Divining Slavery and Freedom

The Story of Domingos Sodré, an African Priest in Nineteenth-Century Brazil

João José Reis

Translated by H. Sabrina Gledhill

New Approaches to the Americas

DIVINING SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

Since its original 2008 publication in Brazil, *Divining Slavery and Freedom* has been extensively revised and updated in this first English translation, complete with new primary sources and an updated bibliography. It tells the story of Domingos Sodré, an African-born priest who was enslaved in Bahia, Brazil, in the nineteenth century. After obtaining his freedom, Sodré became a slave owner himself, and in 1862 he was arrested on suspicion of receiving stolen goods from slaves in exchange for supposed "witchcraft." Using this incident as a catalyst, this book discusses African religion and its place in a slave society, analyzing its double role as a refuge for blacks as well as a bridge between classes and ethnic groups (such as whites who attended African rituals and sought help from African diviners and medicine men). Ultimately, *Divining Slavery and Freedom* explores the fluidity and relativity of conditions such as slavery and freedom, African and local religions, and personal and collective experience and identities in the lives of Africans in the Brazilian diaspora.

João José Reis is a professor of history at the Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil. An award-winning historian and lifetime honorary foreign member of the American Historical Association, he has published extensively on the history of slavery in nineteenth-century Brazil.

H. Sabrina Gledhill is the author of many scholarly articles, essays, and book chapters on Afro-Brazilian history and culture and has translated more than thirty books.

New Approaches to the Americas

Edited by Stuart Schwartz, Yale University

Also Published in the Series:

Arnold J. Bauer: *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture*
Laird Bergad: *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*
Noble David Cook: *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492–1650*
Marcos Cueto and Steven Palmer: *Medicine and Public Health in Latin America: A History*
Júnia Ferreira Furtado: *Chica da Silva: A Brazilian Slave of the Eighteenth Century*
Alberto Flores Galindo: *In Search of an Inca: Identity and Utopia in the Andes*
Herbert S. Klein: *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd edition
Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien: *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713–1796*
Sandra Lauderdale Graham: *Caetana Says No: Women's Stories from a Brazilian Slave Society*
Robert M. Levine: *Father of the Poor? Vargas and His Era*
J. R. McNeill: *Mosquito Empires: Ecology, Epidemics, and Revolutions in the Caribbean, 1620–1914*
Shawn William Miller: *An Environmental History of Latin America*
Natalia Sobrevilla Perea: *The Caudillo of the Andes*
Susan Migden Socolow: *The Women of Colonial Latin America*, 2nd edition

Divining Slavery and Freedom

the story of domingos sodré, an african priest in nineteenth-century brazil

João José Reis

Translated by
H. Sabrina Gledhill

Cambridge University Press

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107439092

First published in Portuguese as *Domingos Sodré, um sacerdote africano* 2008
First English edition published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Reis, João José.
[Domingos Sodré, um sacerdote africano. English]
Divining slavery and freedom : the story of Domingos Sodré, an African priest in nineteenth-century Brazil / João José Reis; translated by H. Sabrina Gledhill.
pages cm. – (New approaches to the Americas)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-07977-9 (hbk) – ISBN 978-1-107-43909-2 (pbk.)
1. Sodré, Domingos, –1887. 2. Slaves – Brazil – Bahia (State) – Biography. 3. Freedmen – Brazil – Bahia (State) – Biography. 4. Slavery – Brazil – Bahia (State) – History – 19th century. 5. Blacks – Brazil – Bahia (State) – Social conditions – 19th century. 6. Bahia (Brazil: State) – Social conditions – 19th century. 7. Candomblé (Religion) – Brazil – Bahia (State) – History – 19th century. I. Title.
HT869.S55R4513 2015
306.3′62092–dc23 2014047358

ISBN 978-1-107-07977-9 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-107-43909-2 Paperback

For Stuart Schwartz
and
Katia Mattoso, in memoriam

Contents

Preface

At 4:30 p.m. on July 25, 1862, a Friday, an African freedman named Domingos Pereira Sodré was arrested in his home in Salvador, the capital of Bahia, then a province in northeastern Brazil. He had been personally reported to the chief of police by a customs officer who accused him of receiving goods that slaves had stolen from their masters as payment for his divining sessions and for "witchcraft." His accuser, whose charges were immediately investigated, was himself a slave owner and one of the alleged victims. *Candomblé* – the term that the police chief used to describe what was going on in the African's home – was already in vogue at the time to denote religious beliefs and practices of African origin, or purported to be, as well as the place of worship. I will use the same broader meaning of the term in this book. Candomblé, it should be said from the start, is a spirit possession religion primarily based in Bahia, but also found in different parts of Brazil. It ranks as one of the most popular Afro-Brazilian religions, which also include Umbanda, Batuque, and Xangô, terms that are sometimes also used to refer to Candomblé.

More than twenty years ago, I came across the first documents pertaining to Domingos Sodré's arrest, which consist of a number of official letters exchanged between the chief of police, Antônio de Araújo Freitas Henriques, and the *subdelegado* (deputy chief constable) for the parish of São Pedro, Pompílio Manoel de Castro, where Domingos Sodré lived. These sources led me to others that enabled me to broaden the focus on the incident that took place in 1862. I went after information regarding the African freedman accused of witchcraft and theft and unearthed a great deal. He was born in Lagos, in what is now Nigeria, and was captured and sold to transatlantic slave traders under

unknown circumstances. After arriving in Bahia, he became a slave on the property of a major sugar planter in the Recôncavo, as the fertile lands that surround the Bay of All Saints are called, and there are strong indications that he won his freedom upon his master's death. I do not know when Domingos moved from the countryside to the City of Bahia, as Salvador was known at the time, but I found him there for the first time in the mid-1840s, in the baptismal records, standing godfather. By this time he was a freedman. Domingos prospered in the city, apparently as a merchant, and became a slaveholder himself, which I discovered in deeds of purchase and sale and letters of manumission registered by several notaries in Salvador, who also registered the purchase and sale of two houses that he owned. Domingos got married in a Catholic church, became a widower, and married again, according to the parish records. I have found that on at least two occasions, he took other African freedmen to court, one of whom he accused of murdering a friend of his. When he was near death, he dictated his last will and testament, leaving his few earthly possessions to his wife, Maria Delfina da Conceição. His probate records tell the story of his final illness, death, and funeral rites.

The sheer volume of information found so far about Domingos Sodré – and more is bound to appear – makes him an exception, although not the only case, among Africans brought to Brazil as slaves. However, while it has been possible to shed light on several aspects of his life story, we are still in the dark about many others. Therefore, our protagonist frequently leaves the center stage in this book to give way to the world he lived in and to the other characters that peopled it, through whom his story is largely told. This narrative method – call it micro-historic – fits well in any biography, because everyone lives in a certain context, whether immediate or broader, in which other individuals belong, with varying degrees of proximity. Naturally, the documents available to recount the history of the barons of slave society in monarchical Brazil are, as a rule, more abundant than those for slaves or freedpersons. The biographies of the latter are more fragmented, and necessarily full of gaps. Nevertheless, in addition to illuminating many aspects of specific life experiences, they serve as a guide that enables us to get to know a time, a society, and particularly the men and women who peopled this world, many of whom made up the social networks of the subjects of those biographies, with their ethnic differences; social and economic ranks; and institutional, social, political, and cultural practices.

Sodré's life in Brazil covered most of the nineteenth century. The century is full of landmarks in that country's history. In 1808, the Portuguese court migrated to Brazil, fleeing Napoleon's troops, and stayed there until the return of King João VI in 1821, leaving his son Pedro as regent. Prince Pedro proclaimed independence from Portugal the following year and became Brazil's often despotic – although with the title of "constitutional" – emperor for almost ten years until, under popular pressure and amid political turmoil, he abdicated the crown on behalf of his infant son, Pedro II, in 1831. For the next ten years, under successive regents, a series of regional, federalist, and liberal revolts shook the country from north to south, until the mid-1840s. Pedro II's reign was long and generally peaceful, except for a five-year war against Paraguay (1864–1870) in alliance with Uruguay and Argentina. The monarchy was abolished in 1889, in part because the emperor had lost support from land and slave owners dissatisfied with the abolition of slavery the year before.

Slavery had reached its peak during the imperial regime, having been kept untouched after independence, despite isolated voices who recommended its reformation. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the slave trade had intensified manifold to provide the workforce for the sugar plantations and cattle ranches in the northeast, the sugar and coffee plantations in the southeast, the salted meat industry in the extreme south, as well as cities, towns, and villages all over the country. But slavery was not just the domain of major planters and ranchers. All sectors of agriculture, including small and medium-sized farms dedicated to sugar, cotton, and tobacco for export and to food production for internal consumption, used slave labor. Slaves could be found everywhere in the labor structure. Besides toiling as field workers, they were employed as miners, metalworkers, domestics, artisans, porters, barber-surgeons, fishermen, sailors, and in every occupation in the "mechanics" and building trades, to name just a few. In the cities, the ownership of one, two, and three slaves by people of lesser means was widespread, especially until 1850, when the transatlantic slave trade was definitively banned, having resisted, through officially tolerated contraband, the first legal attempt to abolish it in 1831. After 1850, however, a vigorous internal slave trade persisted and transferred thousands of enslaved men and women primarily from the decadent sugar-planting northeast to the prosperous coffee-growing southeast. But the decline of the slave population was inevitable when the African traffic ended, and it intensified after the 1871 "Free Womb" law that freed children born to slaves.

Already at the beginning of the century, way before the end of the slave trade, a large and fast-growing free Afro-Brazilian population had been formed, which substantially outnumbered the slave population by mid-century. Partly because of manumission, a particularly widespread phenomenon in Brazil, free and freed people, including the African-born, would become especially vital to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of major cities like Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Salvador, among others. Although patron-client relationships functioned as a powerful mechanism of social control, poor Africans and Afro-Brazilians would become a source of concern because of their potential or actual support and participation, often in positions of leadership, in the social and political conflicts of that time.

Domingos Sodré either witnessed or participated in several of the processes that stand as the foundation of modern Brazil. When he disembarked in Bahia around the mid to late 1810s, he found a region that was experiencing a period of prosperity strongly linked to its main source of wealth – sugar production. Sugarcane was grown and processed in the plantations of the Recôncavo, primarily by African-born slaves, whose numbers rose dramatically when the slave trade intensified to keep pace with the triumph of Bahia's plantation economy. Domingos was one of the numerous victims of that Atlantic boom. In the land that enslaved him, he saw dozens of slave rebellions rise and fall on the plantations of the Recôncavo and in Salvador and its surroundings in the first half of the 1800s. Between 1820 and 1840, Domingos also witnessed major transformations and recurring political crises, starting with the struggles for independence from Portugal, followed by anti-Portuguese riots, federalist and republican movements, military uprisings, and a revolt against the ban on church burials. In the following decades, he saw a general strike of African street workers and a food riot, at a time when the city of Bahia was reorganizing its urban landscape by building roads and plazas, diversifying its public transport system as the local population grew in direct proportion to the decline of its African counterpart. Domingos witnessed (and suffered from) the local elites' embrace of civilizing projects molded along European lines that combated African and Afro-Brazilian customs they considered uncivilized. Slavery grew, changed, and declined with the end of the Atlantic slave trade, and became virtually extinct during his lifetime in Bahia. Domingos died on the eve of the abolition of slavery.

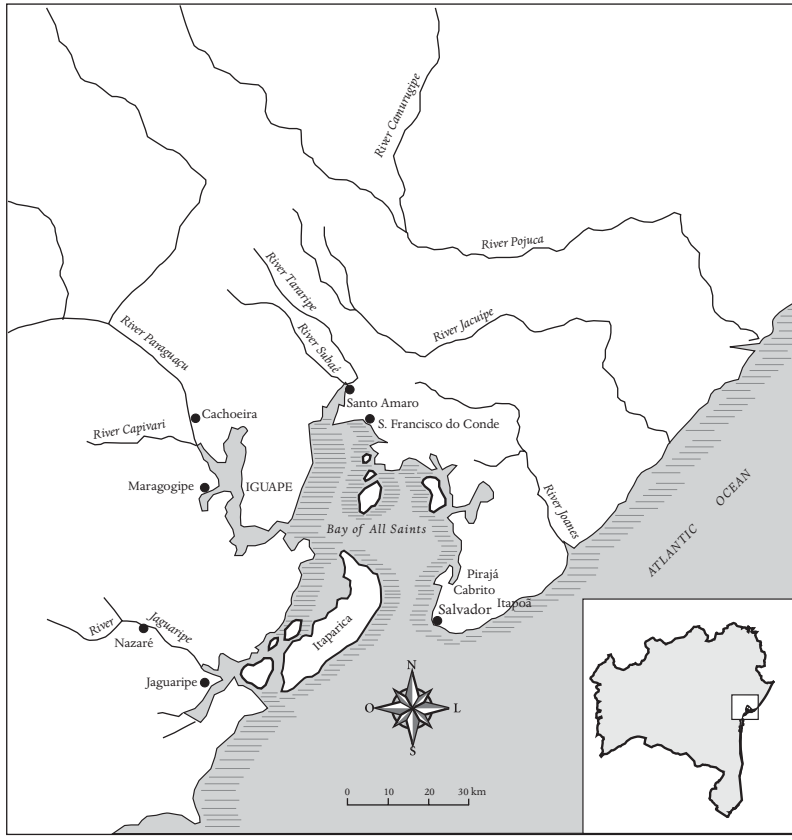
Through Sodré's life, we enter the world of African freedpersons, thousands of men and women who had negotiated with their masters to

Figure 1. View of the city of Salvador, Bahia.

obtain their manumission, sometimes free of charge, but more often – especially for African-born slaves – by purchasing their freedom. These freedpersons, most of whom worked in the streets, played a key role in the formation of Candomblé, a religion whose broad outlines developed precisely when Domingos lived in Bahia. Many of the leading figures in nineteenth-century Candomblé appear in this book, and their life stories are intertwined with his. Called *feiticeiros* (witches or sorcerers) in the official records and the press, these diviners, healers, and heads of houses of worship were the target of systematic persecution by the Bahian police, but the authorities did not always agree on the best way to punish them, or even if they should be punished at all. The police agenda often stressed the danger that these people represented to law and order in a slave society because of their transactions with slaves who went to them for help in confronting their masters. But the fact that other free segments of the community were also Candomblé practitioners, including whites of some social standing, was not the least of the concerns of those who combated the beliefs and ritual practices that Africans brought to Brazil and transformed and re-created there. Sodré's life unfolds as part of this cultural conflict and serves as a narrative thread when telling the history of Candomblé in the Bahia of his time.

Abbreviations

ACMS	Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana de Salvador
AI	Arquivo do Itamarati, Rio de Janeiro
AMS	Arquivo Municipal de Salvador
AN	Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro
APEB	Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia
ASCMS	Arquivo da Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Salvador
BNA	British National Archives
BNRJ	Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro
FHC	Family History Center, Church of Latter Day Saints, Salvador
FO	Foreign Office
LNT	*Livro de Notas do Tabelião*
LRT	*Livro de Registro de Testamentos*



Map 1. Recôncavo of Bahia, the sugar plantation region.

CHAPTER ONE

Cops and Candomblé in Domingos Sodré's Day

Candomblé between Tolerance and Repression

The day before Christmas Eve, 1858, a group of African freedpersons (i.e., ex-slaves) gathered for a *batuque*, the general expression then used for an African drumming session, in the Cruz do Cosme neighborhood on the outskirts of Salvador. Suddenly, the police surrounded and invaded the house, arresting people and seizing objects pertaining to Candomblé ceremonies. This raid caused a rift between the local subdelegado, or deputy chief constable, and the chief of police. In an official letter to his superior, subdelegado Manoel Nunes de Faria complained that he had not been informed of that police action. He later found out that the group of Africans had been arrested "for being found drumming." He questioned that charge, and protested:

> First, for your information, there was no such batuque, of which I am very well aware, and the Africans were at work, and this is nothing more than harassment, and if you perchance should pass by one afternoon and see the work of these Africans you would be amazed, and would even want to ensure that they stay in this parish, therefore it is precisely in light of this persecution that you should have them released and if you do so you will be doing them a great justice.[1]

He went on to state that the lieutenant commander of the urban police had acted "as if there were no subdelegado in the parish, which is highly

[1] Manoel Nunes de Faria to the chief of police, December 23, 1858, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6232.

astonishing"; and described the raid as typical "absolutism," indicating a lack of confidence in his authority. If the chief of police did not trust the subdelegado, "it would only be just to fire him," the aggrieved officer concluded.[2]

To provide a better understanding of this controversial issue and others that would arise later, I should say something about the structure of the police service in Bahia at the time. The provincial police chief, whom the emperor appointed directly, was at the top of the chain of command, and beneath him were *delegados* (chief constables), subdelegados, and the armed police force, which had its own hierarchy. The posts of delegado and subdelegado were created by the 1841 police reform act, and the president of the province chose their occupants from a police chief's list of three candidates. They replaced most of the police functions previously held by the justices of the peace, elected officials who held a post created in the late 1820s.[3] Salvador had two delegados, one for the urban parishes, the other for suburban and rural parishes. But the police chief interacted directly with the subdelegados, who were in charge of the day-to-day policing of each parish – or one of two districts in larger parishes – with the help of a clerk, constables, and, when necessary, bailiffs and urban guard officers. The urban guard patrolled the city day and night, on the lookout for lawbreakers. The post of subdelegado was unpaid but reflected and added to the power, respectability, and prestige of the men who held that office. It was precisely in an effort to defend those attributes of his post that the subdelegado of Cruz do Cosme complained to the police chief about the raid on the Africans' home.[4]

The Cruz do Cosme district was typical of what was then the rural outskirts of Salvador. Located in the second district of the rather large Santo Antônio Além do Carmo parish, it was home to a sizable number of African freedpersons who lived and farmed there, selling their produce for a living, as its subdelegado accurately stated in his letter to

[2] Ibid.

[3] For justices of the peace, see Thomas Flory, *Judge and Jury in Imperial Brazil, 1808–1871: Social Control and Political Stability in the New State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[4] The rules governing police ranks and titles can be found in Araujo Filgueiras Junior, *Codigo do Processo do Imperio do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Eduardo e Henrique Laemmert, 1874), particularly chaps. 2 and 3; and the "Regulamento" (Regulations) for the Urban Guard of May 18, 1857, Art. 6, followed by the "Instruções" (Instructions) of July 25, 1857, APEB, *Polícia*, maço 2946.

the chief of police. Following the food traditions of their homelands, these freedpersons, sometimes with the assistance of slaves, mainly planted yams for both their own consumption and the city's food supply.[5] This rural district was typical of the "black countryside" to which historian Flávio Gomes refers in his study of Rio de Janeiro, in which solidarity and negotiation, as well as competition and conflict, marked the daily lives of the communities that formed around small farms and businesses.[6]

Cruz do Cosme was frequently mentioned in police reports. In September 1859, subdelegado João de Azevedo Piapitinga (remember his name) reported that he had received frequent complaints from farm workers regarding "constantly occurring thefts." Three Africans were arrested for stealing yams from other Africans.[7] But produce theft was not the only problem. According to the subdelegado, there was a great deal of "disorder" in that area, particularly on weekends, when a large

5 The Yoruba people were the most numerous group among the Africans who arrived during that period in Bahia, where they were called nagôs, and yams always came first in descriptions of Yoruba agriculture. See, for example, Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966 [orig. 1897]), 109–110; Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 174. Yam farming was widespread in the African forest zone while millet predominated in the savannah area, according to Robert July, *A History of the African People*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 131–132. The tuber played an important role in the diet of slave ships, according to Robert Hall, "Savoring Africa in the New World," in *Seeds of Change*, ed. Herman J. Viola and Carolyn Margolis (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute, 1991), 163–165; and Markus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), 237, which indicates that yams were eaten aboard by slaves imported specifically from the bights of Benin (from where most slaves embarked for Bahia) and Biafra. Yams were served at the meal the Malês ate before the 1835 revolt, according to "Devassa do levante de escravos ocorrido em Salvador em 1835," *Anais do Arquivo do Estado da Bahia*, no. 38 (1968): 63. In other slaveholding cities such as São Paulo, freed Africans also settled in rural districts like Cruz do Cosme. See, for example, Maria Cristina Wissenbach, *Sonhos africanos, vivências ladinas: escravos e forros em São Paulo (1850–1880)* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1998), esp. chap. 4.

6 Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Histórias de quilombolas: mocambos e comunidades de senzalas no Rio de Janeiro, século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2006).

7 João de Azevedo Piapitinga to the chief of police, September 29, 1859, APEB, *Polícia*, maço 6232.

number of city residents passed through there.[8] In 1860, Piapitinga had requested police reinforcements to combat the "murderers, deserters, fugitive slaves, escaped convicts and gamblers" in his district.[9] Many of those people frequented the Candomblé sites established there, which many officials also considered part of the "disorder" in the outskirts of the city. This is where the Christmas 1858 raid on the African drumming session comes in.

In his account of this episode to the president of the province, the police chief reported that on December 23, among other measures, they arrested one man and twelve women – all African freedpersons – found "in dances and batuques, having seized several objects and garments used in those dances." He did not give any details about the confiscated objects and garments, but listed the names of the individuals arrested.[10] Also according to the chief of police, this time in response to subdelegado Faria's protest, the raid was due to "repeated complaints from neighbors regarding the rumpus that many blacks frequent[ly] made at the Candomblé in the house that was raided." And he went on to accuse the subdelegado of dereliction of duty, because that measure would have been unnecessary if "the police had been so vigilant and active" in that district that he, the police chief himself, would not have been obliged to take steps against those Africans. Finally, he said he was surprised at the "immoderate tone" of his subordinate's letter and concluded by threatening to remove him from office because he lacked the "serenity which is indispensable to anyone in any small position of authority."[11]

[8] João de Azevedo Piapitinga to the chief of police, June 5, 1858, APEB, *Polícia*, maço 6232.

[9] João de Azevedo Piapitinga to the chief of police, September 12, 1860, APEB, *Polícia*, maço 6233.

[10] A. M. de Aragão e Mello to the president of the province, December 23, 1858, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5730, fl. 58. The majority of this group was made up of women, which fits with what we know about the gender of the people arrested at nineteenth-century candomblés in Bahia. See João José Reis, "Sacerdotes, seguidores e clientes no candomblé da Bahia oitocentista," in *Orixás e espíritos: o debate interdisciplinar na pesquisa contemporânea*, ed. Artur César Isaia (Uberlândia: Editora da Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, 2006), 57–98.

[11] A. M. de Aragão e Mello to the subdelegado of the second district of Santo Antônio, December 24, 1958, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5732, fls. 9v–10v.

The subdelegado's response, dated December 27, was humble and conciliatory. He wrote that his first letter was an outburst in response to a raid that had undermined his authority, as it was carried out without his knowledge in his own district. Now that he knew that the order had come directly from the chief of police, he understood and accepted it. He concluded by promising to be "always ready to serve the public," leaving out of his thoughts the Africans whom he had previously defended as unjustly treated.[12]

But the Africans themselves, better yet, the women in the group, headed by Aniceta Rita Junqueira, put up a capable defense. The day after their arrest, they sent a petition to the police chief explaining that they were nothing more than honest washerwomen who went to the house the police raided to get some food and rest after a hard day's work. After that, they would go to the city, where they claimed to live, but "the house where they used to stay was surrounded by a police detachment, and then they were arrested and imprisoned in the Aljube," a religious jail dating from colonial times that was now used to house individuals, particularly slaves, accused of petty crimes. The African freedwomen claimed that "they were not in that house for illicit purposes," and asked to be set free. The chief of police released them that same day. They were in luck, because he did so before the dispute with the subdelegado began. Otherwise, he might have kept the African women in jail to avoid giving the impression that an insubordinate underling had pressured him to let them go.[13]

This episode is typical of what went on behind the scenes of the police repression of nineteenth-century Candomblé in Bahia. Police officials frequently disagreed about how to handle it. Referring to the colonial period, Nina Rodrigues observed that "the suppression or maintenance of the drumming sessions was an apple of heated discord."[14] Generally

[12] Manoel Nunes de Faria, December 27, 1858, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6234.

[13] Petition from Aniceta Rita Junqueira et al. to the chief of police, December 23, 1853, APEB, *Polícia*, maço 6322. Aniceta owned at least one slave, a woman named Esperança. APEB, *Índice de alforrias, 1861–1861*, maço 2882.

[14] Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 4th ed. (São Paulo: Editora Companhia Nacional, 1976), 155–156. Nina refers to the different repression policies of Count da Ponte and Count dos Arcos. For details, see João José Reis, *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos malês em 1835* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), chap. 3; João José Reis and Renato da Silveira, "Violência repressiva e engenho político na Bahia do tempo dos escravos," *Comunicações do ISER*, 5, no 21 (1986): 61–66. Renato da Silveira has

speaking, the same can be said of the policy of repressing Candomblé in Domingos Sodré's time. During this period, police chiefs generally exerted stricter control of African cultural expressions, while many subdelegados – who had to deal with the problem firsthand on a daily basis – often opted for a policy of tolerance and negotiation, as the numerous complaints about candomblés and other drumming sessions that resounded from several parts of the city suggest. As historian Dale Graden has noted, some police officials "recognized the benefits to be gained from quiet diplomacy."[15] The press repeatedly accused the police and other authorities of colluding with the candomblés and African drumming sessions. In 1864, for example, the *O Patriota* newspaper published a satirical poem criticizing a judge for suspending a robbery investigation to protect the Candomblé community. A passage of the poem said, "the judge makes no justice/When there is a whiff of Candomblé."[16]

But no newspaper was as insistent as *O Alabama* in accusing police officers of protecting Africans, permitting them to engage in their practices and even taking part in Candomblé ceremonies. I have even found in the pages of this paper a complaint about a subdelegado who was said to be possessed by an African divinity. Self-styled by its mulatto editor as a "critical and jocular" publication – a common motto of such publications in nineteenth-century Brazil – the newspaper preached that these officers were holding back the march of progress and civilization – European civilization, that is – in that province, which was its main concern.[17]

conducted an extensive study of the dynamics of repression/tolerance by church and state, in which doctrine and political strategy converge. See Silveira, *O candomblé da Barroquinha: processo de constituição do primeiro terreiro baiano de Keto* (Salvador: Maianga, 2006), esp. chaps. 1–3.

[15] Dale Graden, *From Slavery to Freedom in Brazil: Bahia, 1835–1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 118.

[16] *O Patriota*, vol. 5, no 3, June 6, 1864, p. 4.

[17] Regarding *O Alabama*'s coverage of Candomblé, see Dale Graden, "'So Much Superstition among These People!': Candomblé and the Dilemmas of Afro-Bahian Intellectuals," in *Afro-Brazilian Culture and Politics: Bahia, 1790s to 1990s*, ed. Hendrik Kraay (Armonk, NY/London: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 57–73. See also Reis, "Sacerdotes, seguidores e clientes," 57–94; Nicolau Parés, *A formação do candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia* (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2006), 141. At the end of the century, the press attacked black carnival groups and continued harassing Candomblé. See Rodrigues, *Os africanos*, 238–253; Peter Fry, Sérgio Carrara, and Ana Luiza Martins-Costa, "Negros e brancos no Carnaval da Velha República," in *Escravidão e*

The police were not the only authorities who were ambiguous about Candomblé practices. The courts and even politicians disagreed on how to deal with Candomblé and its followers and clients. Some members of the public complained about African healers and diviners, while others consulted, protected, or at least tolerated them – sometimes out of fear, as they had a reputation for wielding extraordinary powers, such as the ability to disseminate witchcraft. When Domingos Sodré was arrested, both Candomblé temples, or *terreiros*, and individual practices – such as divination – that were not based on an organized religious community could already be found throughout the city, although the temples were more often located on the outskirts of the city, places like Cruz do Cosme, far removed from the sensitive ears of city dwellers and the vigilance of the powers that be.[18] Nevertheless, I must stress that their success was due to patient negotiations of tolerance with society, because Candomblé was always on a knife edge, pressured by complaints from the great and the small, particularly the press, which more often than not led to police repression.

A Chief with a Style of His Own

In 1862, the year when the raid on Domingos Sodré's house took place, the head of the police in Bahia was forty-year-old Chief João Antônio de Araújo Freitas Henriques (Figure 2), who would play a leading role in even more heated disagreements on the same subject with his subdelegados than his predecessor's dispute with the subdelegado of Cruz do Cosme. João Henriques had enjoyed a brilliant career in the judiciary and served on high courts of the imperial government. He occupied

invenção da liberdade: estudos sobre o negro no Brasil, ed. João José Reis (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1988), 232–263; and Wlamyra R. de Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação: abolição e cidadania negra no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2009), chap. 5. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the press continued its campaign and accused the police of complicity with Candomblé. See Angela Lühning, "'Acabe com este santo, Pedrito vem aí'…," *Revista USP*, 28 (1995–1996): 194–220.

[18] See, for example, Rachael E. Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Nicolau Parés, *A formação do Candomblé*, 138–142, for instance; Silveira, *O candomblé da Barroquinha*, esp. chap. 8; and particularly Jocélio Teles dos Santos, "Candomblés e espaço urbano na Bahia do século XIX," *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, 27, no. 1–3 (2005): 205–226.

Figure 2. João Antônio de Araújo Freitas Henriques (1822–1903), the police chief who ordered Domingos Sodré's arrest.

the position of chief of police in several provinces (Maranhão, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Bahia) and that of president of Ceará (1869–1870) and Bahia (1871–1872), among various public offices.[19] The son of a colonel in the National Guard, he had held conservative ideas since his youth. At one point, he published a subterfuge-filled defense of large rural landholdings, claiming that they were ideal for furthering economic progress. He praised Britain for the "maintenance of large farms," which "preserved an aristocracy of great repute that is strongly committed to national prosperity."[20] Apparently, for him, what

[19] Arnold Wildberger, *Os presidentes da província da Bahia, efectivos e interinos, 1824–1899* (Salvador: Typographia Beneditina, 1949), 591–598.

[20] J. A. de Freitas Henriques, "Se a Terra deve ser dividida em grandes ou pequenas propriedades e quaes são os seus resultados econômicos e políticos," *O Musaico*, 15 or 16 (?) (Sept.? or Oct.? 1846): 230, 246.

was good for Britain – if indeed it was – was good for Brazil. Henriques wrote that article when he was twenty-four. Now, sixteen years later, he was committed to his role of protecting Bahian aristocrats and commoners alike from the propagation of vibrant African cultural expressions that abounded in the province.

Since he had taken office in late November 1861, João Henriques had worked hard to eradicate candomblés, and more. Although I would like to focus on his crusade against that religion, I should at least mention his antipathy toward other African and creole customs – folk customs in general, in fact – that were widely popular in the province. For example, he prohibited Catholic devotees from collecting alms for the saints, a common activity among the members of black confraternities, which raised funds that way to take care of their altars and churches, organize their lavish and entertaining devotional feasts, and care for their poor brethren in life and death. According to Henriques' law, alms gatherers could only operate in the city with the official authorization of the archbishop. The "intent is to punish those who use the cloak of religion to profiteer, taking advantage of the public's credulity," the police chief explained in a bulletin to his subdelegados.[21] As we will soon see, he used similar terms against followers of Candomblé, and added even harsher words.

Outside the religious sphere, Henriques sought to repress lesser infractions and offenses by enslaved, freed, and free blacks, such as bouts of capoeira street fighting, the African-derived martial art. On June 18, 1862, he sent a circular letter to his subordinates ordering them to clamp down on capoeiras – in this case the practitioners of the martial art – in all parishes of the city. This is an interesting document for various reasons, and worth quoting in full:

> Seeing that on previous Sunday afternoons a large number of scamps have gathered in Barbalho Field, who in organized gangs and from various places will go there to make it their stopping place, where, according to the press, on the afternoon of Sunday last there was a great outcry and noise, and some were wounded, I demand that you pay attention to this. As I have issued orders for them to be taken by surprise in that area, it is likely that they will seek another position to practice the fight and game of capoeira, a

[21] Circular letter from the police chief to the subdelegados of Salvador, May 31, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fls. 146–146v.

> business that should not be overlooked, in view of what goes on in the Court [of Rio de Janeiro], whose police, although surrounded by other means, have not been able to put an end to those turbulent "capoeiras."
>
> In fact, based on the foregoing, I recommend that you be fully vigilant in your district, to prevent gatherings of such people, and I hope that you will take action in this regard with full energy and zeal.[22]

The following day, Cosme Firmino dos Santos, a creole (Brazilian-born black) freedman who worked as a tailor, was arrested "for capoeira" in Santana parish and sent to prison.[23]

This order to crack down on capoeira eloquently speaks for itself and is the first document to establish a clear relationship between capoeira as a martial art and a game. But the duality of being both a game and a fight was not the heart and soul of capoeira alone, and João Henriques did not seem to realize this when he proposed to eradicate cultural practices with African roots and hues in Bahia. But he was not alone. The press had issued constant warnings about the operations of candomblés since at least the beginning of February 1862, two months after Henriques became the highest police official in the province. At the time, the *Diário da Bahia* newspaper reported the presence of a "major batuque, and in due form, to which a few dozen Africans abandoned themselves in a backyard in Agony alley," not far from where Domingos Sodré lived. It was a celebration in honor of a recently deceased Candomblé dignitary, "solemn obsequies" as the paper ironically described it, although it was a perfectly accurate description: the candomblés marked the passing of the most important members of the African community with a solemn ceremony and even a feast, accompanied by the consumption of food and drink. However, the editors of the *Diário* were only interested in spreading the news that the celebration was accompanied by the "hubbub of shouting, the hellish din of instruments," and plenty of hard liquor. They concluded by appealing to the police

[22] Circular letter from the police chief to the subdelegados of Salvador, June 18, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fl. 171v.

[23] Chart of the prisoners in the penitentiary, June 19, 1862, APEB, *Prisão. Relação de presos*, maço 6272. For capoeira in nineteenth-century Bahia, see Frederico José de Abreu, *Capoeiras: Bahia, século XIX* (Salvador: Instituto Jair Moura, 2005).

to combat, on behalf of civilization, those "brutal practices, children of the stupidest superstition."[24]

Throughout this book, you will read several excerpts from newspaper articles arguing in this vein. The Bahian press made a huge contribution to the police harassment of Candomblé in Salvador and the nearby rural districts, before and after Chief Henriques took office.[25] We have an example from the Recôncavo region, where the majority of the enslaved population was concentrated on the sugar plantations that drove the provincial economy. In October 1850, *O Argos Cachoeirano*, a newspaper published in the city of Cachoeira, featured a long and fantastic report on the "prodigies of the African blacks' saints," who had recently managed to drive five members of the same family insane "on the same day." A young girl had even cut her own throat, "and it was a horrific spectacle," of course; another family member was said to have been locked up in a dungeon because he posed a danger to society. The local subdelegado was called in to investigate this episode, but when he visited the Candomblé house and conducted his sober investigation, he found nothing out of order. Furthermore, he concluded that "he was not sure what he should investigate." However, the editors of the Cachoeira newspaper, who apparently were fervent believers in witchcraft, decided to teach the police how to do their job: "The suicide as well as the insanity is the result of crimes that are offenses to morality, to religion: the Candomblé houses are inside and all around the city! And there is nothing to investigate!!!" They rounded off by insisting: "And so the houses, the oracles of superstition, that give rise to these sad and horrible events should keep going? And there is nothing to investigate!!!"[26]

[24] *Diário da Bahia*, February 6, 1862. The word "form" is underlined in the original. For African funerals in Brazil, see João José Reis, *A morte é uma festa: ritos fúnebres e revolta popular no Brasil do século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992), 159–162.

[25] The persecution of Afro-Brazilian religious customs in the name of civilization and science in the press was also common in other parts of the country. For São Paulo, see Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *Retrato em branco e negro: jornais, escravos e cidadãos em São Paulo no final do século XIX* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987), 125–128; and for Rio Grande do Sul between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, see Sandra Jatahy Pesavento, "Negros feitiços," in *Orixás e espíritos: o debate interdisciplinar na pesquisa contemporânea* ed. Artur César Isaia (Uberlândia: EDUFU, 2006), 129–152.

[26] *O Argos Cachoeirano*, October 26, 1850, p. 2.

The Bahian press tirelessly repeated the narrative that the police were not doing their duty in item after item. Some officials, whether fearing a public scandal or out of personal conviction, responded to their urgings. And they investigated. However, this does not seem to have been the case with law enforcement in Cachoeira in 1850, proof that some police officers acted cautiously and professionally in such matters.

However, Chief João Henriques was on the same page with the *Diário da Bahia* and *O Argos Cachoeirano*. In April 1862, he launched a fierce campaign against Candomblé houses in the provincial capital. His first target was the recently opened terreiro in the second district of Santo Antônio parish, the same general area where the Christmas 1858 episode occurred. History seemed to repeat itself. This time, Henriques wrote to the subdelegado for that district, João de Azevedo Piapitinga, and ordered him to join a police detachment he had sent to attack the candomblé located on the Pojavá Pequeno estate before dawn on the following day, a Monday. The chief gave his subordinate the following orders: "You will conduct a thorough search, sending all the people found [there] to me, as well as all suspicious items," which was certainly a reference to ritual objects.

Albeit a success, the raid did not produce satisfactory results for the police chief. He was angry with subdelegado Piapitinga because he suspected that, in the first place, he had authorized that large gathering, and on a very Catholic Easter Sunday at that, "numbers greater than 100, given up to all sorts of immoralities and the practice of superstitious acts that do such harm to the naive." Being "civilized," Henriques demanded an explanation from his careless subordinate and ordered the constable responsible for policing Pojavá, the specific site where the candomblé was located, to see him in person.[27]

Henriques had treated the subdelegado with suspicion since the beginning of that police action. In his letter advising him about the raid on Pojavá, he said that the detachment sent there for that purpose – headed by the lieutenant colonel who was the police commander – would not even stop outside the subdelegado's house so as not to raise the neighbors' suspicions about their mission, which had been kept secret thus far. As a result, the chief seems to have wanted

[27] Chief Henriques to the subdelegado of the second district of Santo Antônio, April 19 and 23, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fls. 106, 110. See also Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder*, 142–143.

to take not only the Candomblé community but the subdelegado himself by surprise, perhaps fearing that he would sound a warning about the imminent attack. At the very least, Piapitinga, like his alternate Manoel Faria four years earlier, had been sidelined from an important police operation in his own jurisdiction. As a result, he was too late to see the start of that Monday morning raid because he only received the letter from his boss at 7 A.M., when he went over to Pojavá and saw the police force leaving with prisoners, some carrying the seized ritual objects. It was an embarrassing situation for Piapitinga.[28]

But he would then be charged with a smaller mission. To name and shame the prisoners, Chief João Henriques ordered the subdelegado to "publish a list of all those arrested, their [skin] colors and trades." But that did not happen. The *Diário da Bahia* hailed the raid on the Pojavá candomblé, and recommended that a list of "the followers of such a mysterious association" be published but did not print their names, probably because Piapitinga did not provide them with any.[29] The newspaper merely published an article two days later stating that most of those arrested were creoles – twenty-two men and twenty-three women – as well as four *pardas* (brown, or light-skinned mulatto) women and three pardo men. There were just three Africans – two women and one man, all of them freedpersons – among the prisoners. The women's occupations were not specified, but except for one farm worker, all the men had trades, and were therefore city dwellers.[30] Their occupations may better explain why the police chief wanted to intensify the hunt for the African religion's followers. No longer a belief system held exclusively by people considered "African savages," Candomblé was spreading fast among professional people born and raised in Brazil, particularly creoles, but also pardos and whites. Incidentally, the police chief mentioned that there were more than 100 people there, although only about sixty were arrested. There were no whites among the prisoners, possibly because the police let them go on the pretext that they were just curious bystanders.[31]

[28] Subdelegado João de Azevedo Piapitinga to the chief of police, April 24, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6234.

[29] *Diário da Bahia*, April 23, 1862. For a more detailed discussion of the people arrested in Pojavá, see Reis, "Sacerdotes, devotos e clientes no candomblé da Bahia oitocentista," 81–83.

[30] *Diário da Bahia*, April 25, 1862.

[31] Since the 1830s, police officials had been amazed at the presence of creole women among Bahian candomblés. See João José Reis, "Nas malhas do poder escravista: a

The Pojavá incident sparked animosity between Chief João Henriques and subdelegado João Piapitinga, who had held his post for seven or eight years by 1862. Piapitinga, sixty-six, a respectable white citizen, a lieutenant colonel in the National Guard, and a clerk at the Naval Hospital, had just been called a liar by an arrogant police chief twenty-six years his junior but superior to him in rank in several ways. The subdelegado, who was also a slaveholder, did not appreciate the implication that he had been tolerant with the Candomblé houses within his jurisdiction. In two letters to Henriques, he angrily responded that he was not accustomed to "prevaricating," and claimed that, on the contrary, he harshly combated the candomblés in his district. In fact, he believed he had the Africans fully under control, the vast majority of whom were engaged in honest and successful work on their farms, mainly planting yams. Mind that his alternate used the same argument in 1858. Certainly, they had joined forces to carry out what they believed to have been a successful mission to civilize the Africans. Both, in fact, followed guidelines set down by the powerful head of the Conservative Party of Bahia, Francisco Gonçalves Martins, the Viscount of São Lourenço. When he governed Bahia from 1848 to 1850, Martins sought to prevent Africans from holding jobs in the city, because he wanted them laboring in the fields, preferably as docile serfs on the Recôncavo's sugar plantations. In his mind, urban jobs should be reserved for Brazilian-born workers, including whites, blacks, and mulattos. Piapitinga and his alternate apparently agreed with the viscount.

As for African festivals, Piapitinga claimed to tolerate those that were "decent" and properly supervised – those, in fact, that attracted upstanding city folk seeking an exciting but safe adventure on the outskirts of the capital. He invited the police chief to see for himself. The subdelegado explained that the existence of a Candomblé house in Pojavá was just as surprising to him as it was to his superior. He guaranteed that on the day of the drumming session, he had just replaced the acting subdelegado, Sinfrônio França, who had gone into town because his mother had just died. In other words, if there had been any

invasão do candomblé do Accú," in João Reis e Eduardo Silva, *Negociação e conflito: a resistência negra no Brasil escravista* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1989), 32–61. The process of creolization of Candomblé in nineteenth-century Bahia is discussed in Reis, "Sacerdotes, devotos e clientes."

complaints about the gathering in Pojavá, they would have been made, not to him, Piapitinga, but to the other subdelegado, who had not done anything about them because he had more urgent, funereal business to attend to. Piapitinga added that the site of the candomblé was a good distance from his home, so he could not hear the drums. Finally, he admitted that he had not been paying much attention to the behavior of the creoles because he had not suspected that they, too, were interested in that sort of "entertainment," which he felt was typical of the Africans – although that was not true of the Africans who lived in his district, of course, whom he had reformed through and for labor.[32]

When he said he did not know that creoles had adopted Candomblé, it may have slipped Piapitinga's mind that this was not the first time he had been accused of protecting Brazilian-born blacks who followed the African religion, or at least those who frequented terreiros in his district. Seven years earlier, a constable under his command had complained to another police chief that Piapitinga had failed to investigate an incident involving contempt of authority, which I will summarize as follows. It was 6 A.M. on October 21, 1855, when Constable Francisco de Moura Rosa reprimanded a member of a group of creole men and women coming from the city for uttering "the most dishonest and obscene words in loud voices." According to the constable, the group ran to "one of the houses of ill repute in this district called Candomblés." One Marcolino, a municipal police officer from the neighboring parish of Brotas, was said to have insulted the constable and threatened to hit him if he arrested any member of the group, backed up by an armed pardo man. The constable reported the incident to Piapitinga, and suggested sending a police detachment, because the place was "very popular among vagabonds because of those Candomblés, where sometimes over 200 people get together to engage in immoral acts." The idea that sexual promiscuity infested Candomblé ceremonies was widespread in the

[32] The dispute between the police chief and the subdelegado can be followed in Henriques to the subdelegado of the second district of Santo Antônio, May 3, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fls. 119–119v; Piapitinga to the chief of police, April 26 and May 16, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6195. For the subdelegado's ownership of slaves, see APEB, *Índice de alforrias 1860–1861*, maço 2882 (Silvana, a slave woman, is listed in the alphabetical index); and for his work as a hospital clerk, see *Almanak administrativo* (1863), 291. For Martins' policy on African workers, see Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *Negros, estrangeiros: os escravos libertos e sua volta à África* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985). This subject will also be discussed in Chapter 2.

police and press reports of the time, presented as one of the strongest signs of its followers' un-Christian and therefore uncivilized lifestyle. In his complaint to the police chief, the constable, after stating that his immediate superior had "done nothing" about the case, despondently concluded, "finally, the said creole Marcolino has protectors who do their utmost to defend him." He was implying that the subdelegado had caved in to pressure from above – either that, or that Piapitinga himself was protecting the creole Candomblé practitioner.

Four days later, Piapitinga replied to the police chief that, contrary to his subordinate's accusation, the subdelegado had taken action and even discovered the full name of the subject of that complaint, Marcolino José Dias. He had not arrested him yet because that measure would depend on the results of an investigation by the subdelegado of the parish where the accused individual resided. Piapitinga did not seem to be very efficient.[33] These events transpired in late 1855. I don't know what caused the incident, but a few months later the same man would no longer be the head of that police district, although he returned there in 1862 in time to witness the raid on the Pojavá candomblé.

There is further evidence that Piapitinga may have been on good terms with Africans who were fond of Candomblé. In May 1860, he was a witness at the wedding of an African couple who lived in his district. That in itself is unremarkable. The bride and groom, however, were among the Africans arrested around Christmas 1858 and charged with practicing Candomblé, the incident with which this chapter began. João Costa, a freedman, was very ill when he got married, and may have taken that step because he wished to die on good terms with the Catholic Church. According to the vicar who married them, he and his bride had been living in "an illicit union" and already had two children named Simplício and Libania. It was all set down in the marriage registry of Santo Antônio parish. The same house that had shaken to the beat of Candomblé drums was now the backdrop of a Catholic ceremony presided by a parish priest and canon, and witnessed by a subdelegado and his constable, a pardo man by the way.[34] In short, there

[33] Inspector Francisco de Moura Rosa to the subdelegado of the second district of Santo Antônio, October 21, 1855; Rosa to the chief of police, November 8, 1855, Piapitinga to the chief of police, November 12, 1855, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6231.

[34] Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana de Salvador (ACMS), *Livro de registro de casamentos da Freguesia de Santo Antônio, 1840–1863,* registry dated May 26, 1860.

are indications that João Henriques had good reason to suspect that Piapitinga was turning a blind eye to Candomblé celebrations in his jurisdiction.

Going back to April 1862, we find Chief João Henriques reading the *Jornal da Bahia* on the 22nd. One of the most important newspapers in Salvador, it reported that there was a "big drumming session by residents of some shacks near the Estrada Nova arch, where they take part in all sorts of immoral practices." Luckily for Piapitinga, the drumming was not done in his district. Henriques immediately ordered the local subdelegado to investigate and take all the appropriate measures.[35] He must have suspected that this subordinate was also overlooking such African vices. Better yet, he probably supposed that such tolerance was widespread and had decided to put the house in order. Two days after the *Jornal da Bahia* published that report, in the course of his exchange of barbed comments with João Piapitinga, the police chief distributed the following circular letter to all subdelegados of the City of Bahia:

> To the 18 Subdelegados of the City. As I have learned that in various parts of this city there are profiteers who, by way of divination, and promises of removing spells, make a living by extorting money from fools and imbuing them with superstitious beliefs, by which, in addition to financial benefits, they take advantage of them for vile ends, I demand that you provide me detailed information about this through thorough investigations conducted by your Constables, because I am also aware that even people of a certain status attend the gatherings these profiteers hold for such purposes. This is a very grave matter that merits serious attention due to the infiltration of such pernicious ideas in the public [mind] and must be fully addressed.[36]

Henriques was not the first to advise his subordinates how to combat candomblés in their districts, but his style and even his objective were different from those of his predecessors. Let us compare them. In January 1854, Chief of Police Araújo Góes also wrote a memo to his

Frutuoso Mendes's color (pardo) is stated in subdelegado Piapitinga's letter to the chief of police, March 10, 1858, APEB, *Polícia. Subdelegados*, maço 6232.

35 Henriques to the subdelegado of the first district of Santo Antônio, April 22, 1862, APEB, *Polícia. Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fls. 108–108v.

36 Circular letter from the chief of police to the subdelegados of Salvador, April 24, 1862, APEB, *Correspondência*, vol. 5754, fl. 111.

subdelegados demanding the "full prohibition of African gatherings, under any pretext whatsoever, whether for drumming sessions, or due to someone's death, which gives rise to practices and ceremonies that must not be tolerated."[37] Here, the police chief viewed the Africans' religion as limited to that group alone, and did not realize that it had extended to other segments of society. Furthermore, the decision to engage in religious intolerance had an implicit political aim, which was to prevent Africans from gathering and to keep the peace in the slave quarters and slums of the City of Bahia. In the middle of the previous year, persistent rumors had circulated about a Muslim conspiracy because Arabic writings had been found just like twenty years earlier in the wake of the Revolt of the Malês, in 1835, an event that traumatized the local free population. Therefore, it was natural for the authorities to fear the Africans' religion – those "ceremonies that must not be tolerated."[38]

Between the late 1850s and the early 1860s, Bahia had some police chiefs who, given the growing number of complaints received, took a hard line against Candomblé. These officials had nurtured a veritable psychology of fear, and João Henriques continued to do so. One of the methods of punishment they adopted was deporting African "sorcerers," a form of repression of Candomblé specialists that I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, suffice it to say that the argument that the authorities repeatedly used when adopting that measure – deportation – was the difficulty to prove the crimes with which they were charged, including the poisoning deaths of other Africans, both slaves and freedpersons. During that period, fear of Muslim rebels had receded, and the police no longer considered Candomblé a danger to public order, but deleterious to the private economy, as well as a disruptive influence on morals and good behavior. They had also reached a consensus that Candomblé had transcended the bounds of the African and creole community and now contaminated other segments of society.

João Henriques was an exemplary follower of that doctrine. For him, Candomblé was nothing but a jumble of superstitious beliefs controlled by conmen who exploited the ignorants – particularly women – in many ways, even sexually, but now, the police chief believed, their victims also included worthy and well-educated citizens or, in his words, "people

[37] Circular letter from Chief M. de Araújo, January 31, 1854, APEB, *Polícia*, livro 5716, fl. 3–3v.

[38] I will discuss the 1853 conspiracy in Chapter 6.