, Antônio's master would not punish him for his errors. Putting the herb to the test, Antônio left his master's house early one morning and did not return until late at night. Past experience told Antônio that his master was going to be angry that he stayed away for the entire day. But by using the herb, "his master did not fight with him, nor offer him any harsh words, like on other days that he made these and other similar errors..."¹⁸

Stronger forms of African religious power were aimed directly at the master or his family, sapping their physical strength, or in some instances, making them "crazy." For example, in 1704, an Angolan slave named Mai Caterina (Mother Catherine) was accused of bewitching her master, Capitão Luís Fernandes. Mai Caterina cast a spell on her Bahian master that made him have "such profound sleeps that

¹⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 258-262v.

in order to awaken him, it is necessary...to lift him up."¹⁹ Similarly, in 1686, a Bahian slave holder named Álvaro de Mattos denounced an Angolan woman named Dona Maria for curing his wife, Isabel de Almeida. Álvaro de Mattos stated that his wife was "going crazy" because of some *feitiços* (fetishes) that one of his slaves had given her. Dona Maria prescribed some herbs that led to Isabel's rapid recovery.²⁰

The most powerful forms of African religious antidotes were intended to maim or kill whites and their families. Whites were acutely aware of slave vengeance. Writing in the first decade of the eighteenth century, Father André João Antonil warned that masters who administered excessive punishments to their slaves risked having one of the slave's relatives "take revenge upon them, using either witchcraft or poison."²¹ Such was the case in 1743, when an Angolan-born slave named António Mascarenhas was charged with various crimes on the island of Madeira. Among those who denounced António was one Nicolão Soares, who testified that António entered his locked house in the middle of the night "to commit some dishonesty" with his female slave named

¹⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 76, Livro 270, ff. 41-42v.

²⁰ ANTT, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 135-145.

²¹ Antonil, Cultura e opulência do Brasil, 130-133. For the Portuguese, there was a distinction to be made between poisoning and witchcraft, but the same distinction was not made by Africans. See discussion below.

Teresa. Antônio and Teresa stole some gold, an emerald ring valued at 14,000 reis, a blue silk coat, a new skirt, and other clothes. They then fled to a cavern where they hid for three days. Nicolão Soares received word of their whereabouts and was able to capture the two fugitive slaves. As punishment for their crimes, Antônio was placed in jail, and Teresa was sold away to the Azores.

Soon after Antônio was jailed, various unsettling things began to happen to Soares and his family in their house. In particular, paper cuttings were found in the clothes of all the family members. These cuttings were in the shapes of circles, triangles, and crosses. Even visitors to their house began to find the cuttings in their clothes, "causing great fear among their neighbors and friends." Soares had his house exorcised and sprinkled with holy water, which resulted in a brief period of peace, but the cuttings soon resumed. Eventually, the cuttings appeared not only in his house, but also in the house of his mother, Mariana Mendes da Silva. Soares presumed that Antônio was "casting these spells upon him in hatred and vengeance for having sold away the slave [Teresa]."²²

Though Nicolão Soares and his family found Antônio's *feitiços* before they could take their physical effect, other whites were not so lucky. In 1646, a Bahian woman named

²² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 254.

Angela de Sequeira was suffering from a long-term illness that would not abate. One night she found in her pillows some packets that contained bird feathers, bird beaks, and sea shells. Her mulatta slave Beatriz confessed that she put the objects in her pillows "so that [her mistress] might love her." But even after the packets were removed from her pillows, Angela de Sequeira's condition continued to worsen.

A diviner/healer named Francisco Arda, who was the slave of one Lieutenant Francisco Pereira do Lago, was called in to see if there were more *feitiços*. The Arda slave made a ceremony throwing a little river water into a plate with some scrapings from a little stick that he brought with him. Over the plate, he made some gesticulations, looking from one side to the other, and later announced that there were more *feitiços* buried in the yard. Francisco Arda took a green twig and used it to sprinkle the ground with the river water. At the place where the twig wilted, Francisco ordered the observers to dig. There, they found packets filled with fingernails, hairs, and powders. Francisco said that these were the *feitiços* that were making Angela de Sequeira ill, and that they were placed there by her mulatta slave Beatriz. Beatriz denied having knowledge of this second set of *feitiços*, and even though they were also removed, Angela de

Sequeira continued to suffer from her illness.²³

Free blacks also addressed their grievances with whites using their religious powers. In 1646, a free black named Apolónia was accused of bewitching four children in Bahia, among them the grandson of António Coelho Pinheiro. Pinheiro claimed that he witnessed Apolónia standing at his doorstep around mid-day on April 3. His grandson was inside the house sleeping. Several hours later, the child's father went to wake him but "found him bewitched." The child refused to breastfeed and his lips were blue, "a signal that they say is from bewitching." Within 24 hours, the child was dead. Because of her reputation as a witch and her close proximity to the child, Apolónia was accused of the crime. Whether she actually played a role in the boy's death remains uncertain.²⁴

The depth of "witchcraft" conspiracies in slave communities is demonstrated most clearly by a case from Recife in the early 1780s. For more than three years, a wealthy slaveowner named Manuel Rodrigues de Senna was bed-ridden, nearly paralyzed from an unexplained illness that doctors and pharmacists could not cure. After exhausting all worldly means of finding a cure, Senna opted to test the

²³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, Livro 228, ff. 9-10.

²⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 29, livro 228, ff. 3v.-4.

remedies of the Catholic Church. Father Fidélis de Partana, an Italian Capuchin priest, was called in to perform an exorcism. Father Fidélis began his ceremonies, and "in less than five minutes, [Senna] rose from the bed without any pain." As Father Fidélis continued the exorcism, Senna began expelling from his mouth various things that were impossible to swallow--a four-inch-long fish skeleton, pieces of coal, large amounts of sand, cockroaches, and other "beasts." As a result of Father Fidélis's exorcism, Senna quickly recovered from his illness.

Soon after the exorcism, Senna began to suspect that two of his slaves were responsible for his protracted illness. Over a period of years, Domingos Angola and Gonçalo Mina conspired to "cast various things of witchcraft in the food and drink that were destined for [their master] and also for various slaves of his." Senna slowly became aware that his two slaves were aiming to do him harm, even after he was cured of his paralysis. On one occasion, he overheard the two slaves discussing throwing poison in his milk. He also suspected that the men were entering the kitchen and putting *feitiços* (fetishes) in his food. As a result, he prohibited them from climbing the stairs on the outside of the house that led directly to the kitchen.

Further evidence of the slaves' guilt arose from an unlikely source. One day while the mistress of the house was giving the cook, Maria Angola, some lashes for

"carelessness in the service of the house," Maria began confessing. She cried, "My Senhora, do not punish me, because I promise that I did not throw anything more in the food of my master." Surprised by Maria's spontaneous confession, the mistress asked her what it was that she threw in her master's food. The cook responded that they were "*feitiços* ground into powder that the pretos Gonçalo and Domingos gave to her when she went to the stairs." Even after their master prohibited the two men from climbing the stairs to the kitchen, Domingos and Gonçalo continued slipping the *feitiços* under the door, warning Maria that if she did not put them in their master's food, they would one day put the *feitiços* in her food. Maria confessed further that when her master arose from the dinner table screaming in pain, it was because of the *feitiços* that were put in his food. She also said that she put other *feitiços* in her master's sugar cane liquor (*garapa*) that pushed him "to the edge of death." Gonçalo, who was present during Maria's confession, did not deny his role.

During Maria's painstaking confession, she eventually admitted that she had thrown *feitiços* in her master's food on that very day. Sitting down to eat his meal, Manuel Rodrigues de Senna told his wife that he did not want to eat after hearing Maria's confession. But Senna's wife admonished her husband, telling him that she did not believe Maria's confession; nor did she believe in *feitiços*. She

insisted that she and their children would eat the food if her husband would not. After eating the food, the mistress and her children all became violently ill with abdominal and chest pains. The family dispatched another house slave, Romana Mina, to find Father Fidélis, who later arrived with a colleague. The two priests exorcised the entire family and gave them holy water with various relics to drink. They all later recovered.

But this was not the end of the story. During her confession under the whip, Maria Angola told her mistress that she was terrified that Domingos and Gonçalo would seek vengeance against her for revealing their crimes. The two men had warned her that if she disclosed their role in trying to bewitch their master, they would kill her with the same *feitiços*. The two slaves had made similar threats against Romana Mina, who also put powders, little onions, peels, and "other filthiness" into the food of their master. Sure enough, soon after revealing the guilt of Domingos and Gonçalo, Maria Angola began to swell around her neck. Within six days she was dead, "screaming against Gonçalo that he killed her with *feitiços*." Domingos and Gonçalo were also suspected of killing five other slaves with "witchcraft," including a newly-arrived Mina slave who ate an apple full of *feitiços* that was given to her by Gonçalo Mina. The new slave "began screaming in pain, saying in her language that she would die of *feitiços* that he had given

her." Within three days, the new slave was dead.²⁵

The accusations against Domingos Angola and Gonçalo Mina reveal a great deal about broader understandings of African "witchcraft" in Brazil. Prior to Maria Angola's confession, Manuel Rodrigues de Senna and his family clearly were among those whites who did not believe in the supernatural powers of their slaves. Senna did not consider his illness to be the result of "witchcraft" until he had exhausted all medical possibilities. He gradually began to consider the possibility that his slaves might be responsible for his illnesses, but his wife still refused to believe that there was such a thing as witchcraft. She even used herself and her children as human guinea pigs, eating food that they were warned was tainted with *feitiços*. Only after the entire family became ill did the gravity of the situation become apparent. Finally convinced that African witchcraft was a real and dangerous threat, Senna reported his two slaves to secular and religious authorities. Gonçalo was sold at public auction, while Domingos was remitted to the Holy Office in Lisbon.

The refusal of some whites to believe in African forms of "witchcraft" was a function of several factors, not the least of which was a confusion between "poison" and *feitiços*. By the 1780s, when Domingos and Gonçalo were

²⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3825.

accused, very few Portuguese were still being persecuted for witchcraft.²⁶ The "rationalism" of the Enlightenment had taken hold, and people were less likely to admit their belief in the supernatural. Many of the tools of African "witchcraft" were what the Portuguese would have called "poison" (*peçonha*). Had someone told Senna's wife that she was being poisoned by her slaves, rather than being bewitched, she probably would have been more likely to believe them. But because the majority of African "malevolence" still fell under the broad umbrella of "witchcraft," poisonings often were subsumed under this banner. From the Portuguese perspective, poisoning became just another form of African *feitico*.

The blurring of the lines between poisoning and witchcraft was probably due to African influences on witchcraft discourse in Brazil. From the African perspective, Portuguese "poisons" were natural substances endowed with the power to counter other forms of "witchcraft," or malevolence. Attempts to kill the master with "poisons" are, therefore, probably better understood as attempts to eradicate witches. The master's "witchcraft" was answered with an even more powerful form of African "witchcraft." Powders and herbs that were endowed with the

²⁶ The number of witchcraft cases in Portugal began to decline after 1750. The end of official persecution came in 1774 with the publication of the *Regimento da Inquisição*. Paiva, *Bruxaria e superstição*, 12, 363.

power to heal "disease" could also be used to "heal" the malevolence of Portuguese masters, sometimes maiming or killing them and their families in the process. In all cases, the power of the substances was attributed to the spirit world. From the African perspective, Portuguese "witchcraft" was a positive expression of African religious power. Thus, to call poisons "*feitiços*" was very much in keeping with an African world view and was just one more way in which Africans controlled certain spiritual discourses in Brazil.

That Domingos and Gonçalo were accused of killing as many as five African slaves with *feitiços* was not at all unusual. In fact, in the Inquisition cases, slaves were accused of killing other slaves just as often as they were accused of killing their masters. As early as 1639, the Bishop of Brazil, Pedro da Silva, noted that "the negros from Angola...[who] they call *feiticeiros*...kill with poison or other fashion the other negro men and women with great facility."²⁷ Similarly, in 1671, the municipal council of Salvador complained to the Crown that the white residents of Bahia were suffering great damage "because of the many slave deaths caused by the *feiticeiros*." The suspects could not be prosecuted because there was not enough evidence, but the accused were exiled to far-away places "where they could not

²⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 18, Livro 219, ff. 299-300.

do so much damage."²⁸ Though never approaching the epidemic levels of Renaissance Europe, the Brazilian "witch-hunt" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was certainly more pronounced than the Portuguese variant, with Africans being the prime suspects in the murders of their fellow slaves.

For instance, in 1685, a wealthy Bahian planter named André Gomes de Medina accused Simão Congo of murdering fifteen slaves with witchcraft.²⁹ Similarly, in 1687, Bahian slaveowner Manuel Leite Feira "presumed that a negro of a neighbor of his...whose name is Pedro Dongo (Ndongo) gave *feitiços* to some slaves of his, some dying and others being gravely ill."³⁰ Five years later in Pernambuco, a slave named Ventura was accused of killing three slaves in a very short time. Ventura's master, "out of fear, hides the negro when they come for him [and] one presumes that he consents to what [Ventura] does."³¹ In 1698, Jerónimo Álvares denounced four different slaves for killing other

²⁸ Documentos históricos. Biblioteca Nacional de Rio de Janeiro. 67 (Rio de Janeiro, 1945), 132-133.

²⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No 8464. Also see Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 130-130v. For a detailed discussion of this case, see chapter 7, 236-241 *passim*.

³⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 59, Livro 256, ff. 135-145.

³¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 69, Livro 263, ff. 282.

slaves in the parish of Matoim in Bahia.³² One year later, in 1699, a slaveowner named Joseph Fernandes accused a neighboring slave of killing one of his slaves with *feitiços* in Rio São Francisco, Bahia.³³

Finally, during the second decade of the eighteenth century, two slaves, Gaspar da Costa and Gonçalo de Cuna, were accused of various witchcraft murders across northern Brazil. The two slaves originally lived in Pernambuco, but were exiled to Bahia after their master determined that they were killing other slaves. In Bahia, they were again accused of killing with *feitiços* and were sold to Espírito Santo. When they arrived in Espírito Santo, Gaspar was thrown in jail for his "criminal" activity, but he escaped to his master's house where he continued "killing people as he was accustomed to doing before."³⁴

The custom of selling away slaves suspected of witchcraft was not unusual, since masters had real fears of their slaves' religious powers. But those whose slaves were the victims of "witchcraft" had little recourse. Some slaveowners tried to defend their economic interests by taking up their grievances with the master of the slave

³² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 12658.

³³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 71, Livro 265, ff. 430-430v.

³⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 87, Livro 280, ff. 45-46.

"witch." In Rio de Janeiro in the early 1780s, a poor widow named Teresa Maria de Jesus discovered that one of her slaves, a man named José, was "full of *feitiços*." José knew that his illness was the work of a woman named Rosa, slave of one Captain Vidal Rodrigues. Teresa Maria carried José with her to the house of the captain and demanded that Rosa cure José. Otherwise, she insisted, the captain should be prepared to purchase the dying José. Teresa Maria appealed to the captain, telling him that she was poor and alone and could not afford to lose José's labor. Captain Rodrigues responded by severely beating Rosa, who was unable to provide a cure for José. José was eventually healed by another slave.³⁵

Although many African understandings of religious malevolence persisted in Brazil, one way in which malevolence clearly was transformed was in the "bewitching" of fellow Africans. Slaveholders' fears that Africans were destroying their human property made understandings of religious malevolence far more complex and multi-layered in Brazil than they were in Africa. On the one hand, just as in Africa, Africans may have been using their religious powers in attempts to reconcile disruptions that arose within their own communities. Certainly, everyday misfortunes were still sometimes attributed to other

³⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3641.

Africans, especially where there were perceived social distinctions within slave communities.³⁶ On the other hand, an attack on another slave using African religious powers was always more than a personal attack; it was also a strike against the master's economic and social well-being. Every act of malevolent "witchcraft" against a slave became an act of resistance against the slaveocracy. The depletion of slaves due to "witchcraft"--whether real or imagined--was a blow to colonial order. Thus, African religious power operated on at least two overlapping levels in the African-Portuguese diaspora--one, the "traditional" communal level, and the other a "global" anti-slavery level. No longer just a way of addressing local or "traditional" problems, African religious power posed a real and dangerous threat to the Portuguese colonial enterprise in Brazil.

Witchcraft and Ritual in the Arena of Love

African religious power was not only used to oppose the condition of slavery; it was also used as a way of fighting against various misfortunes that were a result of the institution. The extreme gender imbalances that characterized many Brazilian slave communities, especially

³⁶ See, for instance, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 44, Livro 241, ff. 118-138v.; No. 76, Livro 270, ff. 86-87. But these social distinctions were often perpetuated by the master. Thus, one way to get back at both slave and master was to "bewitch" the deviant slave.

during the seventeenth century, certainly inspired religious responses by African men, who on average outnumbered women by a ratio of two to one. In 1638, Father Francisco Monteiro Soares, Vicar of Ilhéus, reported that a "negro de Guiné" named António "was a *feiticeiro* who separated wives from their husbands."³⁷ Presumably, António made his *feitiços* so that other African men could cohabit with the scarce numbers of women. António's "witchcraft" also might be interpreted as a statement on the cultural inapplicability of Western conceptions of marriage in African slave communities, where, as we have already noted, Africans adhered to a variety of "family" and kinship patterns that were not in keeping with Western norms.

While some Africans sought to remove potential sexual partners from the strictures of Western marriage, others took out their sexual frustrations in more personal assaults on their fellow slaves. In 1699, a creole slave named Francisca was suffering from *feitiços* in Bahia. When she was administered an antidote, she vomited up "a ball of hairs with some black seeds." Francisca claimed that the *feitiços* were made for her by an African slave who was angry that she would not sleep with him.³⁸

³⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor no. 18, Livro 219, ff. 301-303.

³⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 71, Livro 265, ff. 430-430v.

By the eighteenth century, as the gender balance in some slave communities became more evenly distributed, slave women also began using their religious powers against their female rivals. Around 1780, a slave named Rosa "had public fame for being a *feiticeira* who killed various slaves and cattle" in Rio de Janeiro. At one time, Rosa was married to a slave named Fellis. When she learned that Fellis was also married to another slave named Eva, Rosa killed Eva, and later Fellis, both with *feitiços*. Rosa was also "suspected of killing all of the babies that were being born to the slave women" of her master, Captain Vidal Rodrigues.³⁹

In Portugal, the isolation of Africans and their descendants was even more acute than in Brazil, prompting some to take desperate measures to find a mate. In 1733, a free African couple, Manuel Pereira da Silva (Congo) and Bernarda de São Dionísio (Angola), were terrorized by a jealous seductress in Lisbon. Manuel confessed that he was assisting at the celebration of Nossa Senhora da Aracaya, when he met a black woman named Antónia Maria do Rosário. Several days later, the woman sought out Manuel and asked him if he wanted anything from her. Manuel responded that he did not want anything from her, because she had nothing to offer him. Angry that she had been spurned, Antónia told Manuel that he would pay for what he said.

³⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3641.

Several weeks later, Manuel was in his house "when he came down with such a great perturbation in the head" that he grabbed his cloak and hat and went looking for Antônia. According to Manuel, when he arrived at Antônia's door, his "perturbation" calmed down. And when he spoke to her, it calmed even further. Manuel had sex with Antônia and returned home. Manuel claimed that when he was away from Antônia, he continued to suffer from her "evil," a constant fever, abdominal pains, and swelling on his face and stomach. Wanting to get rid of this menace, Manuel stole a silk garment from his wife and carried it to Antônia. Manuel hoped that this gesture would buy her good will, but his act of desperation backfired. Shortly after Antônia received her gift from Manuel, Manuel's wife entered Antônia's house and reclaimed the stolen garment. Attached to the garment was a small package, containing a red rag, some little sticks, some bones, and four pieces of cane. Manuel's wife soon began suffering from neck and chest pains that kept her from sleeping, as well as headaches and stinging sensations all over her body.

Exhausted by his and his wife's suffering, Manuel summoned Antônia to his house and demanded that she remove the *feitiços* that she gave them. Antônia admitted that she had made the *feitiços*, but that she could not remove them without first speaking to her teacher, a slave named Maria de Jesus. Maria de Jesus arrived at the house and said that

she made the *feitiços* at the request of Antónia. She confessed that Manuel's *feitiços* consisted of some water that Antónia dripped on him, water that she had used to wash her private parts. Maria de Jesus also confessed that in addition to the *feitiços* that were attached to her silk garment, Bernarda was also affected by a sack of woolen fabric that was attached to the head of her bed. Inside the sack was a doll with pins stuck through the head and a needle stuck through the body. A similar doll was also found under Bernarda's mattress.⁴⁰

Not all of the attempts to find love were harmful or violent. Some remedies were more coercive in nature, designed to entice a potential lover to accede to the wishes of the one who was trying to attract his/her attentions. For example, in 1688, the Mozambican slave, António, used a small stick as a charm to attract women in Lisbon. António paid another slave three cruzados for the red stick, which was about the size of a finger. Supposedly, if the stick were to touch "any white or black woman or single or married and of any condition or quality, she would immediately give herself up to the one who touched her on any part of her body and even on the clothes." Testing the stick's effectiveness, António immediately carried it with him through the city. António passed "a negra he had never seen

⁴⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 99, Livro 292, ff. 283-300v.

before" and "touched her with the stick on the outside of her clothes...without saying a word to her." As Antônio moved away from her, the woman called for him two times. Antônio calmly walked over to meet the woman. After a short conversation, he walked her back to his living quarters and had sex with her. The woman then departed, and Antônio never saw her again.⁴¹

Slaves in Brazil used similar substances to draw the attentions of potential lovers. In 1725, two female slaves in Cabo Frio, near the city of Rio de Janeiro, used various "diabolical modes in order to get the men that they wanted." Francisca and Luzia, both "Guiné" slaves, washed their private parts, saving the water to give to men to drink. When the men drank the water, the women were able to achieve their "evil intents." Similarly, Francisca killed a vulture, and taking its brains, she made a fine powder out of them. She threw the powder at "any person she wished to have illicit acts with," and within a few hours the man was in her clutches.⁴²

Francisca and Luzia's use of powerful substances from the natural world was not unusual in either African or European traditions. Some of the most commonly used

⁴¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 64, Livro 259, ff. 33-33v.

⁴² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 96, Livro 289, ff. 397-407v.

substances to attract members of the opposite sex were elements from the human body--blood, sperm, urine, hair, fingernails, and so on.⁴³ Because Portuguese and Africans had shared understandings of the power of these human elements, we find several cases in which whites prescribed remedies to blacks. This was especially the case in Portugal, where blacks were often atomized in such a way that access to other blacks was quite limited.

For instance, in 1671, in the small Portuguese town of Villanova de Anços, a Cape Verdean slave named Esperança confessed that she had an affair with a young man named Manuel Francisco de Oliveira. Esperança learned that Manuel was preparing to marry another woman, and in order to stop the marriage, Esperança looked for some *feitiços*. She went to a white woman named Sebastiana de Carvalhal, who was esteemed for making *feitiços* for "diverse persons." Sebastiana told Esperança that in order to attach herself to Manuel, she needed to bring her some of his hairs and semen. Eight days passed before Esperança returned with specimens of Manuel's hair and semen. Sebastiana put them into a vase and assured Esperança that she could rest easily. As long as she was in possession of Manuel's hair and semen, he would always search for her, even if he married the other

⁴³ For Africa, see Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:121; Hilton, The Kingdom of Kongo, 15-18. For Europe, see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 171-172; Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 97-98.

woman. Just as Sebastiana predicted, Manuel married the other woman, but he ran away from her, searching for Esperança.⁴⁴

Slaves in Portugal also took love advice from Moors. In the 1730s, in Lisbon, a creole slave named Marcelina Maria received counsel from a Moorish slave named Antónia. Searching for ways to obtain and keep men, Marcelina got several remedies from Antónia. The first was designed to conquer the will of a man and make him want to have sex. Antónia told Marcelina that in order to get any man, she should cook an egg and sleep with it between her legs. She should then feed the egg to the man she desired. Antónia also taught Marcelina that in order to keep a man, she should moisten her finger in her vagina and make two crosses over the eyes of her man. If she did this, her man would never stray, nor leave her.⁴⁵

Even though Africans and their descendants embraced some elements of European and Moorish traditions in Portugal, when Africans themselves proffered remedies, we can discern differences in the types of objects used to achieve the remedies. For example, in Lisbon, in 1737, a white man named António went to a slave named João Angola to see if he could "make something that would make a woman want

⁴⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 6821.

⁴⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 631. Also see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 239.

him very much, since he wanted to marry for fear that they would make him a soldier." João Angola told António that he knew of no remedy, but that he was familiar with a man who might be able to help. João went to visit another slave, Domingos, who was locked up in the city jail for debts he owed to his master. Domingos gave João two small sticks. He instructed him to tell António that he should put a part of the stick in his mouth before he went searching for a woman and that this would attract any woman he might want.⁴⁶ João carried the sticks to António and collected a payment, which he split with Domingos.⁴⁷

The sticks that were sold by Domingos and João were not unlike the stick used by António Mozambique, or the ground vulture's brain used by Francisca Guiné. All of these were substances utilized by Africans to help rectify the void in human contact and affection that was created by slavery. In Brazil, gender imbalances and instabilities caused by death, disease, and forced separations inspired male and female slaves to seek remedies that would give them access to members of the opposite sex. In Portugal, these same obstacles were exacerbated by the acute isolation and marginalization felt by peoples of African descent. Even

⁴⁶ Licking a small stick and making a wish was a potent ritual in Dahomean voodoo. See Herskovits, Dahomey, 2:283-284.

⁴⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15628.

though some of the objects and rituals used by Africans to address affairs of the heart dovetailed with Portuguese "superstitions," we should not lose sight of the fact that these were still very African responses to misfortune. The sticks, powders, and rituals were all used in an attempt to control the temporal world and transform their condition. The everyday use of such charms, talismans, and rituals was a common feature of slave communities in the Portuguese world.

Central African Rituals and Beliefs in Controlling Everyday Affairs

Africans used a variety of charms, talismans, and rituals to bring themselves luck and to protect themselves from various maladies in their everyday lives. The earliest of these rituals to be noted in Brazilian slave communities were of Central African origin. Three rituals, in particular, stand out in the documents: the *quijila*, the *tambo*, and an unnamed ritual used to discover the whereabouts of a missing person.

The *quijila*, which in the Kimbundu language means "prohibition," were dietary restrictions that were followed by many Angolans during the seventeenth century. According to Father Cavazzi, the *quijila* were old Mbundu laws and customs that were re-instituted in Angola during the seventeenth century by Temba-Ndumba, who was the wife of

Zimbo, chief of the Imbangala (Jaga). Cavazzi noted that these "ridiculous and superstitious" laws were traditions that were long followed by Mbundu ancestors. They included prohibitions against eating pigs, elephants, snakes, and other animals. These dietary taboos were believed to bring success in war, hunting, and agriculture.⁴⁸

In Brazil, some Angolan slaves continued to follow these strict dietary restrictions, abstaining from "meat, fish, seafood, and many other things."⁴⁹ In a 1720 report from Rio de Janeiro, it was noted that Angolans followed these "*quigillas*," fearing that if they broke the taboos, they would immediately fall dead or become crippled in the feet and hands.⁵⁰ Portuguese observers judged that the "*quigillas*" were "an explicit pact that these pagans make with the devil...that passes by tradition to children, grandchildren, and many more descendants."⁵¹ Though the negative Portuguese assessment is predictable, it also

⁴⁸ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:179.

⁴⁹ Nuno Marques Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:133.

⁵⁰ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v. For those slaves who adhered to these dietary restrictions, nutritional deficiencies certainly were exacerbated. Since almost all meats were prohibited, protein deficiencies must have been particularly acute. Whether these Angolans were able to substitute beans, eggs, or other protein-fortified foods for meat remains uncertain.

⁵¹ Nuno Marques Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:133.

reveals the tenacity of certain Angolan beliefs in Brazil. Not only were Angolans adhering to their own systems of belief, but they were succeeding in passing these beliefs on to their offspring, just one more indication of the resilience and survivability of Central African beliefs in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Brazil.

The second Central African ritual practice to appear in Brazil, the *tambo*, was an elaborate funeral ceremony designed to insure the eternal happiness of the dead person's soul. In Angola, these ceremonies were preceded by eight days of mourning in which the body was displayed, receiving the respects from neighbors and family. At the end of the eighth day, the body was prepared with a ritual bath of roots and herbs "in order that the soul of the dead would not return [to earth]...and without this ceremony, they [Angolans] believed that the soul would appear and make them sick."⁵² The next morning, the funeral party commenced. Father Cavazzi described it as follows:

The party begins early in the morning, and during the time that that infernal mockery lasts, all of the surrounding environs for a distance of one mile remain giddy. The dancers, with the great admiration of those who see them, spin around on one foot like

⁵² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 72, Livro 266, ff. 39-41v. (August 5, 1698--Luanda).

tops; afterward, entangled among [the dead], they quickly give turns, raising confusing voices, without anyone knowing if they speak, sing, cry, laugh, if they lament, or if they are happy about the death of that person.

Among such delirious ones, there was one elected *xinguila*, this is the priest or minister of the funeral, coming close to the face of the dead one, he asks him repeatedly what was the cause of his death. But as the dead can not speak, the *xinguila* responds in the name of the dead one, and with an altered voice....

Meanwhile, they do not forget themselves, eating in order to recharge their strength, nor of the dead person, judging that he needs food just as they do. Then, with their stomachs filled, they throw the rest of the food and drink over the cadaver....⁵³

Given the absolute necessity of proper ritual burials in most Central African societies, it should not surprise us that slaves continued these practices in Brazil, as well as in other locations in the diaspora.⁵⁴ The alternative was

⁵³ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:128-129.

⁵⁴ In seventeenth-century Cartagena, Colombia (New Granada), the Jesuit Father Pedro Claver noted that funerals were "social occasions" (quote from Thornton) where "certain assemblies of Moors of the same nation [*stripe*] meet when someone of their nation dies." Similarly, in seventeenth-century Virginia, slaves gathered "in great numbers in

to be permanently victimized and tortured by the disgruntled souls of the dead. In most locations, slavemasters were not receptive to their slaves' wishes to provide proper burial ceremonies for their deceased brethren. Indeed, the corpses of dead slaves were often left to rot in shallow graves, where they were dug up and eaten by dogs or wild animals. Others were dumped onto beaches and taken out to sea with the tide.⁵⁵ The appearance of human bones that sometimes surfaced in the pastures worked by slaves understandably caused great fear and scandal among those who found them.⁵⁶

Despite the disdain that most slavemasters showed for their slaves' spiritual needs, some masters allowed their slaves to continue with the *tambo* rituals, especially in urban areas. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, an ecclesiastical report from Rio de Janeiro described the "Tambes of deceased Negros of the city." The "tambes" of Rio de Janeiro were remarkably similar to the Imbangala *tambo* described by Cavazzi. The Brazilian variant took place in the slave quarters (*senzalas*) and consisted of large gatherings of slaves "with their atabaques

makeing and holding of Funneralls for Dead Negroes." Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 202, 228.

⁵⁵ Russell-Wood, The Black Man in Slavery and Freedom, 132.

⁵⁶ See, for example, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 55, Livro 252, ff. 367-397v. (May 30, 1678--Sergipe do Conde).

(tamborines), *engomas* (drums), and other instruments." Just as in Angola, the slaves ate and drank, and the ceremony was presided over by a "*feiticeiro* who assumes various practices." The Catholic priest who lodged the report viewed the *tambes* through a sexual prism, noting that the slaves cohabited "indiscriminately" and that "one finds some licentious whites" at these affairs.⁵⁷

Whether or not people had sexual liaisons at these funeral parties is probably unimportant.⁵⁸ Certainly, the *tambes* provided a rare opportunity for slaves to socialize "freely" and reclaim a modicum of humanity, which might have led to increased sexual contact. But the deeper meanings of the *tambes* should not be lost behind the moralistic clamor. Central African slaves required these elaborate funeral ceremonies to appease the spirits of the deceased. Otherwise, the spirits would return, spreading more of the death, disease, and suffering that were already rampant in most slave communities.

The third ritual, allegedly of Angolan origin, involved the recovery of missing persons. It was believed that if one tied certain cords or a piece of clothing of a missing

⁵⁷ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v.

⁵⁸ However, one might argue that sexual interactions at funerals were deeply symbolic expressions of the human capacity for regeneration and renewal, perpetuating the life force and insuring the continuity of the kinship group.

person to the door through which he left, he would soon return. In Brazil, the ritual most often was used to recover runaway slaves. For example, in the 1690s, a slave of Captain Domingos Pinto Ferrás ran away from his home in Bahia. The captain's wife, Maria Pereira, moored a piece of cloth that belonged to the runaway slave to the back door of their house. Two days later, the slave returned to his master, who attributed the slave's speedy return to his wife's ritual.⁵⁹

Bolsas, Mandingas, and other Talismans from the "Guinea" Coast

By the end of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century, the most popular and widely-used talisman in the African-Portuguese diaspora was the *bolsa de mandinga*. *Bolsas* could literally be found in almost every corner of the Portuguese world, from Bahia to Madeira, and

⁵⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 68, Livro 262, ff. 176-183v. It is not clear how widespread this practice was in Brazil. This is the only example that I was able to find. Still, the practice was prevalent enough to warrant notice on a list of ten "rites of pagans from Angola" that was written in Rio de Janeiro in 1720. ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Sancto Ofício XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, ff. 123-123v. and 235-235v. (Ritos gentílicos de Angolla). "Quando foge algum escravo se sabem aporta por donde fugio vião de certas medidas de cordeis, e dentro dos dias sinalados, se recolhe o do escravo a casa do Senhor."

from Mazagão to India.⁶⁰ Typically, the *bolsa* was a pouch made of cloth or leather that was worn around the neck, or other parts of the body, on a cord or string. Inside the pouch could be any number of substances including folded pieces of paper with Christian orations written on them, rocks, sticks, roots, bones, hairs, animal skins, feathers, powders, consecrated particles, and so on. The various combinations of substances were prescriptions that were designed to help the wearers in their everyday affairs.

Each *bolsa* had its own virtues. Some protected the wearer from the master's beatings. Others assured victories in games. And still others had the power to help slaves escape from bondage. But by far the most common form of *bolsa* was one that protected slaves in quarrels. These *bolsas* had the virtue not only of protecting from fistic blows, but they also made the wearer impervious to knives, swords, and even gunshots.

While similar pouches of substances were used by Europeans from as far back as the Middle Ages, the proliferation of *bolsas* in the Portuguese world during the eighteenth century can be attributed primarily to Africans,

⁶⁰ For the use of *bolsas* in Mazagão, North Africa, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 70, Livro 264, f. 205 (March 18, 1698); for *bolsas* in India, see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 66, Livro 260, ff. 42-57 (1689). Others will be discussed below.

particularly those from the "Guinea" and "Mina" coasts.⁶¹ The use of the term *bolsa de mandinga* makes clear that African *bolsas* were to be distinguished from those that might be more familiar to the Portuguese. The first documented mention of Mandingo *bolsas* comes from the Jesuit Father Balthezar Barreira. In a long description of the Guinea coast written in 1606, Barreira related the practices of the Mandingos, including the use of *bolsas*:

They follow the sect of Mohammed...they have mosques and schools of reading and writing and many priests (*casizes*) who carry this plague to other reigns from the band in the south, tricking the people with *bolsas* that they make with metal and of very well-cured leather in which they put writings full of lies, affirming that having these *bolsas* with you, neither in war, nor in peace, will anything bad happen...⁶²

Barreira's quote reveals that the Mandingo used *bolsas* in their attempts to proselytize among non-Muslims along the Guinea coast. The "lies" that were inside the *bolsas* were

⁶¹ For early uses of *bolsas* in Europe, see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 211-212; Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 113-114.

⁶² ANTT, CSJ, Maço 68, No. 119. One can find a similar description of Mandingo pouches in Richard Jobson, The Golden Trade (1623), reprint, Devonshire, 1904, 67.

Islamic prayers and orations drawn from the Koran. As Islamic scholars moved across the region, *bolsas* spread "to other reigns," eventually becoming prevalent across all of West Africa.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, Mandingo remedies similar to the *bolsas* described by Father Berreira were already being used by the mixed-race Afro-Portuguese community around the port of Cacheu, Guinea. In 1656, Crispina Peres Banhu, a *parda* woman, was having a difficult childbirth in Cacheu. In order to relieve her suffering and initiate the birth, Ambrósio Gomes, a white man, tied some cords of black and white cotton around her waist and arm. These cords were those that "the negro Mandingas were accustomed to bringing...and they have them for their relics." Ambrósio Gomes told Crispina that "he used the same cords in order not to be injured in war." In addition to the cords, Ambrósio also gave Crispina some powders with water, which she drank. The combination of the cords and the drink facilitated the birth of Crispina's baby. Once the child was born, Ambrósio removed the cords from one of Crispina's arms and tied them around her other arm. He told her that she should leave the cords attached until her baby walked. When the baby finally walked, Ambrósio returned and removed the cords, collecting a goat as payment for his

remedies.⁶³

One of the first recorded cases of a slave using a *bolsa* in the African-Portuguese diaspora occurred in Lisbon in 1673, but at this early juncture, the offending pouch was still called a *bolsa*, and not a *bolsa de mandinga*. A "negro" slave named Manuel was denounced by a cleric named Miguel Gomes da Rama. Gomes da Rama said that some time around May of 1672, Manuel was collecting water at the public fountain when he got into a fight with a soldier who was on guard. The soldier tried to stab Manuel, but Manuel dodged the soldier's thrust. Manuel taunted the soldier, telling him that he should go ahead and stab him, but the soldier refused. Gomes da Rama, who witnessed the incident, asked Manuel what he would have done if the soldier had actually stabbed him. Manuel responded that if he were stabbed, the dagger "would not do any damage because the dagger would bend and would not enter." Gomes da Rama asked him how this could be, and Manuel held up one of his arms. Tied to his wrist was "a sewn piece that appeared...to have something inside of it." Manuel said that the pouch protected him from harm, and that if Gomes da Rama wanted to bet on its effectiveness, he would gladly bet five or six *tostois*⁶⁴ that no knife could penetrate him. Gomes da Rama

⁶³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 2079.

⁶⁴ One *tostão* was equal to one hundred *réis*.

declined Manuel's offer and determined that he must be a *feiticeiro*. As further evidence, Gomes da Rama had heard that on the island of Madeira, where Manuel worked before arriving in Lisbon, he was renowned for putting his sword on the ground with the blade facing upward. With the point of the sword against his chest, Manuel would throw himself on top of the sword, and the sword would double without entering his body.⁶⁵

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the virtues of African *bolsas* were becoming well-known in Lisbon, and the African character of these pouches was beginning to be emphasized. Public demonstrations, like the one offered by Manuel, had become commonplace, and some slaves had a thriving business in selling *bolsas* to blacks and whites alike.⁶⁶ For instance, in 1700, a Cape Verdean slave named Francisco sold a variety of *bolsas* to white men in Lisbon. Francisco's *bolsas* not only protected the wearer from injury in fights, but he could also make ones that ensured victory in games or guaranteed that the wearer could attract any woman he might want.⁶⁷

In the letter to the Inquisitorial prosecutor

⁶⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 51, Livro 248, ff. 283-285v.

⁶⁶ For a description of the public demonstrations, see Paiva, Bruxaria e superstição, 113-114.

⁶⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 72, Livro 266, ff. 77-91.

(*promotor*) that was included with Francisco's denunciation, the priest who heard the denunciation made an explicit link between African beliefs and witchcraft. In describing Francisco's *bolsas*, the priest wrote: "One presumes the likelihood of a pact with the devil, [since] the said *bolsas* come to him from his homeland [Cape Verde]...and it is quite apparent to presume the frequency of *feitiçarias* that there are among that cast of people..."⁶⁸ In other words, because Francisco was a black African, his *bolsas* and their powers were automatically assumed to be the work of the Devil. The *bolsas* that were well-known in medieval Europe were being transformed into the *bolsas de mandinga* that were the work of Africans, agents for the Devil.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the *bolsas de mandinga* took on their own distinct "diabolical" character, but they remained common among all castes of people in the Portuguese world. In Angola, a white soldier gave an Angolan soldier, Vicente de Morais, a *bolsa* that was to "free one from dangers." Doubting the authenticity of the *bolsa* that was given to him by the white man, Vicente decided to perform an experiment to see if it would work. He put the *bolsa* around the neck of a stray dog and shot him with his pistol. The dog was not injured, leading Vicente

⁶⁸ Ibid.

to conclude that "the *bolsa* was *Mandinga*."⁶⁹

Perhaps the clearest indication of the proliferation of *bolsas de mandinga* in the African-Portuguese diaspora comes from a series of cases from the late 1720s and early 1730s. During this period, a number of well-traveled slaves were denounced for using *bolsas de mandinga* in both Portugal and Brazil. From just a handful of Inquisition cases, an intricate web of relationships and exchanges between dozens of African *mandingueiros* emerges. In 1729, Luís de Lima, who was born on the Ouidah (Judá) coast in Dahomey, confessed to using *bolsas* in Brazil (Pernambuco) and Portugal (Porto). Luís proclaimed that he "never felt fear of anything" when wearing his *bolsa de mandinga*. He also said that he had been stabbed on numerous occasions and never been injured. In his confession, Luís named 26 other slaves, many of them also Africans from the "Mina" coast, who used *bolsas* or other "*mandingas*." The majority of those named in Luís's confession had spent some time in Brazil before going to Portugal with their masters.⁷⁰

Among those named in Luís's confession was a friend of

⁶⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 5477 (November 4, 1716).

⁷⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 1630. For another case that is tied in with Luís de Lima's, see ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 7840 (Pedro Joseph, single slave, born on the Mina Coast, resident in Porto). Still another case from Lisbon in 1731 is ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16479.

his named Manuel de Piedade, a Bahian-born slave who was jailed in Lisbon in 1730. Manuel had run away from his ship-captain master in Porto. After five slaves denounced him before the tribunal in Coimbra, Manuel was jailed in Lisbon for being a *mandingueiro*. His most serious crime was selling the ingredients and materials needed to manufacture *bolsas de mandinga*. He was alleged to have prepared the ingredients in the countryside, outside of the cities in which he lived, in concert with the Devil.⁷¹

Only one year later, two more Africans, both from the Dahomean town of Ouidah, were processed for being *mandingueiros*. José Francisco Pedroso and José Francisco Pereira were the slaves of two brothers who lived in Lisbon. They were accused of manufacturing and selling *bolsas de mandinga* to various people in and around Lisbon, but both were suspected of bringing their knowledge of "witchcraft" from Brazil, "in whose state there is frequent use of *mandingas*." Like Luís de Lima in Coimbra, José Francisco Pedroso named five partners, all of whom had connections to Brazil. Pedroso himself had lived for some time in Rio de Janeiro and claimed that there were many other *mandingueiros*

⁷¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 9972. Also see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 217.

whose names he could not remember.⁷²

The threads that tied all of these *mandingueiros* together, besides their personal connections, were their common origins and enslavement in Brazil. The majority hailed from the Mina coast, and more specifically the Portuguese fort at Ouidah, which was established in 1721. It seems quite possible that some of these men knew each other even prior to their departure from the African coast, although there is no evidence to support such a connection. When they arrived in Brazil, they were entering a colonial world that, in the view of metropolitan Portuguese, was teeming with human "savages"--Indians, Africans, and even colonial whites. Witchcraft was believed to be widespread, much of it of African origin. In 1714, Father Manuel Carvalho wrote that "generally in that land, one uses *feitiçarias*, *mandingas*, *cartas de tocar*, and superstitious cures with words for many ailments, and in the *sertões* (hinterlands), to cure cattle. And the *quibangos* [are used] in order to divine who made thefts and some things of the future, everything done with publicity..."⁷³ From the

⁷² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 11774 (Processo de José Francisco Pedroso); Processos, No. 11767 (Processo de José Francisco Pereira). Also see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 217-218.

⁷³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 79, Livro 272, ff. 397-397v. *Cartas de tocar*, literally "touch letters," were of European origin. They were pieces of paper with various orations and drawings that were reputed to draw the sexual interest of any person who was

Portuguese perspective, Brazil truly was a dangerous place, populated by innumerable human "beasts" who were the very embodiment of the Devil.⁷⁴

Once these Mina slaves arrived in Lisbon, they were suspected of witchcraft, not only by virtue of their blackness/Africanness, but also by their ties to Brazil. To some extent, Portuguese suspicions may have been correct, especially if "witchcraft" was understood as a sustained religious opposition to slavery. The common experiences of these Mina slaves from Africa, to Brazil, to Portugal, forged a oneness among them that transcended geographical boundaries. No matter where they were in the African-Portuguese diaspora, these slaves sought one another out and exchanged religious remedies that directly addressed the hardships that resulted from their slavery.

We have already seen how *bolsas* worked as armor against knives and guns, but *bolsas* and other *mandingas*⁷⁵ were also

touched with them. Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 228-230. African slaves used *cartas de tocar* in their *bolsas de mandinga* as another form of talisman. See discussion of written words below.

⁷⁴ For the Portuguese view of Brazil as a place alternating between heaven, purgatory, and hell, see Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, especially 371-378. The "ambiguity" of Brazilian "popular" religion rendered it a veritable purgatory in the minds of most Portuguese religious thinkers.

⁷⁵ The *bolsa* was the most common form of *mandinga*, but any object or talisman that was reputed to protect or bring luck could be referred to as a "*mandinga*."

used to escape the blows of slavery. Some slaves went to great lengths to release themselves from their master's abuses. In the 1720s, a slave named Joseph bought a series of *mandingas* that were aimed at his violent master in Porto. First, he bought a tooth that would allow him to run away from his master. This remedy apparently failed. Later, he went to another slave, the aforementioned Luís de Lima, and bought a prescription that would compel his master to sell him. This remedy was highly effective. Joseph's master informed him that he indeed planned to sell him away. But fearing that his next master would be equally as vicious as his first one, Joseph again sought the help of the *mandingueiro* Luís de Lima. Using a string of shells, the Mina slave divined that Joseph would have greater success in his new master's house, which he did.⁷⁶

Other slaves used their *bolsas de mandinga* to protect themselves from the master's whip. In 1732, a Lisbon slave named António de Sousa reacted with contempt when his master punished him "very roughly." António was protected by a blue cloth *bolsa* filled with red feathers "of some bird from Brazil," a piece of bull horn, and some little pieces of white paper.⁷⁷ Five years later, also in Lisbon, a slave named Domingos offered João Angola a *mandinga* that allowed

⁷⁶ ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processos, No. 1630.

⁷⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Novos Maços, Maço 27, No. 41.

its owner to open locked doors and exit through them without being noticed. Using this *mandinga*, Domingos told João that he could run away from his master.⁷⁸

Similarly, around 1742, on the fazenda of Olho de Peixe in the *sertão* (hinterlands) of the village of Jacobina, Archbishopric of Bahia, an Angolan slave named João da Silva aided a runaway slave named Manuel de Barros. Manuel was on his way from the *sertão* to the city of Bahia, when he stopped over at Olho de Peixe. João offered him some food to sustain him for the rest of his journey. As a token of thanks, Manuel gave João a leather *bolsa* that had the power to free him from his servitude. João never capitalized on the alleged power of the *bolsa*. In fact, he showed it to several white people, asking them if it would be good to carry the *bolsa* around his neck. A cattle rancher opened the *bolsa* and told João that it contained various ingredients, including the oration of San Marcos. Eventually, João was betrayed by a young girl named Teresa. He was called before Padre João Mendes, Vicar of the Freguesia of Santo António da Jacobina. The vicar opened the *bolsa*, revealing a square-shaped rock, a piece of garlic, two pieces of lead, a piece of consecrated host, and the oration of San Marcos. Ultimately, João was remitted to

⁷⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 15628. It is not clear whether the *mandinga* offered by Domingos was a *bolsa* or some other talisman.

Lisbon, where he was sentenced to appear before the Auto da Fé, publicly whipped, and exiled for four years to the Portuguese Algarve.⁷⁹

The presence of Christian orations inside of many *bolsas de mandinga* should not draw our attention away from the deeper meanings of the *bolsas*. Just as the original *bolsas* used by Muslims on the Guinea coast contained Arabic scripts from the Koran, so too did many *bolsas de mandinga* in the Portuguese world have writings and orations from the Bible and Catholicism. This does not necessarily indicate that the users of the *bolsas* were integrating Muslim or Christian theology into their spiritual world. We must remember that most non-Muslims in Africa and slaves in the Portuguese world were illiterate. If those carrying the *bolsas de mandinga* were even aware that the scrawl on the paper were words to be read, the power of the orations was probably not in what they said. Rather, the power most likely resided in the magic of the words themselves.

For many illiterate peoples, the written word literally seemed to "speak" to those doing the reading. African slaves, many of whom did not speak the languages of their captors, were astonished and amazed when they first

⁷⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 502. Two years earlier, in 1750, three other slaves were accused of carrying *bolsas de mandinga* in the Bahian village of Jacobina. See Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 220-221, from the following cases: ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, Nos. 508, 1131, and 1134.

encountered these papers and books that could "talk." In one of the first slave narratives ever published, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw described his first encounters with the written word. Gronniosaw, who grew up in Bournou, the "chief city" of the Kingdom of Zaara, was first enslaved by the Dutch. He explained his understanding of the strange and magical texts that were read by his first master:

[My master] used to read prayers in public to the ship's crew every Sabbath day; and when I first saw him read, I was never so surprised in my life, as when I saw the book talk to my master, for I thought it did, as I observed him to look upon it, and move his lips. I wished it would do so with me. As soon as my master had done reading, I followed him to the place where he put the book, being mightily delighted with it, and when nobody saw me, I opened it, and put my ear down close upon it, in great hopes that it would say something to me; but I was very sorry, and greatly disappointed, when I found that it would not speak.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, as Related by Himself (London, 1770) as quoted in Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment, 1772-1815, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and William L. Andrews (Washington, DC, 1998), 114-115.

Gronniosaw was not the only African who believed that books could speak. Other Africans, including the well-known Olaudah Equiano, believed similarly.⁸¹

For the majority of African slaves, literacy remained elusive, and the written word probably maintained its mysterious and magical quality throughout their lives. The Christian orations that were placed into *bolsas de mandinga* can therefore be understood in much the same way that we understand the other powerful objects that were put in *bolsas*. The written word was a magical talisman that provided powerful protection, perhaps drawing its power from God or the Catholic saints, but more likely getting its strength from the world of the dead. Inanimate objects (papers or books) that had the capacity to "talk" could only get their "voice" from the spirit world. To harness these voices and carry them in a pouch was powerful medicine indeed.

Conclusion

Over the course of the last three chapters, we have attempted to demonstrate the variety of religious responses

⁸¹ For a discussion of African encounters with "the word," see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: The Talking Book," in Pioneers of the Black Atlantic, 1-29. For a very different reaction to an encounter with "the word" among the Inca in Peru, see Patricia Seed, "'Failing to Marvel': Atahualpa's Encounter with the Word," Latin American Research Review 26 (1991), 7-32.

that Africans and their descendants raised against their treatment under slavery. In the process, we have shown how African religious forms were transformed, or perhaps even (re-)created, as a result of these brutal conditions. This does not mean that the African lens was abandoned, or even that particular ethnic rituals were abandoned. To the contrary, many of the Kongolese, Mbata, Ndembu, Imbangala, Arda, and "Mina" remedies remained the same from Africa to Europe and the Americas. But the symptoms of misfortune were radically changed with enslavement by the Portuguese. The everyday obstacles to survival grew, as did the struggle to maintain one's sense of humanity. These harsh new conditions required a new philosophical response, an expanded assault on the new forms of evil that were enslaving so many Africans and carrying them to their deaths in the *tumbeiros* (floating tombs) of the Middle Passage, or in the mines and cane fields of Brazil.⁸² While the content of African religious practices remained remarkably similar in the Portuguese colonial world, the temporal goals of these rituals and beliefs were shifted in accordance with the challenges presented by slavery.

Much of what the Portuguese called "witchcraft" were desperate attempts to resist the hardships of slavery that we discussed in the first four chapters--death, disease,

⁸² For this evocative definition of *tumbeiros*, see Miller, Way of Death, 314.

illness, gender imbalance, community instability, and master abuses. Slaves used divination, medicine, and "witchcraft" to address these new and unfamiliar social ills. African forms of divination shed light on those "malevolent" slaves and freedmen who attempted to deviate from the social or economic norms of the slave community. Divinations also were used to free Africans from "guilt" and find whites responsible for certain crimes. African cures addressed the wide range of new diseases and social illnesses that were encountered in the diaspora. And finally, African "witchcraft" was utilized as a tool of outright resistance, as slaves maimed and killed the master, his loved ones, and his property (human and animal). In short, the mental horizon of African religion was necessarily expanded to meet the needs of a slave community that was constantly under siege.

If African religion was to some extent "re-created" and re-cast by the conditions of slavery, then the Portuguese were equally as adaptable in their re-creation of "witchcraft" as an archetypical African form. Rituals of "witchcraft" that had distinct European and Portuguese provenance were inexplicably transformed into African rituals. The Portuguese *peneira* scissor and sieve divination was converted to the Central African *quibando* divination, just as Portuguese *bolsas* became *bolsas de mandinga*. It was not enough that the "heathen" practices of

Africans already put them in alliance with the Devil. The Portuguese reinforced African "Otherness" by re-inventing their own forms of "savagery" and giving them an African veneer. This dialectic between racism and witchcraft changed the meanings of Portuguese witchcraft and hardened racial attitudes. As anthropologist Michael Taussig has so aptly put it, in the colonial worlds, witchcraft and "magic" functioned as "a gathering point for Otherness in a series of racial and class differentiations embedded in the distinctions made between Church and magic, and science and magic...[an] Otherness in which savagery and racism [were] tightly knotted."⁸³ Race and culture became fused, as Africans became the receptacle for all things "savage."

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the increased marginalization of Africans as dangerous, exotic savages, many Portuguese, especially those in Brazil, began embracing African forms of religious power. We have already shown how individual Portuguese used African divinations and cures to address their temporal concerns. We have also shown how African "witchcraft" could wreak terror in Brazilian slave communities. But African religious power transcended specific individuals and communities. African religious practices penetrated into the deepest crevices of some of

⁸³ Michael T. Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing (Chicago, 1987), 465.

the most sacred Portuguese institutions, including the Catholic Church. In the final two chapters, we will look more closely at how African religions adapted to the challenges of Catholicism. We will also examine the impact of African religion and culture on the Catholic Church in Brazil.

Chapter 10

African Catholicism in the Portuguese World

So far, we have presented a complex picture of the African spiritual terrain in the African-Portuguese diaspora. By now, it should be clear that very specific African ethnic religious beliefs and practices arrived in Portugal and its various colonial possessions, especially in Brazil. In some cases, these African practices were adapted to address new and urgent temporal concerns that were created by slavery. Nevertheless, the rituals themselves and the essential world view and institutional foundations that informed these rituals remained largely unchanged. Explanation, prediction, and control remained the hallmarks of all African religious forms, whether Ndembu or Arda, Mina or Angola.

Despite the tenacity of many African religious beliefs, Christianity and Catholicism did make some headway in the African communities of the Portuguese world. Still, we should be very careful not to overstate the pace of conversion to a more creolized and Christianized population among Africans and their descendants. The embrace of Catholicism among Africans was slow and uneven. And even where we see apparent evidence of devout expressions of Christian faith, we often still can find elements of the African religious past operating parallel to Christian

practices. In this chapter, we will examine the impact of Catholicism in the lives of Africans in the Portuguese world, with particular attention being given to the Brazilian context. Just as Africans gradually embraced certain elements of the Catholic faith, they were also transforming the Brazilian Church, putting an indelible African mark on the religious landscape of colonial Brazil.

Becoming a Christian, Becoming a Slave: The African Background

The earliest conversions of Africans in the Portuguese world occurred in Kongo. From as early as the late fifteenth century, a distinctly African form of Catholicism was being practiced among the Kongolese elite. Over time, Catholic beliefs and practices spread to the common people of Kongo, as missionaries, indigenous clergy, and lay preachers fanned out across the region, proselytizing in even the smallest villages. In rural areas, people might not see a lay preacher but once a year. Nevertheless, many were familiar with the rudimentary practices and prayers of the faith, meeting regularly on Saturdays to say the rosary.¹

Despite the Catholic veneer that many Kongolese displayed, the depth of their religious understanding

¹ Thornton, The Kongolese Saint Anthony, 27-35.

remains unclear. As we have already noted in chapter six, the cosmological worlds of the Kongolese and the Catholics were very different. As a result, most Kongolese viewed Catholicism through their own distinct spiritual and cultural prisms, only gradually grasping the meaning of the Christian cosmos. Where contact between clergy and laity was irregular, the tenets of Christianity probably remained only a peripheral concern. In some instances, not even the indigenous African clergy adhered to Catholic precepts, thereby raising the question of how Catholic practices filtered down to their parishioners.

In 1718, a Capuchin missionary denounced Father Miguel da Silva, a Kongolese-born priest, who "had great disregard for Nossa Santa Fé Cathólica and [who] abused the sacraments." Among other things, Father da Silva was accused of marrying couples who for many years had lived together outside of Holy Matrimony. Father da Silva's error was not that he married these couples, but that he failed to make them confess the sins of their "illicit relationships" before performing the marriage ceremony. In the view of Father da Silva and the couples he was marrying, these relationships probably were not sinful. Therefore, confession was deemed unnecessary.

When Father da Silva heard confessions, he did so in his house, with "the penitents on one side and on the other...a quantity of people with whom the confessor [was]

conversing." Because of the large gathering, the distractions, and the "confusion of voices," Father da Silva only heard two or three sins from each confessant, and "without more exam or attention," he absolved each person. As penitence, the confessants gathered in a large group, and taking turns with a large staff, each one publicly beat himself, reciting his sins--"I was at the place of the *feitichos*. I ate meat on Friday. I broke the sixth commandment," and so on.²

On the one hand, it is clear that the basic sacraments were being administered by Father da Silva. As such, there is no doubt that his followers were Christians. On the other hand, we have no sense of how his flock was interpreting the Christian ceremonies that they were performing. Apparently, Father da Silva's sacraments were creolized to adhere to Kongolese cultural understandings. Just like the meanings of God [*nzambi mpungu*], saints [ancestors, *kitekes*], and the cross [cosmogram], the sacraments very likely were understood within the context of Kongolese cosmology. I do not mean to suggest that these were "syncretic" forms. Rather, the Kongolese embraced those elements of Christianity that overlapped with their own understandings of the world and the cosmos. Catholicism was a thing unto itself, infused with **some** indigenous

² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 98, Livro 291, (unnumbered folios).

Kongolese beliefs, but it was still a cosmology that acknowledged communion with God (or *nzambi mpungu*) as its highest principle. Kongolese cosmology, on the other hand, remained guided by explanation, prediction, and control of the temporal world through a broader pantheon of well-known ancestral spirits. The two cosmologies existed side-by-side in Africa, just as they would in the Americas.

Among the many "dialogues of the deaf" that engaged Europeans and Kongolese, perhaps the most significant was the one involving the Catholic sacrament of baptism. There is a great deal of evidence which suggests that the Kongolese equated baptism with the simple act of eating salt. As part of the baptismal ceremony, Catholic priests placed a piece of salt on the tongues of their African converts. Since baptism functioned as the initiation into the Christian fold, many Kongolese recognized taking salt as the primary symbol of their Christianity. Other sacraments like marriage, confession, and the administration of Last Rites were usually rare occurrences in Kongo, since there were so few priests. But people demanded "to eat salt" (*yadia mungwa*) with great fervor. As Catholic priests entered towns, mobs of Kongolese would demand to be given salt. If there were delays, the Kongolese would become restless, threatening the priests with bodily harm and

forcing them to perform the ceremony.³

On one such mission to Mbata in the mid-seventeenth century, the priests were met with hostility when they were slow to offer salt. Some of the most impatient residents returned to their houses in disgust, spreading "false accusations" against the priests. Others complained that they did not understand the need for religious instruction, "as if the grace of baptism was an exterior and material thing." Still other residents directly interrogated the priests asking: "Why so many cautions and so many exams about the seriousness of our purposes and about what we are obliged to believe? Did we not come voluntarily? Did we not arrive here to eat all the salt that you give us, like the other whites? Why and for what are there so many difficulties?"⁴

The priests probably said more than they knew when they accused the residents of Mbata of believing that baptism was an "exterior and material thing." In Kongolese cosmology, salt was thought to be a repellent of evil people and spirits.⁵ Thus, it was believed that evil could be avoided through Christian baptism, or eating salt. Whether salt was

³ Thornton, The Kongolese Saint Anthony, 149-150. Thornton describes one such incident near the town of Mbanza Soyo in eastern Kongo in 1705.

⁴ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:352-353.

⁵ Thornton, The Kongolese Saint Anthony, 17.

understood to be a witchcraft repellent prior to contact with Christianity remains unclear. It very well may have been another creation of the instability and uncertainty that arose from contacts with the Portuguese. The Kongolesse easily could have interpreted the baptismal salt as the essence of European "witchcraft" and spiritual power. To be "like the other whites," with their economic and social power, meant embracing their most potent religious ritual--baptism.⁶

Regardless of the origins of Kongolesse belief, it is clear that during the era of the slave trade, most Kongolesse understood baptism simply as the taking of salt (*yadia mungwa*). European clergymen were very much aware of this fact, and they recognized that the "impropriety of language does not cease to be a danger." Father Cavazzi wrote that:

...in order to remove from the mind of the indigenous ones an error of such consequences, the Capuchins attempted to substitute the words "*cudia mungua*," which means "to eat salt," with the words "*lusuculu-lunguisi*," which means "sacred bath," and they took care to teach them not only the manner of

⁶ The belief in salt as a witchcraft repellent continues to be widespread across Central and Southern Africa. Those who believe that they are being attacked by malevolent witchcraft will spread rock salt around their yards and on top of their houses to ward off evil spirits.

administering, in case of necessity, this sacrament, but also of what its essence consists.⁷

Despite attempts on the part of European Catholics to recast the meaning of baptism, some indigenous priests continued using **only** salt in their baptisms, omitting all of the other ceremonies. In the early 1700s, Father Miguel da Silva, the Kongolese priest who was accused of performing improper marriages and confessions, baptized hundreds of people in this fashion in the Kongolese territories of "Tumbi, Lemba, Sumbi, Guimenga, Boya, and Matari."⁸ Baptism continued to be equated with eating salt well into the eighteenth century.

The point of this long discussion on the relationship between baptism, salt, and witchcraft is to demonstrate yet again how Central Africans interpreted Christian rituals through their own cosmological lens. Baptism (eating salt) was understood as an external protection against the evils that plagued Africans. It was very much a temporal remedy; not a prescription for eternal salvation and the washing away of sin. For those who would be enslaved, these were the "Christian" beliefs that they would carry with them to the African coast and on to the Americas. The rituals and

⁷ Cavazzi, Descrição Histórica, 1:353.

⁸ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 98, Livro 291, (unnumbered).

practices of Christianity were understood as just one more form of powerful witchcraft medicine.

The links between "witchcraft," power, and Christian ritual become even more clear when one examines the responses of Central African slaves to their mass baptisms on the coast of Luanda prior to embarkation for the Americas. During the early seventeenth century, slaves were gathered together in the Church or main plaza one day before departing Luanda. The priests did not catechize or even teach the slaves who God was. They instead followed a three-step process. First, they went to each slave and told him his Christian name, writing it down for him so that he would not "forget." Second, the priests put salt in the mouths of each slave. And finally, the priests put water on the heads of the slaves. Thus, the baptism was complete.⁹

When these slaves arrived in the Americas and were asked how they understood their baptisms and the washing of their heads, they responded in the language of "witchcraft" and power. Some slaves quite literally said that they thought of their baptism as a "thing of witchcraft" in order for the Europeans "to eat them." Others responded that the ceremonies were to prevent them from having sex with the slave women during the Middle Passage. Others believed that the water would protect them from illness. And still others

⁹ Sandoval, De Instauratione Aethiopum Salute, 348.

thought that the water was to "enchant" them so that they would not rise against the whites onboard the ship. None of the slaves understood their baptism as a washing away of sin.¹⁰ For the majority of Central Africans, their first exposures to Christian rituals were seen through the prism of their temporal misfortunes. Enslavement was a pernicious form of witchcraft, and Christian rituals, particularly baptismal water, were a means of further ensuring the European "enchantment" or power over Africans.

The Catholic Ministry in Brazil

Even though some historians have suggested that Kongolese slaves continued to practice Christianity in the diaspora, I have found very little evidence that Central Africans brought Christian beliefs with them from Africa to Brazil.¹¹ Since Brazil was the destination of more Kongolese and Angolan slaves than any other European colony during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we can presume that some of the enslaved were at least familiar with Christianity. But the depth and extent of these

¹⁰ Sandoval, Instauranda Aethiopum Salute, 349, 363-364.

¹¹ For discussions of the Afro-Catholic influence in the diaspora see John Thornton, "African Roots of the Stono Rebellion," American Historical Review 96 (1991), 1101-1113 and Thornton, "'I am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," Journal of World History 3 (1993), 181-214.

beliefs must be called into question.¹² Indeed, throughout this period, Catholic priests and missionaries in Brazil noted glaring inadequacies in the religious instruction of most slaves. Not only did most Africans arrive in Brazil unfamiliar with the most basic Christian precepts, but many of them remained in that "condition" for many years.

During the earliest years of African slavery in Brazil, language was the most formidable obstacle to the effective proselytization of the slave population. Until around 1620, the language barrier prevented European priests from administering the sacraments in a fashion that was remotely comprehensible to the majority of African slaves. As early as 1583, Father Cristóvão Gouveia noted that: "The Padres go on continuous missions to the *ingenios* (sugar plantations)...[around Olinda] where they catechize,

¹² On the superficial nature of Christian beliefs among Central Africans in the Danish West Indies, see the chronicle of the missionary C.G.A. Oldendorp, History of the Mission of the Evangelical Brethren on the Caribbean Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John, ed. Johann Jakob Bossard, trans. Arnold R. Highfield and Vladimir Barac (Barby, 1770; english edition, Ann Arbor, 1987), 168. Oldendorp wrote: "The Negroes from the Congo nation who came to the West Indies as slaves usually have for the most part some knowledge of the true God and of Jesus Christ, and they are more intelligent and better mannered than other Blacks. For this they have to thank the Portuguese who, since their settlement along this coast, have made a great effort to enlighten and improve these ignorant people with Christian teachings. In this endeavor, they have been partially successful with those who dwell nearby. However, those who live further inland and are far removed from the Portuguese have a religion that combines heathen superstition and Christian ritual."

baptize, and attend to other extreme necessities, not only for the Portuguese, but principally for the slaves from Guinea who are almost 15,000 and for the Indians who are almost 3,000...and as the clerics do not understand, nor know their languages, they are not able to help them as they should."¹³

This situation persisted into the seventeenth century, when large numbers of Angolan slaves were beginning to arrive into the Brazilian northeast. In a 1617 report from the Jesuit missions to the Recôncavo of Bahia, the missionaries complained that the Angolans were arriving with no religious instruction and that the Brazilian priests were ill-equipped to administer to the newly-arrived slaves. The missionaries wrote:

Firstly, the people from Angola who come to these parts of Brazil are mostly unenlightened in the doctrine and the things that pertain to their salvation. Because at present, almost all of the people are new who are put on the fazendas and engenhos, and the majority of *ladinos* [acculturated slaves] and old ones are dead from smallpox and measles...And as there are no priests who know their language who can teach them and administer the sacraments of matrimony, confession, and

¹³ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 159, ff. 333-339.

communion...they receive a great lack in everything necessary for their salvation. And even if they were baptized in Angola...rarely or never does one find that one knows what he received in the baptism and to what he is obligated to God, and they are totally ignorant of everything that pertains to the substance of the mysteries of Nossa Santa Fé; and thus with this blindness they persevere after coming from Angola among the Christians, and in the face of the Church for a space of many years, after being 4, 5, and 6 years in the house of their masters, without knowing what is necessary for them for their salvation...¹⁴

The Jesuits did their best to help bridge the language gap. During the same 1617 report, it was noted that some of the Jesuit missionaries were "very intelligent in the language of Angola" and had some successes in administering the sacraments to the Angolan slaves of the Recôncavo. Two years later in 1619, the Jesuit missionaries reported that they catechized nearly nine thousand souls, who "because they did not know the language [Portuguese], had gone five and six years without confession." The missionaries judged that prior to their arrival to administer the sacraments, these slaves went around as nothing more than "brute

¹⁴ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 250-251.

animals."¹⁵ One year later in 1620, another Jesuit, Father Simão Pinheiro, remarked that the College of Bahia was awaiting the arrival of two more Jesuits who were proficient in the language of Angola. The two young clergymen were dispatched to Brazil by the Father Superior of Angola for the specific purpose of helping the Company minister to Angolan slaves.¹⁶

In their attempts to reach out to Angolan slaves, the Church faced another problem that ultimately proved to be even more daunting and more persistent than linguistic barriers. Throughout the colonial period, there was an acute shortage of priests who could minister to the growing slave population, especially outside of the major coastal cities. The resident priests and missionaries pleaded for reinforcements, but their calls for help usually fell on deaf ears. In 1592, the Jesuit Father Gabriel Soares de Sousa requested that the Company send more priests to Pernambuco to minister to the "many pretos from Angola who do not have another remedy for their souls without the padres of the Company."¹⁷ Nearly a century later, in 1671, the Jesuits in Bahia complained that because of the lack of priests, "so many souls suffer...[and there is a] great need

¹⁵ ARSI, Brasilia 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 270-270v.

¹⁶ ARSI, Brasilia 8 II; VFL Roll 159, ff. 311v.-312.

¹⁷ ARSI, Brasilia 26; VFL Roll 160, f. 386v.

because in these parts there is a multitude of pagans who come from the Reign of Angola, all of them lacking the Christian doctrine."¹⁸ Finally, in 1720, an urgent appeal was sent from Rio de Janeiro to the Inquisitor General and the King of Portugal requesting more priests. The letter argued that the souls of the "negros from Angola" were "hurling toward hell," and "the principal root of such errors is the pagan barbarity in which they live, without having instructors...who show them the true path to salvation..."¹⁹

Increasing the numbers of priests might have helped to alleviate the burdens of those overworked priests and missionaries who were already struggling to proselytize the slave population of Brazil, but numbers alone could not guarantee that the slaves would understand the substance of their religious "conversion." The cosmological gap between Europeans and Africans was far too great. Writing in the early 1700s, Father André João Antonil lamented the fact that baptized slaves "do not know who their creator is, what they are to believe, what law they are to protect, how they are to commit themselves to God, why Christians go to Church, why they adore the consecrated host..." He also said that when slaves knelt to pray, they wanted to know "to

¹⁸ ARSI, Brasilia 3 II; VFL Roll 156, ff. 115-115v.

¹⁹ ANTT, Conselho Geral, "Santo Ofício Tomo XXXI (1720)," Livro 272, f. 231.

whose ears" they were speaking. In addition, slaves wondered where their souls went when they left their bodies. In short, slaves were searching for temporal answers that were absent from Christian doctrine. Africans had a difficult time understanding the concept of communion with an abstract, ethereal God.²⁰

Some priests were aware of the great care that was needed to overcome the cosmological gap between Europeans and Africans. Converting Africans to Christianity would take more than a simple understanding of the rituals and the orations. It would take a complete cosmological reorientation. Jesuit Father Jorge Benci warned parish priests that "there is no point in the slaves saying how many people are in the Holy Trinity and praying the Credo and the Commandments and the other orations; but it is necessary that they understand what they say, that they perceive the mysteries of believing, and that the precepts penetrate well enough that they retain them." Father Benci implored the parish priests to explain themselves thoroughly and make certain that the slaves understood what they were being taught.²¹

As if the obstacles of language, cosmology, and chronic understaffing were not already enough to overcome, the

²⁰ Antonil, Cultura e opulencia do Brasil, 124-127.

²¹ Benci, Economia christã dos senhores no governo dos escravos, 71-78.

Catholic priests also found their conversion attempts thwarted by slave masters, who were often little concerned with their slaves' spiritual well-being. In the minds of most masters, time spent on religious instruction amounted to lost profits. Missionaries and priests argued that slaves should have at least Sundays and saint's days free from work so that they could attend mass. In the early seventeenth century, many planters blatantly disregarded the Church's wishes. In 1624, São Tomé sugar planter Francisco de Almeida was denounced for not allowing his slaves to hear mass on Sundays and saint's days. Adding insult to injury, Almeida's slaves worked next to the main path that led to the church, causing "notable scandal" to all of the passers-by.²² In Bahia, during the same period, Jesuit missionaries suggested ways that planters could gradually shut down the sugar mill on saint's days and then re-open it at sunset so as to minimize losses. Still, some planters were willing to "break the commandments of God," forcing their slaves to work to make just "four more *tarefas* (quotas) of cane."²³

By the middle of the seventeenth century, many masters allowed their slaves to have Sundays free, but in return, the slaves were expected to provide their own food and

²² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 24, Livro 224, ff. 96-125v.

²³ ARSI, Brasília 8 I; VFL Roll 159, ff. 270-270v. (1619).

clothing. Thus, slaves spent their Sundays cultivating the small garden plots (*roças*) that the masters provided for this purpose. Predictably, the Church was not pleased with this arrangement. Jesuit missionaries recognized that the lack of food and clothing meant that rather than attending mass, "when [the slaves] are left free on saint's days, they take advantage of these days by going to work on their *roças*, searching...for what to eat and for what to buy in order to clothe themselves." Some slave women were even forced into prostitution in order to feed and clothe themselves. The Jesuits complained that the policy of forcing slaves to feed and clothe themselves was a "pernicious" one that "seems law among the Masters, and it does not give them any unease of conscience." They appealed to the masters to provide for their slaves' material and spiritual necessities, leaving Sundays free for Christian worship.²⁴

While many planters set aside Sundays for slaves to tend to their own material needs, others continued to make their slaves work through the Sabbath. By the eighteenth century, these planters had refined their arguments against providing Sundays as free days. In response to suggestions that their slaves should attend Church on Sundays, masters contended that slaves would not use their free time to

²⁴ ARSI, Brasilia 10 I; VFL Roll 160, ff. 19-21v. (1702).

worship the Christian God. Rather, they would party, carouse, and worship their own gods--all in great offense to the Catholic Church. One slave owner summed up these sentiments most succinctly. When asked why he forced his slaves to work on Sundays, he answered:

There are two reasons: The first, because there are slaves who are sent to hear mass who intrude on other fazendas...where they engage in these reprehensible *calundús* and *feitiçarias*. The second reason is because when I send them to mass, they get drunk and quarrel mindlessly and cause great mischief.... I resolve that it is better judgment to give them maintenance and clothing, and occupy them, because it is also certain that the idle slave ordinarily creates vices and these result in the major offenses of God.²⁵

This slave master certainly had his own economic agenda in mind when he forced his slaves to work through the Sabbath, and his comment reveals a deep patriarchal condescension. But at the same time, his observations probably were not far off the mark. Zacharias Wagner, who lived in Dutch Brazil from 1634 to 1641, made similar observations regarding the slaves' use of their free days.

²⁵ Pereira, Compendio Narrativo do Peregrino da America, 1:155.

He wrote: "When the slaves have worked hard for a whole week, they are given Sunday off. They usually assemble in specially designated places and spend the day in wild dancing to the sound of flutes and drums--men and women, children and old people alike. This is accompanied by frequent libations...often until they are too deafened and drunk to recognize one another."²⁶ For those slaves who were given a choice, the Catholic Church apparently had little appeal. Most slaves who were released to go to mass did not feel obliged to go. Instead, they used this time to tend to their religious needs in ways that resonated with their African pasts, calling upon their ancestors to relieve them of their earthly suffering. They also took advantage of the rare free time to assert their humanity, sharing a drink with friends outside of their master's purview. In short, African slaves capitalized on these fleeting moments by making spiritual and social connections to their African pasts.

Despite the best efforts of the priests and missionaries who labored in Brazil, many Africans remained largely untouched by the Catholic Church. Some slaves could go many years without so much as a single contact with a priest. The comments of two Jesuit missionaries in Pernambuco describe the effects of this benign neglect. In

²⁶ As quoted in Roger Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 134.

1689, they visited the engenhos of Cabo de São Agostinho, outside of Olinda. There, they "removed many souls from the state of perdition in which they were for many years, and they removed many errors and abuses, principally in the Angolan slaves in which predominated, in some, so much ignorance that they did not have anything more than the name of Christians."²⁷ Slaves who were Christian "in name only" committed many of the "errors and abuses" that we have discussed in the previous chapters--divination, "witchcraft," and curing. Though Catholic priests lamented the spiritual condition of the slaves, most Africans were probably thankful for the lack of Church intervention in their lives. Left to their own devices, they could recreate many of the spiritual structures that sustained them in their homelands.

Christianity in the Diaspora

The process of religious creolization and Christianization occurred slowly and unevenly in the African-Portuguese diaspora. In places like Portugal, where the African presence was always rather small, African religious beliefs probably faded rather quickly, as peoples of African descent were immersed in the teachings of the Church and Portuguese society. Similarly, among those

²⁷ ARSI, Brasilia 9; VFL Roll 158, f. 342.

Africans who were enslaved at a very young age, some were effectively creolized and became ardent Christians.²⁸ In most of Brazil, however, large numbers of slaves and a constant influx of Africans, combined with an institutionally weak Church, led to a much more gradual and incomplete embrace of Catholic teachings. Once Africans and their descendants did begin to accept certain elements of Catholicism, it was not at the expense of their own cosmologies. Just as the Kongolese had done for hundreds of years in Africa, Brazilian slaves naturalized Catholicism, integrating many of those elements that coincided with their own world views. Building upon these symbolic resonances, Africans and their descendants created unique forms of Afro-Brazilian Catholicism. These distinctly African forms of Catholicism continued to be practiced parallel to African religions, never vanquishing the purely African practices during the colonial period.

We have already noted some of the transformations that Africans imposed on Catholic forms, transformations like the meanings of baptism and the cross. But these were not the

²⁸ See, for instance, the remarkable story of the African-born Courana slave, Rosa Egipcíaca, who was brought to Brazil as a child. Rosa was thoroughly creolized and eventually was brought before the Inquisition for her continuous visions and heretical claims. Among other things, she claimed that she was Jesus's wet-nurse, that she would be the bride of the Holy Trinity, and that she would birth the baby Jesus on his second coming. Mott, Rosa Egipcíaca.

only Catholic symbols that were reshaped in the African mind. Africans changed the meanings of a variety of sacred symbols and institutions of the Catholic Church to conform to very specific African understandings. One of the most potent symbols in the African-Catholic world was the *pedra d'ara*, a piece of marble with an internal compartment filled with the relics of martyred saints. The *pedra d'ara* was believed to possess a magical power that was essential in the realization of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. The bread and wine used in communion were transubstantiated only after the priest consecrated them over the *pedra d'ara*. The *pedra d'ara* also served as a "portable altar" for priests who might say mass in some location outside of their home church. The priest carried the *pedra d'ara* with him and placed it on the table over which he said mass, thereby consecrating the table as a holy altar.²⁹

The magical power of the *pedra d'ara* was quickly recognized by Africans, who turned it into one of the most sought-after talismans in the Portuguese world. Rocks and other objects from the natural world, especially those with cavities for harnessing the power of spirits or special "medicines," were widely recognized in Africa as having strong magical powers. For those who were enslaved in the

²⁹ Mello e Souza, O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz, 214. The description of the *pedra d'ara* as a "portable altar" comes from the *Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado da Bahia* (1707).

Portuguese world, the *pedra d'ara* fit into the same category of powerful talismans. The fact that they were so sacred and protected by the Catholic Church probably only enhanced their value. Rather than approaching these religious relics with awe and veneration, Africans tried time and again to steal them from the altars of various churches in Portugal and Brazil, attempting to harness their power for their own religious and temporal needs.

Pieces of *pedra d'ara* were most commonly carried inside of *bolsas de mandinga*, the necklace-like pouches that we described in the last chapter. The *pedra* was just one of the ingredients that protected the owner of the *bolsa* from injury in quarrels or fights. As early as 1690, when a Cape Verdean was accused of carrying pieces of *pedra d'ara* in Lisbon, the prosecutor noted that there was "in this land universal scandal from committing this crime much indulged in by people similar to Negros...[for which] this Mesa already has some denunciations."³⁰ The "sacrilege" of stealing *pedras d'ara* and using them for "evil" intents was already being most clearly associated with peoples of African descent.

By the eighteenth century, the *pedra d'ara* was a common ingredient in the *bolsas* that were transported across the Portuguese world. Francisco, one of the conspirators in the

³⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3670.

1729 *bolsa* web that extended across Brazil and Portugal, was accused of carrying pieces of *pedra d'ara*, the bone of a dead person, and several orations inside of a *bolsa* that he sold to Luís de Lima in Pernambuco. Luís de Lima then carried the *bolsa* to Porto, where he eventually passed it on to Joseph da Costa. The demand for *pedras* continued in Porto. There, another slave named Joseph, also a friend of Luís de Lima's, stole pieces of *pedra d'ara* from an altar and sold them as "Mandingas."³¹

Some African slaves also believed that pieces of the consecrated host were endowed with magical powers. In 1773, in the town of Vila Real do Sabará, a priest had just completed saying mass. When he returned to the altar to administer communion, he "heard a great whispering and saw a particle on the floor broken into two pieces." The priest picked up the two pieces and fastened them together, marking the spot on the floor where the host had fallen. He then completed the communion ceremony. Afterward, he cleaned up the remaining fragments of the host and ordered them thrown in the river.

Just as the people were leaving the church, there was a great commotion, with a slave named Pedro Monjollo in the middle of a throng of angry people. After questioning several witnesses, the priest learned that while he was gone

³¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 1630.

from the altar, Pedro stole the host and put it in his mouth. When he tried to transfer the host from his mouth to his hat, he dropped it on the floor. Even after this mishap, Pedro still tried to recover some of the pieces by drawing them toward him with a truncheon. Only when the priest re-emerged at the altar did Pedro cease in his attempts to reach the fragments of the host.³²

Even though it was widely understood that Africans and their descendants were the most frequent manipulators of consecrated particles and *pedras d'ara* for "diabolical" purposes, some whites also embraced these meanings, especially in Brazil. In some areas, the use of *bolsas* had evidently become standard practice by the eighteenth century, and pieces of consecrated host were among their primary ingredients. Soldiers were the most likely to carry *bolsas* in order to protect themselves from knives and guns. In some instances, even the Church was culpable in promoting these "superstitious" beliefs. In 1714, a Pernambucan priest named Joseph Maurício, was accused of distributing little packets of consecrated particles for residents around Serinhaem to carry in their *bolsas*.³³ Despite official Church policy that forbade the desecration of the sacred hosts and relics, some priests apparently chose to ignore

³² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 14826.

³³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 79, Livro 272, ff. 397-397v.

mandates and followed the will of the majority of their parishoners.

Another way in which Africans gained a foothold in the Catholic faith was through the cult of Catholic saints. The pantheon of Catholic religious figures was, in many respects, analogous to the pantheon of African ancestral spirits. Jesus, the Virgin, and the saints were living, breathing human beings who once resided on earth. Their likenesses could be found everywhere in statues and relics. They had recognizable characteristics and personality traits. And they also possessed the magical power to transform the condition of those on earth.

Like African ancestral spirits, the saints could be called upon to help Africans address specific temporal concerns. The Virgin Mary as Our Lady of Childbirth helped women during difficult child labor. St. Sebastian assisted hunters. St. George protected men in street brawls. St. Lazarus cured skin diseases--leprosy, smallpox, and measles. St. Peter aided in finding thieves. St. Gonçalo answered prayers involving love, desire, and relationships. And the list goes on.³⁴

Slaves did not allow the character of saints to be frozen by the Catholic Church. Africans transformed the traits of the saints, making them more human and more

³⁴ Mary Karasch, Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 268-275; Roger Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 260-272.

amenable to the specific needs of the slave community. For example, as early as the seventeenth century, St. Benedict the Moor emerged as one of the prime protectors of blacks in the Catholic world. Because of his brown skin and his power to heal, Africans immediately recognized him as a kindred spirit. But rather than placing him on an ethereal pedestal, Africans transformed St. Benedict into a being with secular faults and human frailties. In Bahia, in 1689, a processional float belonging to a black brotherhood depicted St. Benedict arguing with the Holy Virgin and acting in a "most indecent fashion."³⁵ Some years later, St. Benedict was memorialized by slaves in the following verse, which endowed him with some of the same character flaws shared by many slaves:

Saint Benedict's a saint
Whom every black adores.
He drinks brandy.
And when he sleeps, he snores.³⁶

By humanizing Catholic saints and transforming them into protectors of slave causes, Africans turned these Catholic

³⁵ Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 116.

³⁶ Sylvio Romero, Contos Populares do Brasil (Lisbon, 1833), 295 as quoted by Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 116.

symbols into African-style ancestral spirits. Though the saints did not replace the African ancestral spirits, they took a place alongside them, providing a point of connection between African beliefs and Catholicism that would eventually contribute to the formation of a distinctly Afro-Brazilian Catholicism.

Among the most potent forces in the emergence of Afro-Brazilian Catholicism were the Catholic lay brotherhoods that were created by Africans and their descendants in the Portuguese world. These black lay brotherhoods were fraternal organizations dedicated to religious activities and social work in the black community. Members of the brotherhoods were given special privileges that rarely were accorded to blacks by their masters or by state authorities. When they died, members were promised a decent Christian burial, support for their dependent survivors, and masses said for their souls. The brotherhoods also aided members during times of illness. Some even provided financial and legal help in purchasing the freedom papers of slaves in their communities.³⁷

The earliest black confraternities were established in the fifteenth century in Portugal. By the third decade of the sixteenth century, there were black brotherhoods spread

³⁷ For instance, in 1754, Antônio, a Courana slave in Rio de Janeiro, was purchased by the Irmandade de Santo Elesbão e Efigênia for 89\$600. ANRJ, Segundo Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro, Livro de Notas, No. 70, ff. 27-27v.

across Portugal, as well as São Tomé.³⁸ The first ones were established in Brazil as early as 1552.³⁹ These early black brotherhoods were dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, a trend that would persist over the entire colonial period. One survey of 165 confraternities in colonial Brazil found that 86 (52%) were dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. Other brotherhoods were dedicated to Senhor Bom Jesus, Nossa Senhora dos Remedios, and Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte.⁴⁰ The attraction of Our Lady of the Rosary is not altogether clear. Dominican missionaries encouraged devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary in Portuguese Africa during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so prior knowledge may have contributed somewhat to the embrace of the rosary. But a more likely explanation is the object power of the rosary itself. The rosary functioned like so many other African talismans. Worn around the neck, the magical power of rosary beads served as a protective balm against the powers of evil, no doubt attracting Africans and their

³⁸ Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 151-152.

³⁹ Patricia A. Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters: Membership in the Black Lay Brotherhoods of Colonial Brazil," Luso-Brazilian Review 17 (1982), 254.

⁴⁰ Patricia A. Mulvey, "Slave Confraternities in Brazil: Their Role in Colonial Society," The Americas 39 (1982), 61.

descendants.⁴¹

The formation of brotherhoods was encouraged by the Church as a way of bringing newly-arrived Africans into the Catholic fold. But the brotherhoods also provided Africans with the opportunity to forge their own social spaces within the repressive slaveocratic society. In Brazil, some brotherhoods functioned as little more than veiled ethnic societies. Membership was restricted to members of particular African ethnic groups, and the brotherhoods' activities included the perpetuation of African religious and social forms. For instance, during the seventeenth century, most of the black brotherhoods of Our Lady of the Rosary in Bahia admitted only Angolans into their societies.⁴² Later, the brotherhood of Our Lady of the Redemption was established for Dahomeans in Bahia.⁴³ The brotherhood of Bom Jesus in the Carmelite Convent in Cachoeira, Bahia, was reserved for Dahomean Gejes.⁴⁴ And the Bahian brotherhood of Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte emerged as a Yoruba enclave reserved for Africans from the Ketou

⁴¹ For the rosary as an African talisman, see Saunders, A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen, 152; Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters," 256.

⁴² Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters," 262-263.

⁴³ Bastide, The African Religions of Brazil, 119.

⁴⁴ Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters," 263.

nation.⁴⁵ Similar patterns of ethnic exclusivity in religious brotherhoods were repeated in Recife and Rio de Janeiro.

The impacts of these ethnic-based brotherhoods were profound for Africans. According to historian, Mary Karasch, when a new African arrived in Brazil, he could find his own ethnic community (brotherhood) worshipping a powerful idol (the statue of a Catholic saint) in a shrine (as an altar in a church):

The members of the brotherhood, he would learn, organized ceremonies in the saint's honor, dressed the statue in proper clothing and symbols of sainthood, carried it in procession, paid a priest to say Mass at its altar, prayed "fervently" before other statues of the saint in the street, carried the saint's image on their persons, and honored the image as long as it was forceful.... When the charm no longer fulfilled its purpose and dissension broke out because of witchcraft or sorcery and diseases plagued the brothers and their families, then one of the leaders led the brotherhood to a new saint, forming a new brotherhood.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Pierre Verger, Flux et Reflux de la Traite des Negres entre Le Golfe de Benin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVIII siecle (Paris, 1968), 528.

⁴⁶ Karasch, Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 272.

For some Africans, the ethnically-exclusive brotherhoods might have seemed similar to the kin-like secret societies that they knew in Africa--for instance, the healing societies in Angola or the *kimpasi* religious societies in Kongo.⁴⁷ For others, the brotherhoods were simply a way to maintain ethnic ties and create a oneness among their peers. Either way, Catholic symbols were integrated into African religious and social views of the world, and not vice versa.

Over time, the brotherhoods provided space for the integration of even more Catholic symbols, and probably for some members, an eventual understanding of communion with the Christian God and other "mysteries of the faith." This process was facilitated by the integration of creoles into some of the formerly ethnically-exclusive brotherhoods. But even as some Africans gradually absorbed Catholic beliefs, they continued to hold closely to those African practices that sustained them in their homelands. This religious parallelism is clearly illustrated in a 1780 report describing the festival of Our Lady of the Rosary in Recife. Members of the black brotherhoods, most of whom were from the Mina coast, were accused of practicing "profane" African dances during the religious festival, but their "real" sins were of another order. The brotherhood members were alleged to be secretly worshipping African deities in religious

⁴⁷ For Angola, see Miller, Kings and Kinsmen, 50. For Kongo, see Thornton, The Kongolese Saint Anthony, 56-58.

houses, complete with clay idols, goats, and priestesses who anointed themselves with oils and animal blood. Thus, the Minas were both Christians and practitioners of African religious forms, a "contradiction" that was intolerable in the eyes of the Catholic Church, but perfectly reasonable for the majority of Africans.⁴⁸

The black brotherhoods were not the sole preserve of parallel religious beliefs and practices. Parallel practices also occurred within all-African congregations that were far from white society's ever-watchful gaze. In 1754, Church officials were informed about one of these African "synagogues" (the term used in the Inquisition denunciation) in Itaubira, Minas Gerais, and they went to shut it down. As several priests approached the small house, they heard the Kongolese preacher, a slave named Pedro Congo, saying "mass." The Catholic priests pounded on the locked door, and when it was opened, they found a large group of slaves and freedmen. Of these, ten were identified as Mina women and one as a Mina man. In addition to these eleven, there were "many others" who the priests did not recognize because they were from other parishes.

When the priests asked Pedro what he was preaching, Pedro responded that he was preaching the Christian doctrine. But a further examination revealed that Pedro was

⁴⁸ Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters," 261.

preaching both a creolized African Christianity along with several forms of African religion. The "Christian" aspects of Pedro's ministry included the general belief among the parishioners that the Holy Spirit spoke to Pedro any time he wanted Him to. This, of course, resonated with those Africans who were accustomed to the continuous revelation of African spirit possession. In exchange for four *vinteis*, Pedro also guaranteed that the souls of dead Africans on the Mina coast and in Rio de Janeiro would enter Heaven. The orthodox Church would have considered this a heresy, since many of those being offered passage into God's Kingdom were not even baptized Christians, but Pedro's prayers for African souls were just one more example of the way Africans transformed Christian practices. In addition to these beliefs, Pedro also preached that anyone who gave alms or performed charity for their fazendas was a sinner. Finally, before being denounced to the Inquisition, Pedro and his flock had purchased a Habit of São Francisco to wear in an upcoming procession on the day of the kings, demonstrating that despite Pedro's unorthodox, Africanized teachings, he and his parishioners still considered themselves a part of the Catholic fold.

Even though Pedro and his Mina followers called themselves Christians, they also continued to practice what were clearly African rituals. The precise derivation of the rituals is difficult to discern, since Pedro was Kongolese

and the majority, if not all, of his followers were Minas. Pedro no doubt tailored his ministry to resonate with his Mina flock, but there were also ritual elements that were clearly Central African. For example, one of Pedro's Mina adherents came to him complaining of an illness that was plaguing her. Pedro determined that she was suffering because her soul had flown off to Vila Rica. Pedro advised the woman that if she took a prayer that he wrote and put it under her knees, her soul would return to her body. In this case, Pedro's diagnosis appears to be of Central African origin. The independent will of the soul was a common belief among Central Africans, and it was understood that when the soul separated from the body, the body would begin to deteriorate.

Other rituals and beliefs are not as easily identifiable. Among other things, Pedro placed a pan of rotten eggs in the middle of the floor in his "synagogue" and ordered all of the women to pass over it for good luck. It was also rumored that on the night of a full moon, Pedro used his powers of "witchcraft" (*feiticeira*) to make ritual sacrifices of human beings. The cryptic nature of the documentation does not allow us to probe these practices any more deeply, but it is clear that Pedro and his adherents relied upon a variety of religious streams.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 16001.

The complexity of the religion practiced by Pedro and his adherents was demonstrative of a trend that was probably becoming widespread in many African slave communities. As Africans of different ethnic backgrounds were thrown together in the various slave societies, they began to create a body of rituals and beliefs that would resonate with all Africans, regardless of ethnic background. The first generation, like Pedro's all-African congregation, certainly must have recognized the distinctions between the Christian, Kongolese, and Mina streams that were contributing to their theology. Since religious world views were roughly similar across West and Central Africa, many rituals and practices could easily be exchanged and understood. Certain elements of Christianity were also adopted, especially those that were analogous to African beliefs.

Over time, as the descendants of first-generation Africans became more creolized, the ethnic past became less pronounced in some places, and a more "syncretic" slave religion might have emerged. But in most of Brazil, this was an excruciatingly slow process which was constantly interrupted by importations of new Africans. These newly-arrived Africans injected religious energy and vitality into slave communities throughout the colonial period. When new ethnic rituals and beliefs were introduced into the community, some of these new ideas were embraced, while

others were discarded. Still, every ritual had a specific traceable ethnic origin that was recognizable to those who were practicing it. These ethnic religious streams remained discrete, with the various rituals (including Christian ones) operating as a spiritual "toolbox" for a heterogeneous group of African slaves who shared a common cosmology-- explanation, prediction, and control of the brutal slave environment.

Blasphemies and Sacrilege Among Slaves

One indicator of slaves' disdain for Christianity and their Christian masters was the frequency of blasphemous statements and sacrilegious acts committed by them. Many of these libels against the Church were committed under duress and were meant to be an affront to the master. Not surprisingly, mulatto and creole slaves were the most likely to sin in this manner. These slaves were more keenly aware of the sanctity of the Church and were seeking to insult the master and his sacred institution. At the same time, their actions show that their commitment to the Church was often only a superficial mask meant to appease their devout masters.

For example, in 1595, a mulatto slave named Joseph was accused of blasphemy in Olinda, Pernambuco. Joseph was a 30-year-old kettleman on the sugar engenho of his master, Fernão Soares. Suffering from acute hunger, one day, Joseph

entered his master's store and stole a small stack of sardines. He was caught by his master and sent to the public jail, where "with rage and fury" he stated that he was renouncing God and giving himself to all the devils.

On another occasion, Joseph was doing some ironwork, repairing the kettles that were used to hold the boiling cane liquid. Still experiencing extreme bouts of hunger, he asked his master's wife, Dona Caterina, if she would give him something to eat. Rejecting his pleas for food, Dona Caterina replied that he should eat the red-hot iron instead. Later that night, Joseph again gave himself to the devils and told them that he would give up a body part if they would remove him from that house. Joseph was reported to the Holy Office. As punishment for his blasphemy, Joseph was sentenced to appear before the Auto da Fé and was publicly whipped in the streets of Lisbon.

Unfortunately, Joseph's sad story does not end here. Several months after returning from Lisbon, he was again heard renouncing God and casting his lot with the devils. He confessed that he only gave himself to the devils because he "wanted them to carry him away, [and] that this was because of the bad treatment and bad life that he has in the house of Fernão Soares, who does not give food to his negros..." For his hunger, malnutrition, and curses of the Catholic Church, Joseph was again sentenced to a public whipping and was exiled for four years to the king's

galleys.⁵⁰

Pedro's case was not unique. Creolized slaves recognized the hypocrisy of their master's Christian message. Whether suffering from hunger, disease, or master brutality, there was very little in the slave's life that could be considered worthy of blessing. In 1736, a 30-year-old slave named Gracia Luzia confessed that she had renounced Jesus Christ, the Holy Trinity, and the purity of the Virgin Mary. Uprooted from the Bahian home that she had known for her entire lifetime, Gracia was a recent arrival in Lisbon. Gracia claimed that before being sold away to Portugal, she requested to purchase her freedom and had made a "reasonable offer" to her Brazilian masters, who turned her down. Angry, frustrated, and alone in her new surroundings, Gracia lashed out at the Christian God who was nowhere to be found in her life. Eventually, Gracia saw the errors of her ways and confessed her sins before the Holy Office. The inquisitors were merciful with Gracia because she appeared voluntarily before them and because her blasphemous words were said in a "moment of desperation." She was ordered to renounce her sins and do penance.⁵¹

Abuses against the Church were not limited to words; slaves also committed a variety of sacrilegious deeds. We

⁵⁰ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 2556.

⁵¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 433.

have already mentioned how some Africans coveted the Sacred Host as a magical talisman, using pieces of it in their *bolsas de mandinga*. Other slaves desecrated the Host more directly, contemptuously rejecting its symbolic Christian meaning. In 1771, Francisco da Costa Xavier, a Bahian-born slave of a São Tomé father and a Geje mother, was accused of desecrating the Host. As a boy, Francisco was ordered to the city to be apprenticed as a shoemaker. Once he became proficient in his craft, Francisco worked as a *negro de ganho* (slave for hire), paying his master 1280 reis at the end of every week. Because his master did not allow Francisco to rest and only cared about getting his weekly payment, Francisco decided to run away. But before he could flee, his master learned of his plot and had him locked up. Francisco was then sold away to Pará.

When he arrived in Pará, Francisco found that his new master was even more abusive than his previous one. Feeling "little compassion" for his slaves, the new master ordered each slave to produce six pairs of shoes per week, a work load that Francisco found intolerable. Francisco also had some disagreements with the mistress of the house, who ordered him to be whipped with the *palmatória* (a wooden paddle with holes in it). When the mistress's husband returned home, he arranged for Francisco to be whipped for a second time.

In desperation, Francisco sought spiritual answers for

the abuse he was receiving. He asked a priest if there were more than one God, and the priest replied that there was only one God. Francisco protested that this could not be true. Since his master treated him contrary to what God ordered, Francisco believed that there had to be other Gods. Francisco later asked another priest who made the world. The priest responded that God made the world. Again, Francisco begged to differ, asking how it was that God could have created a world where people (like Francisco's master) exercised more power than He did. Finally, still questioning his faith, Francisco received communion and removed the Host from his mouth "in order to see with his own eyes Jesus Christ in his hand." Ultimately, Francisco was caught with the Sacred Host and reported to the Inquisition. He was sentenced to appear before the Auto de Fé, publicly whipped, and exiled to ten years in the king's galleys.⁵²

Francisco was not alone in questioning the sanctity of the Communion wafer. Other slaves also rejected the symbolic meaning of the Consecrated Host. In 1781, a 30-year-old slave named Gracia Angola took communion in the small town of Marica near Rio de Janeiro. Since it was a common practice for slaves in Marica to keep the Sacred Host in their mouths and later remove it, steps were taken to

⁵² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 719.

curb these abuses. "Negros and children" of the Igreja Paroquial of Marica were required to pass in front of a lay assistant and open their mouths to prove that they had consumed the Host. Gracia somehow evaded detection. As she exited the church, she spat the Sacred Form on the ground, without any regard for who might see her. At the urging of an elderly creole slave, Gracia picked up the soiled Host, put it in her mouth, and swallowed it. Gracia eventually was arrested and jailed by the Inquisition. Ultimately, she paid the supreme price for her "disrespect." She died four years after her arrest, still in jail for her sacrilegious act.⁵³

Gracia's rejection of the symbolic body of Christ was a calculated act of defiance against the Church, an unambiguous expression of resistance to the religion (or witchcraft?) of those who were keeping her in thrall. Other slaves chose mockery and humor as a way of challenging the sanctity of the Catholic Church. In 1593, Francisco, the slave son of a São Tomé father and a Kongolese mother, stole an image of the Virgin Mary from the altar of a church in Lisbon. Francisco took the statue with him to the house of two female acquaintances, a woman and her niece, who both commented that the image was better off in their house than on some dusty altar. The three friends began a long night

⁵³ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3641.

of merry-making with the statue. They removed the image's clothes and kissed her on the face. The two women danced with the image of the Virgin on top of their heads, laughing hysterically at the new pleasures they were showing the Holy Mother. At one point, the older woman took the hand of the image and put it under her dress, sarcastically remarking to her niece, "Look sister, she doesn't have that!" Ultimately, the image was broken, but not before the three had exposed the Holy Virgin to some of the "mysteries" of the secular world.⁵⁴

Slavemasters also were not beyond playing sacrilegious tricks on the Church, even at the expense of their slaves. In 1698, a Carmelite priest named Father António da Conceição denounced an Angolan slave named Branca in Bahia. Father da Conceição accused Branca of proffering heretical propositions against the Catholic faith. Branca told the priest that Christ did not exist in the sacrament of the Eucharist, because she could not see Him with her own eyes. Branca also asserted that she could be saved in her faith just as the Catholics could in theirs. She stated that the pope was not the successor of St. Paul, nor the Vicar of Christ, because St. Paul did not have a successor. Finally, she said that she "made a song" when she gave confession, because it was not the priest's place to act as Christ in

⁵⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No 9676.

absolving her. Asking Branca where she heard all of these "lies," Father da Conceição learned that her master, Capt. Fernando Pereira da Rocha, taught her to be a non-believer. Father da Conceição went on to denounce Capt. Pereira da Rocha, but the captain and his allies had their own version of the story. Branca's heretical statements were all a cruel trick played against Father da Conceição.

Another priest, Father António de Rosário, accompanied Father da Conceição when the incident with Branca occurred, and he confessed that it was all a misunderstanding, a joke that went too far. Father de Rosário said that when they were out seeking alms, the two priests were given shelter at the house of Capt. Pereira da Rocha in Cachoeira. When Father da Conceição saw Branca, who was extremely fair-skinned and red-headed, he asked if she was from a foreign country. Realizing that Father da Conceição was a novice priest, the captain decided to play a trick on him. The captain told Father da Conceição that Branca was indeed from a foreign country, and that she followed a religion other than Catholicism. After making his examination of Branca and becoming convinced that she was a non-believer, the trick was revealed to Father da Conceição. But "because of his simplicity," he remained unmoved in his opinion that both Branca and the captain were heretics. Father de Rosário, who was in on the joke, vouched for the captain, arguing that he knew him to be a faithful Catholic who often

provided shelter to the priests when they were out collecting alms for their convent. Apparently, the Holy Office believed the captain and Father de Rosário. Neither Branca's nor the captain's case was ever brought to a full trial.⁵⁵

If one reads between the lines of Branca's case, it seems that her lack of faith in the Catholic doctrine was profound and not something she conjured along with her master. But even if we accept that Branca's heretical statements were only a joke, we still must pause to consider the implications of such a joke. Both a slavemaster and a priest were willing to compromise the sanctity of the faith for a few moments of amusement. This hypocritical message could not have been lost on the slaves who were the objects of such frivolity. For many whites, priests included, slave souls were little more than a laughing matter.

Conclusion

Despite the many physical and philosophical obstacles that the Church faced in its efforts to proselytize African slaves, a distinct Afro-Brazilian Catholicism emerged in the colonial period. The basic core of African beliefs remained unchanged, but elements of Catholicism were added to existing beliefs, enhancing and strengthening African ritual

⁵⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 73, Livro 267, ff. 86-93v.

practices. This process of creolizing Catholic symbols and beliefs permanently transformed the Catholic Church in Brazil, Africanizing the Church in such a way that even whites embraced some of the new meanings, including the increased temporal powers of the *pedra d'ara* and the cult of saints.

The creolization of religious forms was not a one-way street. As we have already suggested in earlier chapters, whites also embraced elements of African religious beliefs. Seeking answers to questions that their God and saints could not provide, whites often sought out the remedies of African diviners and curers. Most of the time, whites only dabbled along the periphery of the "diabolical" African arts, continuing to assert the spiritual supremacy of the Catholic Church. But in some instances, whites briefly abandoned the Church in favor of "stronger" African remedies. In the next chapter, we will analyze some of these cases, suggesting that the Portuguese embrace of African religious forms was in many respects no different than the African embrace of certain Catholic forms. Both Portuguese and Africans engaged in parallel religious practices in accordance with their temporal and religious needs. We will also examine the ways in which certain Catholic priests responded to the challenges presented by African religious practices, modifying certain rituals while maintaining the essential Catholic core.

Chapter 11

The Impacts of African Religious Beliefs on Brazilian Catholicism

While Catholic missionaries and priests actively proselytized African slaves, vigorously attempting to bring them into the Christian fold, Africans never engaged in such a calculated conversion project among their masters. Overt "conversion" simply was not a part of the African religious understanding. Nonetheless, whites still gravitated toward African forms of religion. One of the ironies of Church difficulties in converting Africans to Catholicism in Brazil was the extent to which whites seemingly embraced so many elements of African religious beliefs and practices. The question is why?

Africans did not need to "convert" the Portuguese to their spiritual beliefs because African religion proved itself through temporal results. Where Portuguese Catholicism was abstract and ethereal to most Africans--requiring a heavy dose of faith--African divining, healing, and "witchcraft" were very real to many Portuguese. The efficacy of African rituals was proven on a daily basis through empirical means, as practitioners tested the strength and goodwill of various deities and ancestral spirits. Christian and African cosmologies were not necessarily at odds with one another. As we have

demonstrated, it was quite possible for a person to practice parallel beliefs. There were no inherent cosmological contradictions that precluded one from being both a Christian and a practitioner of African religions. But, in the wake of the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church had increasingly little tolerance for unorthodox beliefs and practices. Threatened on a number of fronts, both in Europe (with the rise of Protestantism) and in the colonial worlds, the Church responded with a rigid codification of Catholic doctrine. Expanding upon existing notions of African "savagery" and "heathenism," the Church consistently declared African religious practices to be the work of the Devil. As we have seen, attempts to extirpate African practices and beliefs were a dismal failure. Nonetheless, the Church succeeded in marginalizing, criminalizing, and exoticizing African religious practices, reifying the widely-held belief in African primitive power.

Because the Church framed the struggle for African souls as a holy war between European agents of God and African agents of the Devil, those opting for African remedies were *ipso facto* casting their lot with the Devil. As we have already seen, many whites simply ignored the rigid dichotomy between God's work and the Devil's work. Masters used African slaves to divine the whereabouts of stolen objects and runaway slaves. They used African curers to heal them of various illnesses. Some even purchased

African healers as prospective investments, expecting the slaves to return a handsome profit from their cures. Still other masters feared their slaves' religious powers and quickly sold away any slave suspected of "witchcraft." All of these behaviors indicate a pervasive belief in African religious powers.

While these examples of the acknowledgement of African powers are impressive enough, even more shocking are the ways in which specific African beliefs became woven into the everyday fabric of Brazilian society. Whites and mixed-race peoples embraced certain elements of African religions as if they were their own. For instance, Central African *calundú* rituals were not the sole preserve of Africans. In 1713, several mulattas emerged as important religious leaders in the slave community of Tapagipe de Riba in Bahia. Two women named Lourença, one a "negra" and the other a mulatta, performed *calundús*, dancing to the sound of *canzás* and *tabaques*. When they entered their trance, both women spoke in the "language of Angola." Seated in a prominent place and observing the proceedings was another mulatta named Ignes, the aunt of Lourença Mulatta. João da Costa Barros, a pardo man who witnessed the ritual, asked why Ignes did not also dance the *calundús*. The other observers responded that Ignes was the Queen, and that in order to achieve her trance, it was not necessary for her to dance. The spirit would enter her even as she sat still, without any dancing

or other invocation. And thus it happened. After the two Lourenças had been possessed by their spirits, Ignes was possessed while seated. When Ignes was finished proffering her divinations and cures, everyone in the house was called to hug her (or her spirit). The ceremony ended when the last man hugged her, lifting her from her seat and agitating her until the spirit left her body.¹

The significance of this case lies not so much in the actual ritual, which, as we have seen, was fairly common. Rather, what makes it important are the cultural passageways that it reveals within a certain African-derived community. The two mixed-race women, Lourença and Ignes, did not try to distance themselves from the "savagery" of their African ancestors. On the contrary, they were religious leaders in the best tradition of their African forefathers and mothers. The two mulattas not only practiced distinctly Central African rituals, but they performed them in the "language of Angola," insuring that very specific Central African ideas and structures would not die. Finally, we get a glimpse of how these ideas and practices were passed from generation to generation. Ignes was at least one generation removed from her nearest African ancestor. Ignes's initiation of her niece, Lourença, into the practices of the *calundeira* guaranteed that Central African language and religious

¹ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 80, Livro 273, ff. 32-32v.

beliefs would survive for at least a third generation, even in the mixed-race, Brazilian-born community.

Though one might expect some mixed-race peoples to continue holding on to specific African rituals and beliefs, this same elasticity certainly would not be expected to extend to the white community. Nonetheless, there was at least one case in which a white woman believed that she could be possessed by her own *calundús*. One night in 1694, the Bahian Captain Domingos Pinto Ferrás was sleeping in his bed with his wife, Maria Pereira, when he was awakened by a loud clamor. He sat up and saw "his wife putting her finger on her head." The captain described the noise as "a rumbling in her head, like a fury of wind over dry leaves." Soon, Pinto Ferrás "felt in him a vehement ardor of sensuality" like those that he had experienced only before marrying Maria. When he informed her about his amorous feelings, she responded that "they must have been her *Lundus*" that were making him feel that way.

Pinto Ferrás was convinced that his wife was a *feiticeira*. In fact, the captain believed that his wife had bewitched him. The captain had a strange odor coming from his body that he presumed to be "some balm of the devil." He was also suffering from an ailment that was making him "crazy." Pinto Ferrás called in an African curer from a neighboring property, but the African told him that he could not cure him because he was suffering from *caboclo* (a

mixture of Indian and white) *feitiços*. The captain later learned that his wife was trying to bewitch him by urinating on the corners of the doors of the house early in the morning before he awoke, a practice that was more in accordance with European "witchcraft" practices than African ones. The captain eventually resorted to beating his wife and his mother-in-law before finally denouncing them to the Inquisition.²

Maria Pereira drew from several religious traditions in formulating her responses to her husband. In addition to the *lundus* and the European *feitiços* that were a part of her spiritual arsenal, she also prayed various versions of the Hail Mary, including one that apparently was designed to assert the special place of women in God's kingdom. It went: "Hail Mary full of grace. God is with you and the women. Amen." Maria embraced a set of beliefs that contained elements of Christianity, European "witchcraft," and Central African spirit possession. These elements did not mix. Rather, they were drawn upon in specific contexts and circumstances as a way of addressing the misery suffered at the hands of her abusive husband.

Though Maria's adoption of three different spiritual traditions is interesting, what concerns us here is the specific nature of the African elements that she invoked.

² ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 68, Livro 262, ff. 176-183v.

Maria did not appeal to an undifferentiated form of African spirit. She appealed to the spirits of her deceased ancestors, her *lundus*. By using the term "*lundu*," Maria was referring to a very specific Central African tradition, one that resonated even with her husband, who told the Inquisition that "in the language of the pretos from Guine," *lundus* were "demons or malignant spirits." As we discussed in chapter eight, the specialized rituals of the *calundeiros* apparently remained the provenance of Africans and their descendants. But the African belief in the power of deceased spirits (or "demons") became engrained in the broader Brazilian culture. The impact of African religious beliefs on white Catholics can be summed up in the disparate reactions of Maria Pereira and her husband. Whites Brazilians, even as early as the colonial period, were torn between an embrace of "exotic" African spiritual power and a rejection of this power as "diabolical" and "sinful."

Perhaps the most startling aspect of the white embrace of African religious traditions is the way African beliefs and practices impacted the Brazilian Catholic Church. We have already seen how priests provided pieces of consecrated hosts for *bolsas* in Pernambuco. The Benedictine monastery in Olinda employed African healers. And a priest in Bahia advised his ailing parishioners to send their slaves to *calundeiros* because exorcisms would not work against African forms of "witchcraft." Usually, priests only acknowledged

African religious powers as they might apply to other Africans, arguing that whites must avoid the taint of the Devil's remedies and cures. But sometimes, when the Church's remedies were ineffective against African "witchcraft," priests advised whites that their only hope for survival was consultation with an African diviner/healer.

In the 1780s, in the village of Iraruama, outside of Rio de Janeiro, a woman named Francisca de Sousa was suffering from an "evil spirit" that had taken over her body. The evil spirit was the result of "witchcraft" created by her mulatta slave, Clemência, and Clemência's spiritual advisor, a free African named Boaventura.³ Francisca's husband, Antônio da Assunção, called in a priest to exorcise her. The exorcism eased Francisca's pain, but did not completely expel the evil spirit. After about a week, Antônio brought her some crystals that were supposed to counteract evil spirits. When Francisca took the crystals, the spirit loosened its grip on her body and through her wasted figure began screaming in a loud voice that Clemência and Boaventura were trying to kill her. Clemência denied that she was the one who bewitched Francisca, naming Boaventura as the culprit. Boaventura was

³ Based on the descriptions of his rituals and practices, Boaventura was probably a Kongolese *nganga ngombo*. See Chapter 8, page 286, note 3.

immediately interrogated and jailed, but Francisca's illness still persisted.

In the meantime, another exorcism was performed on Francisca. Father Francisco Gomes, coadjutor of the Igreja de Cabo Frio, presided over the ceremony. The priest worked diligently trying to remove the evil spirit from Francisca's body, but to no avail. During the course of the exorcism, Father Gomes learned that the spirit that possessed Francisca was under the complete control of Boaventura. Father Gomes ultimately advised Antônio that the evil spirit would not leave his wife's body without Boaventura's permission. Not believing Father Gomes, Antônio consulted a Franciscan priest who confirmed that, "Even though the Devil might be the father of all lies, sometimes he tells the truth." In other words, Boaventura was the master of the evil spirit that resided in Francisca, and neither the Devil nor the Church had the power to remove it on their own accord.

In order to free his wife from the malignant spirit, Antônio da Assunção was forced to throw himself on the mercy of the "criminal" who created this evil. Antônio arrived at Boaventura's jail cell around midnight. He carried with him some oranges and some tobacco to ingratiate himself to the African. After giving Boaventura the gifts, Antônio told him that he would arrange to have him released from jail if he would free his wife from her suffering. Antônio begged

Boaventura in the name of God and the Holy Virgin "to concede license to the devil to exit the body of my wife." But Boaventura was unmoved. He angrily responded that Antônio's prayers would not work against him. Eventually, Boaventura was sentenced to forced labor in the chain gangs.⁴

The case of Boaventura illustrates several important points about the nature of African religious strength in the colonial world. First, some Catholic priests conceded that exorcisms and other Church remedies were no match against African spirits, even when they infected white Christians. When these priests advised their parishioners to utilize the services of African diviners and healers, they were providing a tacit recognition of African powers and weakening the position of the Church as a temporal force in Brazil. Second, African religious power had the potential of inverting the social order. Given the racial hierarchy of colonial Brazil, the image of the wealthy, white Antônio da Assunção entering Boaventura's jail cell, bearing gifts and soliciting his spiritual services, is a difficult picture to fathom. African religious power operated as one of the most powerful forms of resistance to slavery and racial oppression. Finally, the reactions of ecclesiastical and secular authorities to African "witches" only served to

⁴ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 3641.

reinforce African religious strength. The prosecution and chain-gang sentence received by Boaventura was an admission that his powers were so formidable as to be criminal.

Catholic priests, like their parishioners, were not immune to the lure of African religious solutions. Sometimes priests strayed from the precepts of the Church, becoming intimately involved in the personal and spiritual lives of their African charges. In 1702, Father Miguel da Assunção, Prior of the Carmelite convent in Goiana, was involved in an intimate relationship with one of his slaves, a woman named Felícia. Felícia inexplicably fell ill, prompting Father Miguel to send for "a negro *feiticeiro* to make certain divinations and *feitiçarias* in order for him to know who it was who made the evil for his negra." A free black named Pedro arrived and began his ceremonies, using calabashes and a pan of water. Pedro determined that Felícia's illness was the result of witchcraft cast by another slave owned by the convent, a woman named Caterina. Father Miguel immediately began a campaign of retribution and torture against Caterina. In less than three months, Caterina was dead from the ill treatment and "rigorous punishments" meted out by Father Miguel.⁵

Presumably, Father Miguel did not abandon the core beliefs of the Catholic Church, but his actions demonstrate

⁵ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor No. 75, Livro 269, ff. 201-203.

a belief in a parallel and competing set of African spiritual forces. As all of the foregoing cases show, instances of priests acknowledging the parallel power of the African spirit world were not isolated incidents of capitulation to African influences. Rather, they were expressions of deeper institutional struggles for the heart and soul of the Brazilian Catholic Church. On the one hand were those priests who wanted to uphold the rigid orthodoxy of Trent, rejecting all African practices as the work of the Devil. Father Antonil, for instance, argued that the *feiticeiros* and curers were "deserving of abomination," and that those who sought their services were effectively "leaving God, from whom comes all remedies."⁶ On the other hand were a more pragmatic group of priests who recognized that conditions in Brazil demanded a more relaxed attitude toward African religious practices. The harsh physical conditions of the Brazilian environment took their toll on whites as well as blacks, and both groups sought out African diviners and curers who were experts at explaining, predicting, and controlling this forbidding environment.

While some priests saw no contradiction in parallel practices, advising their parishioners to consult with African diviners and healers, still other priests sought to "Africanize" Church doctrine so that it would cohere with an

⁶ Antonil, Cultura e opulência do Brasil, 102-103.

emerging Brazilian world view that emphasized the temporal as well as the spiritual realm in religious expressions. The core of Church doctrine remained unchanged, but certain rituals were transformed to accommodate these new African-inspired imperatives. For example, in 1713, Father Alberto de Santo Tomás, a friar in the Convento de São Domingos in Lisbon, confessed that as a missionary in Brazil, he had made some adjustments to the Church's prescribed method of healing those afflicted with evil spirits. Father Alberto said that he had embarked for Brazil around 1702. When he arrived in Bahia, he "observed that for all of those parts of the *sertão* (hinterlands) where he went preaching, those residents used many evils, vexing many people; and in order to free themselves from these, they called on some negroes who were *feiticeiros*." Father Alberto noted that these *feiticeiros* divined many things for their clients, telling them who had caused the affliction and how to recognize its symptoms. Upon seeing these many "offenses," Father Alberto "tried in his sermons and conversations, as well as in confession, to exhort and admonish the people that they should not consult nor use the services of the said negros, nor of some other person who they might understand had dealings with the devil; and that in order to free themselves from evil, they should use the exorcisms of the Church, which were the most secure and efficacious remedy, and that they should appeal to [Father Alberto] who had a

book to make the exorcisms." Father Alberto followed the book's direction in performing his exorcisms, which were not in any way extraordinary. After doing the exorcism, he always ordered that the clothes and the bed of the sick person be searched. These searches yielded dolls, little pieces of clothing of the ill person, and live beasts, all of which Father Alberto ordered burned. As a result of his good works, Father Alberto claimed that the people of Bahia stopped appealing to the "negro feiticeiros."

In addition to providing directions on how to perform the exorcism ceremony, Father Alberto's book also made a number of unorthodox prescriptions that went beyond the usual prayers and incantations. The book, authored by Father Bento Remígio, recommended that the sick person provide the priest with myrrh, gold dust, wax, salt, olive leaves, and rue. Father Alberto blessed each one of these items. He then mixed them all together and separated them into four or more parts, putting each one into a little *bolsa*. Father Alberto then ordered that the *bolsas* be put in the corners of the mattress of the sick person and that one of the *bolsas* should be carried with the ill person at all times. The book also instructed that sick people should drink holy water and temper their food with consecrated salt. Holy water was also used in enemas, which Father Alberto claimed elicited such objects as pins, feathers, fishhooks, cords, cotton, wood, animal bones, skeletons,

people's teeth, hairs, sand, animal skins, and other "filth" from the bodies of sick people. Finally, the book required that the priest bless all medicines taken by the ill person. Since, Father Alberto was not always present when his patients were taking their medicines, he instructed them to sprinkle the mixtures with holy water in order to invest them with the power of God.

Father Alberto claimed that his remedies were successful across Brazil, so much so that when he was passing through Pernambuco, the municipal council (câmara) of Recife wanted to request a special commendation from the King, immortalizing him in that city. But Father Alberto rejected the accolades, noting that his success was due to the power of God and his book of exorcisms. Indeed, after revealing that his exorcisms came from a book, a number of people in Recife bought the book from a local store.

Despite Father Alberto's many successes, the Inquisition did not look kindly on the embellishments that he made to the typical exorcism. After making his confession, Father Alberto was ordered to cease performing exorcisms and not to leave the city of Lisbon pending an investigation. The details of Father Alberto's case were passed on to several ecclesiastical scholars for their judgments of his behavior. When the reports came back, the scholars were divided in their opinions.

Father Manuel Manso concluded that the mixtures put

into the *bolsas* seemed "superstitious and a symbol of some tacit pact with the devil in order to undo one *feitiço* with another." He suspected that these "counter-*feitiços*" were "instituted by the very devil, disguised with the blessings of the Church in order to trick those who are less erudite and circumspect." Father Manuel advised that no exorcist should be permitted "to exceed that which is ordered in any ritual approved by the Church." In keeping with the Inquisition's role as a public censor, he also insisted that the offending pages of Father Alberto's guidebook should be removed from all surviving editions.

The two other priests who rendered opinions on Father Alberto's case were far more forgiving. Father Sebastião Ribeiro argued that "corporal" objects like salt, wax, myrrh, and so on, had no effect on "pure" spirits like the Devil. Natural remedies could not cure the illnesses that were caused by the Devil. According to Father Sebastião, the efficacy of Father Alberto's cures probably lay in their natural healing properties. As such, Father Alberto was not substituting one *feitiço* for another. Rather, he was curing natural illnesses with natural remedies.

Father Alberto's most sympathetic reader was Father Antônio de Santo Tomás. Father Antônio admitted that it was "indecent" to apply holy water to mixtures that were to be taken orally, but that this indecency was "only material and not formal, since the end that it carried was to achieve the

remedy." Father Antônio concluded that Father Alberto's zeal in healing the sick was justified. Otherwise, the sick would have continued going to "the negroes, who certainly cured by work of the Devil." Father Antônio reasoned that Father Alberto's unorthodox exorcisms diverted these behaviors and kept whites under the umbrella of the Catholic Church. After some debate, Father Alberto's suspension finally was lifted, but he was ordered not to perform any exorcisms beyond those "ordered by the Roman Ritual, over penalty of being gravely punished."⁷

As one can quickly discern, Father Alberto put himself in a precarious position by Africanizing his exorcism rituals. The ambivalent decision rendered by the Inquisition demonstrates that there was a great deal of opposition to any deviation from the strict requirements of the Roman Church; yet ecclesiastical scholars in Lisbon ultimately determined that the religious ends justified Father Alberto's unorthodox means. The motives behind Father Alberto's expansion of the exorcism ritual were clear enough. In order to remain an important and vital part of the everyday lives of many Brazilians, the Church had to find ways of addressing the harsh physical realities of the colony. The uncertainties faced by most Brazilians compelled them to embrace African remedies that provided

⁷ ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos, No. 597.

more visible and immediate results than prayer and faith. Father Alberto's elaborate rituals were a logical way of meeting the African religious challenge. The use of medicinal materials from the natural world, the various blessings, and the *bolsas* must have resonated with people who were accustomed to consulting African diviners and curers. By naturalizing certain African religious principles, Catholic priests were able to meet the changing needs of their parishioners. And though specific Catholic rituals were Africanized, core beliefs remained unchanged.

The adoption of African spiritual elements by Catholic priests was no different from the African embrace of Catholic elements that we discussed in the last chapter. Africans and Europeans exchanged religious ideas in Brazil, naturalizing elements of each other's belief systems for their own distinct purposes. At the same time, both groups were forced to recast certain elements of their own belief systems to explain the conditions that each faced in Brazil. As the nexus of various African and European worlds, colonial Brazil was neither Portuguese nor African in its religious and cultural essence. But neither was it an undifferentiated "creolized" mixture. Rather, Brazil was the sum of its separate, often incongruent parts.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have been consumed with

detailing the cultural and religious practices of Luso-Africans from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century--from Islamic Wolof slaves in sixteenth-century Portugal, to Ndembu slaves in seventeenth-century Bahia, to Arda slaves in eighteenth-century Pernambuco, and finally to Benguela slaves in eighteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. Despite my best attempts to provide some sense of the ethnic heterogeneity of the African-Portuguese world and the changes that occurred over time and space, the dominant cultural stream that was considered in this work was the one from Central Africa to Brazil. That Central African beliefs and practices would survive in Brazil should come as no surprise. Between 1600 and 1770, better than two-thirds of the approximately 1.7 million slaves that arrived in Brazil hailed from Congo and Angola. But what may surprise many is that the beliefs and practices of Central African slaves were more than culturally detached and diluted "survivals." The argument posited here is that an essential character, or world view, based on the cultural values of specific African ethnic groups, was transferred to the Americas and survived in large measure.

The most commonly practiced rituals of Brazilian slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were probably Mbundu in origin. In addition to the expressions of concern over various *calundús*, Catholic priests and other observers throughout Brazil commented on an array of very specific

Mbundu ritual practices and beliefs. These included the Oath of *Golungo* and the ordeal of *jaji* (to divine who committed some crime), *tambes* (ritual burial ceremonies), *quitecles* (ancestor worship through "dolls"), *quigillas* (dietary taboos), *quimbandas* (same-sex kin-like secret religious societies), as well as other specific beliefs, practices, and lineage structures that went unnamed.

Taken together, these findings challenge widely-held notions that African slaves were unable to replicate specific African "institutions" in the Americas. Scholars have argued that the removal from one's specific cultural milieu in Africa and the devastating experience of the Middle Passage effectively diluted distinct African cultural systems. As noted earlier, Sidney Mintz and Richard Price's seminal work, The Birth of African-American Culture, suggests that, at best, particular African "retentions" and "survivals" merged with the beliefs of other African ethnic groups, as well as the beliefs of the larger colonial society to form new "syncretic" or "creolized" cultures. Even as recently as 1998, the authors of a work on slave religion in the United States and the British Caribbean articulated this same sentiment when they wrote that: "Nowhere in the Americas would Africans be able to duplicate their traditional religious systems. What they were able to do, and often very successfully, was to piece together new

systems from the remnants of the old."⁸

For early colonial Brazil, this clearly was not the case. Not only did the broad contours of Mbundu rituals remain intact, but uniquely Angolan implements of spiritual invocation made their way across the Atlantic. One of the central arguments made by the "creolization" school is that Africans were unable to replicate the necessary conditions to recreate African cultural forms. But the use of Kimbundu-language signifiers in the Portuguese records indicates that Angolans were utilizing numerous ideas and material objects that had no analogous terms in Portuguese. Conceptually, the *quilundo*, the *nganga-ia-nzambi*, and the *nganga wisa* had no Portuguese equivalents. Even material terms like *canzá*, *ngoma*, *mpemba*, and *ualuá* defied Portuguese descriptors. Finally, the ceremonies themselves usually were conducted in the Kimbundu language, limiting the complete understanding of the rituals to those who were Kimbundu speakers. Where "creolization" occurred in Brazilian slave communities during the seventeenth century, this creolization most often occurred among various Central African ethnic groups that shared remarkably similar cultural and linguistic cores. Philosophically and structurally, seventeenth-century Brazilian slave culture

⁸ Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, Come Shouting to Zion: African-American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830 (Chapel Hill, 1998), 39-40.

must be characterized as Central African, with a variety of specific ethnic practices and beliefs--Ndongo, Ndembu, Kongo, Mbata and so on--resonating in the slave community, much as they did in Africa. Slave culture in Brazil during the seventeenth century was never a "creolized" or diluted system of thought, any more so than culture in Central African was a "creolized" system of thought. And the passage of these cultural and linguistic practices through generations of Brazilian slaves and free blacks, even to mixed-race African descendants in the mid-eighteenth century, demonstrates the tenacity of Central African culture. The so-called "Angolan" stream of Brazilian slave culture remained strong throughout the colonial period.

While I concede that some elements of Central African culture were gradually transformed or lost in Brazil, particularly after 1700 when large numbers of Mina slaves arrived in the slave communities, it is no longer evident that we should start from a premise of creolization when analyzing slave culture in the diaspora. Rather, we should assume that specific African cultural forms and systems of thought survived intact. We should then assess these disparate cultural and ethnic streams and attempt to chart the **process** of creolization. Historians do not dispute the specific Portuguese cultural roots of Brazil, or the specific English cultural roots of British North America. Yet the same is not true of the Africans who arrived in

those destinations. The deductive and additive processes of creolization took place extraordinarily slowly and African beliefs and practices were often quite resistant to changes imposed from the "outside," especially for fundamental core beliefs like religion.

One of the first discernible changes to Central African rituals in Brazil was the inclusion of white Portuguese in the rituals. None of the documents that I have consulted suggest that whites actually became diviners or played important roles in the ceremonies, but very early on, whites consulted African diviners and healers to seek redress from a variety of maladies. According to Mintz and Price, slaves were able to create institutions only "*within the parameters of the master's monopoly of power, but separate from the master's institutions.*"⁹ Masters did co-opt the strength of their spiritually powerful slaves, consulting them on a variety of matters--from ferreting out runaway slaves to exposing pilferers and thieves on the plantation. But there were instances in Brazil where the master class not only ceded elements of power to their slaves, but actually adopted the slaves' institutions, especially in the realms of divination and healing.

This widespread belief in African religious practices among whites raises serious questions about power dynamics

⁹ Mintz and Price, The Birth of African-American Culture, 39.

and the nature of slave resistance in the diaspora. In light of the evidence presented here, it seems clear that much of the African struggle against slavery occurred in the religious realm. Fighting their inhumane condition with religious rituals may help explain why Africans did not resort to overt violence as often as might have been expected. Violence was neither as powerful, nor as effective an option in their world view. We must recognize that African ritual behaviors were as much secular and political as religious exercises. By monopolizing direct access to the power of the spirit world, Central Africans were able to undermine their servitude on a regular basis. As conduits to the spirit world, Africans not only held the power to divine and to cure, but they could also manipulate the spirits to help them maim and kill livestock, other slaves, or even the master himself. Unlike direct physical resistance, these rituals and practices were stealthy killers, provoking constant paranoia and fear on the parts of whites. Some might argue that this was psychological resistance, but the physical effects were very real, especially for those who believed that their physical deterioration was due to the malefic curses of their slaves. In the final analysis, Africans used the most potent weapons at their disposal to shield themselves and retaliate against the brutalities of slavery. Religious remedies were efficacious because the Portuguese had no antidote to the

African spiritual arsenal.

Central African religious power was firmly entrenched in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Brazilian society. The Portuguese constantly affirmed the power of specific divination and healing practices. By acknowledging the "diabolical" qualities of Central African religious practices, the Portuguese reinforced the spiritual power of slaves and free blacks. Ironically, the main impetus for the reification of African religious power was the Catholic Church. In their attempts to eradicate "heathen" practices like "idolatry," "fetishism," and "witchcraft," the Church actually energized these alternative, counter-hegemonic spiritual forces, especially in the white community. African behaviors that might have been dismissed simply as "superstition" were transformed into a reality that challenged elements of Catholicism and the broader social order.

While there were certainly Africans in Brazil who gradually adopted elements of Christianity, I would argue that the impact of Christianity on Africans was no greater than the impact of African beliefs on Christians. Those who emphasize the Christian core of African slave communities assume the superiority of Christianity and obscure our understanding of African religious meanings. As the Inquisition and other records show, there were at least some Africans in Brazil who practiced African religious forms in

an almost unadulterated form, recasting their belief systems only as a way of addressing the new sources of misfortune caused by slavery. These African beliefs were independent systems of thought that ran parallel and counter to Catholicism, challenging the temporal power of the dominant society and leaving the indelible imprint of Central Africa on the emerging Brazilian nation.

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

This study relies upon a range of ecclesiastical and state records, the majority of them housed in Portuguese and Brazilian archives. In Portugal, I examined marriage records, criminal pardons, Jesuit- and Benedictine-related materials, and Inquisition cases. In Brazil, I looked at marriage records, baptismal records, and notarial papers. I also consulted the Jesuit missionary reports at the Vatican Film Library at St. Louis University.

In some instances, I have retraced the steps of other scholars, examining many of the same documents, but through a distinctly African prism. Stuart Schwartz and Dauril Alden have both done magisterial works using the Jesuit materials in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo.¹ Indeed, Professor Alden's notations in that collection served as a helpful road map for negotiating the lack of order that characterizes the collection. Professor Schwartz's work also served as a guide for my research in the Benedictine collection at the Arquivo Distrital de Braga. Their studies made my research far easier.

Though I have built upon the works of other scholars, by far the most important collection that I consulted for

¹ Schwartz, Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society and Dauril Alden, The Making of an Enterprise

this project was one which has been used only sparingly by colonial Brazilianists--the collection of documents of the Portuguese Holy Office of the Inquisition. The Inquisition records provide some of the richest ethnographic accounts describing the Portuguese and their colonial subjects. Included in the collection are detailed descriptions of those African religious practices that were defined by the Portuguese as "witchcraft." The collection also includes descriptions of the practices of Muslim slaves. In addition to detailed accounts of African religious practices, there are data on sacrileges, blasphemies, separation from families and kinship units, same-sex relationships, master abuses, work patterns, economic opportunities, and many other aspects of slave life.

The collection has remained inaccessible to many scholars because it is so immense and, until recently, almost completely uncatalogued. The *processos* (cases that were actually brought to trial) are slowly being entered into a computer data base. The data base allows the researcher to perform searches according to a wide range of criteria including names, ages, birth places, types of crimes, social status, marital status, verdicts/punishments, and so on. But the slow pace at which this information is being entered means that research still can be excruciatingly difficult.

During the time that this research was being

undertaken, the data base was far from complete. In most cases, the processo number and the name of the suspect were the only information available. Thus, in my searches for peoples of African descent, I engaged in a strategy of informed guesswork. Since most slaves lacked surnames, I scanned all of the data bases for the Coimbra, Évora, and Lisboa tribunals, searching for those suspects who were listed with only a first name. Once I had compiled a list of all of the suspects with first names only, I systematically examined each of these cases to determine whether Africans were among the accused. This strategy elicited a number of cases involving African slaves, but was certainly not a foolproof way of finding Africans and their descendants. Despite my best efforts, there are very likely a number of cases involving Africans that remain to be discovered.

Though the *processos* provide the most complete and detailed ethnographic descriptions in the Inquisition collection, perhaps the best starting point for any student of the Portuguese empire are the *Visitações* and the *Cadernos do Promotor*. Included among the papers of the Lisbon tribunal of the Inquisition are the various confessions, denunciations, and reports from Portugal's colonial possessions. The Inquisition made official visitations to the Azores and Madeira (1591-1593), Bahia (1591-1595 and 1618-1620), Pernambuco (1593-1595), and Grão Pará (1763-

1769) during which they heard confessions and denunciations.² In addition to these visitations, officials of the Holy Office heard confessions and denunciations on a regular basis in the colonies and sent them to Lisbon for review. The surviving confessions, denunciations, and reports are kept in the more than one-hundred books of the *Cadernos do Promotor*.

The *Cadernos* have been largely ignored by historians and anthropologists, but their potential as a source of social and cultural history for the Portuguese colonial world is enormous. The *Cadernos* are organized chronologically. Within each book (*livro*) might be confessions, denunciations, and reports from a variety of locations in Portugal, Africa, Brazil, Asia, and India--in other words, the entire Portuguese colonial world. Thus, a single *livro* might cover a five-year period and be comprised of twenty pages of denunciations from Goa, followed by fifteen pages of denunciations from São Tomé, followed by fifty pages of denunciations from Bahia, followed by sixty pages of denunciations from Luanda. The typical *livro* is around 500 pages in length. For those interested in the cultural beliefs and practices of the peoples who comprised the Portuguese colonial world, the *Cadernos* are a rich and

² These documents have been published. See the bibliography of published primary sources that follows this discussion.

underutilized source.

BRAZIL

Arquivo da Curia Metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro (ACMRJ).

This is the archive for the archbishopric of Rio, where the old parish records are collected. The collections include marriage, baptismal, and burial records for slaves and free blacks. The documents provide vital information on the marriage choices of Africans and their descendants. I consulted the records from the following parishes:

Nossa Senhora do Loreto do Jacarepaguá

--Batismos de escravos, 1691-1725

Paroquia de São José

--Batismos de escravos, 1751-1790

Nossa Senhora da Candelária

--Casamentos de pessoas livres e escravos, 1751-1761

Freguesia de S. Salvador do Mundo de Guaratiba

--Casamentos de escravos, 1763-1794

Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (ANRJ). The national archives of Brazil. Here, I consulted notarial records,

which included letters of emancipation and slave inventories. The letters of emancipation reveal important information like the sex, age, and ethnicity of the emancipated slave, who purchased the slave's freedom, for how much, under what terms, and so on. Slave inventories give the researcher data on the ethnic and gender compositions of particular slave properties. The documents I consulted may be found in the following collections:

Primeiro Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro

--Livro de Notas, Nos. 117-121, 123-125

Segundo Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro

--Livro de Notas, Nos. 62, 65-68, 70

Quarto Ofício de Notas do Rio de Janeiro

--Livro de Notas, Nos. 44, 46-49

PORTUGAL

Arquivo Distrital de Braga/Universidade de Minho (ADB/UM).

The Benedictines of Brazil submitted triennial reports to their mother house in Tibães, near the city of Braga. These reports are now housed in the district archives and reveal important information on slave mortality rates, slave treatment, and slave purchase/inheritance patterns of the

Congregation. I consulted all of the *livros* of the collection:

Congregação de São Bento (CSB)

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon (ANTT). The National Archive of Portugal houses the majority of the surviving records of the Portuguese Inquisition, discussed above. It is also the depository for some of the papers of the Portuguese Jesuits, including those who operated sugar plantations in Bahia. The Jesuit records are among the only surviving plantation records for early colonial Brazil and reveal indispensable information on African origins of slaves, slave purchasing patterns, work patterns, living conditions, birth and mortality rates, and kinship patterns. I also consulted the marriage records of several Lisbon parishes; however, unlike the parish records that I consulted in Rio de Janeiro, there was no ethnic or genealogical information listed in the records of slaves and free blacks. Finally, I looked at the criminal pardons issued by Dom Filipe III. These pardons show the "criminal" behaviors of slaves and free blacks, including assaults, murders, gambling, and "illicit relationships" (*amancebados*) between males and females. The collections are as follows:

Cartório dos Jesuítas

--Maços 5-19, 26-27, 30, 33, 35-38, 51-54, 68-70, 82-8

Chanceleria D. Filipe III

Perdões e Legits (Proprios)

Corpo Cronológico

Parte 1

Registos Paroquiais

Concelho de Lisboa

--Sé--Casamentos, Livros 1-3

--Nossa Senhora da Conceição--Casamentos, Livros
1-4

Santo Ofício

Conselho Geral

--Inquisição, Livro 272

Inquisição de Coimbra

--Processos (10,282 cases)

Inquisição de Évora

--Processos (11,724 cases)

Inquisição de Lisboa

- Processos (17,980 cases)
- Cadernos do Promotor
- Novos Maços
- Visitações

UNITED STATES

Saint Louis University/Vatican Film Library (VFL). St. Louis University houses a microfilm collection of numerous Vatican and other Church-related documents. Among their collection are the papers of the Society of Jesus, taken from the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu in Rome. These papers include missionary reports from across Brazil during the early colonial period. The missionary reports provide valuable commentaries on the religious practices of African slaves, as well as the attempts of Catholic priests to proselytize Africans. The mission priests commented on a number of important issues including language difficulties, shortage of priests, slave mortality, gender imbalance in the slave population, and the difficulties of administering the sacraments to Africans. The citations in my text reflect the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI) collection (Brasilia) and book number, as well as Vatican Film Library (VFL) microfilm roll number. I consulted all of the microfilms in the Brasilia collection.

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