

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves, a Nineteenth-Century Yoruba Muslim in the Black Atlantic

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### Abstract

The literature on freed Africans who returned from Brazil to West Africa in the nineteenth century has emphasized the centrality of Catholicism in Aguda identity, treating Islam as a marginal consideration despite its role in catalyzing the returnee movement. This article argues that Muslims formed an important component of the returnee population throughout the century. Taking as a case history the life of Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves, a returnee who founded one of Lagos's oldest mosques, the paper reconstructs his trajectory on both sides of the Atlantic. The analysis begins with the political context of his enslavement, moving on to his life in Bahia, Brazil, where he witnessed an important Muslim uprising, purchased his freedom, and formed a family with whom he emigrated to Lagos in 1857. In Lagos, he acquired land, expanded his family and household, and became an important leader among Muslim returnees. The article's final section presents evidence that even after returning to Lagos, Saliu Salvador maintained commercial and affective ties to Brazil, as did many other Aguda Muslims. Some of those who engaged in trade were religious leaders, a fact that demonstrates Islam's importance in the dynamics of the Black Atlantic.

### Résumé

L'historiographie des Africain-es affranchi-es qui sont rentré-es du Brésil en Afrique de l'Ouest au XIXe siècle a mis l'accent sur le rôle central du catholicisme dans l'identité agouda, marginalisant ainsi le rôle l'islam malgré son rôle de catalyseur du mouvement des rapatriés. Cet article soutient que les musulmans ont constitué une composante importante de la population rapatriée tout au long du siècle. En prenant pour exemple la vie de Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves, un rapatrié qui a fondé l'une des plus anciennes mosquées de Lagos, l'article reconstitue sa trajectoire des deux côtés de l'Atlantique. L'analyse commence par le contexte politique de son asservissement, puis se poursuit par sa vie à Bahia, au Brésil, où il est témoin d'un important soulèvement musulman, achète sa liberté et fonde une famille avec laquelle il émigre à Lagos en 1857. À Lagos, il acquiert des

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terres, agrandit sa famille et son foyer, et devient un dirigeant important parmi les rapatriés musulmans. La dernière partie de l'article montre que, même après son retour à Lagos, Saliu Salvador maintient des liens commerciaux et affectifs avec le Brésil, comme beaucoup d'autres musulmans agouda. Certains de ceux qui se sont engagés dans le commerce étaient des chefs religieux, ce qui démontre l'importance de l'islam dans la dynamique de l'Atlantique noir.

**Keywords:** Muslim Aguda; Black Atlantic; transatlantic networks; Islam in Brazil; Islam in Lagos

The saga of Africans and their descendants who returned to the Bight of Benin from Brazil in the nineteenth century—known in Benin and Nigeria as Brazilians, Agudas, or Amaros—has long captured the imagination of scholars. The single most intensive phase of return occurred in the late 1830s, following a Muslim-led slave uprising in the province of Bahia known as the Malê rebellion. Many other freed people migrated during later periods of the century.<sup>1</sup> Islam helped catalyze the early phase of the returnee movement, and most towns with Aguda quarters have mosques founded by returnees at different points in the nineteenth century. Still, as Elisée Soumonni observes, Muslim returnees have received little attention from scholars, most of whom have emphasized Catholicism's importance in Aguda identity. Lagos is no exception, even though many of its Aguda families are known to be predominately Muslim.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Verger, *Trade Relations Between the Bight of Benin and Bahia from the 17th to 19th Century* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1976), 314–325; 532–563; Jerry Michael Turner, “Les Bresiliens—The Impact of Former Brazilian Slaves upon Dahomey” (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1975), 44–59, 65–67, 77–79; João José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos Malês em 1835* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 479–485; Lisa Earl Castillo, “Mapping the Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Returnee Movement: Demographics, Life Stories and the Question of Slavery,” *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2016): 25–52. Some returnees came from Cuba, but in much smaller numbers. Little has been written about their history. Rodolfo Sarracino's *Los que volvieron a Africa* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1988) remains the best book on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> Elisée Soumonni, “Afro-Brazilian Communities of the Bight of Benin in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman (New York: Continuum, 2003), 181–194. Authors who focus on Catholicism's importance include A. B. Laotan, *The Torch Bearers or Old Brazilian Colony in Lagos* (Lagos: Ife-Olu Printing Press, 1943); Turner, “Les Bresiliens,” 156–158, 162–177; Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros: os escravos libertos e sua volta à África* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012), 187–236; Lisa A. Lindsay, “To Return to the Bosom of their Fatherland: Brazilian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Lagos,” *Slavery & Abolition* 15, no. 1 (1994): 31. For works that discuss Muslim returnees, see Paul Marty, *Études sur l'Islam au Dahomey* (Paris: Lérout, 1926), 18–19, 32–34, 49–52, 89–92; João José Reis and Milton Guran, “Urbain-Karim Elisio da Silva, um agudá descendente de negro malê,” *Afro-Ásia* 28 (2002): 77–96; Lisa Earl Castillo, “L'impacte de la révolte d'esclaves de 1835 à Bahia sur la croissance des communautés aguda du Bénin,” in *Du Brésil au Bénin: contribution à l'étude des patrimoines familiaux aguda eu Bénin*, ed. Alexis Adandé, Lisa Earl Castillo, Didier Houénoué, Luis Nicolau Parés and Elisée Soumonni (Cotonou: Fondation du Patrimoine Afro-brésilien au Bénin, 2018), 39–49; Robin Law, “Yoruba Liberated Slaves Who Returned to West Africa,” in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 349–365; Ayodeji Ogunnaike, “Bilad al-Brazil: The Importance of West African Scholars in Brazilian Islamic Education and Practice in Historic and Contemporary Perspective,” *Religions* 12 (2021): 1–21.

This article examines the history of Muslim returnees by reconstructing the life of Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves, founder of one of the oldest “Brazilian” mosques in Lagos. Based on extensive archival and ethnographic data from both sides of the Atlantic, the paper investigates his path from enslavement in Oyo and life in Bahia during the time of the Malê uprising, to freedom and eventual return to Lagos, where he became a leader among Muslim returnees. In tracing the story of his individual life, we also examine the role of other Muslims in the history of return to Lagos, underscoring Islam’s centrality in the making of Lagos’s Brazilian quarter and relating Saliu Salvador’s biography to the experiences of other Muslim returnees, in Bahia and in Lagos. Finally, the paper demonstrates that Muslims played an active role in the dynamic commercial and affective relationships that linked Africans in Brazil and West Africa during the nineteenth century.

The biographical approach that structures our article yields fine-grained information about individual subjects and their worlds, which tends to remain opaque when macro-historical methods are used, as recent historiography of the Black Atlantic shows.<sup>3</sup> Saliu Salvador’s biography yielded crucial information about his family and other personal relationships that were critical to his success as a freedman in Brazil. Many of those relationships were still important when he died four decades after leaving Brazil, illustrating the vital role of such networks in returnees’ lives.

Given our subject’s geographic mobility, sources from both sides of the Atlantic are integral to our analysis. Working with disparate sources, however, creates challenges. Most basically, returnees often were known by different names in different places, which sometimes changed across time, complicating efforts to trace them. The founder of Salvador Mosque, for example, appears in Brazilian documents as Salvador Ramos das Neves, but in Lagos his descendants remember him as Ramos Saliu Salvador. When discussing his life in Bahia, we have opted to refer to him using the names that appear in records there; in the section of the article dealing with Lagos, we refer to him as Saliu Salvador, in keeping with popular memory.

## Enslavement and First Years in Bahia

In 1857, when Salvador Ramos das Neves left Brazil, he was around 54 years old and had been in Brazil for nearly three decades. His descendants’ family *oriki* mentions Ilorin, an important city in the kingdom of Oyo, perhaps his place of

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<sup>3</sup> See for example João José Reis, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, and Marcus J. M. Carvalho, *The Story of Rufino: Slavery, Freedom and Islam in the Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); James H. Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Lisa A. Lindsay, “Biography in African History,” *History in Africa* 44 (2017): 11–26; Lisa A. Lindsay, *Atlantic Bonds: A Nineteenth-Century Odyssey from America to Africa* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

birth.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that he was enslaved during the political turmoil that assailed Ilorin and the surrounding region in the 1820s. The city's ruler, Afonja, who held an important military post in Oyo, had been dissatisfied with its leadership for years. Much of Oyo's enslaved population was Muslim, and in 1817 Afonja formed an alliance with them, rebelling against the *Alààfin* [king] of Oyo. Around 1823, however, Afonja's erstwhile allies turned on him and he was killed. From that point on, Ilorin fell under the control of the Sokoto Caliphate, becoming a strategic vantage point for expanding an ongoing jihad into Oyo's territory. Around ten years later, Sokoto's armies razed Oyo-Ile, the kingdom's capital.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the captives seized during these and other conflicts in the Yoruba-speaking region were taken to the coast and sold into the Atlantic slave trade, whose main markets at that point were Brazil and Cuba.<sup>6</sup> Like most other Yoruba speakers who ended up in Brazil, Saliu was shipped to the city of Salvador da Bahia, capital of the province of Bahia and one of the biggest slave ports in the Americas. There, he was purchased by an African couple, Luis Ramos and Felizarda Rosa das Neves. On 15 August 1830, they took Saliu to their parish church, where he was baptized with the name Salvador, meaning savior, a common given name in Brazil.<sup>7</sup> The same day, the couple baptized three other captives. Like Salvador, they were described in their baptism records as *Nagô*, a term that in Bahia referred to any Yoruba speaker.<sup>8</sup> As freed Africans who had gone on to become slave masters, Luis Ramos and his wife were not unusual in Brazil, where an abolition movement would only take shape in the second half of the 1800s. Moreover, in the late 1820s Brazil was experiencing a boom in the trade in enslaved Africans, creating a buyer's market that made slave ownership more accessible to those near the bottom of the economic pyramid, including Africans such as Luis Ramos and his wife.<sup>9</sup> By 1830 the vast majority of Africans

<sup>4</sup> Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia (APEB), Registros de Passaportes (RP), 1842–1857, Maço 5896, fl. 384. “Salvador Ramos das Neves,” 7 March 1857; Taiwo Lolade Salvador, telephone interview by Lisa Earl Castillo, 22 February 2021. *Oríkì* are a genre of Yoruba oral praise poetry, one type of which focuses on family history.

<sup>5</sup> Much has been written on this subject. See especially Robin Law, *The Oyo Empire, c.1600–c.1836: A West African Imperialism in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 13, 245–246, 255–260; and Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (Lagos: CMS Bookshops, 1960), 189–205.

<sup>6</sup> See, among others, David Eltis, “The Diaspora of Yoruba Speakers, 1650–1865: Dimensions and Implications,” in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 31–32; João José Reis, “‘Por sua liberdade me oferece uma escrava’: alforrias por substituição na Bahia, 1800–1850,” *Afro-Ásia* 63 (2021): 238–240, 245–247, 260–261.

<sup>7</sup> Arquivo da Cúria Municipal de Salvador (ACMS), Pilar, Batismos 1830–1838, fl. 6, “Salvador e Esperança, nagôs,” “Vitorio nagô,” and “Maria, nagô,” 15 August 1830.

<sup>8</sup> The term *Nagô* entered Brazilian Portuguese via the slave trade, derived from *Ànàgò*, a Yoruba enclave in today's Benin Republic. Cf. Robin Law, “Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: ‘Lucumi’ and ‘Nago’ as Ethnonyms in West Africa,” *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205–219.

<sup>9</sup> On slave-owning by Africans in Brazil, see Reis, “Por sua liberdade”; Zephyr L. Frank, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 42–43, 47–50, 58–67, 91–93, *passim*. Ramos and his wife had at least two other captives,

arriving in the city were Nagôs, most of them captured during the Oyo, Owu, and Egba wars. Islam was present in these regions and some of those arriving in Bahia were already Muslims, especially those from Oyo.<sup>10</sup> Others converted in Bahia where there was already a diverse Muslim community that included Hausas, Bornos, Baribas, Nupes, and Fulanis.<sup>11</sup> It is unclear at what point in his life Salíu adhered to the teachings of Mohammed, but the stature he quickly attained among Muslims after his return to Lagos indicates that his faith dated back to his years in Brazil, if not earlier.

The parish of Pilar, where Salvador's master and mistress lived, was near the port, nestled along the base of a steep coastal escarpment. An area of warehouses and slave markets, Pilar also had a small residential district, home mainly to slave traders, sea captains, sailors, porters, barbers, and others employed in maritime commerce or its service sector. According to an 1855 census, Africans and Creoles (i.e., Brazilian-born Blacks with no racial mixing), nearly all of them enslaved, made up about 40 percent of the parish's population.<sup>12</sup> Freed African residents tended to be involved in its dominant economic sectors, usually performing types of work they had been trained for during their enslavement. This was probably the case with Luis Ramos, whose former master, a slave trader, lived in Pilar.<sup>13</sup> After obtaining his freedom, Ramos remained in the parish, moving to an area known as Mangueira.

In urban Brazil, the type of work performed by captives varied depending on their age and gender. Strong young men, for example, were often trained as porters, stonemasons, or carpenters. Women often worked as hawkers, selling food of various types. Enslaved vendors received payment directly from the customer, turning over a fixed sum to the master each week according to a predetermined agreement. Anything over that amount was the vendor's to keep, a system that facilitated saving up to buy one's freedom.<sup>14</sup>

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both registered in Felizarda's name: ACMS, Conceição da Praia, Batismos 1814–1824, fl.159v; "Benedita nagô," 10 December 1820; Batismos 1824–1830, fl. 44, "Maria nagô," 6 April 1826.

<sup>10</sup> T. G. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba, 1841–1908* (London: Longman, 1978), 4; Saburi O. Biobaku, *The Egba and their Neighbours, 1842–1872* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 25–26, 56; Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, chapter 7. For a case history of an Oyo Muslim who was enslaved and taken to Brazil, see Reis et al., *The Story of Rufino*, 3–6.

<sup>11</sup> João José Reis, "Os malês segundo Abd Al-Rahmān Al-Baghdādī, um imã otomano no Brasil oitocentista," *Revista Brasileira de História* 43, no. 93 (2023): 355–396; Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 176–178, 215–216, 283–300, 327, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> An 1855 census found that freed Africans made up only 2 percent of Pilar's population: Anna Amélia do Nascimento, *Dez freguesias da cidade do Salvador: aspectos sociais e urbanos do século XIX* (Salvador: Edufba, 2007), 58–59, 157, 182.

<sup>13</sup> Luis Ramos's former master, José Ramos de Araújo, owned a slave ship that made numerous voyages to the Costa da Mina in the early nineteenth century. Cf. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>, voyage nos. 41810, 47521, 49746, 51324, 51349, 51367, 51389, 51412, 51431, 51457, 51487, 51510, 51532; APEB, Livro de Testamentos 12, "Testamento de José Ramos de Araújo," fls. 212–214v.

<sup>14</sup> Much has been written on the types of work performed by captives in urban Brazil and the phenomenon of wage-earning. See for example Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 185–210; Mieko Nishida, *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender, and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808–1888* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 24, 78–84;

Salvador was trained as a barber. One of the most lucrative trades open to Africans in Brazil, barbering involved not only cutting hair and shaving beards, but also performing curative procedures of the times, especially bleeding and cupping. Barbers' expertise in such practices made them sought-after to work on slave ships, where poor sanitation, diet, and crowded conditions led to the outbreak of diseases.<sup>15</sup> On land, barbers were called upon to treat captives' ailments, especially the newly arrived, who were often weak and in poor health. Moreover, as João José Reis argues, because of barbers' expertise as healers, they could purchase ailing captives at bargain prices, later nursing them back to health—and profitability. This may help to explain why freedmen who were barbers often owned relatively large numbers of slaves.<sup>16</sup> Given that Salvador was a barber and lived in a district where most employment opportunities were related to the slave trade, it is likely that he worked in that economic sector, whether on land or at sea. Moreover, as a resident of the parish where arriving captives disembarked, he was in a privileged position to receive news from Yorubaland, including subjects that weighed heavily on the minds of Africans in Brazil, such as the wars that had led to their enslavement and the fate of family and friends left behind.

### The Malê Uprising

Early in 1835, a major Muslim-led slave revolt exploded in the city, becoming known as the *Revolta dos Malês* [Malê Rebellion], from the Yoruba word *imàlè*, meaning Muslim. Although the rebels included some Nupes, the leaders were mainly Yoruba speakers, many of them from Oyo.<sup>17</sup> One, a freedman whose Brazilian name was Aprigio, had been enslaved by Geraldo Roiz Pereira, a freedman who lived a stone's throw away from Luis Ramos.<sup>18</sup> As some of the few freedmen in a parish where most Africans were in bondage, Pereira and Ramos had probably known each other for years. Pereira shared a cultural bond with Ramos's wife, Felizarda: both were *Jejes*, an ethnonym that referred to Gbe-speaking peoples from the kingdom of Dahomey and the surrounding region.

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Herbert S. Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Slavery in Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 266, 283–286.

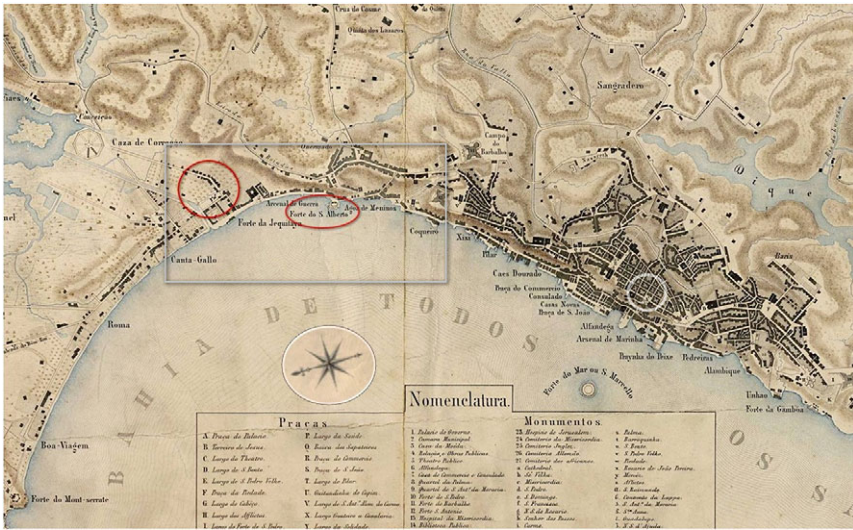
<sup>15</sup> Mariza de Carvalho Soares, "African *Barbeiros* in Brazilian Slave Ports," in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, ed. Jorge Canizares Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 227–230; Tânia Salgado Pimenta, "Sangrar, sarjar e aplicar sanguessugas," in *Escravidão, doenças e práticas de cura no Brasil*, ed. Tânia Salgado Pimenta and Flávio Gomes (Rio de Janeiro: Outras Letras, 2016), 229–247; Mary E. Hicks, *Captive Cosmopolitans: Black Mariners and the World of South Atlantic Slavery, 1721–1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming), chapter 6.

<sup>16</sup> Karasch, *Slave Life*, 39, 202–203; Reis, "Por sua liberdade," 252. For discussions of African barbers who acquired large numbers of captives, see Frank, *Dutra's World*; Lisa Earl Castillo, "O terreiro do Gantois: redes sociais e etnografia histórica no século XIX," *Revista de História* 176 (2016): 19–23.

<sup>17</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 294, 299, 339.

<sup>18</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1824–1830, fl. 62v, "Aprigio e Agostinho, nagôs," 6 April 1828; APEB, LN 234, fl. 62v, "Liberdade de Aprigio nagô," 28 May 1831; Luis Nicolau Parés, "Militiamen, Barbers and Slave-Traders: Mina and Jeje Africans in a Catholic Brotherhood (Bahia, 1770–1830)," *Revista Tempo* 20 (2014), 6.





**Figure 1.** Map of Salvador da Bahia, c. 1851. The grey rectangle marks the approximate boundaries of Pilar Parish. The red circle indicates the Mangureira district, where Salvador Ramos das Neves lived and where Aprigio worked. The red oval shows where Aprigio lived during his enslavement, and the white circle shows where he resided as a freedman. Detail of Carlos Augusto Weyll, “Mappa topographica da cidade de S. Salvador e seus suburbios,” c. 1851.

Source: Biblioteca Nacional (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

Aprigio and Salvador were undoubtedly well-acquainted through their masters and as fellow Oyo they shared an important bond. Moreover, Aprigio worked in Mangureira, very close to Salvador’s master’s home (Figure 1). While waiting for customers, Aprigio led Muslim prayer sessions and taught his countrymen to write Qur’anic verses, accumulating a following. From this, we may surmise that he was an *alfa* or Islamic teacher. Although he moved to the center of the city after gaining his freedom in 1831, Aprigio continued to work in Mangureira, thus maintaining contact with his followers.<sup>19</sup> Salvador almost certainly participated in Aprigio’s prayer sessions.

Aprigio’s new home, shared with some of the rebellion’s leaders, became one of the epicenters of the uprising. The scene of the first battle, it was also where planning sessions were held.<sup>20</sup> Salvador’s mistress, Felizarda, testified against Aprigio, as did several other Mangureira residents. They stated that they had seen him leading his countrymen in “prayers in their language,” and that he conducted writing sessions using the same “strange letters and characters” found on papers among the rebels’ possessions. They had also seen him preparing white tunics like the ones used by the rebels in battle.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 216; “Os pretos forros Aprigio e Belchior,” *Anais do APEB* 54 (1996): 28–35.

<sup>20</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 129–132; 293–295.

<sup>21</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 210, 216; 299; Verger, *Trade Relations*, 469; “Peças processuais do levante dos malês,” *Anais do APEB* 40 (1971): 105, 107–108; “Os pretos forros Aprigio e Belchior,” 35, 37–39; João

Whether Salvador participated in the uprising is unclear. What is clear is that he was not one of the nearly three hundred Africans who were arrested, over twenty of whom, like him, were enslaved residents of Pilar Parish. Many of the accused were jailed for the mere possession of papers with Arabic writing on them, such as Julião Nagô, a friend of Salvador's who was eventually absolved.<sup>22</sup> Aprigio, however, was found to be one of the main conspirators, and he was one of the few who received a death sentence.<sup>23</sup> Many others, found guilty of lesser offenses, were sentenced to prison terms or brutally flogged. In addition, some two hundred freedmen were deported to Africa.<sup>24</sup> In the face of the anti-African, anti-Muslim backlash that swept the city, many others, including non-Muslims, left voluntarily. They settled in coastal towns of the Bight of Benin, especially Ouidah and Agoué, where some became important in the growth of Islam.<sup>25</sup>

The return migrations of the 1830s stand out because of the sheer numbers of people involved. But they occurred within a longstanding context of voyages to the Bight of Benin by Africans, both enslaved and freed, who worked in the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>26</sup> Several of those accused in the Malê uprising had recently been to the continent.<sup>27</sup> Aprigio's own master, freedman Geraldo Roiz Pereira, had made a number of trips to Lagos, accompanied by enslaved assistants, some of whom continued working in the African trade after obtaining their freedom.<sup>28</sup> Paradoxically, the Bahian capital's role as a slave port enabled a small but significant part of its African population to maintain contact with the continent of their birth. These voyagers served as messengers who brought news of events in their homelands, sometimes even precious information about the fate of those

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José Reis, "O rol dos culpados: notas sobre um documento da rebelião de 1835," *Anais do APEB* 48 (1985): 119–132. Since Felizarda was Jeje, her decision to testify against Aprigio may be understood in the light of the conflicts between Dahomey and Oyo, which were rival empires. Cf. ACMS, *Conceição da Praia, Batismos 1814–24*, fl. 159v, "Batismo de Maria nagô," 10 December 1820; A. I. Asiwaju and Robin Law, "From the Volta to the Niger, c. 1600–1800," in *History of West Africa*, ed. J. F. A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 1985), vol. 1, 437–464.

<sup>22</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 392; "Julião, escravo de Manoel José Estrella," *Anais do APEB* 53 (1996): 187–198.

<sup>23</sup> Aprigio's death sentence was later reduced to life in prison. Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 460, 476.

<sup>24</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 483.

<sup>25</sup> Castillo, "Mapping," 30–31; Lisa Earl Castillo and Luis Nicolau Parés, "Profis biographiques de quelques familles aguda dont le retour du Brésil peut être situé dans les années 1830 e 1840," in *Du Brésil au Bénin*, ed. Alexis Adandé et al., 47, 52–53, 59–61.

<sup>26</sup> See for example Pierre Verger, *Os libertos: sete caminhos na liberdade de escravos da Bahia no século XIX* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1992), 9–13; Robin Law and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1999): 307–334; Daniele Santos de Souza, "Tráfico, escravidão e liberdade na Bahia nos 'anos de Ouro' do comércio negreiro (c.1680–c.1790)" (PhD dissertation, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2018), 208–211, 232–233.

<sup>27</sup> One of the rebellion's main organizers, freedman Belchior da Silva Cunha, had been issued a passport to Africa in 1833. His brother, who had also been brought to Bahia as a slave, was away on a voyage to Africa when the rebellion took place: "Devassa do levante de escravos ocorridos em Salvador em 1835," *Anais do APEB* 38 (1968): 128.

<sup>28</sup> Luis Nicolau Parés, "Militiamen," 28–29. Aprigio appears to have been purchased on one of these trips.



who had been left behind. As we will see further on, this pattern continued after the end of the slave trade, via freed people engaged in legitimate commerce.<sup>29</sup>

### Life as a Freedman

The return migrations of the late 1830s abruptly transformed the demographics of Bahia's freed African community. Many of those who left were longtime residents and prosperous, respected figures. Nagôs and members of other ethnic groups that practiced Islam, such as Hausas, Bornos, and Nupes, formed a disproportionate number of the travelers.<sup>30</sup> For Muslims who stayed in Brazil, the rebellion's aftermath reshaped their way of life. Anti-Islamic prejudice remained high for many years and those who were enslaved or enjoyed little privacy learned to conceal their faith, often abandoning protocols on prayer schedules and diet.<sup>31</sup>

Salvador's master died at the end of 1837. Three years later, Salvador purchased his freedom from the widow, Felizarda Rosa das Neves.<sup>32</sup> The manumission letter was drawn up in the office of two wealthy slave traders, José Alves da Cruz Rios and his brother Joaquim Alves da Cruz Rios, who signed as witnesses to the transaction.<sup>33</sup> Their role in Salvador's manumission suggests that he worked for them in some capacity, either aboard their slave ships or in their warehouse for newly arrived captives.

As a freedman, Salvador assumed surnames borrowed from his former masters, as was the custom in Brazil, becoming known as Salvador Ramos das Neves. As Luis Ramos had done, Salvador continued residing in the parish where he had lived during his enslavement. Although we located many documents that shed light on his life as a freedman, none illuminates his involvement in Islam. Indeed, like many other freed Africans, both Muslims and those who worshiped African deities, Salvador continued to engage in the sacrament of baptism, a fundamental Catholic rite.

This should not be interpreted, however, as evidence of religious conviction. In Brazil, Catholic records performed important bureaucratic functions in addition to religious ones. Catholic baptism, marriage, and death certificates had the weight of legal documents. Baptism certificates in particular were necessary for

<sup>29</sup> Kristin Mann, "The Illegal Slave Trade and One Yoruba Man's Transatlantic Passages from Slavery to Freedom," in *The Rise and Demise of Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Atlantic World*, ed. Philip Misevich and Kristin Mann (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 226–232, 238–239.

<sup>30</sup> Castillo, "Mapping," 27; Reis, "Os malês," 371–372, 374.

<sup>31</sup> Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 525–43; Reis, "Os malês," 364.

<sup>32</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Óbitos 1834–1847, fl. 39v, "Luis Ramos," 19 November 1837; APEB, LN 269, fls. 36v–37. "Liberdade do escravo Salvador," 26 August 1840. The price of Salvador's freedom, 600 *mil-réis*, reflected his earning power as a barber. In 1839/40, the mean price of manumission for adult males was less than 500 *mil-réis*. Cf. Kátia M. de Queirós Mattoso, Herbert S. Klein, and Stanley L. Engerman, "Trends and Patterns in the Prices of Manumitted Slaves: Bahia, 1819–1888," *Slavery and Abolition* 7, no. 1 (1986): 62; Kristin Mann and Urano de Cerqueira Andrade, "Manumission Papers, Bahia, 1831–1840," *Journal of Slavery and Data Preservation* 4, no. 4 (2023).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1838–1846, fl. 113v, "Salvador nagô," 23 April 1843; Verger, *Trade Relations*, 402–403.

personal identification, a point that comes up in the travel account of an Ottoman imam who visited Brazil in 1865. He noted with astonishment that Muslims in Brazil “submerge their children in the water of the baptismal basin,” because failure to present proof of baptism could be interpreted by the authorities as a ruse to conceal enslaved status.<sup>34</sup> For the masters of enslaved people, baptism records were considered proof of ownership. Moreover, in Brazil, as in other parts of Latin America, the bonds of fictive kinship created by godparenting, termed *compadrio* in Portuguese, performed important social functions. At times, they signaled the existence of affective ties; at others, they formalized relationships of mutual, albeit unequal, obligation.<sup>35</sup> Captives’ godparents were especially important in the latter sense: they were usually chosen by the master for reasons that were more strategic than emotional.<sup>36</sup>

Salvador participated in baptism rituals both as a godfather and as the master of captives. In his first years after manumission, he was godfather to several captives belonging to the Cruz Rios family, revealing that he remained within their sphere of influence. In 1843, for example, he participated in a collective baptism involving twenty-odd bondsmen owned by the family.<sup>37</sup> Some others baptized that day belonged to members of its patronage network, including a few Africans such as Salvador. That day, he stood as godfather to one of the Cruz Rios family’s slaves and baptized one of his own, christened Manoel, the first of various captives that Salvador would acquire during his time in Brazil.<sup>38</sup>

While still a captive himself, Salvador had formed a stable union with Maria Luiza da Conceição, an enslaved Nagô woman. In 1837, she bore a daughter named Tecla, apparently their first and only child. Although her mother was still in captivity, Tecla was baptized as free. Her godfather was a white notary public, a choice that brought the promise of well-placed support in the event of any problems with the authorities.<sup>39</sup> By 1843, Maria Luiza had obtained her freedom as well, but she and Salvador never formalized their union through a church wedding, perhaps a sign of limited engagement with Catholicism.<sup>40</sup> At some

<sup>34</sup> Abd al-Rahman al-Bagdadi, *The Amusement of the Foreigner*, trans. Yacine Daddi Addoun and Renée Soulodre-La France (Nigerian Hinterland Project, York University, 2001), 19, text supplied to us by Dr. Addoun; Reis, “Os malês,” 369–370.

<sup>35</sup> Katia de Queirós Mattoso, *Bahia, século XIX: uma província no Império* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1992), 497; Stephanie Blank, “Patrons, Clients and Kin in Seventeenth-Century Caracas: A Methodological Essay in Colonial Spanish American Social History,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 2 (1974): 260–283.

<sup>36</sup> Luis Nicolau Parés, “Afro-Catholic Baptism and the Articulation of a Merchant Community, Agoué, 1840–1860,” *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 197; Luis Nicolau Parés and Lisa Earl Castillo, “José Pedro Autran e o retorno de Xangô,” *Religião e Sociedade* 35, no. 1 (2015): 18–21.

<sup>37</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1838–1846, fls. 112–113v, “Batismos de 23 de abril de 1843.”

<sup>38</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1838–1846, fls. 112, 113 “Benedicta nagô” and “Manoel nagô,” 23 April 1843. The following year, Salvador was godfather to two African women enslaved by the Cruz Rios brothers’ mother: Pilar, Batismos 1838–1846, “Maria e Maria,” 17 March 1844.

<sup>39</sup> ACMS, S. Pedro, Batismos 1834–1842, fl. 117, “Tecla crioula,” 24 June 1838; *Correio Mercantil*, ed. 43, 23 February 1839, 2.

<sup>40</sup> An 1843 baptism record in which Maria Luiza appears as godmother describes her as a freedwoman residing in Pilar parish: ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1838–1846, fl. 112, “Benedicta nagô,” 23 April 1843.

point, Salvador took a second common-law wife, a Nagô woman named Camilla Guimarães, ten years younger than Maria Luiza. It is unclear when this new relationship began, but it was probably formalized in mid-1853, when Camilla purchased her freedom from her master.<sup>41</sup> There is no evidence of any offspring born in Bahia, but she and Salvador later had children in Lagos.

When Brazil's participation in the Atlantic slave trade ended in 1850, barbers lost one of their most important sources of income. It may have been in response to this change that Salvador opened a barber shop a few doors from his residence on the Rua da Mangueira. Although some barbers plied their trade in open squares, those who had the means often rented commercial spaces to offer their clients more comfort and privacy.<sup>42</sup> In addition to being trained in Brazilian healing practices, some barbers had parallel expertise in African ones and played important roles in religious communities that worshiped the *òrìṣà* and the *vodun*.<sup>43</sup> Little is known about Muslim barbers in Brazil, making it difficult to know whether they too employed an eclectic approach to healing the ailments of body and spirit, but it seems likely.

Certain healing practices were sanctioned by orthodox Islam, such as ingesting the water used to rinse writing boards or using amulets containing Qur'anic verses. Still, most Muslims in Brazil did not limit themselves to orthodox Islam, borrowing extensively from African practices, much to the chagrin of the Ottoman imam mentioned above. At various points in his account, he bemoaned local Muslims' refusal to refrain from divination, geomancy, and numerology. Reports from later periods also highlight Muslim heterodoxy in Brazil.<sup>44</sup> Given this context, it is probable that both Salvador's Islamic practice and the healing techniques he employed in his barbering were influenced by Yoruba beliefs.

By January 1855, Salvador owned a barber shop, as noted by a census worker who also visited his home. His household was one of the largest on the block and one of only two headed by an African. The census report provides a detailed picture of the household's composition (Table 1). Of the fourteen people living there, four were described as free: Salvador, Maria Luiza, Camilla, and Tecla. Ten others were described as Salvador's slaves: three men, three women, and four children.<sup>45</sup> This was a relatively large number of enslaved people for an urban

<sup>41</sup> APEB, LN 308, fl. 76v, "Liberdade de Camilla Nagô," 12 July 1853. On polygyny in African families in Brazil, see Isabel Cristina Ferreira dos Reis, "A família negra no tempo da escravidão: Bahia 1850–1888" (PhD dissertation, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil, 2007), 112–117.

<sup>42</sup> Soares, "African Barbeiros," 211–212, 220; Karasch, *Slave Life*, 204.

<sup>43</sup> Luis Nicolau Parés, "O sítio Dagomé: um candomblé rural no século XIX (Salvador, Bahia)," *Afro-Ásia* 66 (2022): 140–161; Castillo, "O terreiro do Gantois," 22–23, 50–51.

<sup>44</sup> Reis, "Os malês," 370, 379–380, 382–383; Reis et al., *The Story of Rufino*, 207–209, João do Rio, *As religiões no Rio* (Rio de Janeiro: Garnier, 1906), 5–8. See also Ogunnaike, "Bilad al-Brazil," and Lisa Earl Castillo, "Ogun in the Black Atlantic: Family History and Cross-Cultural Religious Exchange in Bahia, Brazil," *Journal of Africana Religions* 11, no. 2 (2023): 213–214.

<sup>45</sup> APEB, Governo da Província, Recenseamentos, Documentos avulsos 1824–1873, Maço 1602, Recenseamento de 1855, Pilar, Quarteirão 14, "Rua da Mangueira," 18 January 1855. Since Brazilian law recognized only Catholic marital unions, the census report did not describe either Maria Luiza or Camilla as Salvador's wife.

**Table 1.** Census report on the household at 38 Rua da Mangueira

Name	Age	Place of birth/ color	Occupation	Census remarks
Salvador Ramos das Neves	52	Africa	Barber	Freed; head of household
Tecla Maria das Mercês	16	Bahia/ Creole		Freed; daughter of above
Maria Luiza da Conceição	41	Africa		Freed; dependent
Camilla	31	Africa		Freed; dependent
Manoel do Bonfim	32	Africa	Barber	
Antonio	32	Africa		
Joaquim	23		Barber	
Felicidade	27	Africa		
João	6	Bahia/ Creole		Slaves of Salvador Ramos das Neves
Maria [Pursina]	2½	Bahia/ Creole		
Joanna	41			
Davina	7	Bahia/ Creole		
Christina	31	Africa		
Isabel	2	Bahia/ Creole		

Source: 1855 Census, APEB, Governo da Província, Recenseamento, Documentos Avulsos 1824–1873, Maço 1602. Information in this table is given as it appears in the census report.

household, especially given that Salvador and his wives were former captives themselves, working their way up from poverty.<sup>46</sup>

The labor performed by these enslaved men and women was undoubtedly fundamental in allowing the household's free members to accumulate the capital that paid for their eventual return to Lagos. Two of the men, barbers like their master, probably worked alongside him in his shop. One, Manoel, had served Salvador for over ten years. The other, Joaquim, a more recent acquisition, was

<sup>46</sup> In urban Rio de Janeiro between 1800 and 1850, for example, only 25 percent of those who owned captives had more than ten. Cf. Luis Carlos Soares, *O povo de Cam na capital do Brasil: a escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro do Século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Viveiros de Castro Editora, 2007), 70–72; Frank, *Dutra's World*, 77–78. On slaveholding by Africans, see Juliana Barretto Farias, "Mercados minas: africanos ocidentais na Praça do Mercado do Rio de Janeiro, 1830–1890" (PhD dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, 2012), 227–262; Maria Inês Côrtes de Oliveira, *O libertado: o seu mundo e os outros, Salvador, 1790/1890* (São Paulo: Corrupio, 1988), 40–47; João José Reis, *Divining Slavery and Freedom: The Story of Domingos Sodré, an African Priest in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 276–280.

probably still an apprentice. No occupation was given for the third male captive, Antonio, nor is it clear when he entered the household.<sup>47</sup> The census taker also neglected to record occupations for any of the women, even the enslaved ones, but it is likely that they all worked under the supervision of Maria Luiza, the senior wife, as vendors in food markets or as hawkers in the streets, the predominant economic activities of African women in urban Brazil.<sup>48</sup> Despite Camilla's free status, according to Yoruba norms she was subordinate to Maria Luiza, having entered the household after her.<sup>49</sup>

Most of the social and kin relationships described in the census report are confirmed by other documents, but at times significant differences emerge. For example, although Christina and Joanna were described by the census worker as belonging to Salvador, notary records show that their legal mistress was Maria Luiza.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Maria Pursina—described in the report as enslaved—had been free since 1853, when Salvador gave her a manumission letter, identifying her as “the daughter of my slave Felicidade.” In 1857, when he requested permission for her to travel to Lagos with him, he again described himself only as her former master. Many years later, however, in his will, he referred to Pursina as his daughter.<sup>51</sup> It is thus difficult to know whether she was his biological child or he simply considered her to be one.<sup>52</sup>

During Salvador's final years in Bahia, he continued to utilize the Catholic institution of godparenting, but his strategy shifted. Rather than deploying it to create client-patron relationships with elite families such as the Cruz Rios, he invested in forming a more horizontal and largely African social network. His new *compadres* were freed Africans, often fellow Nagôs who lived nearby.<sup>53</sup> In 1849, for example, he stood as godfather to the daughter of his friend Julião, who had been arrested but found innocent in the Malê rebellion. In 1852, he was godfather to the only child of Nagô barber Primo Mendes dos Santos.<sup>54</sup> Still another *compadre* was Nagô freedman Pompeo Monteiro, whose eldest child was Salvador's goddaughter.<sup>55</sup> The relationships of trust and mutual support

<sup>47</sup> As mentioned, Manoel was baptized in 1843. Joaquim, however, was baptized in 1851. APEB, Batismos 1846–51 fl. 167, “Joaquim nagô,” 28 December 1851.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Graham, *Feeding the City: From Street Market to Liberal Reform in Salvador, Brazil, 1780–1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 35–42; Karasch, *Slave Life*, 205–207; Cecilia Moreira Soares, *Mulher negra na Bahia no século XIX* (Salvador: Eduneb, 2007), 59–81.

<sup>49</sup> N. A. Fadipe, *The Sociology of the Yoruba* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1970), 80, 88, 114–117.

<sup>50</sup> Arquivo Municipal de Salvador (AMS), Pilar, Compra e venda de escravos, 1855–1857, fls.183v–184, “Venda de Joanna Nagô,” 11 February 1857; “Liberdade de Christina Nagô,” LN 328, fls. 197v–198.

<sup>51</sup> APEB, RP, 1842–1857, Maço 5896, fl. 384v, “Porcina crioulinha,” 9 March 1857; APEB, LN 329 fls. 80–80v, “Liberdade da crioulinha Pursina,” 25 May 1853; “Will of Salvador Ramos das Neves,” 8 October 1895. We thank Chief Hakeem Danmola for sharing this document.

<sup>52</sup> For examples of African freedmen in Brazil who had children by women who served them as slaves, see Reis, *Divining Slavery*, 175–177; Lisa Earl Castillo, “Between Memory, Myth and History: Transatlantic Voyagers of the Casa Branca Temple,” in *Paths of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Interactions, Identities and Images*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Amherst NY: Cambria Press, 2011), 206.

<sup>53</sup> ACMS, S. Pedro, Batismos 1848–1853, fl. 47v, “Felicidade, crioula,” 27 May 1849.

<sup>54</sup> ACMS, Sé, Batismos 1840–1853, fl. 395, “Maria crioula,” 25 December 1852; APEB, Inventários, 04/1770/2240/02, fls. 1, 4v, “Primo Mendes dos Santos,” 1861.

<sup>55</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1846–1851, fl. 62, “Maria crioula,” 26 August 1849.

between freedmen that godparenting ties created and strengthened frequently withstood the test of time. As with many other returnees, in Salvador's case these ties spanned the Atlantic.<sup>56</sup>

### Returning to Africa

Early in 1850, Pompeo Monteiro traveled to Africa, leaving his wife and daughter in Bahia.<sup>57</sup> His voyage occurred at the vanguard of a wave of new migration by freed people of West African origin who were leaving Brazil to resettle in the continent of their birth. Some had begun their journeys in other parts of Brazil, especially Rio de Janeiro and Recife. Pompeo's trip appears to have been a reconnaissance mission: by 1856 he was back in Bahia, where he requested passports for his entire family to accompany him back to Onim, as Lagos was then known in the Lusophone world.<sup>58</sup> Like him, many other men leaving Bahia at that time traveled with wives and children. This trend represented a change from the previous decade, when most freed Africans crossing the Atlantic from Bahia were single men who worked on slave ships or in slave "factories" in African ports.<sup>59</sup>

As mentioned, Brazil withdrew from the Atlantic slave trade at the end of 1850, delivering a fatal blow to that employment sector. In December of the following year Britain bombarded Lagos and deposed its ruler, ending the town's role as a slave port. It is sometimes assumed that this change in Lagos's status infused new life into the returnee movement, by turning the town into a safe haven.<sup>60</sup> Yet as early as 1848, more and more freed people were already traveling to West Africa with permanent resettlement in mind, judging from the increasing percentage of freedwomen and children receiving passports.<sup>61</sup> The timing of this demographic shift calls into question the idea that the increase in permanent migration was sparked by a reduced risk of re-enslavement.<sup>62</sup> Whatever catalyzed the change, the number of women and children receiving passports

<sup>56</sup> Lindsay, "'To Return,'" 28, 30; Castillo, "Mapping," 29–30.

<sup>57</sup> APEB, RP, 1847–1850, Maço 5890, "Pompeu Monteiro," 15 May 1850.

<sup>58</sup> APEB, RP, 1842–1857, Maço 5896, 1842–1857, fl. 355, "Pompeu Monteiro, Efigênia Monteiro, Maria de Alleluia e Maria Victoria," 18 March 1856.

<sup>59</sup> Castillo, "Mapping," 34–35; Kristin Mann, *Transatlantic Lives: Slavery and Freedom in West Africa and Brazil* (forthcoming), chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>60</sup> For quantitative analyses of passports issued to Africans in Bahia during this period, see Emanuelle Maia Moreira, "Vivendo sem amarras: as viagens dos africanos libertos entre a Bahia e a Costa da África, 1840–1860" (Master's thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil, 2018); Monica Lima e Souza, "Entre margens: o retorno à África de libertos no Brasil, 1830–1870" (PhD dissertation, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil, 2008), 113–122.

<sup>61</sup> Between 1842 and 1847, only 3 percent of those traveling to West Africa were women and children, but in 1848/49, the percentage jumped to 19, continuing to rise during the first five months of 1850, when 26 percent of the passports for travel to the region went to women and children. Figures calculated from APEB, Polícia, RP, Maços 5884–5888, 5890, 5896. See also Souza, "Entre margens," 122; Maia, "Vivendo sem amarras," 82–84.

<sup>62</sup> Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 137; Souza, *Entre margens*, 114.



remained high and by 1860 Lagos had emerged as the preferred destination of Africans leaving Brazil.<sup>63</sup>

Salvador Ramos das Neves and his household joined the exodus to Lagos in early 1857, less than a year after Pompeo relocated there. A number of factors probably motivated the decision, including financial ones. Since the beginning of the decade, the provincial government had been drastically increasing the taxes targeting freed Africans. Discrimination against Muslims was probably another issue. In 1853, an underground Qur'anic school was raided by the city police, who seized writing tablets and other supplies. In response, a group of Muslims petitioned the authorities for religious freedom, to no avail. A few months later, a Nagô *alfa* named Rufino José Maria was arrested in the distant province of Pernambuco, under trumped-up charges of inciting insurrection. He was eventually exonerated, but the case had already received attention from major newspapers. Given that Muslims in Bahia were lobbying for the right to practice their religion, there is little doubt that they were aware of Rufino's arrest.<sup>64</sup> Then in 1855, a devastating cholera epidemic swept Brazil, killing thousands of people in Bahia alone.<sup>65</sup>

On 20 January 1857, Salvador sold Felicidade her freedom for the high price of 1 *conto de réis*.<sup>66</sup> Her manumission letter is the earliest concrete indication that the family was beginning to liquidate assets in preparation for leaving for Africa. Over the following weeks, most of the family's other captives bought their freedom or were sold. Salvador gave power of attorney to his friend and *compadre* Primo Mendes dos Santos, entrusting him with the family's two remaining captives.<sup>67</sup>

In March, Salvador applied for passports for himself, Maria Luiza, Camilla, and Tecla (now eighteen years old).<sup>68</sup> His application also named several children who had appeared in the census report as enslaved. One, as already mentioned, was Pursina, Felicidade's daughter. The girl's older brother, João, was also on the list, as was Christina's daughter, Maria Isabel.<sup>69</sup> The latter had recently been freed at no charge, but the mother, like Felicidade, had paid dearly for her manumission.<sup>70</sup> Neither of the two women traveled with the group, perhaps

<sup>63</sup> On the destinations of ships leaving Bahia for Africa, see Turner, "Les Bresiliens," 173; Castillo, "Mapping," 34–35.

<sup>64</sup> João José Reis, *Ganhadores: a greve negra de 1857 na Bahia* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019), 145–169; Reis, "Os malês," 377; Reis et al., *The Story of Rufino*, viii, *passim*; *Jornal do Commercio* (Rio de Janeiro), 25 September 1853, ed. 266, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Donald B. Cooper, "The New 'Black Death': Cholera in Brazil, 1855–1856," *Social Science History* 10, no. 4 (1986): 467–488; Onildo Reis David, *O inimigo invisível: epidemia na Bahia no século XIX* (Salvador: Edufba, 1996).

<sup>66</sup> APEB, LN 332, fls. 74–74v, "Liberdade de Felicidade Nagô," 20 January 1857. In 1855/56, the mean price of manumission for adult females was 695 *mil-réis*: Mattoso et al., "Trends and Patterns," 62.

<sup>67</sup> APEB, LN 328, fls. 197v–198, "Liberdade de Christina nagô," 11 February 1857; LN 326, fl. 134, "Liberdade da crioulinha Maria Isabel," 28 February 1857; LN 343, fls. 8–8v, "Liberdade de Antonio Nagô," 18 March 1858.

<sup>68</sup> APEB, RP, 1842–1857, Maço 5896, fl. 384, "Salvador Ramos das Neves e família," 7 March 1857.

<sup>69</sup> ACMS, Pilar, Batismos 1846–1851, fl. 74, "João crioulo," 26 August 1849.

<sup>70</sup> "Liberdade da crioulinha Maria Isabel"; "Liberdade de Christina Nagô."

owing to tensions over the cost of their freedom. Felicidade, however, ended up going to Lagos twenty years later, where she rejoined her children and former master, as discussed later on.

The party appears to have left Bahia on the French brig *Naplousin*, which had recently arrived from West Africa with a load of palm oil, country cloths, kola nuts, shea butter, and other merchandise. After the slave trade ended, a smaller commerce in non-human commodities, especially palm oil, continued between Bahia and the Bight of Benin. When the *Naplousin* returned to Africa on 7 April, in addition to a cargo of sugar cane spirits it carried 120 travelers, Salvador and his household undoubtedly among them.<sup>71</sup> The voyage was slow, hampered by the easterly winds that prevailed in those latitudes. The *Naplousin* did not reach Lagos until the end of May.<sup>72</sup>

### Settlement in Lagos

New emigrants from Brazil typically stayed on arrival with friends or acquaintances who had returned to Lagos before them, until they could buy a house of their own or acquire land and build one.<sup>73</sup> For Saliu Salvador and his party that may have meant Pompeo Monteiro. The hospitality and assistance immigrants received from their hosts began a longer process of rebuilding their lives and recreating communities of identity and support in Lagos.<sup>74</sup>

The family undoubtedly returned to Africa with some capital saved from the sale of their property in Bahia. Quickly, however, they would have wanted and needed means of earning income in Lagos. Saliu Salvador, his wives, and his grown daughter may have brought small quantities of goods from Brazil to trade after their arrival. When Primo Mendes dos Santos died in 1861, he identified himself in his will as the “correspondent” of Salvador Ramos das Neves, meaning that the two had a business relationship.<sup>75</sup> Most likely, their business involved shipping trade goods to one another. On the African end, the most common exports to Bahia were those carried by the *Naplousin* in 1857, especially country cloths and palm oil. The latter was used in cooking by African and African-descended people and as an industrial lubricant, among other things. On the Bahian end, tobacco and sugar-cane liquor were common.

<sup>71</sup> APEB, Polícia do Porto, Visitas do Porto, 1850–1859, Maço 6426, “Entradas e saídas,” 13–14 January 1857; Alfândega, Manifestos 1856–1857, vol. 18, fl. 181, “Manifesto do brig *Naplousin*,” 14 January 1857; Governo da Província, Tesouraria, Mesa do Consulado 1838–1888, Maço 4587, “Capitão Morran à Mesa do Consulado,” 6 April 1857.

<sup>72</sup> Campbell to Clarendon, 5 June 1857, No. 11, *British Parliamentary Papers on the Slave Trade*, vol. 44, 1857–1858, Class B Correspondence, 14 (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1977); The National Archives (TNA), UK, Foreign Office, 84/1031, Campbell to Clarendon, 5 June 1857.

<sup>73</sup> For example, two different women named Felicidade stayed on arrival in Lagos with friends, and in one case also a countryman, whom they had known in Brazil: Lagos State High Court, Criminal Court Records, *Regina v. Momo and others*, 2 April 1871, 107; Judges Notebooks in Civil Cases, 2, 64, *Francisco Augustino v. Antonio Ariba*, 18 February 1879.

<sup>74</sup> Lindsay, “‘To Return’,” 28.

<sup>75</sup> APEB, Testamentos, 3/1343/1812/70, “Primo Mendes dos Santos,” 23 June 1861.

After his partner's death, Saliu Salvador would have had little difficulty finding another commercial correspondent among the many freedmen in Bahia who provided such services for returnees in West Africa. Following the abolition of the slave trade to Brazil, an active, if smaller, commerce in non-human commodities continued between Lagos and Bahia, although it declined dramatically in the last two decades of the century.<sup>76</sup> While Saliu Salvador probably continued to be involved in small-scale commerce, trade did not define his identity.

Saliu Salvador also likely continued to work as a barber in Lagos, a service in demand in the town. As a learned Muslim, he probably derived income from making and selling charms and amulets, some of which were designed to have healing powers.<sup>77</sup> His wives and grown daughter Tecla contributed to their own support probably by hawking provisions, cooked food, or Brazilian wares in the streets or from the steps or windows of their residence. Alternatively, they may have provided services such as sewing or laundering.<sup>78</sup> The children who accompanied Saliu Salvador from Brazil contributed labor appropriate to their ages and gender. The contributions of youths were vital to the economic life of households in Lagos and the wider region.<sup>79</sup> Saliu Salvador and Maria Luiza had been economically successful in Bahia, despite their subordinate status and the oppressive conditions in which they lived. In Lagos Salvador showed similar drive, but his top priority appears to have been religious teaching not business. When he died in 1895, his estate was valued at under £100.<sup>80</sup>

Lagos land records reveal that in April 1865, Salvador Ramos das Neves received a grant to a plot in Faji, an area near the center of Lagos island where many returnees were settling. Britain had annexed Lagos a decade after the 1851 bombardment. The new colonial government soon began to issue land grants in recognition of prior occupation, not as a means of allocating vacant land. Saliu Salvador therefore must have acquired his land some time before, via purchase or a grant from the *oba* (king) or a chief. By the time he received his grant, he and his family may have been using the land for several years.<sup>81</sup> By early 1866 around

<sup>76</sup> On trade between Bahia and Lagos in this period see Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 143–160; A. G. Hopkins, *Capitalism in the Colonies: African Merchants in Lagos, 1851–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming), chapters 3 and 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Regina v. Momo*, 124–126; Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam*, 132–134.

<sup>78</sup> *Francisco Augustino v. Antonio Ariba*, 64–69; Lindsay, “‘To Return’,” 29–30; Alcione M. Amos, “The Amaros and Agudás: The Afro-Brazilian Returnee Community in Nigeria in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Yoruba in Brazil, Brazilians in Yorubaland: Cultural Encounter, Resilience, and Hybridity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Niji Afolabi and Toyin Falola (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2017), 94.

<sup>79</sup> Toyin Falola, *The Political Economy of a Pre-Colonial African State: Ibadan, 1830–1900* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1984), 51–56; Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 65, 68, 132, 182; Jessica C. Reuther, *Fostering Trust: A History of Girlhood and Social Motherhood in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming); Mann, *Transatlantic Lives*, chapter 5.

<sup>80</sup> Salvador Ramos das Neves's name does not appear on a list of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century wills valued at £100 or more that Mann compiled at the Lagos Probate Registry (LPR) in 1973–74. The mean value of estates probated between 1888 and 1897 was £68. The values ranged from £3 to £25,000.

<sup>81</sup> Directorate of Land Registry, Lands Bureau, Lagos State Government Secretariat, Ikeja, Register of Crown Grants (RCG), vol. 1, part 2, “Salvador Ramos das Neves,” April 1865; Mann, *Slavery*, 251–255.

260 crown grants had been issued. About 15 percent of them went to returnees from Brazil.<sup>82</sup> Saliu Salvador was thus in the forefront of an important change taking place in local land tenure, as were other Muslim returnees. One, Ventura Grillo alias Momo, who reached Lagos in 1859, also received a land grant in 1865 and was almost certainly a part of Salvador Saliu's social network. The two men may have known each other in Bahia, where Grillo lived in a parish adjacent to Pilar. Members of the two families later intermarried and became important in the early history of Inabere Mosque, founded in the 1920s.<sup>83</sup> Another important Aguda Muslim leader, Alfa Tairu Akinosho Eko, who founded an eponymous mosque in 1882, received three land grants.<sup>84</sup>

The land Saliu Salvador acquired was in a desirable location in the eastern part of Faji, and it became an important asset. New immigrants were constructing houses and other buildings in the neighborhood, which gradually altered the landscape of the central portion of the island. By 1868, three major east-west thoroughfares had been created: Bamgbose Street, Tokunboh Street, and Igboşere Road. Narrow cross streets intersected them. Salvador's plot fronted on Bamgbose and ran along Joseph Street to its intersection with Igboşere Road (Figure 2). West of it lay an open space that later became known as Campos Square and was regarded as the center of Popo Aguda, the Brazilian quarter. Close to Saliu Salvador's plot stood St. Peter's Anglican church and school, opened in the 1850s and attended by some Aguda children.<sup>85</sup> A few blocks to the southeast, the Société des Missions Africaines (SMA) founded Lagos's only Catholic mission in 1868.<sup>86</sup> Saliu Salvador's land lay smack in the heart of the Brazilian quarter, and it was near the center of the growing colonial town and expanding Atlantic port.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> These numbers are derived from an analysis of data that Mann extracted in the 1970s from RCGs, when they were held at the former Lagos Land Registry, Igboşere Road.

<sup>83</sup> RCG, vol. 1, pt. 2, "Ventura Grillo," April and June 1865; "Ventura africano," 29 April 1844, ACMS, Conceição da Praia, Batismos 1834–1844, fl. 183v; APEB, Pedidos de Passaportes (PP), 1858–1859, Maço 6365; "Ventura Grillo," 2 April 1859; Adam Animashaun, *The History of the Muslim Community of Lagos and the Central Mosque* (Lagos: Hope Rising Press, n.d.), 7, 8. One of Grillo's most prominent descendants was related to the Salvador family via his mother: P. Nelson Graves, "Christendom's Narratives and the Stained Glass Designs of Yusuf Cameron Adebayo Grillo," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5, no. 4 (2016): 151–152. On the Inabere street mosque, see Lawal Babatunde Adams (ed.), *Eko Dynasty, Colonial Administrators and the Light of Islam in Lagos* (Lagos: Eko Islamic Foundation, 2004), 191; and "Brazilian Mosque, Inabere Street, Lagos: Turbanning Ceremony of ... Alhaji Sikirulai Atanda Anthonio," 17 April 1994. We thank the late Chief Adekunle Alli for the latter document.

<sup>84</sup> RCG, vol. 1, part 2, "Cyprião Antonio Augusto (sic)," August 1866; vol. 6, pt. 3, "Seyprion Antonio Augusto (sic)," April 1871; and vol. 6, pt. 3, "Seyprion Antonio Agus (sic)," June 1871. On Tairu Eko's Brazilian name, see note 129. For the date his mosque was founded, see Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 157.

<sup>85</sup> Peter R. McKenzie, *Hail Orisha! A Phenomenology of a West African Religion in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Brill, 1997), 503.

<sup>86</sup> M. J. Bane, *Catholic Pioneers in West Africa* (Dublin: Clonemore and Reynolds, 1956), 150; Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 187, 240.

<sup>87</sup> Michael J. C. Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 18–19; Mann, *Slavery*, 118–30; Ademide Adelusì-Adeluyi, "'Africa for the Africans?' Map Making, Lagos, and the Colonial Archive," *History in Africa* 47 (2020): 276, 278, 294.



**Figure 2.** Map of Lagos, c. 1885–1890. The darker area shows the approximate limits of Faji, where many returnees from Brazil settled. Note that the mosque founded by Saliu Salvador lay several blocks east of Alagbayun, the town's first Brazilian mosque. Still further to the east was Tairu Eko Mosque, perhaps a reflection of the fact that it was founded somewhat later. Inabere Mosque came into being in the 1920s.

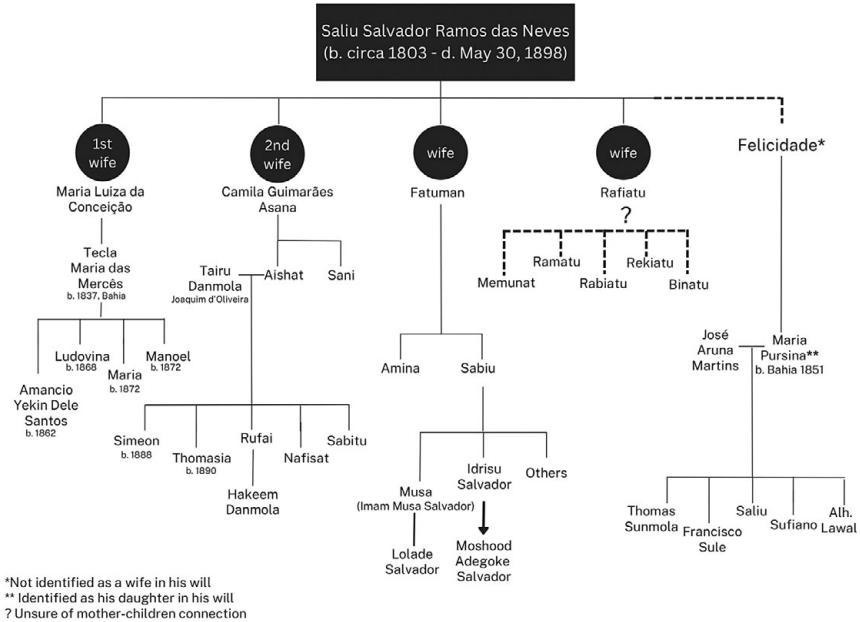
Sources: Jean Herskovits Kopytoff, *A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The "Sierra Leonians" in Yoruba, 1830-1890* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 90–93; Michael J. C. Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 18–19; TNA, UK, "Town of Lagos, West Africa, 1891," CO700, Lagos 14.

In this changing neighborhood, Saliu Salvador erected a dwelling. His household initially consisted of those who came with him from Brazil, but its size and composition changed during his lifetime. Family trees created by contemporary descendants of his son Sabiu provide insights into the family structure, but they do not identify his children's mothers. Nor do they name the children's spouses. However, utilizing information from Catholic records and Salvador Ramos das Neves's last will and testament, we have been able to fill in some of the gaps (Figure 3).<sup>88</sup>

In Lagos Saliu Salvador took two more wives, Fatuman and Rafiatu. We were unable to find information about the latter, but Fatuman was the Lagos-born daughter of a Brazilian returnee, Higinio Pinto da Fonseca, whom Salvador knew from his time in Bahia. She and Saliu Salvador had two children, a daughter named Amina and a son, Sabiu.<sup>89</sup> Both Maria Luiza and Fatuman died before their

<sup>88</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves.

<sup>89</sup> APEB, Inventários, 01/26/27/01, fl. 5, "Higinio Pinto da Fonseca," 1896.



**Figure 3.** First generations of the Salvador family.

Sources: Moshood Adegoke Salvador, *Beyond a Dream: A Memoir* (Lagos: Self-published, 2014), ix; Salvador family Youth Program, “Birth Map of Salvador’s Grandfather”; Lagos Baptism Register and the will of Salvador Ramos das Neves.

husband, but in his will, Saliu Salvador named two wives who survived him: Camilla alias Asana and Rafiatu.<sup>90</sup> After Maria Luiza’s death Camilla became his senior wife. She appears to have been the mother of his daughter Aishat and his son Sani. Judging from their lack of Catholic names, we assume they were born in Lagos. Catholic names were acquired at baptism, which was obligatory in Brazil but optional in Lagos, where it often depended on the mother’s wishes. Rafiatu was probably the mother of some, perhaps all, of Salvador Saliu’s five remaining daughters: Ramatu, Memunat, Rabiatsu, Rekiatu, and Binatu, also presumably born in Lagos.

Many of the females in the second generation probably left the household on marriage or entry into informal domestic unions. Tecla, for example, had her first child in 1862 with Firmino Jacob dos Santos, a Creole returnee. In the 1870s, she had children with two other men.<sup>91</sup> Later still, Maria Pursina married a prominent Aguda Muslim, José Aruna Martins, as did Aishat, whose husband was Joaquim de Oliveira, alias Tairu Danmola.<sup>92</sup> Eventually, all of the daughters born

<sup>90</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves.

<sup>91</sup> Archive of the Société des Missions Africaines, Cork, Ireland, Lagos Baptism Register, 1863–1883 (LBR), no. 65, April 1864; no. 178, 16 August 1868; no. 249, 21 July 1872; no. 274, 8 December 1872. We are grateful to Fr. E. M. Hogan for a copy of this baptism register.

<sup>92</sup> Laotan, *The Torch Bearers*, 17–18; Chief Hakeem Danmola, interview by Titilola Marinho, Lagos, 18 July 2023.





**Figure 4.** Salvador Mosque and the family compound today. View of Salvador Mosque (left) and the family compound (right), separated by Joseph Street, seen from Bamgbose Street looking south. Source: Google Maps (accessed 19 August 2023).

in Lagos probably formed domestic unions through formal marriage or other means. While these unions were intact, the women may have lived outside Saliu Salvador's household, although they enjoyed rights to return to it.<sup>93</sup> Saliu Salvador's two sons Sani and Sabiu still lived in his household at the time of his death, as did João, who had come with the family from Bahia.

Intermittently, other people also lived in Saliu Salvador's household. Felicidade and Antonio, formerly enslaved by Salvador in Bahia, returned to Africa in 1877.<sup>94</sup> It is unclear what became of Antonio, but Felicidade evidently entered the household at that time. Even though she was the mother of Maria Pursina—who Saliu Salvador identified as a daughter in his will—he did not name Felicidade as a wife, although she still lived in his household when he died in 1898. Friends and co-worshippers newly arrived from Brazil likely also found temporary lodgings in the house on Bamgbose Street, as did apprentices and students of Islam.

Household heads enlarged their dwellings in stages, as the demand for space arose. By the end of his life Saliu Salvador's dwelling included two corridors and multiple rooms, with a yard and gardens behind. In addition to that property,

<sup>93</sup> O. A. Sobande, interviews by Kristin Mann, Lagos, 1974 and July 1980; Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status, and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>94</sup> APEB, PP, Maço 6376, "Requerimento da africana liberta Felicidade," 14 March 1877; Livro de saída de passageiros (LSP), vol. 52, "Passageiros do patacho *Paraguassu*," 7 April 1877.

located on the western side of Joseph Street, he owned two houses on the east side of the street, adjacent to Salvador Mosque. At the time he wrote his will, he supplemented his income by renting out space in all three of his houses, which he managed as a single compound.<sup>95</sup> Although his descendants no longer own the properties adjacent to the mosque, to this day, the family compound lies at the corner of Bamgbose and Joseph streets, directly across from Salvador Mosque (Figure 4).

### Founding a Mosque, Building a Religious Community

According to a recent survey conducted by the municipal government of Lagos, there are eight Brazilian mosques on Lagos Island today, six of which date back to the nineteenth century: Alagbayun, Salvador, Olosun, Obadina, Oloro, and Tairu Eko.<sup>96</sup> A seventh, Inabere, was founded in the early 1900s, as already mentioned. In most cases, oral traditions give conflicting dates of their founding, a problem that is perpetuated in written sources.

The mosque named after Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves provides an excellent example. Some sources claim it dates back to the late eighteenth century, but an inscription above the entrance to the building states that it was founded in 1848. However, Lasibat Danmola, Saliu Salvador's great-grandson, gave the year as 1858, which fits well with the information we have uncovered about when the mosque's founder arrived in Lagos.<sup>97</sup>

If Lasibat Danmola's memory was correct, it would appear that from the time Saliu Salvador settled in eastern Faji, he began holding prayer sessions there, perhaps initially in the open air and later inside his house. L. B. Adams classifies Salvador as one of Lagos's many *ratibi* mosques, which began in residences with the support of their heads.<sup>98</sup> Just when Salvador Mosque began to be publicly recognized and attract a larger congregation is less clear. The first written

<sup>95</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves. In the final quarter of the nineteenth century, it was common for polygynous men in Lagos who had many children to alter the spatial configuration of their compounds, so that the parts of them were not contiguous. Sunmonu Animasaun's many wives and children, for example, lived in separate houses he provided them up and down a narrow lane. LPR, Will, Sunmonu Animasaun, 19 June 1895.

<sup>96</sup> Lagos State Building Control Agency (LASBCA), *Compendium on Churches and Mosques within Lagos Island*, September 2022, available at <https://lasbca.lagosstate.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/COMPENDIUM-OF-WORSHIP-CENTRES-LAGOS-ISLAND-SEPTEMBER-2022.pdf> (accessed 13 February 2024); Chief Adekunle Alli, personal communication to Kristin Mann, 21 June 2021. The earliest surviving issue of J. A. O. Payne's *Lagos and West African Almanack and Diary, 1878* (London: W. J. Johnson, 1877), 36, lists the city's mosques, but only the names of the streets where they were located, not of the mosques themselves. Still, it is possible to recognize three of the oldest Brazilian mosques: on Taiwo street (Alagbayun), on Obe street (Obadina), and on Joseph street (Salvador). Olosun Mosque on Luther street may be that which Payne called Faji, and Oloro Mosque on Odufna street that which he referred to as Okepopo. Tairu Eko Mosque had not yet been founded.

<sup>97</sup> Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 157, 187; Lasibat Danmola, interview by Lisa Earl Castillo, Lagos, 24 September 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 146. See also J. D. Y. Peel, *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 138.

evidence of it comes in 1878, when J. A. O. Payne's *Lagos and West African Almanack* listed a mosque on Joseph Street, still the location of the temple today.<sup>99</sup> The free-standing structure that by then housed the mosque was probably built initially of mud and bamboo and was improved gradually, as funds became available. Its current façade, evidently the result of twentieth-century renovations, bears little resemblance to the original facades of other Aguda mosques, which were influenced by nineteenth-century Brazilian architectural aesthetics.<sup>100</sup>

Only one land grant in the name of Salvador Ramos das Neves or his wives Maria Luisa and Camilla can be traced between 1863 and 1872. Yet there were apparently four properties: his dwelling on the western side of Joseph Street and the mosque and two other houses on the eastern side. It is possible he acquired the properties to the east separately, through conveyances or deeds of gift, in which case he would not have required crown grants to secure his title. Or he may have acquired crown grants to the eastern plots after 1872, when our data end.

One point is certain. Salvador Mosque was not the first place of Islamic worship in Lagos founded by returnees from Brazil. According to Chief Adekunle Alli, an authority on Islam in Lagos, the first Brazilian mosque on the island was Alagbayun, located on a side street behind Tinubu Square, with three others later branching out from it: Salvador, Olosun, and Inabere.<sup>101</sup> Although Chief Alli gives 1819 as Alagbayun's founding date, there is no evidence that the returnee community in Lagos dates back that far, nor even that it resulted from the exodus of the late 1830s.<sup>102</sup> As noted earlier, some families in Ouidah and Agoué descend from Muslim freedmen who left Bahia then. In Lagos, however, no trace has been found of anyone arriving at that time, not even Ajadi Luis Daupele, who was convicted of participation in the uprising and whose deportation sentence specifically mentioned Onim (Lagos).<sup>103</sup> According to Gbadamosi, the first returnees from Brazil arrived in Lagos around 1841. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of freedmen from Brazil in the town during the 1840s, most of them

<sup>99</sup> Payne, *Lagos Almanack*, 1878, 36; LASBCA, *Compendium*, 45.

<sup>100</sup> "Brazilian Mosque, Inabere Street"; Adedoyin Teriba, "Afro-Brazilian Architecture in South-west Colonial Nigeria (1890s–1940s)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2017), 61–67, 221, 224–227; Ayodeji Ogunnaike, "The Transcontinental Genealogy of the Afro-Brazilian Mosque," *MAVCOR Journal* 6, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>101</sup> According to oral tradition, the Brazilian name of Alagbayun's first imam was Anthonio (sic). Cf. Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 144, 164, 193; Chief Adekunle Alli, interview by Kristin Mann, Lagos, 2 July 2019, and personal communication from him, 21 Jun. 2021; Chief Alli, "Notes of an interview with Arafat Oseni," Lagos, 10 August 1986; Lawal B. Adams and Adekunle Alli, *Oko Faji: The Biography of a Community* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 125.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholas Omenka, "The Afro-Brazilian Repatriates and the Religious and Cultural Transformation of Colonial Lagos," *Abia Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2004): 28; Lindsay, "To Return," 22, 48.

<sup>103</sup> In 1836, a large group of liberated Africans in Rio de Janeiro requested passports to Onim. However, there is no evidence that they actually departed. Cf. Souza, "Entre margens," 139–140; Walter Hawthorne, "'Being Now, as it Were, One Family': Shipmate Bonding on the Slave Vessel *Emilia*, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic World," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45, no. 1 (2008): 67–70; Verger, *Trade Relations*, 320–322.

employed in the slave trade.<sup>104</sup> It is probable, therefore, that Alagbayun was founded sometime in the 1840s, or perhaps as late as the early 1850s.<sup>105</sup> The subsequent founding of Salvador Mosque, farther to the east, may have occurred in response to the increasing number of Aguda Muslims settling in that part of the city in the 1850s who wanted mosques close by.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, when Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves and other Muslim returnees were arriving in Lagos, conditions were propitious for the expansion of Islam. A moment of crisis following the British bombardment, when the Chief Imam and several prominent local Muslim traders and war leaders fled to Epe with Oba Kosoko, did not last. While a significant number of the Muslim exiles remained in Epe, many others soon returned, as later did their former *oba*.<sup>106</sup> Over time, Lagos's Muslim population steadily grew, through immigration (from the interior, Sierra Leone, and Brazil), conversion, and biological reproduction. Population figures are inexact. They show, however, that between 1851 and 1900 Muslims consistently outnumbered Christians; by the end of century, they formed a majority of the city's population.<sup>107</sup> Throughout the period, moreover, indigenous and colonial political authorities permitted Muslims to worship openly.<sup>108</sup>

During Saliu Salvador's early years in Lagos, Islamic institutions were just beginning to develop in the town. A Central Mosque under the authority of a Chief Imam existed by the 1840s, but it did not exercise tight control over the settlement's many neighborhood mosques, then important sites of Islamic expansion.<sup>109</sup> Individual Muslim leaders such as Saliu Salvador established mosques near where they lived and built congregations around them. Payne listed twenty-seven such sites in his 1878 *Almanack*, and there were probably others.<sup>110</sup>

The reputation of Muslim leaders for Qur'anic learning and piety increased their ability to attract followers. So too did their reputation for skill in less orthodox matters, such as making powerful charms and being able to harness the

<sup>104</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 321, 352; Reis, *Rebelião escrava*, 464–466; *Correio Official*, Rio de Janeiro, 14 July 1837 (ed. 12), 2; Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 28. On the freedmen from Brazil in Lagos during the 1840s, see Mann, *Transatlantic Lives*, chapter 3.

<sup>105</sup> Alli, interview.

<sup>106</sup> Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 31, 69; Robert S. Smith, *The Lagos Consulate, 1851–1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 35, 46–47, 52–55, 127; Mann, *Slavery*, 95, 97–98, 107; Mufutau Oluwasegun Jimoh, "The Growth and Development of Islam in Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria, 1851–2010," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 2 (2016): 2–6.

<sup>107</sup> Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 51; Pauline H. Baker, *Urbanization and Political Change: The Politics of Lagos, 1917–1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 39; J. A. O. Payne, *Table of Principal Events in Yoruba History* (Lagos: Andrew Thomas, 1893), 30; Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos*, 82.

<sup>108</sup> Tajudeen Gbadamosi, "The Contribution of Sierra Leonian Brazilian (sic) Muslim Repatriates to Nigerian History and Development," in *History of African Muslims in Brazil*, ed. Salih Mahdi Samarrai. Available at: [http://dr-samarrai.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/62\\_History\\_of\\_Afro\\_Brazilian\\_Muslims\\_english.pdf](http://dr-samarrai.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/62_History_of_Afro_Brazilian_Muslims_english.pdf) (accessed 25 July 2023).

<sup>109</sup> Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 38–39, 53–54; Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 7, 143; I. O. Raifu, "Intrigues and Twists in the Imamate Crisis of Lagos Central Mosque (Jama'atul Muslimeen Council), 1841–1947," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 5, no. 4 (2016): 38.

<sup>110</sup> Payne, *Lagos Almanack*, 1878, 36.

forces of the spirit world.<sup>111</sup> Immigrants from Brazil, Sierra Leone, and parts of the interior gravitated to religious leaders who shared their histories and experiences. While the identities of most of those who worshipped at Salvador Mosque in the nineteenth century are unknown, the majority were undoubtedly returnees from Brazil. They probably included Ventura Grillo, Pompeo Monteiro and, toward the end of the century, Saliu Salvador's sons-in-law José Aruna Martins and Tairu Danmola.

Strong congregational life characterized Yoruba mosques. In Lagos, male leaders known as *Giwas* headed neighborhood Muslim associations charged with mobilizing believers to organize funerals, marriage rituals, and infants' naming ceremonies, as well as vibrant Islamic festivals.<sup>112</sup> The teamwork that went into planning and staging such events promoted mutual support and helped propagate faith in Islam. Thus, in addition to providing returnees with a place of prayer, Salvador Mosque and its affiliated associations helped build solidarity among them. At some point in the late nineteenth century, Salvador Mosque, like others in Lagos, must have created a governing body, to which its ownership passed. When its founder wrote his will, stating how he wanted his property divided, no mention was made of the mosque.<sup>113</sup>

Periodically, itinerant *alfas* and imams from the north passed through the town spreading knowledge about Islam and energizing the faithful. One such teacher, Salaiman, who arrived in Lagos in 1875, provoked a lasting doctrinal split by insisting that the Qur'an was all sufficient for religious guidance and that other Islamic texts then also venerated in Lagos should be abandoned.<sup>114</sup> The mosque founded by Tairu Akinosho Eko followed Sulaiman, but it was apparently the only Brazilian mosque to do so. Despite the schism, Gbadamosi argues that in the final quarter of the nineteenth century Muslims in Lagos were "confident" of their religion and that leaders who had arrived from Brazil—such as Saliu Salvador, Ventura Momo Grillo, and Tairu Akinosho Eko—contributed to that self-confidence.<sup>115</sup>

Fragmentary evidence suggests that Saliu Salvador commanded respect beyond his own household and Faji's Muslim population, playing a broader leadership role. In 1877, when the British colonial government introduced a new Supreme Court as part of a major judicial reform, "Senhor Salvador" represented "Brazilian Emigrants" during the crowded inaugural

<sup>111</sup> Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 6; Peel, *Christianity, Islam*, 137–139; Muhsin Adekunle Balogun, "Syncretic Beliefs and Practices amongst Muslims in Lagos State Nigeria; with Special Reference to the Yoruba-Speaking People of Epe" (PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2011), 19, 143, 159, 166, 170–171, *passim*.

<sup>112</sup> N. E. S. Adewale, interview by Kristin Mann, Lagos, July 1974. For lists of men's associations in Lagos headed by *Giwas* see Payne, *Lagos Almanack*, 1878, 21, and 1885, 67.

<sup>113</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves; Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 37–39; "Brazilian Mosque, Inabere Street."

<sup>114</sup> Sulaiman's followers, known as *Alalukurani*, left the Central Mosque and established another of their own. Gbadamosi, *Growth of Islam*, 34–35, 65–66, and "Patterns and Developments," 178, 186; Balogun, "Syncretic Beliefs and Practices," 84; Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 10–12.

<sup>115</sup> Gbadamosi, "The Contribution," 3–6, Omenka, "The Afro-Brazilian Repatriates," 28–29, 42–43.

ceremony.<sup>116</sup> A decade later, during the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign, when a group of Aguda men wrote a letter to the governor congratulating Her Majesty, Salvador Ramos das Neves was among the eighteen signatories. At the bottom of the list, "Senhor Salvador" signed a second time on behalf of his "followers," presumably members of his mosque.<sup>117</sup>

### Muslim Returnees and Catholicism

Many studies of Brazilian returnees stress Catholicism's importance as a symbol of Aguda identity. Yet little is known about how Muslim returnees engaged with the religion into which they were baptized during their enslavement.<sup>118</sup> In Saliu Salvador's case, after arriving in Lagos, he appears to have put the religion firmly behind him. His name does not appear in Catholic parish records. However, even as he distanced himself from Catholicism—probably the result of increasing focus on Islam—his family and household remained religiously heterogeneous. Both his senior wife, Maria Luiza, and his eldest child, Tecla Maria das Mercês, were identified in his will only by Catholic names, without Muslim aliases. Some accounts today describe Maria Luiza as having been a Catholic. Parish records show that her daughter Tecla had four children who were baptized as Catholics and that she was active as a godmother.<sup>119</sup>

On the other hand, Saliu Salvador's second wife, Camilla Guimarães, at some point embraced Islam, judging by her Muslim alias Asana.<sup>120</sup> The names of his other two wives, Fatuman and Rafiatu, indicate that they were also Muslims. Moreover, none of Saliu Salvador's Lagos-born children appears to have been Catholic. Maria Pursina and Tecla, both born in Bahia, are the only daughters not identified by Muslim names in the will. As already mentioned, Pursina's husband was a prominent Muslim and some of their children were baptized. Still, by 1910 an SMA priest described them as apostates.<sup>121</sup> Aishat's husband, whose Yoruba name was Danmola, is remembered as having converted to Islam

<sup>116</sup> Payne, *Lagos Almanack*, 1878, 59.

<sup>117</sup> *The Lagos Observer*, 2 and 9 July 1887, 9.

<sup>118</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 533; Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 189–191; Milton Guran, *Agudás: Os "brasileiros" do Benin* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1999), 15, 17, 69; Lindsay, "'To Return,'" 31; Amos, "Amaros and Agudás," 70.

<sup>119</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves. David Adio-Moses, comment posted to "Brazilians in Lagos" in *MindReadings* blog (March 2014), <https://femioyebode.com/2014/03/07/brazilians-in-lagos/> (accessed 13 August 2023). For Tecla's role as a godmother see LBR, 1863–1883, no. 46, July 1869; no. 90, 27 March 1870; no. 112, 3 July 1870; no. 215, 5 November 1871; no. 518, 6 January 1877; no. 841, 17 December 1880; no. 893, 8 May 1881.

<sup>120</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves.

<sup>121</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves. Maria Pursina and José Aruna's offspring were half siblings of the famous early-twentieth-century Muslim leader and British-educated barrister Jubril Martins. Cf. Amos, "Amaros and Agudás," 73; Humphrey J. Fisher, "The Ahmadiyya Movement in Nigeria," *African Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1961): 61–74; Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 58–59. Laotan, *Torch Bearers*, 17–18, observes that a number of Aruna Martins' sons attended Catholic primary and secondary schools, but that only one became a Christian.



in Lagos, receiving the Muslim name Tairu and eventually becoming an *alfa*. Although the couple baptized their two sons, they gave them a Muslim upbringing. Rufau Danmola, their second son, went on to become imam of Inabere Mosque, also making the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the marriages of both Aishat and Pursina cemented alliances with important Aguda Muslim families.

Although Islam evidently predominated within the family, the fact that João, a good Catholic in the eyes of the priests, still lived in Saliu Salvador's dwelling when he wrote his will in 1895 shows that the Muslim leader tolerated religious difference.<sup>123</sup> The religious identity of Maria Pursina's and João's mother, Felicidade, is unknown, but no Muslim alias is mentioned for her in the will, so she too may have retained an association with Catholicism, and perhaps *òrìṣà* worship as well. The latter was extremely common in Lagos, even among returnees.<sup>124</sup> The subject has received little attention from scholars, but evidence is emerging from other towns that some Aguda Muslims simultaneously engaged in ancestral religious practices.<sup>125</sup> In the case of Saliu Salvador's family, however, his will gives no Yoruba names for any of his family members, perhaps a sign of distance from *òrìṣà* worship. While Saliu Salvador was a Muslim religious leader, and while his family and probably also his household were majority Muslim, both were also religiously diverse.

The provisions Saliu Salvador made in his will, written three years before his death in 1898, confirm his commitment to the Christian and Muslim members of his family and household. Most significantly, he bequeathed the parlor and another room in the house on the western side of Joseph Street that he used as his own personal space, plus a yard connecting them to Igboṣere Road, collectively to all of his children and to their heirs and assigns forever, without differentiating based on religion.<sup>126</sup> The bequest was a clear sign that he wanted them, in perpetuity, to identify and act as one family. Many other men in Lagos at that time used their wills to turn their personal residences—however small—into “family houses” in which all of their descendants would forever enjoy usage rights.<sup>127</sup> Saliu Salvador also allocated specific spaces

<sup>122</sup> Chief Hakeem Danmola, interviews by Titilola Marinho, Lagos, 18 July and 3 August 2023; “Brazilian Mosque, Inabere Street.”

<sup>123</sup> Holy Cross Parish Index, c. 1910. João Salvador appears often in Lagos baptism records. Between 1875 and 1882, he had four children with Adelaide Tristão da Costa, all baptized as Catholics: Anastacio, Juliana, Rosa, and Amancio. LBR, 1863–1883, records no. 443, 29 August 1875; no. 575, 8 July 1877; no. 835, 25 November 1880; and no. 960, 11 April 1882.

<sup>124</sup> Dr. John O. Akerele, interview by Kristin Mann, Lagos, June 1974; Felix Agbola Gomez and other descendants of Francisco Gomes de Andrade, interview by Kristin Mann, Lagos, 4 July 2019; Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 193–196; Lisa Earl Castillo, “Bamboxê Obitikô and the Nineteenth-Century Expansion of Orisha Worship in Brazil,” *Tempo* 22, no. 39 (2016): 135–136.

<sup>125</sup> Castillo and Parés, “Profis biographiques,” 61; Alexandre L. d’Albéca, *La France au Dahomey* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1895), 166; Guran, *Agudás*, 91, 97; Marty, *Études sur l’Islam*, 34–36, 52; Lorelle Semley, *To Be Free and French: Citizenship in France’s Atlantic Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 162.

<sup>126</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves.

<sup>127</sup> Wills recorded at the Lagos Probate Registry illuminate the phenomenon, one of the most important developments in Lagos land law during the second half of the nineteenth century. Mann,

within his three houses to individual children or groups of them, plus their heirs and assigns. Tecla, for example, was to have the corridor and yard that her late mother had inhabited. In addition, Saliu Salvador directed that his surviving wives, Camilla and Rafiatu, should be allowed to use specific spaces during their lifetimes.<sup>128</sup>

Saliu Salvador did not overlook his former slave Felicidade, mother of Pursina and João. Although the latter was evidently the son of another man, both he and his mother were to be allowed to remain in the spaces they inhabited when Saliu Salvador wrote his will. However, rights to the rooms did not extend to João's descendants. Clearly, Saliu Salvador provided for these two differently than he did his wives and children.<sup>129</sup>

Not all Aguda Muslim leaders in Lagos followed Saliu Salvador's example in eschewing involvement in baptism. An interesting case in point is Tairu Akinosho Eko, mentioned above, who came to Lagos in 1854 along with his wife and children.<sup>130</sup> Although the family has many Muslim descendants, Tairu Eko is also an ancestor of several prominent Catholic Aguda families, notably the Alakijas.<sup>131</sup> He himself appears eight times in early Lagos parish records, baptizing children born to him in Lagos.<sup>132</sup> However, he never acted as a godfather, not even to any of his numerous Catholic grandchildren. His Brazilian-born daughters, on the other hand, were extraordinarily active as godparents, especially his daughter Doroteia, who had over twenty godchildren between 1864 and 1883.<sup>133</sup>

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Slavery, 258; T. Olowale Elias, *Nigerian Land Law and Custom*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 230, 265–270.

<sup>128</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves.

<sup>129</sup> Will, Salvador Ramos das Neves. Consistent with Yoruba custom, Saliu Salvador left his wearing apparel to his sons Sani and Sabiu, and to one of his executors Girinu (Querino) Pompeo Monteiro, alias Giwa, the son of Salvador Saliu's longtime friend and *compadre*, Pompeo Monteiro.

<sup>130</sup> APEB, PP, 1852, Maço 6314, "Scipião Antonio Augusto e suas filhas," 21 December 1853. Although Tairu Eko's Lusophone name is recalled today as Cypriano Ribeiro, his master in Bahia, Antonio Augusto de Mendonça, baptized him with the Catholic name Scipião. After manumission, he became known as Scipião Antonio Augusto de Mendonça: APEB, LN 299, fls. 105v–106, "Liberdade de Doroteia crioula," 26 July 1851. In Lagos, his baptismal name metamorphosed into Cypriano, phonetically similar and more common. His wife Constança and the children she bore during her enslavement used their master's surname, Ribeiro. Cf. APEB, LN 309, fl. 155v, "Liberdade de Constança nagô e sua filha Carolina," 17 July 1846. The first record of the surname Ribeiro in connection with Scipião/Cypriano comes considerably after his death (Laotan, *Torch Bearers*, 17), probably a case of retrofitting, based on the assumption that the children's surname must have come from their father.

<sup>131</sup> The Alakija family has attracted scholars' attention since the very first studies of the Aguda. Cf. Lorenzo Turner, "Some Contacts of Brazilian Ex-Slaves with Nigeria, West Africa," *Journal of Negro History* 27, no. 1 (1942): 65; Laotan, *The Torch Bearers*, 17. The family descends from Tairu Eko's daughter Maximiana and her husband Marcolino d'Assumpção, who was born in Rio de Janeiro and arrived in Lagos as a child. Cf. APEB, RP, Maço 5895, Laurianna Maria de Santana e seu filho Marcolino de Assumpção Paraiso, 19 July 1856.

<sup>132</sup> LBR, no. 59, 6 December 1863; no. 221, 24 December 1871; no. 279, 29 January 1873; no. 370, 9 August 1874; no. 664, 25 September 1878; no. 908, 9 August 1881; and no. 1027, 14 January 1883.

<sup>133</sup> Laotan, *Torch Bearers*, 17; LBR, nos. 37–40, 76, 117, 257, 461, 471, 548, 772, 865, 873, 874, 876, 1034, 1125.

Such engagement with Catholicism, particularly at the social level represented by godparenting, was common among returnees who were born in Brazil, even Muslims. A good example is João Jacob de Souza Marques, recalled as an important figure at Alagbayun Mosque.<sup>134</sup> Born in Rio de Janeiro, he was brought to Lagos as a child by his mother, an African freedwoman. As an adult, he baptized seven children born to him by five different mothers and also acted as a godfather.<sup>135</sup>

Clearly, Muslim returnees' relationship to Catholicism varied from person to person. Like João Jacob, those who had been baptized into Catholicism as infants in Brazil tended to view the religion as a symbol of Aguda identity. For the African-born, who had arrived in Brazil in the holds of slave ships and as freedmen there continued to participate in Catholic rituals because of their bureaucratic and legal functions, the return to Lagos often became an opportunity to break away from a religion that had been externally imposed. This was clearly the case with Saliu Salvador. Yet others, such as Tairu Eko, continued to selectively participate in Catholicism. A similar pattern is seen in other Muslim Aguda communities, where families tended to embrace heterogeneous religious practices and beliefs.<sup>136</sup> Whether or not Muslim returnees who were heads of households maintained a personal connection to Catholicism, they did not forbid their kin or other dependents from doing so, a rule that probably also applied to *òrìṣà* worship.

### Muslim Networks Connecting Lagos and Brazil

The return to Africa by freed men and women is often envisioned as a definitive rupture with the anguished place of enslavement, in direct opposition to the “door of no return” commonly evoked as a metaphor for enslaved people's forced departure for the Americas. In Brazil, however, where a significant number of enslaved and freed men were employed in Atlantic commerce, the picture was often very different. During the slave trade and later on vessels engaged in other types of commerce, they traveled back and forth between Bahia and Africa. Among those who eventually resettled in West Africa, the pattern was inverted: many returnees remained connected to Brazil as traders.<sup>137</sup> *Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves* is a case in point. In Bahia, his work as a barber put him in a privileged

<sup>134</sup> Alli, interview.

<sup>135</sup> LBR, records no. 135, 672, 718, 903, 904, 996, 1019, 1020. Until the mid-1880s, João Jacob used his mother's surname, Soares, which he later changed to Souza Marques.

<sup>136</sup> For examples from Porto Novo and Agoué, see Verger, *Os libertos*, 34–41; Regina Byll-Catarina, *Histoire d'Agoué (Republique du Bénin) par le Révérend Père Isidore Pélofy* (Leipzig: University of Leipzig Papers on Africa, History and Culture Series, no. 8, 2002), 15, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30; Guran, *Agudá*, 92, 96; and Semley, *To Be Free and French*, 162, 173–174.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Castillo, “Mapping,” 31–34, 37–39; Reis et al., *The Story of Rufino*; Luis Nicolau Parés, “Entre Bahia e a Costa da Mina, libertos africanos no tráfico ilegal,” in *Salvador da Bahia: interações entre América e África, séculos XVI–XIX*, ed. Giuseppina Raggi, João Figueirôa-Rego, and Roberta Stumpf (Salvador: Edufba, 2017), 13–49; Mann, “One Yoruba Man's Transatlantic Passages,” 225–230; Semley, *To Be Free and French*, 169, 173; Hicks, *Captive Cosmopolitans*.

position to maintain contact with Africa, either traveling there himself or having contact with others who did so. Likewise, after migrating to Lagos, he continued to be connected to people in Brazil, such as his partner and *compadre* Primo Mendes dos Santos.

However, neither of them appears to have traveled themselves. Instead, they relied on networks of friends and acquaintances who did travel and who assisted them by relaying oral messages, carrying letters and gifts, and keeping a watchful eye on merchandise.<sup>138</sup> A number of people in the family's immediate circle probably acted as intermediaries in this sense. Firmino Jacob dos Santos, father of Tecla's oldest child, was involved in trade to Bahia, exporting African goods such as kola nuts, shea butter, and black soap.<sup>139</sup> Bernardo Rodrigues, with whom she had two children in the early 1870s, also made regular trips to Brazil, first as a sailor and later as a ship's captain.<sup>140</sup> Aishat's husband, a palm oil trader, made at least one trip to Bahia. Last but not least, after Saliu Salvador's death, his widow Camilla/Asana, by then the household's senior member, traveled there herself.<sup>141</sup>

Perhaps the family's most important contact in Bahia was Fatuman's father, Nagô freedman Higino Pinto da Fonseca, whom Saliu Salvador had known since before leaving Bahia.<sup>142</sup> Higino also lived in Lagos for some time, receiving a crown grant in 1864. However, he soon went back to Bahia, where he opened a stall in the city market. His wares included African goods such as shea butter and country cloths, some probably supplied by his daughter and her husband.<sup>143</sup> By the time of his death in 1896, Higino's assets included six real estate properties and a sizable amount of money in bank notes.<sup>144</sup> Fatuman had preceded her father in death, so he bequeathed her share of his estate to her children, Amina and Sabiu. But in order to claim the inheritance—a townhouse worth four *contos de réis* and another two *contos* in bank notes, a tidy sum by Brazilian standards—

<sup>138</sup> For examples of communication between returnees and their networks in Brazil, see Castillo, "Between Memory, Myth and History," 219; Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 158–160; Verger, *Os libertos*, 55–64, 130–136; Elaine Santos Falheiros, "Luis e Antonio Xavier de Jesus: mobilidade social de africanos na Bahia oitocentista" (Master's thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, 2014), 49–60, 128–131.

<sup>139</sup> Flávio Gonçalves dos Santos, *Economia e cultura do candomblé na Bahia: o comércio de objetos litúrgicos afro-brasileiros, 1850–1937* (Ilhéus, Bahia: Editora Uneb, 2013), 252.

<sup>140</sup> APEB, Polícia do Porto, Entradas de Embarcações, 1867–1868, "A escuna *Águia*," 22 April 1866 and 13 June 1867; Legitimações de passaportes, 1864–1875, Maço 5877, fls. 64, 122v, "Bernardo Rodrigues," 7 August 1866 and 25 May 1868. "Passageiros do hiate *Carolina*," 17 January 1872, Polícia do Porto, Mapas de embarcações, 1872–1873, Maço 6439; Santos, *Economia e cultura*, 294.

<sup>141</sup> APEB, LSP, vol. 55, "Passageiros do patacho *Ericairense*," 20 October 1887; LSP, vol. 57, "Passageiros do *Jovem Anna*," 17 September 1898.

<sup>142</sup> AMS, Pilar, Compra e venda de escravos, 1855–1857, fls.183v–184, "Venda de Joanna Nagô," 11 February 1857.

<sup>143</sup> RCG, vol. 1, pt. 2, "Higino Pinto da Fonseca," November 1864; *Almanak administrativo, comercial e industrial da província da Bahia para o ano de 1873, parte 3* (Salvador, Bahia, Typographia Mendes, 1872), 56; APEB, Alfândega, Notas de despacho de importação, vol. 379 (February 1884), "Mercadoria de Higino Pinto da Fonseca," 31 January 1884, no. 67.

<sup>144</sup> "Inventário de Higino Pinto da Fonseca," fls. 14–14v; 16–17v.

court papers had to be filed in Bahia.<sup>145</sup> Power of attorney was given to Joaquim Pereira da Costa, a returnee who lived up the street from the family's mosque. Also known by the Muslim name Bakare, he was a trader who went regularly to Bahia.<sup>146</sup>

Brazil's African population had been declining since the end of the slave trade, but in the late 1890s there were still around five hundred Africans in the city of Salvador da Bahia, around a third of whom were Muslims according to a contemporary scholar. There was a mosque led by an imam and a number of *alfas*.<sup>147</sup> One of these *alfas* was Nagô freedman José Maria alias Salu, whom Higino chose as executor of his estate, a choice that highlights the latter's involvement with Bahia's Muslim community. Other major Brazilian cities, especially Rio de Janeiro and Recife, were also home to followers of Mohammed.<sup>148</sup> Surely well-known to their Lagos brethren engaged in trade with Brazil, these enclaves could offer lodging and assist with other practical matters.<sup>149</sup> They probably also constituted a clientele for religious articles more easily available in Lagos than Brazil, such as amulets, writing boards, *tessubas* and copies of the Qur'an. When the visitors from Lagos were *alfas* or imams, they were likely welcomed as teachers and consulted as diviners and amulet makers, as Ayodele Ogunnaike has suggested.<sup>150</sup>

Indeed, many Lagos-based Muslims did business in Brazil in the late nineteenth century, including Aishat's husband, Joaquim de Oliveira alias Alfa Tairu Danmola, who went to Bahia for a month in 1887, probably to tend to his interests in the palm oil trade.<sup>151</sup> João Jacob de Souza Marques, active in the Alagbayun Mosque, made at least three trips to Brazil between 1884 and 1898, taking with

<sup>145</sup> "Inventário de Higino Pinto da Fonseca," fl. 5. It was not uncommon for Bahian probate records in this period to mention heirs in Lagos. For example, in 1868, Nagô freedwoman Josefa da Silva left money to a godson in Lagos. And in 1912, another Nagô freedwoman, Justa da Silva Castro, left property to a daughter living in Lagos. APEB, Inventários, 05/2186/2655/05, fl. 2. "Josefa da Silva," 1868; 06/2693/08, fl. 4, "Justa da Silva Castro," 1912. Likewise, many returnees in Lagos left property to family members in Brazil. Cf. Lindsay, "'To Return,'" 44.

<sup>146</sup> "Inventário de Higino Pinto da Fonseca," fls. 132–134. Pereira da Costa's travels to Bahia are too extensive to enumerate here. See for example APEB, Livro de entrada de passageiros (LEP), vol. 3, "Passageiros do patacho Garibaldi," 30 December 1881; LSP, vol. 54, "Passageiros do patacho Rapido," 28 September 1884; LEP, vol. 6, "Passageiros do patacho Bonfim," 25 August 1892.

<sup>147</sup> Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Edelstein de Pesquisas Sociais, 2010), 68–70, 75, 109.

<sup>148</sup> Reis, "Os malês," 368–369; Rio, *As religiões no Rio*; Alberto da Costa e Silva, "Buying and Selling Korans in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro," in *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil*, ed. Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 83–90; APEB, *Inventário de Higino Pinto da Fonseca*, fl. 5; Roger Bastide, *The African Religions of Brazil* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 143–154.

<sup>149</sup> When in Bahia, Bakare stayed in the house of Lucrecia Maria da Piedade, a Nagô freedwoman who was active in trade to Lagos: APEB, *Inventário de Higino Pinto da Fonseca*, fl. 133; Santos, *Economia e cultura*, 249, 251–253, 255.

<sup>150</sup> Ogunnaike, "Bilad al-Brazil," 2, 14–16, 19.

<sup>151</sup> APEB, LEP, vol. 4, "Passageiros do hiate Africano," 27 September 1887; LSP, vol. 55, "Passageiros do patacho Ericeirense," 20 October 1887.

him products such as kola nuts and “medications,” possibly herbs used in traditional healing.<sup>152</sup>

During the last two decades of the century, Muslim names became common on the passenger lists of ships traveling between Bahia and Lagos. Often groups of names appear together repeatedly, revealing that Muslims, like other Agudas, tended to travel in the company of people they knew. A good example is Oseni Antonio, probably a member of a Lagosian Aguda family that played a crucial role in the history of the Alagbayun and Inabere Mosques.<sup>153</sup> Always accompanied by other Muslims, Oseni made three trips to Brazil, taking merchandise such as country cloths, kola nuts and African pepper.<sup>154</sup> He first arrived in Bahia on 20 January 1884, traveling with a returnee named Luis Mama and three other men who used the Muslim title *Giwa* as a surname.<sup>155</sup> The former, a trader who had been crisscrossing the Atlantic since the mid-1870s, adopted the name Mama—a diminutive of Mamadou, a variant form of Mohammed—in 1877, after his second trip to Lagos, which suggests that he converted to Islam while there.<sup>156</sup> Like Oseni, the three *Giwas* were on their maiden voyage to Brazil. A month after arriving, they left Bahia for Rio de Janeiro, guided by Mama. At the end of April, Oseni joined them and three months later the entire group returned to Bahia, along with a new traveling companion, Manoel Musa Balthazar, a trader based in Lagos who went to Brazil frequently. On 28 September, all six—Oseni, Mama, Balthazar, and the three *Giwas*—set sail for Lagos, now accompanied by Bakare.<sup>157</sup> Their overlapping itineraries, involving temporary separations followed by reunions in a distant city and a collective return voyage to Africa, required careful planning that was motivated by shared business dealings and probably also by affective bonds in which religious identity played a role.

Oseni Antonio’s last voyage to Bahia began in early 1898, when he disembarked along with Manoel Musa Balthazar. The latter returned to Lagos later that year, traveling with Saliu Salvador’s widow Camilla, as well as Firmino Jacob dos Santos and João Jacob de Souza Marques. Oseni, however, remained in Bahia until April 1899. During Oseni’s last few months in the city, Bakare arrived with the mission of filing the court papers for Fatuman’s children’s inheritance. Once the paperwork was complete, the two men booked passages back to Africa on the brigantine *Alliança*, by then one of the few remaining vessels going to Lagos. Bakare had purchased a considerable amount of merchandise, much of it

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<sup>152</sup> On his first trip to Brazil, for example, he arrived in 1884 and remained until 1889, also visiting Rio de Janeiro. APEB, LEP, vol. 5, “Passageiros do patacho *Bonfim*,” 19 November 1884; LSP, vol. 55, “Passageiros do vapor *Advance*,” 19 May 1889; LSP, vol. 55, “Passageiros do patacho *Bonfim*,” 4 October 1889; Santos, *Economia e cultura*, 255.

<sup>153</sup> Adams, *Eko Dynasty*, 191, 193.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Santos, *Economia e cultura*, 244, 246, 248.

<sup>155</sup> APEB, LEP, vol. 4, “Passageiros da escuna *Winshotten 2º*,” 20 January 1884. Moses Giwa, Pedro Asani Giwa, and Kasamu Asani Giwa were also passengers.

<sup>156</sup> APEB, LEP, vol. 2, “Passageiros da barca *Hersília*,” 26 December 1876; LSP, vol. 52, “Passageiros do vapor *Senegal*,” 6 February 1877; LEP, vol. 2, “Passageiros do patacho *Garibaldi*,” 3 November 1877.

<sup>157</sup> APEB, LSP, vol. 54, “Passageiros do patacho *Rapido*,” 28 September 1884. On Manoel Balthazar’s role as a trader, see Wlamyra Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação: abolição e cidadania negra na Bahia* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), 59.



probably acquired in his capacity as the children's legal representative. The goods included over three hundred barrels of tobacco, fifty of which were consigned to Camilla, under the alias Asana das Neves, as well as foodstuffs such as sugar and coffee, and practical items such as shoes and a sewing machine. Oseni also had merchandise aboard, although in much smaller quantities, as did Luis Mama and many other passengers. Some of the cargo had been consigned by prominent Aguda merchants in Lagos, including Joaquim Francisco Branco.<sup>158</sup>

The *Alliança* left Bahia on 10 April 1899, with sixty-one passengers aboard, many of them Muslims. But the ship was caught in the doldrums. Supplies of food and water ran low and disease broke out, taking the lives of twelve people. Six decades later, one of the survivors, Romana Maria da Conceição, recalled her amazement at the intense devotion of the Muslim passengers, who in the face of death, disease, and hunger unfailingly kneeled on deck, their heads bowed toward Mecca, performing their prayers. When the vessel reached Lagos on 24 June, the colonial authorities placed it under quarantine, fearing yellow fever. Three months later, the passengers were finally allowed ashore, but all their belongings were burned by the British.<sup>159</sup>

Barred from unloading its cargo in Lagos, the *Alliança* returned to Bahia, where local authorities determined that the merchandise aboard should be auctioned off if it went unclaimed for thirty days. Given that most of those who had cargo on the ship were far away in Lagos, the deadline barely gave them time to receive the news of the impending sale of their property, let alone return to collect it. Moreover, for those with relatively small amounts of merchandise aboard, the cost of returning to Brazil to claim the proceeds of the auction was greater than what they stood to gain.

Bakare, however, who was responsible for about a third of all the ship's cargo, was one of the few passengers who rushed back to Bahia to file a claim, arriving in March 1900, after the auction had already taken place. Receiving reimbursement was a drawn-out and complicated affair. Some of the merchandise was unaccounted for and some had been damaged or had spoiled in transit. To make matters worse, owners were charged for the cost of shipping their property back to Bahia and for unloading it after arrival.<sup>160</sup> For Amina and Sabiu, the *Alliança* fiasco meant the loss of whatever part of their inheritance Bakare had with him on board, whether in cash or in goods. For Africans in Brazil who dreamed of emigrating to Lagos but feared giving up the security of their lives in Bahia, the *Alliança* affair confirmed their worst fears about the risks involved: the passengers who managed to escape death lost everything but the clothes on their backs. For returnees in Lagos involved in trade with Brazil, the incident marked the nadir of a downward spiral in commerce that had been worsening for years. After the end of the slave trade, commerce between Brazil and Lagos had continued

<sup>158</sup> APEB, Inventários, 01/86/100/06, fls. 10v–12v, “O patacho *Alliança*,” (1899–1904). On Joaquim Francisco Branco, see Amos, “Amaros and Agudas,” 87–88.

<sup>159</sup> *Inventário do Alliança*, fls. 142–142v; Verger, *Trade Relations*, 560–562; Antonio Olinto, *Brasileiros na África* (Rio de Janeiro, Edições GRD, 1964), 216. Many studies of the Aguda mention this incident. See especially Turner, *Les Brésiliens*, 80–82.

<sup>160</sup> *Inventário do Alliança*, fls. 159–160; 195–196v, 202, 205, 230.

due to the demand for palm oil in Brazil and for tobacco and cane spirits on the coast, but by the 1870s the trade's economic importance was dwindling. As trade declined, so did the movement of ships carrying people and commodities between the two places.<sup>161</sup>

When Bakera left Bahia at the end of 1901, after more than a year of lobbying for reimbursement, he traveled on the *Cecilia*, the first ship to depart for Lagos since the *Alliança's* fatal voyage nearly two years before.<sup>162</sup> The *Cecilia's* journey eastward across the Atlantic, with thirty passengers aboard, was the last direct voyage from Bahia to Lagos, marking the end of a long era. From then on, travelers leaving for Lagos were obliged to take two ships: one to Dakar or the Canary Islands, then another bound for the Bight of Benin.<sup>163</sup> The social and religious networks between Lagos and Brazil had been sustained by trade, and as the latter withered, the former became difficult to sustain. For the generation coming of age in early twentieth century Lagos, including the descendants of Salvador Ramos das Neves, voyages to Brazil would become the stuff of tales told by elders. In Brazil, the twilight of contact with Africa coincided with the gradual disappearance of the African-born population, becoming a turning point for African religious practices, including Islam. *Òrìṣà* worship, known as Candomblé in Bahia, survived the transition and, with some changes, eventually thrived, but Muslim communities were harder hit. Within a few decades they were all but extinct in Brazil, their descendants being absorbed into Candomblé, Catholicism, or both.<sup>164</sup>

## Conclusion

The evidence presented in this article sheds new light on the history of Muslims in the nineteenth-century Brazilian Black Atlantic. Although Silva et al. have recently argued that few enslaved Muslims arrived in Brazil in the first half of the century, João José Reis points to a significant Muslim presence during that period.<sup>165</sup> Our evidence supports Reis's point, by demonstrating that Muslims were an integral part of the returnee movement that gained force in 1835 following the Malê uprising and continued until the end of the century. Saliu Salvador Ramos das Neves was part of a wave of Muslim freedmen who left Brazil in the 1850s. Some, like him, had probably witnessed the Malê Rebellion and

<sup>161</sup> Hopkins, *Capitalism in the Colonies*, chapter 7, reports that in 1880 trade between Lagos and Brazil was worth £52,159, which amounted to 5.5 percent of the colony's total external trade. By 1892 the numbers had dropped to £8,517 and 0.9 percent respectively. See also Verger, *Trade Relations*, 583, and Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros*, 138–161.

<sup>162</sup> APEB, LSP, vol. 58, "Passageiros da barca *Cecilia*," 31 October 1901.

<sup>163</sup> Lorenzo Turner, "Some Contacts," 59–60.

<sup>164</sup> Bastide, *The African Religions*, 152–154. In a monograph originally published in 1917, Bahian scholar Manoel Querino already referred to Muslim practices using the past tense. Querino, *A raça africana e seus costumes na Bahia* (Salvador: Edição PF5, 2021), 81–90.

<sup>165</sup> Daniel B. Domingues da Silva et al., "The Transatlantic Muslim Diaspora to Latin America in the Nineteenth Century," *Colonial Latin American Review* 26, no. 4 (2017): 528–545, Reis, "Os malês," 359–364, 394–395.

experienced the anti-Muslim discrimination that followed it. Their arrival in Lagos contributed to Islam's growing strength in the town.

Saliu Salvador's biography also clarifies certain aspects of Aguda history in a more general sense, by revealing some of the mechanisms utilized in Brazil by future returnees to achieve manumission and economic security. In Saliu Salvador's case, his expertise in an occupation in demand in the slave trade drew him into a patronage network involving elite Bahians, thus facilitating his upward mobility. At the same time, he forged horizontal personal relationships that provided support, opened opportunities, and continued to be important long after his return to Africa. In Lagos, the household that had formed in Bahia, involving complex ties of blood and fictive kinship, expanded into an extensive family unit with numerous descendants to this day.

In the port of Bahia, Saliu Salvador had access to news from across the ocean about changing conditions on the West African coast, probably including the advantages and disadvantages of the various towns with Aguda quarters. When Saliu Salvador left Brazil he opted to settle in Lagos, then the region's most important port. As a Yoruba speaker, he was probably also drawn by the town's predominantly Yoruba population. Moreover, Lagos already had a vibrant Muslim population, undoubtedly important to co-religionists returning from Brazil.

Following the end of the slave trade to Brazil, strong markets between it and the Bight of Benin sustained trade and travel between the two regions. But after 1880, the scale of trade deteriorated and profit margins shrank. Small traders, many of them freed people, assumed a larger share of what remained, relying on networks structured by family and religious ties but with little cushion for absorbing losses. In this context, the *Alliança* affair had catastrophic consequences.

The existence of networks linking *òrìṣà* devotees in Brazil and colonial Lagos, postulated by J. Lorand Matory, has since been documented by other scholars, whose work demonstrates that such networks extended back to the first half of the nineteenth century, when Ouidah played a greater role.<sup>166</sup> The archival evidence presented in this article shows that after 1850 similar networks existed among Muslims, although when exactly they emerged is unclear. Not only were some of the enslaved already Muslims upon arrival in Brazil, others converted once there. A fair number later obtained their freedom and returned to the Bight of Benin region. Some became traders who traveled back and forth, connecting followers of Mohammed on both sides of the Atlantic. The evidence we have presented of Muslim agency in commercial networks between Brazil and Lagos lends support to Ayodeji Ogunnaike's claim that Islam, like *òrìṣà* worship, had become a transatlantic religion.<sup>167</sup> Still, evidence of the circulation of Islamic religious knowledge and practices, which undoubtedly also occurred, remains elusive. We hope that our work will help open pathways for future research on the subject.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), especially chapter 1; Parés and Castillo, "José Pedro Autran," 23–25; Parés, "O sítio Dagomé."

<sup>167</sup> Ogunnaike, "Bilad al-Brazil."

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