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# *State Construction and Representation of the African-Brazilian Identity in Colonial Lagos*

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### **Abstract:**

The invasion of Lagos in 1851 and the eventual annexation of 1862 by the British colonial state witnessed the birth of the purported “legitimate commerce”. This era coincided with the repatriation of African ex-slaves from Brazil in consequence to the 1835 Bahia Revolt. Entrepreneurial skills of the African-Brazilian ex-slaves, in particular their expertise in agricultural activities drew them closer to the colonial state. Hoping to secure the active participation of the

returnees in new forms of commerce, the British colonial state concocted narratives of “African Brazilian exceptionalism” by offering several incentives to the benefit of the returnees. However, decades before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonial-invented concept of “African Brazilian exceptionalism” was put on trial. This paper intends to pursue two subject matters, first, the *modus operandi*, that was built on both myth and fact and employed by the British

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colonial state in institutionalizing “African-Brazilian exceptionalism”, and second the subsequent attempts employed by members of the community in embracing their African social identity during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Resumen:**

La invasión de Lagos en 1851 y su incorporación en el estado colonial británico, fueron eventos que provocaron el nacimiento del supuestamente “comercio legítimo”. Este período coincidió con la repatriación de exesclavos africanos de Brasil en consecuencia del levantamiento en Bahía de 1835. Las habilidades comerciales, especialmente el conocimiento en actividades agrícolas que los afrobrasileños aportaban provocó un vínculo más fuerte con el estado colonial. Con la aspiración de conseguir participación de los “regresados” en esta nueva forma de comercio, el estado colonial ofreció incentivos que al final favorables a los afrobrasileños. Décadas

**Keywords:**

Colonial Lagos, African-Brazilian Returnees, Social Identity, Slavery, Capitalism.

antes del final del siglo XIX, el concepto de “African-Brazilian exceptionalism” inventado por el estado colonial británico, estaba siendo cuestionado. Este artículo propone seguir dos aspectos – en primer lugar, el *modus operandi*, construido con hechos y mitos, empleado por las autoridades coloniales en su concepción del “African-Brazilian exceptionalism”, y en segundo lugar, los intentos de los miembros de la comunidad que adoptaron esta identidad social durante el siglo XX.

**Palabras claves:**

Lagos colonial, exesclavos afrobrasileños, identidad social, esclavitud, capitalismo.

## **Introduction**

On the African continent, the continuing vestiges of the Atlantic slavery is visible in the ruinous and satellite state of modern political economy of countries on the one hand, and the hybridized social identity of a significant group of people, on the other hand. Scholars indeed have engaged the legacies of the Atlantic slavery from the standpoint of the backward socio-economic conditions that faces the descendants of enslaved African people in this contemporary period. This paper however will be engaging the question of social identity through a focus on the experiences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century African-Brazilian community in Lagos.

Driven by the leading role of materialism in the making and unmaking of historical events, this paper is convinced about the preeminence of economic factors in the making and unmaking of the social identity of a once prominent community in colonial Lagos – the African Brazilian community. The question of materialism is visible in that the rise to prominence of the African Brazilian community was possible consequent to the provided incentives by the British colonial state. Again, these incentives, as will be treated in the latter parts of this paper, surfaced in order to aid British exploitative mission in the colony. And these incentives later vanished when it could not serve no more any material purpose.

It will be incorrect to conclude that there are not some existing works related to the contextual framework of this paper. The absolute neglect for the role of materialism in the creation of the historical realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century African Brazilian community in Lagos is the lacuna that will be taken care of in this paper. This mandate as such is not in conformity with bourgeois and unscientific narratives on the question of social identity. Though an impressive undialectical scholar, Matory's claims that the British colonial state was interested in the search of the African social identity by the African Brazilian returnees in Lagos following their repatriation,<sup>2</sup> is unscientific and ahistorical.

With the abolition of the Atlantic slavery came the search for colonies by the European nations. Colonialism, which can be described as the political manifestation of capitalism indeed needed the

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<sup>2</sup> Matory, "The English Professor of Brazil," 80.

active participation of a nucleus of Africans in their own exploitation. The British colonial state-invented “legitimate commerce” had the mandate of promoting cash crops through the cooperation of African farmers and traders. In colonial Lagos, there was a conscious attempt by the British to draft a chunk of the newly arrived returnees from Brazil into the new form of commerce. This was considered to be a necessity owing to the diasporic experiences of the returnees. Whilst there was a significant response, as some individuals like Pedro Pacheco and Ojo Martins invested in the commerce, unlike the Saro, a greater chunk of African Brazilian businesspersons during this period had the goal of building an independent capital base of theirs.

The provided opportunities by the British colonial state to the returnees, all in search of a class of indigenous collaborators for the success of “legitimate commerce”, would be instrumental to the emergence of prominent figures in the community. By subsidizing the repatriation and settlement of the returnees, the capital accumulative process of a foremost and prominent indigenous bourgeoisie class in colonial Lagos began – the African-Brazilian bourgeois class.

It did not take long however before the inherent contradictions of the British colonial state-invented “legitimate commerce” became uncovered. Although for the best parts of the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the provisions of the British “legitimate commerce” were responsible for the establishment of a somewhat independent capital base for a section of members of the African Brazilian community, this transformation could not be sustained.

Individuals such as Ojo Martins and Pedro Pacheco were very prominent in the returnees’ community owing to the dividends earned from their involvement in the palm oil trade. This trade had a trickledown effect in the capital base of some members till the point when they became heavily involved in shipping and some masonry businesses. In this instance comes prominent individuals such as Senhor Manoel de Sant Anna, Esan da Rocha, and Joao Francisco Branco.

The gradual eclipse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw to the consistent arrival of European sophisticated capitalist firms in Lagos and across. This marked a threat to the then unholy alliance between the British colonial state and their indigenous partners-in-capitalism. As the waves of monopolistic-capitalism dominates the scene, many privileged Africans became disenchanted with the colonial state. Many would approach the corridors of nationalism to articulate their disgust. From the state

of an avid admirer of European social values, prominent members of the returnees' community rapidly became disciples of the Yoruba cultural renaissance mission of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Lagos.

### **Atlantic Slavery and the African-Brazilians**

The commencement of the Atlantic slavery was propelled by the supposed “discovery” of the Americas. The underlying factors responsible for the foremost role of Portugal in this inhumane business adventure has been addressed in other studies<sup>3</sup>, however, it is pertinent to state that Portuguese sailors and explorers were the first set of Europeans to explore the West African coast and sail around the continent<sup>4</sup>. As far back as 1444<sup>5</sup>, the first set of Africans to be enslaved were captured by a group of Portuguese merchants led by Lancarote de Lagos, and subsequently enslaved in Portugal, marking the dawn of the era of the Atlantic slavery.

In the early beginning of the Atlantic slavery, as estimated by scholars such as Phillip Curtin, Ivana Elbi, Ralph A. Rusten, a number of 600 Africans were kidnapped and subsequently enslaved each year from 1450 to 1500<sup>6</sup>. But this number increased *ipso facto* the creation of more plantations in the Americas; as the urgent need for a sizeable amount of free labour on these plantations grew. By 1650, the number of Africans captured and afterwards enslaved had skyrocketed to 4000 per year. And by 1750, the number had increased tenfold to a figure of over 50,000 people every year. The number was so huge that between the years 1701 to 1800, over 6,090,000 people were said to have been kidnapped and forced into slavery in the Americas, while the total number documented dropped to 3,466,000 between the years 1801 to 1867<sup>7</sup>, as a result of the abolition of slavery by some leading slaves-dealing European countries like Britain, Spain, France, etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Rawley, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Mattoso *To Be a Slave in Brazil*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> This year has been agreed upon by different scholars on the Atlantic slavery studies. Phillip Curtin in his ground-breaking *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, confirmed this. in their books Toplin, R.B *The Abolition of Slavery in Brazil* and Leslie *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade* also confirmed 1444.

<sup>6</sup> Manning, “Slavery and Slave Trade”,

<sup>7</sup> Lovejoy *Transformation in Slavery*, 19.

Beyond the pioneering roles played by the Portuguese slave merchants, studies have shown that the growth and expansion of the Atlantic slavery was orchestrated by Portugal. By 1550, four major areas of the West African coast<sup>8</sup>, Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin<sup>9</sup>, had become the thriving centres for capturing Africans by the Portuguese. By 1600, the Portuguese annexed-territory of Brazil (annexed in 1500<sup>10</sup>) in the Americas had become the leading sugar producing territory in the Americas, leading to the increase in the importation of Africans as slaves. The heavy demand for free African labour in these plantations became the last resort following the continuous demise of the native population as a result of their vulnerability to diseases such as small pox, fever, brought by the Europeans. In no time, sugar production in places like Bahia grew above any other plantation in the Americas. Interestingly, by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the hitherto enjoyed dominance of the Portuguese began to decline following the aggressive intervention of firstly the Dutch, the French, and lastly the British.

As contested by Paul E.L., between the years 1650 to 1807, the Atlantic slavery witnessed a consistent growth across plantation economies under the dominance of the Dutch, French and British<sup>11</sup>. In Brazil, this transformation meant the introduction and “development” of two export-oriented products – gold and coffee. The non-Portuguese dominance of the Atlantic slavery would continue until 1807 when the British finally decided to abolish. Ironically, the period that followed the abolition of the Atlantic slavery by the British witnessed the most horrifying period for the African people as more persons, more than any other time, were captured and subsequently enslaved by European slave-dealers. Because a greater number of these dealers were of Portuguese-origin, this latter period in the history of the Atlantic slavery saw to the reemergence of the dominance of Portugal. During this last phase, enslaved Africans were primarily transported to the Caribbean islands of Cuba, Brazil and Puerto Rico.

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<sup>8</sup> Manning, “Slavery and Slave Trade”.

<sup>9</sup> The Bight of Benin was used to describe regions such as the coast of modern Southwestern Nigeria, the Republic of Benin, and Togo. The territory used to be called the “Mina Coast” or “Slave Coast”.

<sup>10</sup> In 1500, Brazil was discovered by the Portuguese navigator, Pedro Alvares Cabral, for the Portuguese, this was encapsulated in the work of Wagley, *An Introduction to Brazil*.

<sup>11</sup> Lovejoy *Transformation in Slavery*, 19.

By the quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese slave-dealers have emerged as the chief dealers in the Atlantic slavery, accounting for about 71 percent of the total slaves' vessels after 1810<sup>12</sup>. It is therefore not surprising that Brazil in May 13, 1888, became the last country to officially end slavery in the Western hemisphere in the name of Princess Isabel's Golden Law, under the monarch, Pedro II. By the end of the Atlantic slavery, it was estimated that Brazil alone received 40 percent of the total number of Africans forcefully brought to the Americas. This implies that more than any other nation in the Americas, Brazil received more Africans during the Atlantic slavery.

However, concerning the demography of the Atlantic slavery, several studies have shown that the overwhelming majority of enslaved Africans came from two important coasts. The first was the coast to the north and south of the Congo River in present day Congo and Angola, while the second coast, which was considered as the more important coast, was the region that surrounds present day Ghana, Nigeria, the Bights of Benin and Biafra. The latter coast has been said to have produced nine out of every ten people during the Atlantic slavery<sup>13</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the heavy presence of slave merchants from Brazil, who were of Portuguese origin, had intensified the direct exportation of kidnapped Africans to Brazil from the Bight of Benin.

The active slave raiding activities orchestrated by Oyo in the 1780s was said to have led to the earliest expansion of Yoruba, Igala, and Nupe captives in the Americas<sup>14</sup>. Nevertheless, it would take the Jihad of 1804 and subsequently the Yoruba Civil Wars<sup>15</sup>, to provide the most profound number of Yoruba people that were captured and enslaved in Brazil. The collapse of the Old Oyo Empire during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century wars, in 1830 was known to have led to the dispersal of several Yoruba speaking people, thus resulting in the overwhelming boom in the number of

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<sup>12</sup> Herbert, *African Slavery*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Lovejoy, *The 'Middle Passage'* 10.

<sup>14</sup> Law, *The Oyo Empire*, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria* revealed that the collapse of the Old Oyo Empire brought about a major disintegration of Yorubaland and subsequently the rise of Ibadan, an empire that could not resolve the raging wars amongst several Yoruba towns. In the stead of seeing to the end of the Civil War, Ibadan escalated it, therefore providing slave catchers vulnerable Yoruba speaking people to be exported to either Brazil or Cuba in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Yoruba captives in Brazil. In fact, it has been argued in the book<sup>16</sup> of Joao Jose Reis that during the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the 7,000 Africans who arrived to Bahia yearly were actually Yoruba-speaking people. Bahia subsequently became the largest slave plantation in the whole of the Americas. Concurrently happening as at this period was the gradual rise to prominence of an African city – Lagos.

The earliest knowledge of Lagos to the Portuguese can be dated back to 1472 following the expedition of a Portuguese explorer named Sequeria. This explorer was known to have been the first Portuguese to have come in contact with the island on the west coast of Africa. This island, relatively inundated by water and encircled by fringed of deep mangrove, was called “Onim” or “Eko” by the indigenous people<sup>17</sup>. But the territory was renamed by subsequent Portuguese explorers to “Lagos de Curamo”, and later Lagos – the Portuguese word for “lake”. Several studies have revealed that albeit Lagos had been profoundly involved in the Atlantic slavery since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the territory became the most significant slave port on the coast of West Africa, outstripping important ports such as Porto Novo, Dahomey, Badagry, Ouidah<sup>18</sup>.

Significantly, the emergence of Lagos as an important slave port in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was responsible for the rise to prominence of the monarchical institution. This period for instance witnessed the increase in the wealth of Oba Kosoko<sup>19</sup> and some of his chiefs. Quite ironic, this rise conversely was responsible for the eventual conquest of Lagos by the British in 1851. This conquest would be followed by the birth of “legitimate commerce”. The commencement of this new commercial economic activity coincided with the return of the formerly enslaved Africans (mostly people of Yoruba origin) in the Americas, but specifically, in Brazil and Cuba. Their

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<sup>16</sup> Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Akinsemoyin and Vaughan-Richards, *Building Lagos*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> National Archives Ibadan, Lagos Division Office Papers, Ref Div. 1/1-9/8, titled, *Intelligence reports file on Lagos*. File. No.2157. 1955.

<sup>19</sup> Oba Kosoko ruled Lagos during the period 1845–1851, his reign was brought to an end following the bombardment of Lagos by the British and subsequently the re-enthronement of Oba Akintoye by the British in 1851 owing to the British sudden abolition of slavery campaign, one which was primarily economic motivated, contrary to the position of Kristin Mann, where she posited that it was the “great shift in moral consciousness in the West” that led Britain to the point of abolishing slavery. See, “Slavery and the Birth of an African City...”p.1. .



arrival was necessitated following the abolition of slavery and the outbreak of several slave rebellions.

Historically, it has been found to be true that since 1807 there have been several slave uprisings in Brazil, specifically in heavily concentrated African settlements like Bahia. It is on record that in the 1820s alone there were different insurrections led by Hausa and Yoruba slaves in Brazil<sup>20</sup>. But it was the Muslim Uprising of 1835, also known as the Male Uprising, staged in Bahia, that would forever change the course of the Atlantic slavery in Brazil. Not surprising, the uprising was said to have been led by Hausa, but mostly Yoruba Muslim slaves in Bahia.

By the end of the Male Rebellion, the Brazilian government enacted several repressive and oppressive policies solely against both the enslaved and freed Africans. Consequently, many felt the urgent need to repatriate to Africa, especially to the West African coastal areas such as Porto Novo, Dahomey, Lagos, Badagry etc. It is an arduous task to determine the exact number of the ex-slaves that returned to Africa during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, Carneiro da Chuna in his classic work posited that between 1820 and 1899, an approximately figure of about 8,000 Africans left Bahia for Africa<sup>21</sup>. Studies have shown that the first set of returnees to have arrived in Lagos came around 1840. But according to the then appointed British governor of Lagos, Alfred Moloney, in a letter to one Sir. Henry Holland Bart<sup>22</sup>, these earliest returnees could not settle, as at then (1840) because of the precarious nature of Lagos. In the stead of Lagos, many were said to have immigrated into the interiors of Yorubaland.

In 1853 Lagos, over 130 African-Brazilian families were said to have been counted by the British Consul, Benjamin Campbell<sup>23</sup>. Patrick Cole in his classic work<sup>24</sup> has pointed out that by 1871 and in the 1880s, there were 1,237 and 3,321 African-Brazilians in Lagos respectively. In 1889, it was

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<sup>20</sup> See, Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro*. See also Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*.

<sup>21</sup> da Chuna, *Negros estrangeiros*, 35.

<sup>22</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 553.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 544.

<sup>24</sup> Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*.

documented that in respect of the general population of Lagos, one in every seven Lagosians had lived in either Cuba or Brazil, 5,000 out of 37,458 people<sup>25</sup>.

### **British Colonial State and the African Brazilians in Lagos**

The establishment of “legitimate commerce” by the British colonialist in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lagos was accompanied by the desire to bring onboard prominent indigenous businesspersons and elites. In the list of potential indigenous collaborators was the newly arrived group of African-Brazilian returnees. The special interest the British colonial state had in this group of returnees is built on the pedestal of the collective experiences the latter have had whilst in Brazil. The colonial state envisaged that their diasporic experiences will be relevant to the propagation of the processes of cash crops production in the colony. Though the returnees for the best parts disappointed the colonial state by venturing into independent businesses, they seized the opportunities that accompanied the colonial state’s intention.

Prior to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, efforts to repatriate into Lagos have been consistently frustrated by members of the indigenous ruling class. Matory reported that the African-Brazilian returnees “suffered unspeakable physical abuse and extortionate taxation”<sup>26</sup> in the hands of many coastal kings across West Africa. In Lagos, Oba Kosoko, down to Oba Dosumu, were hostile to the earliest returnees. During the 1840s, the returnees had many of their properties and goods plundered under the watch of Oba Kosoko. Against this backdrop, members of this group naturally sided with the British colonializing mission.

The dominance of the British in the overall activities of Lagos intensified the repatriation of African-Brazilians. The population of the returnees increased so much so that by 1853 about 135 African-Brazilian returnee families, many of which were of Yoruba ancestry, were identified in Lagos<sup>27</sup>. The British colonial state was attracted to this class of returnees for a number of purposes. Concretely, the African-Brazilian returnees were attracted to the British colonial state because of

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<sup>25</sup> Lorand Matory, “The English Professor of Brazil,” 79.

<sup>26</sup> Lorand Matory, “The English Professor of Brazil,” 86.

<sup>27</sup> Lindsay “To Return to the Bosom,” 23.

firstly their solid reputation as an exceptional group of farmers and masons. Secondly, the contact the returnees have had with Christianity was considered as a plus to the “civilizing mission” of the colonial state. The exceptionality of the Brazilian returnees in the area of architectural designs was so noticeable that they were consistently admired and commended as a unique group of returnees by colonial officers.

The Governor of Lagos, Alfred Moloney, in an 1887 letter had stated that the African-Brazilian returnees’ “represents an orderly, industrious and respectable portion of this community, and set generally a good example as citizens”<sup>28</sup>. In 1890, the governor was quoted to have said that “...such *Negroes* (Brazilian returnees) are required for the establishment of civilizing centres, for the spread of the industries they have learnt in the Western hemisphere; they are to be the educators of their less enlightened fellow-countrymen”<sup>29</sup>. Interestingly, for the best parts of the late 19th century, prominent members of the returnees’ community were entranced by this colonial invented exceptionalism. Pertinent to mention that these letters are indicators of the special interests the colonial state had in the returnees, and the naked racist sentiments that formed the very bulwark of colonialism.

The first practical test of the abovementioned alliance between the colonial state and the African-Brazilian returnees can be traced back to the encouragement, both financially and morally, the latter got in the process of repatriation to Lagos. Not only did the British abolish the hitherto head tax formerly imposed on the returnees by the indigenous ruling class, there was also a conscious attempt at subsidizing the costs of repatriation. Evidences shows that the British consulate consistently issued British passports to prospective returnees in Bahia during the mid-19th century. In addition to this, the consulate went out of its way severally to charter steamships for the returnees. In 1889, the colonial governor of Lagos, Alfred Moloney, sent invitations to groups of potential African-Brazilian returnees promising them about their safety and protection in Lagos owing to the possibility of a direct steamship from Bahia to Lagos.

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<sup>28</sup> Lindsay, “Brazilian Women in Lagos,” 135.

<sup>29</sup> Lindsay, “To Return to the Bosom,” 41.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1890, Moloney, gathered the press, government officials, notable returnees<sup>30</sup> and some other important dignitaries, to announce the establishment of a shipping line under Agent M. Neville, for the repatriation of the African-Brazilian ex-slaves into Lagos.<sup>31</sup> In the meeting, the governor estimated that about a million ex-slaves desired to return to Africa<sup>32</sup>. The Consulate was indeed obligated to establish this steam communication because it was apparent that a heavy presence of the returnees in Lagos would further lubricate British dominance. The Acting Colonial Secretary present in the meeting had asserted that the governor had done well by initiating the steam communication because “the repatriates will bring back from Brazil a higher average of intelligence than that which prevails here (Lagos)”.<sup>33</sup>

Upon return to Lagos, studies shows that the colonial consulate again became instrumental to the settlement process of the returnees as lands were negotiated from the indigenous people for this purpose. Between 1858 to 1860, under the influence of the British, Oba Dosumu gave out a total of 38 land grants<sup>34</sup> to members of the newly emerging African-Brazilian community in Lagos. The areas where the returnees settled in subsequently became known as “Popo Aguda” or the “Brazilian Quarter”.

Beyond the question of settlement, the British colonial state also acquired lands on behalf of the African Brazilian returnees essentially for agricultural purpose. Consul Campbell through several incentives and programmes encouraged a section of the returnees to acquire farmlands in the areas that became known as Yaba and Agege during the 1860s. Considering the diasporic experiences of the returnees, the colonial state in Lagos envisaged that the cultivation processes of cash crops such as cotton, cocoa, coffee, etc. will be advanced by the returnees from Brazil. In an 1888 address to the returnees in Lagos, Governor Moloney described them as the “breadwinners” of cash crops production<sup>35</sup>. Meanwhile in another address in 1887, the Governor made similar point when he

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<sup>30</sup> Some notable returnees present in the meeting were Senhor Ferreira, Senhor Augusto Mendes, Senhor P.F. da Costa. NAI, “Weekly Times of Lagos”, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1890.

<sup>31</sup> NAI, “Weekly Times of Lagos”, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1890.

<sup>32</sup> NAI, “Weekly Times of Lagos”, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1890.

<sup>33</sup> NAI, “Weekly Times of Lagos”, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1890.

<sup>34</sup> Lindsay, “Brazilian Women in Lagos,” 130.

<sup>35</sup> NAI, The Eagle Newspaper, “Moloney address to the Brazilians”, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1888.

said that due to their “sophisticated techniques”, the cultivation of some important cash crops such as cocoa, rubber, cotton, indigo, tobacco, sugar, coffee, etc. is going to be improved upon by the African Brazilian returnees<sup>36</sup>.

As argued by Kaye, the returnees were eventually helpful in the spread of the knowledge of cash crops in colonial Lagos<sup>37</sup>. In 1887 when Moloney finally launched a botanical station at Ebute-Meta, an aspiration over active participation of the returnees was articulated in a speech. Interestingly, in the long run the returnees’ community did not produce a substantial number of farmers for colonial Lagos, as many rather became merchants, traders, successful masons, etc.

The word “Aguda” is a Yoruba word which literarily means “those who have been away from home”<sup>38</sup>. Another study however has established that it meant “Brazilian Catholic or White”<sup>39</sup>. However, contrary to these sources, Robin Law in his work<sup>40</sup> had stated that the word can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as it was generally in use among slaves in Brazil of Dahomey background. But in the 19<sup>th</sup> century according to Robin, the word, in West Africa became more nationally or linguistically oriented other than geographically, as it began to be used primarily for both the Portuguese and the Brazilians.

The Brazilian Quarter was situated directly opposite the European settlement known as Marina. Beyond being the centre of the island of Lagos, the quarter spanned across present-day Tinubu Square to the Faji Market, extending southwesterly towards Bamgbose Street through Cow Lane<sup>41</sup>. In a show of public affection, the colonial state had no qualms in naming the streets in the quarter after prominent members of the returnees’ community, hence Bamgbose, Martins, Pedro, Tokunboh streets, amongst others. Echeruo has stressed that the fact that the British consulate in Lagos was responsible for the settlement of the returnees is a display of higher expectation. There was an expectation on how the returnees were going to inspire their fellow African brethren into

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<sup>36</sup> TNA, UK, Moloney to C.O, 147/59, 20th of July, 1887.

<sup>37</sup> Whiteman, *Lagos: City of the Imagination*, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Valch, “The Brazilian House,” 12.

<sup>39</sup> Whiteman, *Lagos: City of the Imagination*, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Law, “Yoruba Liberated Slaves”

<sup>41</sup> Amos, “The Amaros and Agudas,” 66.

accepting the “civilizing mission” of the Europeans<sup>42</sup>. In reaction to this opportunity, a number of members of this returnees’ class not only did according to the colonial biddings, but utilized it in the building of their personal upward social mobility.

As recognized by Lindsay, though the returnees largely identified as Africans while in Brazil, upon arrival to West Africa, many socially identified themselves as Brazilians or Westerners<sup>43</sup>. The reason behind this is connected to the economic and socio-political advantages that followed this hybridized identity as far as colonial Lagos was concerned. Against this backdrop, the returnees in their numbers emerged as renowned merchants, traders, master masons, carpenters, painters, moneylenders, bread-bakers, dressmakers. Women of this community in fact became heads of businesses such as seamstress, baking, hairdressing, in colonial Lagos.

### **Social Mobility and Identity of the African-Brazilians in Lagos**

Before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonial state had no qualms in flagging the perception of an “African-Brazilian exceptionalism” in Lagos. Indeed, the returnees arrived Lagos with three prominent features pertinent to the cause of colonialism – imported capital from Brazil; professional and non-professional occupations; and Christianity. These factors could not have been pertinent to the colonial enterprise if they have had no economic impulses. The alliance the British colonial state proposed to the returnees was instrumental to the building process of the forces of colonialism. Prominent members of the returnees’ community exploited this opportunity to build a somewhat proto-capital base for themselves. It is thus unsurprising that the Governor of Lagos, Moloney, while delivering a speech in honour of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee celebration in 1887, described the accomplishments of the returnees by stressing that their;

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<sup>42</sup> Echeruo, *Victorian Lagos*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Lindsay, “To Return to the Bosom,” 23.

acquisition of professional and vocational trainings (had) made them admirable, valuable and necessary centres for the diffusion among their less developed fellow countrymen in Yorubaland of the enlightenment and civilization...<sup>44</sup>

Two classes of successful people emerged in the African-Brazilian community before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was firstly a class of prominent merchants and traders on one hand, and secondly, a class of professionals and petty-traders, on the other hand. The foremost respected members of the returnees' community were merchants and traders. The rise to prominence of this class of returnees can be traced back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when the British colonial state commenced the issuance of British passports to prospective returnees in Brazil. The purpose of this issuance was to ensure the safety and protection of these returnees en-route to Lagos. As studies have shown, early enough, a handful of returnees upon arrival began to use the issued passport to go back and forth between Lagos and Brazil, Bahia in particular, to engage in elaborate commercial activities. Sant Anna, Pedro Pacheco, Joao Esan da Rocha, Joao Francisco Branco, Augusto Cardoso, were foremost members of the class of African-Brazilian merchants in Lagos and all had British passports<sup>45</sup>.

The emergence of the African-Brazilian merchant class occasioned the birth of what can be described as the Lagos-Bahia trade network. Whilst exports from Brazil to Lagos consisted of trade articles such as cigars, rum, tobacco. imports from Lagos took the form of kolanut, palm oil, black soap, pepper, beads, indigenous fabrics, to mention a few. This trade network was so ingrained in the economic life of Lagos that it survived sketchily into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All through the 1870s, Brazil was the third important international market for Lagos after Germany and Britain. In 1881 alone, imports from Brazil and exports to Brazil were estimated at 26,110 pounds and 12,868 pounds sterling, respectively<sup>46</sup>. Lindsay has reported that before the 1890s, out of a total

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<sup>44</sup> Lagos Observer Newspaper, June 2nd, 1887. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.

<http://www.crl.edu/world-newspaper-archive-african-newspapers> (Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Oral interview with Baba Adekunle Ali, a personal historian to the Oba of Lagos, Eko Akete, Iyana-Ipaja, Lagos, (14<sup>th</sup> August, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> PRO, UK, FO 84/1002, Campbell to Foreign Office, 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1856.

number of 92 full-time traders in the African-Brazilian community in Lagos, about 59 traders were strictly dealers of Bahia products.

Relevant to state that certain members of the merchant class of African-Brazilian returnees were simultaneously involved in farming, thus fortifying their capital base by supplying the huge interest of the colonial state in cash crops. It is important to make a mentioning of Ojo Martins, a prominent African-Brazilian farmer and exporter of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Ojo Martins, alongside a number of returnees started building their capital base early consequent to the land grants provided to the potential farmers by the colonial state. Indeed, the colonial state was clear that, “The soil (of Lagos) is destined to be peopled and cultivated by the returning emancipated slaves from Brazil”<sup>47</sup>.

In the 1870s, trade activities in Lagos were built around Brazilian commodities, particularly among the indigenous people, because of the presence of warehouses owned and controlled by African-Brazilian merchants and traders. Prominent streets such as Kakawa, Bamgbose, Cowlane, etc. were dominated by these warehouses. Two merchants were particularly prominent during this period – Joao da Rocha and Joaqium Francisco Devode Branco. These two returnees were said to have entered commercial business in colonial Lagos around the early 1870s by relying on a direct trade connection from Lagos to Bahia. Kristin Mann pointed out that both Da Rocha and Branco “consigned goods to ships sailing across the Atlantic and occasionally chartered vessels of their own”<sup>48</sup>. Da Rocha had more than two trading stores stockpiled with perishable and consumable goods from Brazil at Tinubu square during the 1880s. The merchant in 1885 used Africano to export a tonnage of 128 goods like egusi seed, basket, country clothes, palm oil, kola nut to Bahia<sup>49</sup>. Da Rocha at the point of death in 1891 was said to have built a large business empire for his children in Lagos, thus not surprising that by the turn-of-the-century, his children emerged as members of an important African elite group. There was also one prominent trader, Joao Angelo Campos, whom the popular Campos Square was named after.

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<sup>47</sup> Lindsay, “To Return to the Bosom,” 40.

<sup>48</sup> Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 126.

<sup>49</sup> NAI, Government Gazette, February, 1885, 128.



In the 1880s, Manoel J. de Sant Anna, was perhaps the most prominent African-Brazilian merchant. Sant Anna would go on to become one of the foremost African merchants to own a sailing vessel in Lagos. This vessel was named Olinda. In 1883, with the use of a different shipping line – Zaida Shipping Line, Sant Anna imported a number of goods with the capacity of 157 tonnage into Lagos from Bahia<sup>50</sup>. The merchant accumulated a substantial capital through the Lagos-Bahia trade network so much so that he had liquor and building materials warehouses at Kakawa street. In 1882, Ildefonso de Sant Anna, son of Sant Anna, died on board the Schooner African on his return trip from Brazil. As reported by Lagos Observer, the young Sant Anna's opulence was illustrated by his transatlantic voyaging, having left Lagos for Brazil 18 months earlier to marry a Brazilian woman<sup>51</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the absence of major European firms in 19<sup>th</sup> century Lagos enabled the rise to prominence of African-Brazilian merchants and traders. However, with the change of events years before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – one marked with the gradual infiltration of European firms in the overall economy of colonial Lagos, the influence of the once prominent class of African-Brazilian merchants and traders began to wane. It is relevant to mention that, coincidentally, this period also witnessed a decline in the overall state of the economy of the colony. The 1880s in Lagos witnessed a sharp decline in the value of oil trade as a result of the fluctuation in the economy of Britain<sup>52</sup>. The gradual eclipse of prominent members of the African Brazilian community in the economy of colonial Lagos is also tied to the decline in oil trade before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1889, the presence of eight prominent European firms had begun to send shivers down the spine of the African-Brazilian merchants and traders. These firms were largely involved in export and import trades between Lagos and Europe<sup>53</sup>. The firms were John Walkden & Co., J.D. Fairley & Co. Ltd., Charles Molver & Co., John Holt & Co. Ltd., Paterson, Zochonis & Co. Ltd., G.L.

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<sup>50</sup> NAI, Government Gazette, January, 1883.p.94.

<sup>51</sup> Lagos Observer, August 31<sup>st</sup> 1882. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.

<sup>52</sup> Governor Moloney in several of his dispatches during this period lamented heavily over the instability of the economy of Lagos. See, TNA, UK, Moloney to C.O, 147/59, 20<sup>th</sup> of July, 1887 and also Moloney to C.O, 147/60, 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 1887.

<sup>53</sup> NAI, Colony of Lagos, annual reports, 1905.

Gaiser, Rylands & Sons Ltd., Witt & Busch, Lagos Stores Ltd., and Pickering & Berthoud. The cheaper commodities being imported by these firms began to divert the attention of colonial Lagosians away from the African-Brazilian community. The gradual decline of this class of returnees witnessed the rise to prominence of a class of professionals in the returnees' community and although the aggregate wealth of a professional in the African-Brazilian community could not equal that of a merchant or trader, the professionals' rise to prominence was not as directly dictated by colonial incentives.

The gradual decline of the African-Brazilian merchants and traders in the economy of Lagos saw the rise to prominence of a number of individuals who were professionals in carpentry, building, tailoring, moneylending, laundry, medicine, teaching, law, civil services in the African Brazilian community. This class of returnees attempted to distance themselves from the fangs of British colonialism by investing heavily in skilled labour occupations, particularly those that were not in vogue in colonial Lagos. In effect, the African-Brazilian community earned a popular Yoruba appellation – *Aguda o je l'abe geesi*, translation, “The Aguda (African-Brazilians) are not subservient to the British”. The exceptional attributes of Aguda carpenters, joiners, cabinetmakers, builders, laid the foundation towards the building of a progressive social mobility. The popularity of African-Brazilian builders subsequently moved beyond colonial Lagos following the discovery and spread of the peculiar and innovative “Brazilian houses”. Prominent builders such as Lazaro Borges da Silva, Senhor Francisco Nobre, Senhor Joao da Costa, Prisco da Costa, Marcos Augusto Cardoso, etc. had their social mobility built around their expertise in building. Beyond constructions, African-Brazilian professionals were also involved in tailoring, bread-baking, cake-baking, medicine, laundry, moneylending.

Relevant to note that attempts were made by prominent members of the African-Brazilian professional class to maintain the waning Lagos-Bahia trade network. Whilst this latter involvement was inconsequential to the overall economy of Lagos, it was important for members of the community both sentimentally and financially. An insight into the accumulated wealth of prominent African-Brazilian professionals can be exhumed through the different letters of administrations addressed to the Chief Judge of the Colony of Lagos at different points in time. As

found in government gazettes of the 1890s, most late professionals had to their names, credits, goods, chattels. An application filled by one Lucrecia Carolina on behalf a deceased, Francisco Martins, in July 31<sup>st</sup> 1891, to Chief Justice Richard, showed that the deceased, who lived at Igbosere Street, was a professional painter<sup>54</sup>. At the point of his death in 1885, Francisco, whose alias was Abuduramanu, had several goods, chattels, and credits to his name. Lucrecia in her application demanded for the necessary papers to administer the estate of the deceased.

The above is also an expression of the prominence of women in the professional class of African Brazilians in colonial Lagos. Before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, quite a number of these women were well-known in Lagos as successful seamstresses, moneylenders, traders, etc. As deduced from the archive, Maria da Conceicao started out as a moneylender in the 1870s, by the 1890s, she had opened two major warehouses in the Brazilian quarters. Her warehouses in Kakawa and Custom streets were famed for Brazilian products such as canned foods, rice, wines, dried fish, etc.<sup>55</sup> For a chunk of the women that rose to prominence during this period, there was a conscious attempt at sustaining the Lagos-Bahia trade network. More often than not, these women intentionally specialized in merchandizing Brazilian products in spite of their distinct professions. Clemencia Guimaries was a leading dressmaker of Victorian Lagos. As indicated by the 1890 official government gazette, she had a retail store where imported goods from Bahia were kept at Bamgbose street<sup>56</sup>. Women such as Maria F. Ramos, Sabiu B. da Silva, etc. were involved in the sale of Brazilian wines and spirits<sup>57</sup>. At the time of the death of Maria circa 1920s, she was able to bequeath a landed property to her children at Bamgbose Street<sup>58</sup>.

The emergence of the African-Brazilian community in Lagos unquestionably led to the popularization of both English and Portuguese lifestyles. Indeed, African-Brazilian elites became so influential that the first masonic lodge of the Freemason was established by this class in 1868<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> NAI, Government Gazette, 31<sup>st</sup> July, 1891.p.220.

<sup>55</sup> Lagos Weekly Record, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1892. World Newspaper Archive, African Section. <http://www.crl.edu/world-newspaper-archive-african-newspapers> (Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2018).

<sup>56</sup> NAI, Colonial Government Gazette, 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1890, 29.

<sup>57</sup> NAI, Colonial Government Gazette, March, 1893, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Laotan, *The Torch Bearers*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact*, 268.

at the Brazilian quarters. Ayandele has pointed out in his work that the Masonic lodge was so influential in colonial Lagos that almost all prominent African leaders based in Lagos of that day were members. The African-Brazilian prominent figures of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were so much in tune with their colonial invented social identity to the point that many were prouder of their Brazilian and newly acquired English identity. From exotic parties, to elaborate games, and fixated commitment to Catholicism, the returnees were almost everything but “African”.

Interestingly also, it took the British Education Ordinance of 1882 before English language became the official language of instruction in schools around the African-Brazilian quarters. To distinguish themselves also in colonial Lagos, affluent members of the community often invested into the popularization of some Brazilian meals and snacks such as *bomfim*, *canjika*, *freijon*, *mocoto*, *moqueca*, *mengau*. Many of these foods had survived greatly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>60</sup>

Studies have shown also that no sooner had the African-Brazilian returnees arrived in Lagos that they became fond of associating themselves with European recreations and sports such as racehorses, picnics, regular flamboyant parties, crickets.<sup>61</sup> The African-Brazilian community for the best parts of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an abode for numerous Western inclined social events such as dress balls, elaborate musical and dramatic concerts. Importantly, insights into the extravagant lifestyles of the returnees were often narrated by different newspaper outlets.<sup>62</sup> The Lagos Observer on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1888 gave a report of an exotic event put together by the returnees in honour of the eventual abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade. The paper narrates; “Grand ball event, displays of fireworks, dramatic entertainment, carnival procession, fancy dress ball, etc. were among the elaborate events that were held between, 27<sup>th</sup> of September to the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1888, at the Glover Memorial Hall”.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bomfim is a special feast renowned in Bahia; canjika is delicacy prepared from bean flour and often served during wake-keeps; freijon is made from brown beans, usually cooked with coconut milk.

<sup>61</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 557.

<sup>62</sup> Lagos Observer, 8<sup>th</sup> of December, 1880; Lagos Observer, 4<sup>th</sup> of August, 1888; Lagos Standard, 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1882, Lagos Observer, 11<sup>th</sup> of August 1888, Lagos Standard, 11<sup>th</sup> of September, 1895, Lagos Observer 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1888, Lagos Times, 8<sup>th</sup> of December, 1880 etc. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.

<sup>63</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 552.

In 1887, some members of the African-Brazilian merchant class celebrated the Jubilee of Queen Victoria of Britain with the Governor of Lagos, Alfred Moloney.<sup>64</sup> In honour of this celebration, members of this class organized several rallies and festivities such as *Caretas*. Prominent members of the returnees that sponsored this celebration were Prisco Da Costa, A.M. Assumpcao, M.P. da Silva, P.M. dos Anjos, T.T. de Souza Marquis, Sho. S. da Silva, F. Gomes, Marcos Cardoso, P.L. da Silva, L.A. Cardoso.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, the active involvement of members of the African-Brazilian community in the popularization of European lifestyles began to change gradually consequent to their changing roles in the political and economic state of Lagos.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the once illustrious African-Brazilian community has greatly diminished in the overall economy of Lagos so much so that it could only produce a handful number of elites. However, the prominence of some individuals such as Candido da Rocha son of the 19<sup>th</sup> century merchant – Esan da Rocha; Francisco Branco, Lourenco Augusto Cardoso, etc. was helpful in putting the community in the colonial map of social relevance. Though a chunk of these elites were not big merchants and traders, their different investments in landed property, moneylending, importation, banking, transport, laundry, were lucrative. Candido da Rocha before his death in 1959 was involved in several businesses that included landed property, moneylending, and banking.

The Lagos Weekly Record reported in 1915 that there was an attempt by European merchants to preclude “native” merchants from participating in export trade through an unjust allocation of shipping spaces<sup>66</sup>. The birth of the colonial monopolistic capitalism simply meant the excusing of African businesses and owners from the commanding heights of the economy of Lagos. Added to the emerging competition with European firms was also the gradual heavy presence of Lebanese and Syrian merchants and traders.

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<sup>64</sup> Lagos Observer of June, 18<sup>th</sup> 1887. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.

<sup>65</sup> Verger, *Trade Relations*, 552.

<sup>66</sup> Lagos Weekly Record, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1915. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.

### **Colonial Displacement and Nationalism in African-Brazilian Community**

The relegation of prominent members of the African-Brazilian community in the overall economy of Lagos is essentially, amongst other things, a justification of the significance of the Marxian analysis of class relations. The ultimate reversion of the returnees' community into their African socio-identity can be understood, on the surface, as a sudden reawakening, but it is instructive to point out that this transformation was materially motivated. The emergence and decline of social classes are often propelled by the processes that followed the acquisition of power and wealth.

Since classes are undoubtedly the process to social relations on the fierce acquisition of power and wealth<sup>67</sup>, it is not an abstraction that the end product of social relations will be conflict-ridden. It is in lieu of this that class struggle, as put forward by Marx<sup>68</sup>, has been the only force responsible for the emergence of the different modes of production that had surfaced so far in the course of human history. With classes been a product of social and material production, the rise of an African merchant class was inevitable following the arrival of the colonialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The African merchant class during the early phase of colonialism, with the example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century African-Brazilian merchant class, was the most favoured class by the Europeans. But this was going to change by the turn-of-the-century following the unprecedented influx of Europeans into the colonies. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been agreed by several scholars to have marked a turning point in the history of colonialism in Africa. Aghalino S.O in his classic work on the British colonial economic policies on the oil palm industry posited that the opening decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the strong determination by Britain and other imperial nations to effectively occupy the African continent<sup>69</sup>. This eventual takeover would mean the excusing of a significant number of indigenous businesspersons from the overall economy of the colonies. In

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<sup>67</sup> Lenin no doubt has painted one of the most glaring and illuminating perspectives surrounding the basis of social classes in most of his works. In V. I. Lenin, "Collected Works", Vol. 29, *Moscow*, (1977), Lenin espoused that classes are basically large groups of people, with distinct historical mission to fulfill under a system of production, one which invariably exposes their relations to the means of production, their role in the social organization of labour, and consequently the dimensions and modes of acquiring the share of social wealth which they dispose.

<sup>68</sup> Karl Marx had stated in *The Communist Manifesto*, one of the most influential pamphlets ever written, first published in 1848, that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". Struggles that can be demonstrated between an oppressor and an oppressed. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*,

<sup>69</sup> Aghalino, "British Colonial Policies," 23.

colonial Lagos, this period marked an immediate eviction of the once potent African Brazilian merchant-retailer class.

Before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it could be argued (unscientifically) that due to the peculiarity of the then prevailing Lagos-Bahia trade network, it would be impossible for the role of the African Brazilian merchant class to decline in Lagos. The subsequent dominance of monopolistic capitalism would in fact turn the attention of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Lagosians from the Lagos-Bahia trade commodities to Lagos-Europe trade merchandises. The collapse of the once renowned Lagos-Bahia trade network however is critical to the eventual irrelevance of the returnees' community to the overall economy of colonial Lagos.

The account of the collapse of the capital base of a prominent African Brazilian merchant during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is critical to the understanding of the crudity of the colonial monopolistic capitalist system. Manoel J. de Sant'Anna started out in Lagos in the 1870s as a merchant that would go on to own a personal sailing vessel known as *Olinda*. The merchant would sail on this vessel twice in six months to Bahia and Salvador for commercial purposes in the 1870s. In the beginning of the 1880s, he had established the Sant Anna & Co, although he was still importing Bahian commodities into Lagos through other shipping lines. In 1883, through the Zaida Shipping Line, Sant Anna imported a number of goods with the capacity of 157 tonnage into Lagos from Bahia<sup>70</sup>. The merchant in the beginning of the 1880s owned a Lagoon steamer that cost about 2,000 pounds and could carry 50 tons of goods.

Though Sant Anna's wealth deteriorated significantly after a personal shipping line known as Bento de Freitas capsized in 1894, the tragedy of the merchant had begun as far back as the early 1880s following a commercial dispute with the German owned G.L. Gaiser & Co. at Port-Novo. The nature of the dispute as described by Lagos Observer was over a heated debate on the sale and exchange of palm oil and spirits<sup>71</sup>. This dispute was transferred to Lagos at the detriment of the African-Brazilian merchant. G.L. Gaiser & Co. ordered its subsidiaries not to establish any commercial relationship with the latter. The colonial state unlawfully legitimized this decree by

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<sup>70</sup> NAI, Government Gazette, January, 1883.p.94.

<sup>71</sup> Lagos Observer, November, 21<sup>st</sup>, 1883. World Newspaper Archive, African Section.



her indifference. Subsequently, the wealth of the merchant began to decline as evident in the gradual reduction in the number of owned warehouses.

According to Hopkins, Sant Anna was “the last representative of the long line of Brazilians who traded (actively) between Bahia and Lagos”<sup>72</sup>. Pertinent to state that the services of the sailing vessels owned by Sant Anna were frequently being employed by other merchants of the African-Brazilian community for goods consignment purposes with regards to the Lagos-Bahia trade network. The decline of the merchant created an irresolvable vacuum.

The preponderance of European firms during the last phase of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw to the widespread of European commodities in Lagos. The taste of not just Lagosians, but also African-Brazilians, for cheap and not necessarily efficient European commodities increased drastically. European commodities began to surface more and more, even in the stores of prominent African-Brazilian retail-merchants like Candido da Rocha, P.F Gomes, J.A Campos, etc. The Lagos Observer, early enough, also observed in 1892 that the Brazilian *Chacha* (drink) “now has a competitor – a newly imported brandy produced from sugarcane by the British firm, Willoughby Distillery, located at Apapa”<sup>73</sup>. The depth of the crises created by the colonial monopolistic capitalist system was presented in a report by The Lagos Standard in 1900. The report affirms that about “75 percent of African traders who had thrived in the last 20 years were either bankrupt or were living a hand-to-mouth existence”<sup>74</sup>. This is a pointer to the fact that contextually, the overall class of indigenous businesspersons had to share the brunt of the arrival of the sophisticated European firms into the colony.

The transformation of the pattern of relationship between the once favoured indigenous class and the British colonial state naturally set the stage for an intense intra-class conflict. In the case of the African-Brazilian community, this conflict was expressed through a conscious attempt at reverting to the African social identity. Unlike the era where members of the community were apparent enablers of the British colonial interests, many became critical and frustrated with the entire modus

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<sup>72</sup> Hopkins, *Economic Imperialism*, 36.

<sup>73</sup> NAI, Lagos Observer, March, 14<sup>th</sup>, 1892.

<sup>74</sup> Nozomi, *The Educated Elites*, 100.



operandi of the colonial institution. The eventual relegation of African-Brazilian community in the economic status of colonial Lagos sparked a great sense of resentment and disenchantment. The first decades into the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a significant influx of European firms, merchants, administrators, professionals, etc. against the pleasure of members of this community. In a swift turnaround, the hitherto exceptionalism the colonial state had accorded members of the community was diverted to the newly arrived Europeans. In reaction to this, many African-Brazilian elites began to embrace their African identity as a weapon. It is pertinent to stress that this resort could not have been impossible since the inherited Brazilian and English identity was no longer serving the purpose of wealth accumulation. As a matter of fact, the new century brought with it a volatile state of racial discrimination, hence it could not have been accidental that the community reverted to its repressed African social identity.

Matory has pointed that Lagos was rife with cases of racial discrimination during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> The scholar asserted that a Lagos that was divided among Europeans, repatriated Africans and “natives”, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was heavily divided into Black and White by 1910. The gradual change of African-Brazilian elites from “Black Portuguese or English” into African cultural nationalists was propelled by the then prevailing skewed economic realities and conditions. Culturally, it is fundamental to state that the African-Brazilian community prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely Portuguese inspired. In fact, it used to be said that one can rapidly learn Portuguese on the streets of the Brazilian Quarters during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

In reclaiming their African identity, members of the African-Brazilian community in Lagos started to adopt Yoruba names, dresses, plays, spirituality, language, etc. Unlike the 1880s and 1890s when Portuguese dresses, plays and language were dominant, the people began to express publicly their Yoruba social identity. Many important figures began to change their names into Yoruba. For instances, Rufino became Soluade; Assumpcao to Alakija; Cardoso to Alade.<sup>76</sup>

For the generation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century African-Brazilians, the frustration that came with the growing European racism forced them, unlike their predecessors, to look inward and become

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<sup>75</sup> Matory, “The English Professor of Brazil”, 89.

<sup>76</sup> As evident in the colonial newspapers of this period.

receptive to the socio-cultural values that came with their identity. Before this time, it was generally considered to be uncivilized for anyone to speak Yoruba on the streets of the Brazilian quarters. Yoruba subsequently not only overwhelmed Portuguese but also English<sup>77</sup>.

In a practical sense, the eventual disenchantment of the African-Brazilian community with the British colonial state gained more expression in the evolution of political and cultural nationalists. On a larger scale, the consequences of the 20th century colonial monopolistic capitalist policies have propelled the formation of anti-colonial organizations and groups. In Lagos, organizations such as People's Union (PU), Lagos Ancillary of the Aborigines Rights Protection Society (LAARPS), National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), etc. were active before the close of the 1920s. The desire to repel their socio-economic exclusion in the colonial enterprise led African-Brazilian elites into becoming political. In this list are individuals such as Candido da Rocha, Moses da Rocha, Adeyemo Alakija, L.A. Cardoso. Cardoso was a member of NCBWA. In the 1920s, he emerged as one of the spokespersons of the Native Inhabitants of Lagos Union.

Perhaps, the most outspoken nationalist colonial African-Brazilian community ever produced was the renowned pan-Africanist, journalist, doctor and politician, Moses da Rocha. He was the third child of the renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century merchant, Esan da Rocha. After several years in London and contact with different pan-African groups, he returned to Lagos in 1913. In 1923, he founded the United Young Nigerians with the aim of increasing the political awareness of the Nigerian youths. In the same year, he participated, unsuccessfully, in the elections into the Nigerian Legislative Council. Another well-known and public figure of the colonial African-Brazilian nationalists' group was Sir Adeyemo Alakija. Alakija doubled as both a political activist and a cultural nationalist. Adeyemo Alakija was the youngest son of the 19<sup>th</sup> century returnees, Marcolino and Maximiliana. In 1915, Adeyemo Alakija was elected as the Secretary of the LAARPS. In the 1930s, he served as the representative of the Egba Native Authority in the legislative council in Lagos and as the president of the Nigerian Youth Movement.

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<sup>77</sup> Oral interview, Mama Angelica Da Rocha.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has presented a case on the socio-economic effects of the capitalist mode of production in a dependent colonial economy of Lagos. The monopolistic tendencies that marred this economic system precluded the continuous growth in influence of the “admired” African-Brazilian community. Though during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, members of this returnees’ class acquired a substantial state of upward social mobility due to the provided incentives by the colonial state. Many naturally became defenders and propagators of the basic ideals of British imperialism. In effect, the community was socially dominated by European or non-African social values. But as laid down in the conclusions of dialectical materialism, social identity and every fabric of a society, are bound to change. Before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the declining relevance of the returnees’ community in the economic affairs of Lagos would lead to a birth in Yoruba cultural nationalism. As indicated in the paper, the eventual dominance of European firms in the overall economy of Lagos propelled the cutback in the upward social mobility of the foremost African-Brazilian merchants, and the latter professionals. Not only did the response of members of this community gain a cultural expression but also a political expression as many became public critics of the colonial establishment.

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