

The Life and Times of a Free Black Man in Brazil's Era of Abolition

Teodoro Sampaio, 1855–1937

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In 1955, Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987) published a brief article in the magazine of the Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia (IGHBa).¹ By then, Freyre's best-known work, *The Masters and the Slaves* (*Casa grande e senzala*), was already an editorial success in Brazil and in the United States, and Freyre was among Brazil's most renowned intellectual interpreters.² The IGHBa magazine was celebrating the centenary of engineer Teodoro Sampaio (1855–1937), and Freyre lamented that the occasion had not inspired “any scholar of national questions” to study Sampaio, “that almost forgotten embodiment of a Brazilian from Bahia, who also found a partial place in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.” Freyre's complaint was justified. Sampaio's essays on topography, fluvial navigation, sanitation, Brazilian history, and Indigenous languages and cultures were (and still are) little known among Brazilian scholars.³ This lack of interest, Freyre argued, was a sign of the degree to which Brazil's mid-twentieth-century

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¹ G. Freyre, “O centenário.” IGHBa is an intellectual institution founded in 1894.

² *The Masters and the Slaves* was published in English by A. Knopf in 1946; in 1957, an abridged edition was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf Prize, for the best work about race relations in the world.

³ The most important works by Teodoro Sampaio are about the history of Bahia, Indigenous cultures and languages, and geography. See, among others, T. Sampaio, *História da fundação; O Rio; O Tupi*. An exception to the general rule is Stuart Schwartz, who “respectfully dedicated” his 1985 book, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society*, to Sampaio and three other “Bahian intellectuals.”

intellectuals were depriving themselves of “valuable contributions that would allow them to understand and clarify many shadowy areas of the Brazilian past,” which had been expressed in the publications and research notes of the man Freyre called the *eminência parda* of Brazilian letters.⁴

Eminência parda was the term Freyre chose to convince the readers of the IGHBa magazine that the engineer deserved a place among the great interpreters of Brazilian society. Freyre was very careful in his use of this expression, placing it in quotation marks and suffusing it with ambiguity and possible double meanings. In Brazilian Portuguese, *eminência parda* is the most common translation of *éminence grise*, the French term used to describe someone who exercises great and determinate influence over those in power without holding any official position of authority. But the word *parda* was also a category of skin color in Brazil, which meant that *eminência parda* could also be read as “dusky eminence,” with all of the ambiguous racial connotations that designation would have carried in early-twentieth-century North America. In using this term, Freyre aimed to highlight Sampaio’s position as an influential and lettered *pardo* who had been forgotten by the Brazilian intellectual class.

But this chapter does not spring solely from a desire to explore the gallery of forgotten Brazilian intellectuals. It aims instead to examine the impasses, conflicts, and agreements that shaped Teodoro Sampaio’s life trajectory, thus opening an analytic window on the possibilities for social transformation that were available to a man of color during and after the crisis that led to Brazilian abolition. Teodoro Sampaio lived through a time when the dismantling of slavery coincided with a racialization of social status, justified by the postulates of scientific racism. His trajectory thus illuminates how a free, educated son of a freed mother could make his way through a society that was reinventing socioracial hierarchies even as slavery lost its legitimacy. Placing his story in the context of Brazil’s broader social history, this chapter aims to elucidate the intricate network of relationships and endeavors engendered by a *pardo*, born on a large slave property, who managed to become an engineer and manumit his three brothers, who were enslaved on the same plantation where Sampaio himself was raised free. Based on Sampaio’s autobiographical texts, books, articles, and private correspondence – as well as on what his

⁴ G. Freyre, “O centenário,” p. 11. Freyre was referring specifically to a contribution made by Teodoro Sampaio with notes and information from his research on E. da Cunha’s *Os sertões*, a classic masterpiece, published 1902, that detailed the living conditions, ecology, and cultural expressions of people from the *sertão* of Bahia.

contemporaries wrote about him – this chapter will reflect on what we can learn from Teodoro Sampaio’s life about what it meant to be a free, lettered *pardo* man during the dismantling of Brazilian slavery.

TEODORO SAMPAIO AND SLAVERY

Sampaio was born on January 7, 1855, at the Engenho Canabrava sugar plantation. The property belonged to Manoel da Costa Pinto, the Viscount de Aramaré. Costa Pinto was an important land- and slaveowner in Santo Amaro, a municipality in the famous Recôncavo Baiano, at the core of the slave-driven economy that then thrived across the Americas. Until the first half of the nineteenth century, the region reliably produced the abundant exports of sugarcane that enriched the slave-owning elite of the Atlantic World.⁵ Teodoro Sampaio was born to a freedwoman named Domingas da Paixão do Carmo. His paternity is much disputed. One biographer wrote dramatically that the subject was shrouded by “dense mystery.”⁶ The most common version of the story attributes Sampaio’s paternity to Father Manoel Fernandes Sampaio, who supported Teodoro’s schooling and bequeathed his surname. In a brief autobiographical sketch requested by Donald Pierson in 1936, Sampaio claimed to be the son of a modest family. He described his mother as “a Black woman, a person of notable beauty among her race,” and he claimed that his father was “a white man, an educated gentleman from a family of agriculturalists, or *senhores de engenho*, from Santo Amaro.”⁷ One year later, when Sampaio wrote his will, he omitted his father’s name, making it clear that he did not want any controversy about the subject.⁸ His discretion was understandable, given his ostensible father’s clerical status, although Freyre himself had already noted in *The Masters and the Slaves* that such family arrangements were common in the sugarcane regions, where the children of priests were “treated kindly” and raised in “more favorable circumstances than in any other Catholic country.”⁹ Along these same lines, it was common for men, even if they were priests, to have children with enslaved women; while they might not have been

⁵ S. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations*. ⁶ R. Silva Júnior, “Vida e obra,” p. 30.

⁷ IGHB, Autobiographical notes – Teodoro Sampaio, Arquivo TS 06, doc 52; and D. Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, p. 353.

⁸ Arquivo Público do Estado de Bahia (APEB), Inventory of Teodoro Sampaio, administrator of estate José Teodoro Sampaio, Seção Provincial, 052321282113, 1937, p. 5.

⁹ G. Freyre, *Casa grande*, 32nd ed., p. 443.

faithful to Church doctrine, they were certainly attentive to Brazilian society's patriarchal logic.

Teodoro Sampaio died on October 15, 1937. In a small departure from his father's discretion, José Teodoro Sampaio (Teodoro Sampaio's son and the executor of his estate) identified Teodoro as *pardo* on his death certificate and named Joaquim Fernandes Sampaio and Domingas Sampaio as Teodoro's parents. In this way, José Sampaio conferred legitimacy on the relationship between Domingas and a certain Joaquim, who was probably a relative of Father Manoel, although I have not been able to find any traces of him in the notarial archives.¹⁰

There is yet another version of Teodoro's paternity, related by members of the Costa Pinto family, who owned the Engenho Canabrava. In a letter addressed to the biographer Arnaldo Lima in the 1980s, João Gabriel da Costa Pinto said that it was a commonplace in family lore that Teodoro Sampaio was the son of Major Francisco Antônio da Costa Pinto, the Count of Sergimirim and brother of the Viscount of Aramaré; this was a narrative tradition, he claimed, that had "began with his [Sampaio's] birth and was passed down through subsequent generations." Costa Pinto did caution, however, that Sampaio "maintained complete discretion in this regard, perhaps because he was resentful that he had never been recognized by his father, who died a single man." Major Costa Pinto did, in fact, die single in 1863, without recognizing or naming as heirs any natural or illegitimate children.¹¹ Yet if the major had by chance had children, it would have been relatively uncommon for him – as a well-off nineteenth-century gentleman – to have omitted them. Brazilian historiography is full of studies that show that it was common for men on their deathbeds to recognize their paternity during the time of slavery.¹² Perhaps this supposed kinship was nothing more than a twentieth-century desire on the part of the Costa Pintos, who may not have bequeathed any of their wealth to the son of one of their slaves but wanted nonetheless to inherit his prestige. For even though Freyre was correct in complaining about the general lack of academic interest in Sampaio, the engineer did enjoy fame among some Brazilian intellectual circles for being a son of a slave who had succeeded in the white world. The magazine issue devoted to him by the IGHBa was in this sense emblematic.

¹⁰ APEB, Inventory of Teodoro Sampaio, administrator of estate José Theodoro Sampaio, Seção Provincial, 05/2321/2821/13, 1937, p. 4.

¹¹ A. Lima, "Teodoro Sampaio," pp. 13 and 145.

¹² See, among others, L. Castilho et al., eds., *Barganhas e querelas*.

Regarding Domingas da Paixão, we know that she was a captive and that she worked as a nanny and housekeeper at the Big House and sacristy of the Engenho Canabrava.¹³ Although we lack precise information about her manumission, it is reasonable to suppose that her freedom letter resulted from domestic negotiations, in which her dependent position vis-à-vis her former owners would have been evident. Maria Helena Machado's recent research, some of which is included in this volume (see Chapter 6), does much to clarify the customary conditions that delimited freedwomen's autonomy in the 1800s. Sampaio's biographers from the 1950s, in an attempt to construct a romanticized genealogy for a man they termed a "mulato laden with color," described Domingas as a woman of irresistible femininity.¹⁴ She was, wrote Arnaldo Pimenta da Cunha, "graceful and intelligent," the color of "purple cypress or ebony," a woman who "embodied the beauty of those almost regal Black women." "With a truly beautiful face, she had an elegant figure and was very well dressed," demonstrating an "enchantment of posture and elegance" that "attracted and seduced whoever came near" that "daughter of Jeje Africans." Thus Pimenta da Cunha, a biographer and personal friend of Teodoro Sampaio's, went overboard in adhering to the much-contested tendency to rhetorically subsume masters' sexual violence against female slaves in order to celebrate the racial mixture that was – at the end of the day – the supposed legacy of men of Teodoro Sampaio's status. Descriptions such as his were not mere rhetorical devices; it is apparent from the recent historiography that essentialized representations of Black and *mulata* sensuality had broad social and political significance.¹⁵

Pimenta da Cunha described Father Manoel as a "worshipper of muses"; for that reason he could not keep his vow of chastity. The lapse of this cultured, religious man was justified: he simply could not adhere to the demands of the priesthood in the face of the physical attributes of the *crioula* (Brazilian-born Afro-descendant woman). The daughter of Jeje Africans compelled the priest's sins.¹⁶

The sexual appetites of the Big House, the masters' desire for the bodies of enslaved women, and the vast numbers of *pardos* who came to populate Brazilian society are all central to Gilberto Freyre's analysis of the formation of Brazilian society and culture. In Freyre's interpretation, "there is no slavery without sexual depravity. Depravity is the essence of such

¹³ The registration of Domingas' manumission has not been found yet.

¹⁴ R. Da Silva, "Vida e obra," p. 30. ¹⁵ S. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy*.

¹⁶ A. Pimenta da Cunha, "Teodoro íntimo."

a regime.”¹⁷ From that perspective, the sexual violence carried out by masters entranced by the latent sexuality of African and *crioula* women produced generations of glorious bastards, like the “illegitimate son of the master,” who “learned to read and write sooner than did the white lads, leaving them behind as he went on to higher studies. Rural traditions tell us of many such cases . . . of *crias* [dependent children raised to serve in families other than their own] who made their way upward, socially and economically, by making good use of the instruction that was given them.”¹⁸ In this Freyrean sense, Teodoro Sampaio was indeed an *eminência parda*, the son of a priest gestated in the archaic traditions of Brazil's Northeastern sugar country. Through Freyre's lens, Brazilian society was racially and socially defined by its *mestiço* character, which made the borders between masters and slaves – and whites and Blacks – more plastic, more porous, and less perverse.

This interpretation, which has long been contested in Brazilian academia, was already widespread even before *The Masters and the Slaves* became a bestseller in the 1930s. During the post-abolition period, Sampaio was often exalted by the IGHBa as a successful emblem of miscegenation. Social scientist Thales de Azevedo noted that in 1922 a panel of seventy-nine notable Bahians had been created to commemorate the centennial of Brazilian Independence. One of the most distinguished among them was Teodoro Sampaio, who was by Azevedo's classification a “dark *mulato*.”¹⁹

If Teodoro Sampaio was reserved when referring to his father, the same was not so in relation to the short time that he lived in the Engenho Canabrava. In the autobiographical text that he wrote for Donald Pierson, he boasted about having a grand slave plantation for a cradle. In telling his story, Sampaio took pride in the master's power and the mistress's “generosity”:

I was born under the sacred roof of the chapel of Canabrava, an *engenho* that was then owned by a notable agriculturalist and head of an important branch of the Costa Pinto family, in Santo Amaro. I left that place when I was still very small, but I still hold fixed in my memory the image of the *Sinhá* [mistress] who provided me with my first taste of education, taking me in under her roof, as if it were a maternal womb. She was so generously kind, so full of affection, that I will never forget her.²⁰

¹⁷ G. Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, p. 324.

¹⁸ G. Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves*, p. 453 ¹⁹ T. De Azevedo, *As elites*, p. 162.

²⁰ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio, Notas autobiográficas – Teodoro Sampaio, Arquivo TS 06, doc

Though it does not appear among the postmortem inventories of the Recôncavo Baiano's great properties, the Engenho Canabrava, in Bom Jardim, belonged to a wealthy landowner named Manoel da Costa Pinto.²¹ The Costa Pinto clan was part of the select group that dominated the social, economic, and political life of Bahia in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. According to the historian Eul-Soon Pang, in 1880 the Viscount de Aramaré, a "notable agriculturalist," was a founding partner of the first industrial sugar mill in Bahia, which was located in Bom Jardim.²² Francisco Antonio de Costa Pinto, Antonio da Costa Pinto Junior, and Manuel Lopes da Costa Pinto comprised the "patriarchy of agrarian modernization in the nineteenth century." A list of their main undertakings includes everything from the founding of Bahia's Imperial Institute of Agriculture (Imperial Instituto Baiano de Agricultura) to their tenacious lobbying of the Imperial and Provincial governments to create the Santo Amaro Railroad Company (Companhia de Estrada de Ferro de Santo Amaro).²³

The Costa Pinto family was innovative when it came to modernizing sugarcane production but conservative in their politics. They were among the funders of the Society for Agriculture, Commerce and Industry of the Province of Bahia, which mobilized large land- and slaveowners from the Recôncavo Baiano against the abolitionist movement.²⁴ Freyre visited the Costa Pintos when he was in Bahia in the 1930s and expressed his gratitude to his hosts, whose kitchen served up the "the most delicious flavors from the traditional cuisine of the Big House."²⁵ Even long after abolition, the sugar aristocracy preserved the flavors of northeastern slave society.

During the time of slavery, Domingas da Paixão occupied herself with the culinary traditions of the Big House at the Engenho Canabrava: it was there that she would have experienced both Teodoro's departure to study in the Imperial capital and the daily plantation routines of her three enslaved sons, Martinho, Ezequiel, and Matias. At the age of ten, father

²¹ It states in the land registry that Canabrava Mill was 4,356 kilometer square. Registro Eclesiástico de terras, Freguesia de Bom Jardim, Santo Amaro (1859–1863), APEB, Fundo Colonial e Provincial, n. 4669. About properties in the Recôncavo Baiano see: W. Araújo Pinho, *História de um engenho*, p. 323; L. Costa Pinto, *Recôncavo*; M. Brandão, ed., *Recôncavo da Bahia*. In 1880, two new central mills opened in Bahia: Bom Jardim on January 21 and Pojuca on November 18. This might give the impression of a resurgence, but the export figures for the following years continued to demonstrate the severe crisis of sugar production in the Recôncavo Baiano. B. Barickman, "Até a véspera."

²² E. Pang, *O engenho central*, p. 23. ²³ E. Pang, *O engenho central*, pp. 35–45.

²⁴ E. Pang, *O engenho central*, p. 28. ²⁵ G. Freyre, *Casa grande*, 32nd ed., p. xiv.

Manoel arranged for Teodoro Sampaio to leave behind his early education at the *engenho* and attend boarding school at the Colégio São Salvador, in Rio de Janeiro. The year was 1865, a time when the interprovincial slave traffic was radically reorganizing the regional demography of Brazilian slavery. The expansion of coffee cultivation in western São Paulo and southern Rio de Janeiro was absorbing an increasing proportion of Brazil's enslaved workforce, which had previously been concentrated in the old plantation zones.²⁶ Robert Conrad estimates that Bahia's slave population dropped from 300,000 to 76,838 between 1864 and 1887.²⁷ This decrease was substantially impelled by the interprovincial slave traffic. But Teodoro Sampaio migrated to Rio de Janeiro for other reasons and with another destiny. After seven years at the Colégio São Salvador, he enrolled at the Escola Central (the Central School, which would later become the Escola Politécnica) in December 1871. He claimed to have been taught by many great men of science, including André Rebouças – the subject of Hebe Mattos' Chapter 12 in this volume – and the Viscount of Rio Branco, who were both also from Bahia.²⁸ José Pereira Rebouças was part of Sampaio's graduating class in 1876.²⁹

During those years the Imperial capital was roiled by debates and proposals about the so-called servile question. The Viscount of Rio Branco, Sampaio's sometime teacher and a conservative chief of the Imperial Cabinet, in fact called the shots in the emancipation process. The 1871 Free Womb Law, which would grant the incrementally free status of *ingênuo* to all children born of slave mothers from that point forward, was in the process of being approved. As the historian Sidney Chalhoub emphasizes, in the midst of a tense political and judicial debate, the 1871 law also formally recognized many entitlements that had already been hard-won in practice by the captive population, such as the right to accumulate savings to purchase letters of manumission. At the same time, however, the Rio Branco Law preserved many rituals of subordination; it remained the masters' prerogative, for example, to personally hand over a freed person's manumission letter, thus reaffirming freedom as a favor conceded by the master, which reinforced his or her power over the person they had once held as property.³⁰ Even so, large slaveowners such as the

²⁶ R. Slenes, "Malungo, Ngoma vem!"; H. Mattos, *Das cores*.

²⁷ R. Conrad, *Os últimos anos*, p. 43.

²⁸ D. Pierson, *Branços e pretos*, p. 375. André Rebouças was a professor at Escola Central after being a government employee in 1866. R. Vainfas, ed., *Dicionário do Brasil*, p. 43.

²⁹ A. Lima, "Teodoro Sampaio," p. 116. ³⁰ L. Schwarcz, "Dos males."

Costa Pintos still rebelled against what they understood as state interference in their private business and state compromises with those who yearned for their freedom; in their view, the law ran the risk of compromising the “moral force” that the owners wished to continue to deploy.³¹ Among the most daring Liberal ranks, meanwhile, defenders of the “slaves’ cause” such as André Rebouças acted vigorously to enforce the captives’ rights through the press, the Parliament, and the courts.

When recalling his youth, Teodoro Sampaio commented that “we used to run from the Polytechnic School to the legislative sessions, trading a physics class for one in parliamentary oration.”³² In the midst of such effervescence, however, there is no record of Sampaio’s involvement in either side of the slavery dispute. He did, throughout his five years of engineering study, maintain regular correspondence with members of the Costa Pinto family.³³ It seems likely that, in exchange for his frequent updates about his studies and the life of the Imperial Court, news reached him about the repercussions of the Free Womb Law in the red-soiled heart of seigneurial power.³⁴ When Teodoro Sampaio returned to Bahia in 1877 with his engineering degree, the economic and political scene was highly unfavorable for the gentlemen of the Recôncavo. Sampaio’s visit was brief and had a single clear objective: to negotiate the manumission of Martinho, one of his brothers, who was still captive at Canabrava. This suggests that Sampaio had a plan to manumit all of his brothers, Domingas’ sons. Nearly a year later, Sampaio returned to Bahia to finalize his purchase of Martinho’s manumission letter. Very soon thereafter, he assumed the post of second-class engineer at the Imperial Hydraulic Commission, which had been created by the Liberal minister João Lins Vieira Cansanção de Sinimbu, the Visconde of Sinimbu, in order to study Brazil’s interior ports and navigational conditions.

³¹ S. Chalhoub, “The Politics of Ambiguity.” On agriculture clubs, see, among others, E. Pang, *O engenho central*, p. 84, 96–98, 101–102; E. Foner, *Nada além*; W. Filho, *Encruzilhadas*.

³² T. Sampaio, “Discurso.”

³³ There are letters from Teodoro Sampaio addressed to João Ferreira de Moura, Maria Luísa da Costa, and Antônio Joaquim Ferreira de Moura’s son. João Ferreira de Moura was a member of the Bahian Imperial Institute of Agriculture (Imperial Instituto Baiano de Agricultura) and vice-president of Bahia province in 1867.

³⁴ “Informações sobre o estado da lavoura” tells us that in 1874 the 892 existing mills in Bahia (300 of them powered by steam) were in decay, and the main complaint was lack of labor. A great number of slaves were taken to the South, to coffee plantations in São Paulo, and the number of slaves in the province was reduced to 173,639. W. Araújo Pinho, *História de um engenho*, p. 323.

It was at that juncture, according to the autobiography that he wrote for Donald Pierson, that Sampaio claimed to have suffered from “race prejudice.” In a rare recognition that he had been touched by prejudice, Sampaio broke what Hebe Mattos has termed “the ethic of silence” that surrounded his ambiguous social position. The act of discrimination occurred after he was nominally appointed to the Imperial Hydraulic Commission but then summarily excluded from the official list after an employee of Minister Sinimbu’s Cabinet deemed it improvident that a “man of dusky hue” should be among an entourage led by the North American engineer W. Milnor Roberts. “Hence I was excluded and experienced for the first time the sting of prejudice,” Sampaio lamented, though he quickly clarified that the incident was rapidly reversed, thanks to the personal mediation of Senator Viriato de Medeiros, who informed Minister Sinimbu of the situation in time for it to be put right.³⁵

The attention Sinimbu gave to this incident reveals much about the political alliances that worked in favor of the Costa Pinto family’s interests and by extension protected the young engineer. The Viscount de Sinimbu was president of Bahia province between 1856 and 1858, a turbulent period during which he had to confront rebellious multitudes up in arms over the high cost of food and other necessities.³⁶ Before an attempted assassination that sent him back to Rio de Janeiro in fear for his own life, Sinimbu frequently visited the *engenhos* of the Recôncavo, overseeing provincial public works and planning others that might facilitate the flow of sugarcane production, especially in Santo Amaro. He was an engaged administrator and an enthusiast of projects intended to modernize the sugar sector in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁷ It is thus easy to imagine the future Viscounts of Sinimbu and Aramaré, between visits to the cane fields and dinners in the Big House, having opportunity and motive to seal alliances that would end up benefiting Teodoro Sampaio in the 1870s. The clientelistic political culture that structured relationships among the Empire’s political leaders would have been useful in undoing the damage done to Sampaio by that “rare” example of “social prejudice” that nearly excluded him from his professional debut on the Hydraulic Commission. The rapid and satisfactory resolution of the problem fit within the paternalistic logic of the day. This “incident,” this jabbing “thorn of prejudice,” did not even lead Sampaio, in the end, to recognize the existence of any form of

³⁵ D. Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, p. 354.

³⁶ J. Reis and M. Aguiar, “Carne sem osso.” See also R. Graham, *Alimentar a cidade*.

³⁷ E. Pang, *O engenho central*, p. 31.

racial distinction in Brazil. In 1919, analyzing Brazil's slave past, he pondered that "because of their mild ways, Brazilians never experienced the ferocity of [racial] prejudice."³⁸

At that point in his life, it was clear that Teodoro Sampaio, like so many intellectuals of his age, tried to downplay Brazilian racism; in his view, it only caused jabs, small discomforts, which did not render professional relationships between Blacks and whites unviable.³⁹ Because of this, he made use of another strategy of distinction, extolling his own professional capacities and affirming his status as a free and loyal man. In his autobiography he noted that, as soon as he joined the team of North American technicians on the Hydraulic Commission chaired by W. Milnor Roberts, "the cloud of prejudice" was quickly dissipated, thanks to the "value of his work," and Sampaio had "honor of winning their friendship and esteem," which "proved with the passing of the years to be very beneficial and served me well in the profession that I adopted."⁴⁰ In this way, the mark of his color was rendered invisible by his excellent engineering attributes. Such was the strategy that Sampaio and so many others chose in order to navigate the minefield that was Brazilian society during the crisis of slavery: it was best to simply snuff out one's racial condition by recourse to exceptional professional talents and skills.

At the same time, Sampaio showered praise on those who showed him "esteem and friendship." One example involved the North American geologist Orville Derby, whom Sampaio met when they worked together at Brazil's Museu Nacional (National Museum) in 1875. Using the racialized vocabulary of the time, Sampaio recognized in the geologist "a sweet and well-grounded soul, with the phlegmatic calm that is characteristic of his race."⁴¹ Thus, even as Sampaio sought to make his own racial condition invisible and to free himself from any "cloud of prejudice," he classified Derby's "sweetness" and "phlegmatic calm" as characteristics of the "race" of the North American man whose admiration Sampaio had earned. Race was not a relevant attribute when Sampaio described himself, but positive racial characteristics were useful when it came to recognizing the condition of whiteness in others.⁴²

³⁸ T. Sampaio, "Discurso." Thales de Azevedo comments on this text in T. de Azevedo, *As elites de cor*, pp. 179–182.

³⁹ A classical text about the comparison of racial relations in Brazil and in the United States at the time is T. Skidmore, *Black into White*.

⁴⁰ D. Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, p. 355, translation slightly modified based on the Portuguese original.

⁴¹ R. Silva Júnior, "Vida e obra," p. 36.

⁴² For a discussion about identities and racial relations at the time, see W. Albuquerque, *O jogo*; H. Mattos and K. Grinberg, "Antônio Pereira Rebouças."

Even as Teodoro Sampaio grappled with racial identities shaped by the scientific thinking of his day, he strove to realize two great endeavors: the consolidation of his own career and the manumission of all of his brothers. Both tasks required precision and meticulousness, qualities that were also important in his profession, all the more so because he was a man of color who aspired to some form of social distinction. Entangled in a web of favors, protection, and mutual recognition, both Sampaio's employment on the Hydraulic Commission and the purchase of his brother Martinho's manumission letter (finalized in 1878) were woven from threads that linked Sampaio to his family's old masters, the Costa Pinto family. For as long as the Empire endured, Sampaio made use of the family's political connections in order to navigate around his professional obstacles. In truth, recourse to webs of fictive kin and favors was part of the organizing logic of Imperial politics, whether the issues involved were great questions of state or everyday jockeying for employment and prestige among engineers and other professionals, who were extremely dependent on government jobs and resources.⁴³ For those who depended on governmental decisions to exercise their professions, it was critical to cultivate good relationships with people in positions of power and learn to make effective use of clientelism. For Brazilian engineers in the late nineteenth century, the best opportunities were in grand public works projects such as the expansion of the railway network, the development of the water supply, and the improvement of urban sanitation.

Teodoro Sampaio knew well that without strong relationships, difficulties would emerge. After the Hydraulic Commission's work was finished in 1880, at a time when Brazil's Liberal Party was determined to prevail in the complex internal politics of the Empire, Sampaio lamented:

I have spent six months struggling to find work in my field. I have employed this time teaching Mathematics, History and Philosophy with our friend James Edwin Hewitt. It is worth noting a small injustice on the part of the men who govern us in these times of Liberal rule. The "Hydroelectric Commission" was dissolved in June of last year. All of its members were quickly well placed. My supervisor praised me highly and gave me special recommendations, I had done work that reflected well on me and was praised by the minister himself. All well and good, but when it came time for that same minister, Buarque de Macedo, to offer me a position, he demoted me: he gave me the lowest-ranking engineering job on a railroad line in Pernambuco. I refused this polite favor and have since then been waiting for better days.⁴⁴

⁴³ R. Graham, "Brazilian Slavery."

⁴⁴ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio, *Notas autobiográficas – Teodoro Sampaio*, Arquivo TS 06, doc 52.

Researcher Arnaldo do Rosário Lima interpreted this document as evidence of the obstacles imposed upon the engineer by his racial condition.⁴⁵ Yet the reasons Sampaio himself gave for his professional annoyances were conjunctural and partisan. His professional difficulties resulted from “injustice on the part of the men who govern us in these times of Liberal rule.” The year was 1880. The 1878 cabinet, led by the aforementioned Liberal Viscount of Sinimbu, who was quite close to the emperor, had dissolved because of dissension within the Liberal ranks and the instability provoked by the Vintém revolt in Rio de Janeiro. The political atmosphere was turbulent on the streets and confused in the legislature, and governmental control was hotly disputed among Liberal leaders of various stripes, giving rise to the impasse that hampered Sampaio.

Finally, on March 28, 1880, José Antônio Saraiva, who had been born in Bom Jardim, another district in Santo Amaro, established a new Cabinet, which opened space in the government for two other Liberal Bahians, Conselheiro Manoel Pinto de Sousa Dantas and Rui Barbosa.⁴⁶ Ironically, the good times that the engineer so eagerly awaited came with the rise of these Liberals, who had long been committed to the end of slavery and were thus the sworn adversaries of landed elite families such as the Costa Pintos. In this new scenario, Sampaio’s employment difficulties were resolved, and he was named to the position of first-class engineer by the provincial government, charged with prolonging the Bahian railway to the São Francisco River Valley region. This new position suited the Costa Pintos as well: they had recently begun operations at the new Bom Jardim sugar mill and were more eager than ever to facilitate the outflow of their sugar production. This was just the opportunity that Sampaio needed to rescue another of his brothers from captivity. In 1882, it was Ezequiel’s turn to become a freedman. In a letter addressed to the Viscount of Aramaré, the engineer justified his efforts and appealed to the seigneurial grace of his brother’s owner as follows:

I salute Your Excellency and your esteemed family, to whom I commend myself and for whom I wish health and prosperity.

My mother will return [to Engenho Canabrava] today, bearing this letter, in which I once again request Your Honor’s protection and friendship.

My promise to free Ezequiel must now be kept, despite the difficulties I now face as I begin to establish my household and family. I thus ask that Your Excellency extend a great favor to your slave, reducing the price of

⁴⁵ A. Lima, “Teodoro Sampaio,” p. 26.

⁴⁶ R. Graham, *Clientelismo e política*; R. Vainfas, *Dicionário do Brasil*, p. 405.

his freedom with the same generosity that you have always proven capable of, especially toward us.

I have some small savings, which I will give up for this end. The loss will not weigh on me, because it is an expenditure that I make with heartfelt goodwill, and I am sure that Divine Providence will not abandon us.

Dr. Teodoro F. Sampaio⁴⁷

After paying his respects and explaining his financial limitations, Dr. Sampaio proceeded to present the Viscount with a choice in forms of payment (cash or bonds), as if he were already certain of a positive response. He made a point of demonstrating that he only had limited savings but that he would willingly make them available, given the importance of the purchase. In such a situation, seigniorial “protection,” “friendship,” and “generosity” were presented as indispensable. Sampaio was playing with cards from the old paternalistic deck, disregarding the new rules of the game that had been laid down by the abolitionist movement.

After the Free Womb Law of 1871, enslaved people gained the right to buy their freedom, and both they and free abolitionists tenaciously defended that right in the courts and on the streets.⁴⁸ As historian Maria Helena Machado has indicated, by the early 1880s the abolitionist movement occupied public plazas to delegitimize slavery in a “turbulent and popular tone.” In those years, historian Elciene Azevedo has added, enslaved people’s own agency effectively combined with the strategies pursued by lawyers, journalists, and judges who favored “the cause of liberty,” amplifying in the courts the growing public dissatisfaction with masters who impeded their slaves’ manumission.⁴⁹

The abolitionist wave also advanced among the *senzalas* (slave quarters) of the Recôncavo, in plantations that had held large numbers of slaves since colonial times. The bankruptcy of slavery and the grave crisis of sugar production increasingly preoccupied slave masters, who sought ways to guarantee not only their profits but also their supposed “moral force,” which had been viscerally compromised by slavery’s delegitimization.⁵⁰ In response, they employed strategies such as declaring themselves in favor of abolition or advertising their own supposed benevolence and charity vis-à-vis their slaves. In 1881, the push for freedom gained still more popular support as residents looked forward to the visit

⁴⁷ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio’s letter to Viscount de Aramaré, March 13, 1882, Acervo Teodoro Sampaio, caixa 9, doc 75.

⁴⁸ S. Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis*. ⁴⁹ M. H. Machado, *O plano*; E. Azevedo, *O direito*.

⁵⁰ The term was analyzed in S. Chalhoub, *A Força*.

of José do Patrocínio, one of abolitionism's most important Black leaders, to the city of Salvador. Patrocínio, who was famous for his intransigent defense of abolition and his passionate speeches, once told the emperor himself: "When this cursed arid soil cracks, after drinking for three centuries the sweat and tears of millions of men, doesn't Your Majesty worry that your throne might be one of the ruins? . . . There is only one serious issue in this country: the abolition of slavery."⁵¹ Invited by the *Gazeta da Tarde* to meet with Bahian abolitionists, José de Patrocínio met with a large and attentive audience.⁵² Right after his visit, the Sociedade Libertadora Bahiana (Bahian Liberation Society) was founded; it would go on to become the province's most important abolitionist society. Among the most progressive Liberals, the mood was festive. Abolitionist Clubs proliferated in various cities and filled the streets with pamphlets advertising abolitionist rallies and parties to raise funds for "the slave's cause."

Yet despite this ferment, Teodoro Sampaio followed his plans – without politicizing the purchase of his brother's freedom, and without transforming into a right what he could gain from subtly exploiting a wobbly but still pervasive slavocratic logic. In this "game of dissimulation," those involved – and not only Sampaio – showed that they were skilled at negotiating issues of freedom in ways that did much to shape and restrict the place people of color would occupy in a rapidly evolving social order. Elsewhere, I have used the term "game of dissimulation" to describe the interplay of dispute, conciliation, and dissension that surrounded socioracial identities in the context of abolition.⁵³ The argument is that the flagrant racialization of the actions, political choices, and cultural practices of people of color was integral to the disputes that raged during Brazil's drawn-out emancipation process. Yet the game was never explicit; for Brazil's slaveowning class, it was as important to hide the racial criteria that guided decisions of state as it was to ensure the continuity of social hierarchies inherited from slavery. Teodoro Sampaio, it seems, had mastered the rules of this game.

It was not by chance that the task of delivering the letter negotiating Ezequiel's freedom fell to Sampaio's mother, Domingas. She had once herself been enslaved to the powerful Viscount of Aramaré: because of that, the very act of approaching him with a request saturated with

⁵¹ *Gazeta da Tarde*, June 19, 1884, cited in J. Patrocínio, *Campanha*, p. 42.

⁵² L. da Fonseca, *A Escravidão*, p. 283; R. Silva, *Caminhos e descaminhos*.

⁵³ W. Albuquerque, *O jogo*.

reverence and appeals to his seigneurial generosity demonstrated Domingas' respect for the conceptual construction of manumission as a gift. At the same time, she was probably the person to whom Teodoro Sampaio had promised that he would purchase Ezequiel's freedom, spending his savings with "heartfelt goodwill." Because Sampaio had left Canabrava at the age of ten and returned only recently to his birthplace, the freedwoman Domingas would have been the main link between Sampaio and the brothers who had remained on the plantation. Domingas was thus much more than the mere bearer of the letter. According to Robert Slenes, one of Brazil's foremost authorities on the history of the slave family, the purchase of manumission in the nineteenth century was usually a family project engendered by women.⁵⁴ By mediating with her ex-master the purchase of her enslaved son by another who had risen to become a *doutor* (doctor), Domingas may have sought to reconstitute in freedom the family ties that slavery had rendered fragile.

In his letter, Teodoro Sampaio noted that he was beginning "to establish" his "household and family." This was his way of noting that he had recently married and begun a new job. On January 18, 1882, only two months before he began to negotiate Ezequiel's freedom, he had married Capitolina Moreira Maia, his cousin, a twenty-four-year-old woman of color⁵⁵ – thus the need to establish a household in Alagoinhas, where Sampaio had begun to work on Bahia's railroad line. Not by chance, that same line was used to circulate news about abolitionist agitation across Brazil.⁵⁶ Ezequiel's manumission, paid for with Teodoro Sampaio's savings, became reality with little fanfare in 1882; it was, in the end, a negotiation for freedom carried out within the domestic sphere of the Engenho Canabrava. The recent historiography of Brazilian abolition has noted the degree to which manumission became a public spectacle in the 1880s.⁵⁷ Yet our engineer closed this chapter of his family saga far from the agitation of the streets, without entering in judicial disputes, distant from the diatribes of abolitionist journals that recounted serial histories involving persistent slaves, engaged lawyers, and slavocratic masters. Sampaio's brother Matias was now the only one whose freedom was yet to be attained.

⁵⁴ R. Slenes, *Na senzala*.

⁵⁵ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio's letter to Viscount de Aramaré, March 13, 1882, Acervo Teodoro Sampaio, caixa 9, doc 75; APEB, Inventário of Capitolina Maia Sampaio, inventariante Teodoro Sampaio, 051233212832102, May 9, 1932.

⁵⁶ R. Souza, *Trabalhadores dos trilhos*.

⁵⁷ See, especially, C. Castilho and C. Cowling, "Funding Freedom."

A NEGOTIATED FREEDOM

On June 6, 1884, Manoel Pinto de Souza Dantas, leader of the Liberal Party in Bahia, took office as president of Brazil's Council of Ministers, inaugurating the so-called Dantas Cabinet. On June 15, his son, legislator Rodolfo Dantas, presented an emancipation proposal to the Chamber of Deputies. The bill's most controversial provision was an article that would free all slaves over the age of sixty, with no indemnity to their masters. By the wee hours of the following morning, any demonstration of sympathy for the "slave's cause" was met with harsh criticism. At a party on the grounds of Rio's Polytechnical School, for example, a demonstration of support for the abolitionist movement provoked one conservative deputy and staunch slavocrat to give an inflamed speech in which he railed against the "social anarchy" that had gained resonance in the Dantas project.⁵⁸ Councilor Dantas rushed to the tribunal to defend himself and clarify that he was an emancipationist; that is, that he favored the gradual elimination of slavery, carried out under state control, and was not an agitator, a revolutionary, or even an abolitionist. He was a peacemaker, given that "the extinction of the servile element was a national aspiration, in the face of which one cannot retreat, halt, or act precipitously."⁵⁹ Yet not even the Parliament was appeased. Historian Jailton Brito has noted that in 1884, the masters' protests against the project were forceful in the Bahian Recôncavo and especially in the Costa Pintos' Santo Amaro stronghold.⁶⁰

The sugarcane aristocracy's first reaction was to fly the abolitionist flag while at the same time declaring themselves averse to "revolutionary agitation."⁶¹ Mindful of the growth of the abolitionist movement, plantation owners sought to reinforce the notion that freedom was a gift, an act of charity on the part of benevolent masters. In presenting themselves as last-minute converts to emancipationism, and in condemning the abolitionists' "revolutionary agitation," the masters exposed the degree to which the crisis of slavery reinforced their desire to racialize freedom. This explains why the Viscount of Aramaré arranged Matias' manumission as soon as the Dantas project came up for discussion on the legislative agenda. In registering the manumission letter of Sampaio's last captive brother, the Viscount wrote:

I present this freedom letter to Matias, my Creole slave, of about 35 years of age, who can enjoy his freedom as if he had been born of a free womb.

⁵⁸ About Deputy Andrade Figueria's speech, see E. Viotti da Costa, *A Abolição*, p. 80.

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Gazeta da Tarde*, July 19, 1884. ⁶⁰ J. Brito, *Abolição na Bahia*.

⁶¹ W. Fraga Filho, *Encruzilhadas*, pp. 108–109.

I do this in deference to his relatives' good qualities and receive no indemnity in return.

Engenho Aramaré, September 28, 1884⁶²

This time, Teodoro Sampaio had no need to bargain. It would have been misplaced: at that point, with slavery in its death throes, the Viscount of Aramaré was not going to charge him a penny for Matias' freedom. His seigneurial profit would take another form. The viscount thus justified his act with the customary rationale: the freedom letter was payback for or recognition of the "good qualities" of the captive or his relatives. If we follow the Viscount of Aramaré's logic, this act was also an honorable escape from the embarrassment that a captive brother could provoke, not only for a successful engineer like Teodoro but also among the Viscount's allies in the "agricultural and commercial classes" who had recently converted to emancipationist politics. At the same time, Teodoro Sampaio's status as a reputable engineer in charge of the expansion of Bahia's railway line served them as a good example of how seigneurial tutelage was a sure path for men of color.

Matias' manumission was officially registered on September 28, 1884, the anniversary of the 1871 Free Womb Law. There was no more opportune occasion for such an act of lordly charity. During the age of abolition, Brazilian newspapers were full of manumissions that had been sponsored by masters on that same exact date. Their ample distribution of freedom letters was widely publicized by the Bahian press, celebrated in the legislative chambers, and displayed in the public plazas and theaters of various cities. Such performative generosity was part and parcel of the owners' reaction to the Dantas Bill's progress. The masters sought to convince the public that the Free Womb Law was already gradually extinguishing slavery, while the Dantas project only generated social chaos and produced "anarchists." The conservatives' complaints about the project's subversive qualities were exaggerated, but they were still useful, because they reaffirmed the notion that freedpeople could not live in an orderly way if freedom meant escaping from the masters' tutelage. Teodoro Sampaio was also convinced that the 1871 law was the definitive solution to the problem of servitude. In 1916, already quite distant from the orbit of the Costa Pinto family, he wrote:

The [1871] law declared the free status of children born to enslaved women and liberated the sons and daughters of the nation; it even regulated the upbringing and treatment of those minor children and stipulated the annual manumission of

⁶² IGHB, Matias' manumission, Acervo Teodoro Sampaio, caixa 5, documento 8.

other slaves. This law was the mature product of the deliberations of our men of State and an integral solution to the servile question; if its action and impact had been realized in the fullness of time, it would in fact have been the greatest trophy among the parliamentary victories that were won in Brazil.⁶³

Teodoro Sampaio thus maintained the rationalizations of the slaveowning class even long after abolition, which demonstrates the political relevance of the defense of the 1871 law. As historian Joseli Mendonça has noted when analyzing the political dynamics of the 1880s, the gradualism laid out in the 1871 law served the cause of “prudent emancipationism,” which sought to perpetuate a system of “domestic agreements”: the sorts of freedom negotiations – like those undertaken by Teodoro Sampaio – that had been resolved in the living rooms of the Brazil’s Big Houses since colonial times.⁶⁴ Matias’ manumission, like so many across the country, was thus motivated by seigniorial self-preservation and informed by the reigning logic of paternalism.⁶⁵ In this way the manumission letter, understood as a “gift,” simultaneously freed another of Sampaio’s brothers, brought one of his life’s greatest endeavors to a successful conclusion, fulfilled Domingas’ desires, and buoyed the spirits of the Recôncavo’s master class.

In the meantime, the defenders of the Dantas project tried to reorganize after the emperor dissolved the Chamber of Deputies on September 3, 1884. On the other side, as soon as the new elections were called the great slaveowners began to envision the survival of the seigniorial world that they so valued. In Bahia, the failure of the Dantas endeavor was already foretold when Rui Barbosa, an important abolitionist, lawyer, and Liberal leader, was defeated in the new elections for the Chamber of Deputies. Bahia’s place in the Chamber was occupied instead by Conservative Inocêncio Marques de Araújo Góis Júnior, who had the full support of Santo Amaro’s Liga de Lavoura and Comércio (League of Agriculture and Commerce). The League, which counted the Costa Pintos as members, had been created in 1884 with the principal objective of placing a brake on the abolitionist locomotive.

The game had turned in favor of Viscount de Aramaré and his allies. It had been a tough fight, but the slaveowners came away stronger, expounding on the consequences of broad freedom for slaves – even sexagenarian slaves – with heated arguments grounded in scientific

⁶³ T. Sampaio, “Discurso.” ⁶⁴ J. Mendonça, *Entre a mão*.

⁶⁵ S. Chalhoub, *Machado de Assis*.

racism.⁶⁶ On August 10, 1885, Deputy Lacerda Werneck firmly attacked the Dantas project, envisioning the future as follows:

With no sense of justice, with no knowledge of the world, ignorant and incapable of handling themselves, knowing no instincts except those that predominate among their race, incapable of resisting vice, capable of doing anything to satisfy their desire for it; the sexagenarian will be seen by foreigners and by the future historians of emancipation as the most painful evidence of our improvidence.⁶⁷

Incapable, ignorant, stripped of any notion of justice, and governed only by the instincts of his race; such was the freedperson who populated the speeches of the Dantas project's opponents. Thus represented – constructed as beings who would heap shame on the history of emancipation with their vices – Brazil's sexagenarian slaves came to bear not only the weight of their years in captivity but also the burden of racial stigma. The liberty of sexagenarian slaves would encumber them and their nation. There was no shortage of those willing to maintain that, given the vices of their race and the scars of captivity, sexagenarian slaves could not do without the generous protection of their masters. In the end, despite abolitionist efforts to counter this assault, the legislature rejected the Dantas project on the grounds that it provided no state indemnity to slaveowners.

Teodoro Sampaio himself was an apostle of the notion that elderly slaves were best off in benevolent captivity. In “Um Engenho de Cana de Açúcar de Santo Amaro,” he described thus the “life of elderly slaves” at Canabrava:

Elderly slaves who had given good service earned benevolent references that kept the overseers from bothering them and ensured that they would continue to receive their rations This kind of humanity was, truth be told, a general characteristic of Santo Amaro's plantation owners.⁶⁸

And it was in Santo Amaro, this “slave paradise,” that he and Domingas must have witnessed the ceremony in which the Viscount of Aramaré presented Matias with his manumission letter. For everyone involved, this was the successful outcome of a plan for freedom. In only six years, Teodoro's family – taking advantage of the political context and the “humanity” of the Big House – fulfilled their collective ambition for

⁶⁶ On scientific racism, see, for example, L. Schwarcz, *O espetáculo*.

⁶⁷ J. Mendonça, *Entre a mão*, p. 75.

⁶⁸ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio, “Um engenho de cana de açúcar de Santo Amaro,” Arquivo TS, caixa 1, doc. 15, manuscrito.

liberty. Because she had been a “good-quality” slave, Domingas thus had the chance to reconstitute her family, outside of the gates of the Engenho Canabrava but still within the Costa Pinto family’s seigneurial domain. In this she seems to have succeeded: when Matias died on September 11, 1911, he lived in the same house as Teodoro Sampaio, on Misericórdia Street in the Bahian capital of Salvador.⁶⁹

As Domingas began to recreate her family, the abolitionist movement tried to remake itself. And Teodoro Sampaio, for his part, ratcheted up new professional conquests. In 1886, Orville Derby, who was then the director of São Paulo’s Geographic and Geological Commission, invited him to lead the team charged with São Paulo province’s geological mapping. He recounted for Donald Pearson that, as head engineer, he was once required on short notice to present the visiting Emperor Dom Pedro II with blueprints, sketches, maps, and calculations regarding the navigability of the Parapanema River. During the impromptu audience, the emperor sat Sampaio on his right-hand side and showed much interest, not only in the land-use studies but also in the customs and languages of São Paulo’s Indigenous peoples. Pedro II, Sampaio emphasized, was not even uncomfortable with the engineer’s field uniform. The emperor’s interest convinced Teodoro Sampaio that Pedro II thirsted for knowledge, loved science, and had an “utter lack of class or color prejudice.”⁷⁰ The emperor’s interest and relaxed attitude had redeemed Sampaio from the sting of prejudice that he had experienced at the beginning of his career.

The time of captivity ended on May 13, 1888, when Princess Isabel decreed that, from that day forward, Brazilian slavery would be extinct. The emperor and the monarchy itself quickly gave way as well, after a long reign. Not even the patriarch of the Engenho Canabrava survived those turbulent times. The Viscount of Aramaré passed away from a stroke in 1889, just days after the Republic was proclaimed; an eager proponent of sugar modernization, the Viscount only saw the first rays of the new era that dawned after abolition. In 1905, Teodoro Sampaio commented nostalgically on the end of slavery:

Bahia today is a decadent society, a society in transition, with the sickly aspect of a degenerate people. The cultivated Bahia of times gone by is over. ... It is important to explain that abolition ruined the fortunes of the old inhabitants, destroying the sociability and refinement that had been generated by urbanity. Bahia’s decadence dates to abolition. The period that followed was one of remodeling, in which customs and work routines were reformed and life made new

⁶⁹ A. Lima, “Teodoro Sampaio,” p. 27. ⁷⁰ D. Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil*, p. 357.

demands of masters and ex-slaves: of the former because they were used to living off the labor of others, and of the latter because they were unprepared for freedom and led by their ignorance and the racial nature to a life of laziness and idleness.⁷¹

Teodoro Sampaio's complaint echoed those of the Recôncavo's slave-owners at the time of abolition. It was imprudent to have ended slavery without indemnifying the masters; doing so killed all refinement and generated social decadence. At the same time, without the old socioracial rules of deference that Sampaio had manipulated so well, and without any new laws that obligated freedmen to work, the defects of the enslaved race were left exposed. If on the one hand the engineer viewed slavery as a structure that had deformed Bahian customs by making the Big House dependent on captivity, he also believed that the inhabitants of the slave quarters were incapable of navigating freedom without the tutelage of their ex-masters. More importantly still, Sampaio recognized in the "nature" of ex-slaves a tendency toward "laziness and idleness," befitting the race that Sampaio himself bore the mark of.

CONCLUSION

This was the complex character, forged by the crisis of slavery, in whose story Gilberto Freyre recognized the marks of prejudice in 1955. This was why Freyre took such pains to spell out the debt that national memory owed Sampaio, whom he referred to, with clear double entendre, as an *eminência parda*. The debt that Brazilian intellectuals owed to Sampaio was compounded, Freyre emphasized, by the refusal of the Academia de Letras to accept Sampaio's request to become a member. When his candidacy was rejected, Freyre insisted, a "man of letters" who had done "enormous service to Brazil's intellectual life" suffered the "bitter disillusionment of not receiving the glory and recognition he deserved." In Freyre's view, this was another stumble on the part of the Academy, which did not realize the degree to which "that elderly Brazilian of African origin was worthy of representing the Brazilian intelligentsia along with men of letters who were more European in blood and spirit."⁷² From a typically Freyrean perspective, in failing to take in a man of letters born of Africa, the Academy had failed to miscegenate the core of Brazilian intellectual life. The Brazilian Academy of Letters had

⁷¹ IGHB, Teodoro Sampaio, "O aspecto da sociedade baiana em 1906," April 5, 1906, Arquivo TS, caixa 5, documento 13.

⁷² G. Freyre, "O centenário," p. 12.

shirked the commitment to racial reconciliation that Teodoro Sampaio had believed Brazilian society capable of.

I do not believe that Teodoro Sampaio would have been flattered to be referred to as a “Brazilian of African origin.” Yet Freyre’s insistence in characterizing him by his racial attributes helps bring to the surface the pitfalls that marked the engineer’s life story. The rest of the authors who honored Sampaio in the IHGB’s 1955 tribute only briefly mentioned the fact that he was born of slavery before going on to detail Sampaio’s intellectual achievements. They portrayed a successful engineer and first-rate intellectual who did honor to the Bahian Institute of Geography and History, thus silencing or minimizing the difficulties he experienced as a Black man in the era of abolition. Judging from his autobiographical writings, Sampaio himself would probably have preferred the script that his IGHBa colleagues adopted. But Freyre managed in only a few pages to suggest another biographical path, portraying an “*eminência parda*” and a “Brazilian of African origin” who had been frustrated by the refusal of the Brazilian Academy of Letters to seat him and forgotten by Brazil’s twentieth-century scientific and academic communities. These two contrasting scripts force us to the abolition-era crossroads where racism and the question of freedom intersected. In this way, Teodoro Sampaio’s life trajectory helps us to understand the array of political strategies that could be constructed by a lettered man of color, born on a large plantation, who sought to consolidate his professional career and manumit his siblings even as slavery’s demise brought with it a profound racialization of Brazilian social relations.