“Pure Race” Africans and Ethnic Diversity in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro

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Louis Agassiz Photographic Collection, Pure Race Series. Racial type portrait, identified as Mina Igeichà. Photographer: Augusto Stahl. Rio de Janeiro, 1865. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

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During the first half of the nineteenth century, the cities, suburbs, and rural areas of postcolonial Brazil received an increasing number of illustrious visitors. Called simply “travelers” or naturalists, they were for the most part foreigners with diverse interests who were impressed by the local social customs, and recorded their observations. These included people such as John Luccock, George Gardner, Theodor von Leithold, Johann Emmanuel Pohl, Jean-Baptiste Debret, Jacques Etienne Victor Arago, John Mawe, Thomas Ewbank,

Daniel P. Kidder, James C. Fletcher, François-Auguste Biard, Count Suzannet, Johann Moritz Rugendas, Charles Expilly, Johann J. von Tschudi, Robert Walsh, and many others.[1]

One aspect of urban life on the Atlantic coast especially impressed these observers, namely the presence of thousands and thousands of Africans who shared the streets, alleyways, huts, urban orchards, and mansions. In their narratives, travelers "discovered" several Africas within Brazil, and in the process "covered" up several others.[2] Landscapes began to take on the form of postcards, as the travelers' demands, expectations, and surprise gave way to a more naturalized view of daily life and of that which at first seemed so unfamiliar. In Rio de Janeiro, the largest of the cities along the Atlantic, travelers contributed to the creation of established images of Africans. Things that were perhaps trivial to the local inhabitants received special attention from some of the visitors.

Louis Agassiz followed a similar path in his encounter with several Africas in Brazil. Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro with the Thayer Expedition in 1865, he found hundreds of Africans on the streets amidst picturesque scenery. Interested in the "pure race" Africans and based on his prior experience on the plantations of South Carolina, he sought and found more than a dozen different "racial types" with which to compose his visual archive. He must have brought with him expectations about what results the comparisons would produce. In Rio de Janeiro, he hoped to see similarities and differences with regard to the Ebo, Gullah,

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[1] Luccock, John, *Notes on Rio de Janeiro and the southern parts of Brazil, taken during a residence of ten years in that country, from 1808 to 1818* (London: S. Leigh, 1820); Gardner, George, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil: principally through the northern provinces, and the gold and diamond districts, during the years 1836–1841* (London: Reeve Bros., 1846); Von Leithold, Theodor, *Meine Ausflucht nach Brasilien oder Reise von Berlin nach Rio de Janeiro* (Berlin: Maurerschen Buchhandlung, 1820); Pohl, Johann Emmanuel, *Reise im Innern von Brasilien* (Vienna: A. Strauss, 1832-1837); Debret, Jean-Baptiste, *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Brésil, ou séjour d'un artiste français au Brésil, depuis 1816 jusqu'en 1831, inclusivement* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1834-39); Arago, Jacques Etienne Victor, Narrative of a Voyage Round the World (London: Treuttel and Wurtz, Treuttel, Jun. and Richter, 1823); Mawe, John, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Ormes, and Brown, 1812); Ewbank, Thomas, *Life in Brazil; or, a journal of a visit to the land of the cocoa and the palm* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856); Fletcher, James C., and Kidder, Daniel P., *Brazil and the Brazilians, portrayed in historical and descriptives sketches* (Philadelphia: Childs and Peterson/New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, and Co, 1857); Biard, *François-Auguste*, (Paris: L. Hachette, 1862); Comte de Suzannet, *Souvenirs de Voyages. Les provinces du Caucase, l'empire au Brésil* (Paris: G. A. Dentu, 1846); *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil, traduit de l´allemand par M. Golbéry* (Paris: Engelman, 1835); Expilly, Charles, *Le Brésil tel qu'il est* (Paris: Jung-Treuttel, 1862); Von Tschudi, Johann J., *Reisen durch Sudamerika, vol. IV* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1868); Walsh, Robert, *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829* (London: F. Westley and A. H. Davis, 1830). For an overview of travelers who described African slavery and ethnic diversity in Rio de Janeiro during the first half of the nineteenth century, see Karasch, Mary, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[2] Slenes, Robert W., "'Malungu, Ngoma's Coming!': Africa hidden and discovered in Brasil" in Nelson Aguilar, ed., *Mostra do Redescobrimento: Negro de Corpo e Alma/ Black in Body and Soul* (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo/Associação Brasil 500 Anos Artes Visuais, 2000), 221–229.

Fula, Guinea, Congo, Coromantee, and Mandingo whom he had encountered fifteen years earlier in the United States.

The African population of Rio de Janeiro was indeed different. Studies on the slave trade and on demographic trends in the early nineteenth-century South Atlantic have shown that Central Africans (especially those from Angola, Congo, Cabinda, and Benguela) comprised 79 percent of those arriving in Rio during the first half of the century; East Africans (Quilimane, Inhambane, and Mozambique) 14 percent; and West Africans (generically labeled Minas) only 7 percent of the total.[3] Agassiz thus had plenty to work with to compose his visual documentation. In her account of the trip, Elizabeth Agassiz pointed out early on that "I have never seen such effective-looking negroes, from an artistic point of view, as here." Unlike the rural landscape of plantations in the southern United States, the African racial types who appeared in the Brazilian photographic collection were captured in an urban environment. Differences between the United States and Brazil did not go unnoticed by Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz. Elizabeth jotted down her impressions as she observed street life, noting that "a black woman passed us in the street, dressed in white, with bare neck and arms, the sleeves caught up with some kind of armlet, a large white turban of soft muslin on her head, and a long bright-colored shawl passed crosswise under one arm and thrown over the other shoulder, hanging almost to the feet behind," contrasted with another "black woman on the curbstone, almost without clothing, her glossy skin shining in the sun, and her naked child asleep across her knees." She also recorded "a powerful negro looking over into the street, his jetty arms crossed on a huge basket of crimson flowers, oranges and bananas, against which he half rests, seemingly too indolent to lift a finger even to attract a purchaser." These urban scenes also included "half-naked black carriers, many of them straight and firm as bronze statues under the heavy loads which rest so securely on their heads."[4]

But what did the Africans look for in Louis Agassiz? Throughout the nineteenth century, travelers offered abundant descriptions of Africans and their various "nations," forms, behavior, physical attributes, and customs. In his description of his travels in Brazil from 1836 to 1841, George Gardner wrote, "The character and capacity of the negro vary very much in the different nations."[5] Around the same time, J. Pohl commented that, "generally speaking, slaves born in Ada and Mina are strong and robust, while those from Cape Verde and São Tomé are weak; those from Angola and especially from Luanda usually possess

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[3] Florentino, Manolo, *Em Costas Negras: uma história do tráfico de escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), 44–60; Goulart, Maurício, *A Escravidão Africana no Brasil (das origens a extinção do tráfico)* (São Paulo: Ômega, 1975), 272; Karasch, Mary, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*, p. 29, footnote 2; Klein, Herbert, *The Middle Passage: comparative studies in the Atlantic slave trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 73–93.

[4] Agassiz, Professor and Mrs. Louis, *A Journey in Brazil* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1868), 50–51.

[5] Gardner, George, *Travels in the Interior of Brazil*, 20.

distinctive skills especially for mechanical labor. Those from the Congo are known to be apt for plantations, craftwork and housekeeping."[6] In their travelogue of the years 1817 to 1820, Bavarian biologists Johann Baptist von Spix and Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius asserted that "most black slaves who currently are introduced into Rio de Janeiro are Cabindas and Benguelas."[7] Another German biologist, Hermann Burmeister, stated in his 1853 travelogue that "the negroes of Rio were brought from Benguela, Angola, Cabinda and Mozambique, although there remains a great preference for blacks from Guinea, the Gold Coast, which are called 'Mina blacks.' These abound in Bahia."[8]

Johann Moritz Rugendas and Jean-Baptiste Debret, the best known and most widely cited travelers, described the African "nations" in rich detail. The former spoke of "temperament," "character," and "pronounced differences in physiognomy." He classified Minas and Angolas as "excellent," since they were "docile, easy to indoctrinate, and susceptible to dedication, when treated more or less well"; however, Congos were "heavier and preferably are employed in hard field labor." Quite different were Rebolos, "more stubborn and prone to despair and sullenness," although there were "many analogies" to the others in linguistic terms; or Angicos, who were "taller and sturdier, with fewer African features on their faces." Rugendas also commented on other Africans whose ethnic names do not appear in serial records from the slave trade, in estate inventories, or parish records, such as Gabanis, who were "more savage and more difficult to indoctrinate than the others mentioned," while they were "large, well built, and their physiognomy bears few traces of African character." As for Monjolos, he showed disdain, writing that they were "less valued" and were "small and weak, very ugly, lazy, and despondent."[9]

According to Debret, "The most common negroes in Rio de Janeiro belong to the following nations: Banguela, Mina, Ganguela, Benguela, Mina-Nagô, Mina-Nahyo, Rebolo, Cassange, Mina-Calava, fresh-water Cabina, Cabina Mossuda, Congo, Mozambique." He described and visually portrayed differences and similarities among Africans in his series "Heads of Africans from different nations," identifying marks in hairstyles and tattoos, which were "peculiar to distinct nations." A Monjolo could be "recognized by the vertical incisions on his cheeks"; a Mina, with "bronze[-]colored skin, quite light," used tattoos that formed "a series of small points created by swelling of the scars," whose "violet color in contrast with the skin" stood out. He pointed out differences between types of Mozambiques, contrasting the "handsome Mozambique from the interior," who was "an elite negro, employed in the customs

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[6] Pohl, Johann Emanuel, *Reise im Innern von Brasilien*, 68.

[7] Von Spix, Dr. Johann Baptist, and Von Martius, Dr. C. F. Phil., *Travels in Brazil, in the years 1817–1820, vol. 1* (London: Longman, 1824), 177.

[8] Burmeister, Hermann, *Reise nach Brasilien, durch die Provinzen von Rio de Janeiro und Minas Geraes* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1853), 88.

[9] Rugendas, Johann Moritz, *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil*, 26.

warehouses," identifiable by the "perforations in his upper lip and ears," with one "of lower stature and lighter skin tone, upon which stand out the bluish-black scar tattoos; his skin color indicates that he is from the coast." He also called attention to the "handsome black from Banguela," who displayed "an elaborately detailed hair style."[10]

What about Agassiz? We do not know how he chose the African racial types who were to pose for the photographic collection, or how he got professional photographer Augusto Stahl involved. What prior knowledge did he have and what did he wish to compare between these Africans and those who were photographed by Joseph T. Zealy in the United States?

Elizabeth Agassiz's narrative provides some clues. It would appear that the urban "marketplace," peopled by hundreds of African porters, street vendors and slaves for hire, provided Louis Agassiz's photographic subjects, since his main interest lay in "watching the picturesque negro groups selling their wares or sitting about in knots to gossip." The main axis of his interest may be inferred from this observation. He became interested in describing, comparing, photographing, and collecting the West African presence in Rio de Janeiro. In her narrative, Elizabeth Agassiz explained that "the fine-looking athletic negroes of a nobler type, at least physically, than any we see in the States, are the so-called Mina negroes, from the province of Mina, in Western Africa." Offering further detail with her impressions, especially of street vendors, Elizabeth evoked "a very powerful-looking race, and the women especially are finely made and have quite a dignified presence."[11]

Why was Agassiz so interested in West Africans? They constituted a minority among the Africans in Rio de Janeiro, ranging from 1.5 percent to nearly 7 percent of the total number of Africans in the city during the first half of the nineteenth century. If we consider arrests made by the city's police between 1810 and 1821, they accounted for nearly 9 percent. Perhaps the city's African population was undergoing a slight change during the second half of the century, with a greater presence of West Africans, as a result of either the internal slave trade or the clandestine transatlantic trade after 1830. In 1850, the percentage of Minas among the Africans in prison had reached 17 percent.[12] Recent research on demographic patterns, based on parish records (especially baptisms) and on probate records, shows that West Africans account for only 4 percent of the total slave population identified in estate inventories, although they reach 13 percent of the number of slaves baptized.

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[10] Debret, Jean-Baptiste, *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil*, explanation of illustration 22, 75–77.

[11] Agassiz, Professor and Mrs. Louis, *Journey in Brazil*, 82.

[12] Algranti, Leila, *O Feitor Ausente: estudos de escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1821* (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1988), 211, and Holloway, Thomas, *Policing Rio de Janeiro: repression and resistance in a nineteenth-century city* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), recalculation based on Appendix 4, 298.

This variation can be explained by the internal slave trade during the first half of the nineteenth century, especially involving West Africans leaving Bahia (Salvador) and being sold in Rio de Janeiro. The increase in the percentage of baptisms suggests the arrival of West Africans directly from the Mina Coast, in addition to those who arrived indirectly via Bahia. West Africans continued to arrive and continued to be baptized in Rio de Janeiro well after the prohibition of the West African slave trade in 1815, with a direct connection between the Mina Coast and Rio de Janeiro continuing to supply slaves to the city. In Sacramento Parish, 375 adult West Africans were baptized between 1825 and 1840. Candelária Parish recorded 355 such baptisms between 1830 and 1860. These figures signal a continuous movement of West Africans who arrived in Rio de Janeiro via the Atlantic slave trade and who were baptized as adults in the urban parishes throughout the mid-nineteenth century.[13]

The impact of the West African presence was not restricted to demographic features. In Rio de Janeiro, they were always prominent in the urban labor market, the same milieu that impressed Agassiz.[14] Among the slaves registered as slaves for hire, Africans made up over 80 percent, while West Africans accounted for over 30 percent, in the period between 1850 and 1870.[15] The impact that Mina Africans had on the urban service sector had consequences for the pattern of manumissions in the city. Between 1840 and 1859, while varying between 9 percent and 15 percent of the African slave population, Minas accounted for 45 percent of all paid manumissions.[16] Were the Africans selected by Agassiz slaves or freedmen?

The photographic collection, with images of nude Africans seen from the front, rear, and in profile, includes brief notes on "ethnic" origins, which shows that Agassiz made a specific selection (or at least received guidance from someone else, such as Stahl). Included among the African peoples appearing in the series we find the Benguela, Cabinda, Congo, salt water Cabinda, Inhambane, Mina Aouni, Mina Bari, Mina de Ondo a Docco, Mina Eba, Mina Efa, Mina Mondri, Mina Ossa, Mina Tapa, Mina Yoba, Moange, Mozambique Island, Mozambique, and Quilimane. This is a broad selection, considering the inclusion of Central Africans such as the Congos, Cabindas, Benguelas, and Muanges, and East Africans such as

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[13] On the transatlantic trade in West African slaves during the nineteenth century, see Lovejoy, Paul E., *Transformations in Slavery: a history of slavery in Africa, 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, Press, 2000), 145–151 and Law, Robin, "Francisco Felix de Souza in West Africa, 1820–1849," in Lovejoy, Paul E., and Curto, José C.,eds., *Enslaving Connections: changing cultures of Africa and Brazil during the era of slavery* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2004), 196–205.

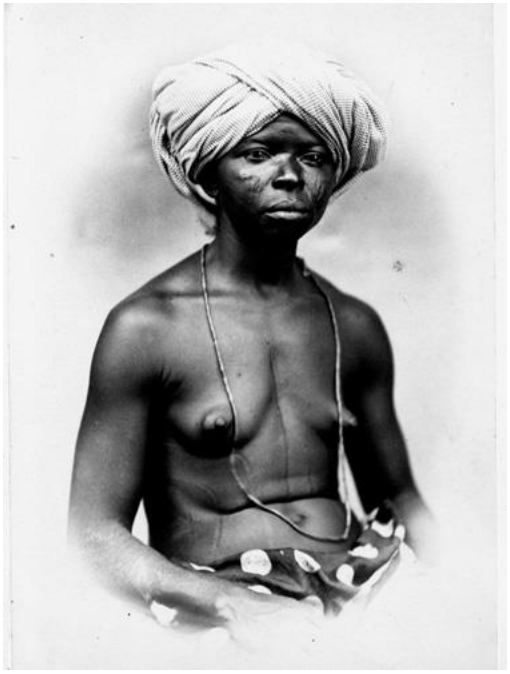
[14] Soares, Carlos Eugênio Líbano, and Dos Santos Gomes, Flávio, "'Dizem as Quitandeiras': ocupações étnicas em uma cidade escravista, Rio de Janeiro, século XIX," Acervo, vol. 15:2, 2002, 3–16 and "Negras Minas no Rio de Janeiro: gênero, nação e trabalho urbano no século XIX," in De Carvalho Soares, Mariza, ed., *Rotas Atlânticas da Diáspora Africana: da Baía do Benin ao Rio de Janeiro* (Niterói: EDUFF, 2007), 208–231.

[15] Soares, Luiz Carlos, *O "Povo de Cam" na Capital do Brasil: a escravidão urbana no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2007), 123–145.

[16] Florentino, Manolo, "Alforria e Etnicidade no Rio de Janeiro Oitocentista: notas de pesquisa," *Topoi*, 5, 2002, 25–40.

the Mozambiques, Inhambanes, and Quilimanes. However, the West Africans stand out clearly, accounting for more than two-thirds of all the Africans identified and photographed by Stahl. Did he realize, at that point, the possibility of having a broader sample of the variety of "pure race" Africans present in Brazil? What about the international implications of his selection, considering his prior experience in the United States?

The Minas especially impressed Agassiz, much as they had impressed earlier visitors. Rugendas called attention to something that was to set the tone for images in newspaper reports as well as in Christiano Júnior's photographs decades later: "They can be distinguished by three semi-circular incisions that run from the corner of the mouth to the ear," that is, the "cat's whiskers."[17]



Louis Agassiz Photographic Collection, Pure Race Series. Phrenological portrait, identified as Mina Ondo. Photographer: Augusto Stahl. Rio de Janeiro, 1865. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

[17] Rugendas, Johann Moritz, *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Brésil*, 26. Examples of these incisions can be seen in the portrait identified as Mina Ondo as well as in the photograph of Inez Mina, in Maria Helena P. T. Machado's article, "Nineteenth-Century Scientific Travel and Racial Photography: The Formation of Louis Agassiz's Brazilian Connection," on this website. For an approach to West African body markings, identities, and their construction in the Atlantic diaspora, see Gomez, Michael A., *Exchanging our Country Marks: The transformation of African identities in the colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 154–185.

In separating and choosing different West African racial types, Agassiz explored an aspect of Atlantic demography that has not been carefully studied for nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro: the ethnic diversity of West Africans within the city. Generically called Minas, sometimes specified as being Calabar, Haussa, Tapa, Jejê, or Nagô, the West Africans selected and recorded by Agassiz were the Mina Aouni, Mina Bari, Mina de Ondo a Docco, Mina Eba, Mina Efa, Mina Efan, Mina Gege, Mina Iebu, Mina Mondri, Mina Jeba, Mina Nagô, Mina Ondo, Mina Ossa, Mina Tapa, and Mina Yoba. Who were these West Africans? And why did he demonstrate such a variety? Many sources in Rio de Janeiro covered up these distinctions. Between 1800 and 1871, of the twenty-six hundred manumissions involving West Africans, those called Minas account for nearly 76 percent. The remainder are classified as Nagô, Calabar, Haussa, and Jejê. West Africans of diverse origins were all simply transformed into Minas in Rio de Janeiro, unlike Salvador, where other denominations appear, including Nagô, Haussa, Tapa, Jejê, Calabar, among others. In estate inventories and parish records from Rio de Janeiro, Calabars sometimes appear, but Nagôs are rare, and Haussas are almost totally absent. But these groups existed in the city and were considered as distinct—at least amongst themselves—appearing in greater detail in the manumission records. Of the West Africans who were not labeled simply Minas in manumissions, the other groups are divided into Nagôs (46.8 percent), Calabars (39.4 percent), Haussas (9.2 percent), and Jejês (4.6 percent).[18] Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, not only did the term Mina become more widespread, but the names of the ethnic denominations Nagô, Calabar, Haussa, and Jejê practically disappeared from usage, thus becoming "covered" up. In their place, composite denominations emerged, such as Mina-Nagô, Mina-Calabar, Mina-Haussa, and Mina-Jejê. It appears that Nagô or Yoruba stood out within the West African community in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. But who were the West African Aounis, Baris, Ondo a Doccos, Ebas, Efans, Geges, Iebus, Jebas, Mondris, Ossas, and Yobas identified by Agassiz in the photographs?

An initial problem has to do with pronunciation, in translating what he was told by the Africans he met. Agassiz recorded the names Tapa, Nago, and Gegê, but he also included Ossa, which meant Haussa; Eba, most certainly Egba (a group in the Yoruba region), along with Iebu, in this case Ijebu; Efan, perhaps Africans from Dahomey, Gbe-ewe speakers; Ondo, possibly Hondo (in the Cape Mount region, near the Galinhas River, between Sierra Leone and the Malagueta Coast); and Mondri, possibly Mouree, Mouri, or Mori, a city near the Elmina Castle.[19]

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[18] See Farias, Juliana Barreto, and Soares, Carlos Eugênio L., and Dos Santos Gomes, Flávio, *No Labirinto das Nações: africanos e identidades no Rio de Janeiro, século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 2005), Chapter 3.

[19] I would like to thank Luis Nicolau Parès for this information.

The West Africans who were highlighted in Agassiz's notes, catalogues and descriptions and who were photographed by Stahl originated for the most part on the Mina Coast, while some may have come from the Bight of Biafra. In Rio de Janeiro at the time of Agassiz's visit, there certainly were very few Gbe-speakers in the African community, although they had constituted a majority of this region's West African population during the eighteenth century.[20] Indeed, the West African population in Rio in 1865 originated from the waves of slaves brought to Rio de Janeiro between the 1830s and 1850s, either directly via the Atlantic slave trade, or indirectly via Salvador. As African slaves, they were the product of wars and migration movements in parts of Dahomey and especially Oyo. They left the African coast from the ports of Grand Popo, Whydah, Jakim, Apa, Aneho, Ekpen, Porto Novo, Badagri, and Onin. Most embarked at the ports in the Bight of Benin, having come from the Yoruba states of Ibadan, Ijebu, Abeokuta, and Ilorin as converted Muslims from the Haussa states.[21] They represented a disproportionate sample of the West Africans in Rio de Janeiro, as they dominated the urban market and certainly occupied a position of social and economic distinction (Elizabeth Agassiz speaks of a "black aristocracy"), based on fear, economic value, and social prestige. Among the West African communities of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, many of those who gained manumission returned to Africa between the 1830s and 1870s.[22]

Agassiz also identified some of his subjects as Mina Ossa, which would be Haussa, Islamized West Africans. He thus noticed another practically invisible dimension of Rio de Janeiro's African social landscape: the Malês, or Islamized Africans, mostly Haussas, who stood out in Salvador but were also present in São Luís, Recife, Alagoas, Porto Alegre, and Rio Grande. Elizabeth Agassiz wrote that "these negroes are Mohammedans, and are said to remain faithful to their prophet, though surrounded by the observances of the Catholic Church."[23] In his selection, did Agassiz not only emphasize the presence of West Africans but more specifically those who were Islamized?[24]

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[20] On the demography of West Africans in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, see De Carvalho Soares, Mariza, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 67–100.

[21] See Parès, Luis Nicolau, A Formação do Candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia (Campinas: Ed. da Unicamp, 2006), 30–57; Reis, João José, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: the Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 139–159; and Reis, João José, and Mamigonian, Beatriz Gallotti, "Nagô and Mina: the Yoruba diaspora in Brazil," in Falola, Toyin, and Childs, Matt D., eds., *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 77–110.

[22] See Da Cunha, Manuela Carneiro, *Negros, Estrangeiros: os escravos libertos e sua volta à África* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985), 101–108, and Guran, Milton, *Agudás: os "brasileiros" do Benin* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira/Editora Gama Filho, 2000), 68–87.

[23] Agassiz, Professor and Mrs. Louis, *A Journey in Brazil*, 85.

[24] Da Costa e Silva, Alberto, *"Buying and Selling Korans in Nineteenth Century Rio de Janeiro,"* *Slavery & Abolition*, 22:1, 2001, 83–90.

In his choices, echoing other travel narratives and visual representations, Agassiz showed that "hidden" and "covered" Africas still existed, and that part of his own experience was to remain hidden as well. How were the mornings and afternoons spent in the city's bustling urban market? How long did he take in making his selection? Who were the informants and guides who introduced him to the scene? What narratives had he previously read and what were his expectations when he selected these Africans in Rio de Janeiro? And, more significantly, what experiences—including silence, submission, payment, and personal interests—were shared by Agassiz, Stahl, and these Africans? Where were the photographs taken and under what conditions? In her narrative, Elizabeth Agassiz mentioned, surely referring to her husband's experiences, attempts to "talk" with the Africans in Rio de Janeiro, especially Minas and Islamized Africans. She wrote: "They do not seem to me so affable and responsive as the Congo negroes, but are, on the contrary, rather haughty. One morning I came upon a cluster of them in the market breakfasting after their work was done, and I stopped to talk with them, asking what they had for breakfast, and trying various subjects on which to open an acquaintance. But they looked at me coldly and suspiciously, barely answering my questions, and were evidently relieved when I walked away."[25]

In other words, what we see in this collection is not restricted merely to the cold, racialized, and Eurocentric gaze of travelers and scientists, but also includes the perceptions of the Africans who allowed themselves to be selected, photographed, and heard. While Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz established a hierarchical scale of races and selected them on the grounds of purity, those who were thus transformed into Africans were in effect in the process of reinventing themselves.[26]

Translated from the Portuguese by John Monteiro

About the Author

Flávio dos Santos Gomes, associate professor of history at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, is a prominent specialist in the history of African slavery in Brazil. He is author of numerous books and articles. Recently he published, along with João José Reis and Marcus J. M. de Carvalho, *O Alufá Rufino: Tráfico, Escravidão e Liberdade no Atlântico Negro,*

[25] Agassiz, Professor and Mrs. Louis, *Journey in Brazil*, 85.

[26] Slenes, Robert W., "African Abrahams, Lucretias and Men of Sorrows: allegory and allusion in the Brazilian anti-slavery lithographs," *Slavery & Abolition*, 23:2, 2002, 147-168, also published as "As Provações de um Abraão Africano: a nascente nação brasileira na viagem alegórica de Johann Moritz Rugendas," *Revista de História da Arte e Arqueologia*, no. 2, 1995–1996, 271–336.

c. 1822-c.1853. *The Alufá Rufino: Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Freedom in the Black Atlantic, c. 1822–c. 1853*], which won the prestigious Casa de las Américas book prize.