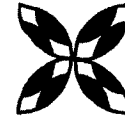


## Chapter Four



# HISTORY, MEMORY AND IMAGINATION: NA AGONTIMÉ, A DAHOMEAN QUEEN IN BRAZIL\*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s in Brazil, the denunciation of the present social and racial inequalities, the fight against racism as well as the emergence of claims for civil rights, have led various Afro-Brazilian groups to develop different forms of cultural assertion, in which the promotion of bonds with Africa—through dance, music, visual arts, and religion—plays an important role. The greater attention given to Afro-Brazilian historical actors, such as Zumbi de Palmares, Chico Rei, João Candido, and Na Agontimé, is contributing to reconstruct the memory of slavery and helping to rewrite Brazilian official history. However, such reconstructions are very often problematic, because despite the importance these characters have in Brazilian popular imagination, few or no historical evidence is available to corroborate their existence. Hence, if from a historical perspective, reconstructing the life stories of these legendary characters is difficult, if not almost impossible, the understanding of the work of memory that allowed their emergence allow historians to better understand their increasing importance in societies still marked by a recent, and painful slave past.

Having the dialogue between history and memory as a point of reference, this chapter examines the case of the Dahomean queen, Na Agontimé, one of the wives of the King Agonglo (r. 1789–1797) and *kpojito* (queen mother)<sup>1</sup> of King Gezo (r. 1818–58). According to the tradition, when King Adandozan (r. 1797–1818) succeeded his father on the throne, he sent Agontimé into slavery in Brazil. Moreover, the tradition, disseminated among others by Pierre Verger, states that Adandozan was deposed because he was an evil and sanguinary king.<sup>2</sup> In 1818, when King Gezo deposed Adandozan by a coup d'état, Adandozan's name was banned from Dahomey's official history, which makes it very difficult determining what parts of this story resulted from Gezo's political propaganda against his predecessor. Scholars such as Pierre Verger contended that after being sold and deported as a slave to Brazil, Agontimé became a Vodun priestess and founded in São Luís do Maranhão the well known Candomblé temple "Casa das Minas," where she introduced the Abomey's royal *Nesuhwe* worship. Even though it is impossible to reconstruct Agontimé's life as a slave in Brazil, as a Vodun priestess, and the queen mother during King Gezo's reign, this study sheds light on key elements of her heritage, and possible trajectories that are probably very similar to the paths followed by several women who were enslaved, sold to slave merchants, and sent to the Americas.

In Brazil, Agontimé is a public character, today celebrated in museums, songs, and during Carnivals as a symbol of Brazil's African roots. Relying on written documents, European travel accounts, literary works, songs and public celebrations, this chapter attempts to reconstruct Agontimé's trans-Atlantic journey. Although the lack of historical data does not allow accurate understanding of what happened to Agontimé, memory and imagination provide us elements to attempt to reconstruct part of her journey in the South Atlantic.

## DAHOMEANS SOLD INTO SLAVERY

Between 1770 and 1850, most Africans sent into slavery to Bahia in Brazil were embarked in the various ports of the Bay of Benin such as Ouidah, Lagos, Grand Popo, Little Popo and Porto-Novo.<sup>3</sup> During this period, very often Brazilian and Portuguese slave merchants went directly from Bahia to the Bight of Benin to sell tobacco and buy enslaved men, women, and children. According to the on-line version of the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages* between 1770 and 1850, about 337,000 enslaved individuals destined to the Brazilian slave market were embarked in the Bight of Benin.<sup>4</sup> This number corresponds to 61 % of the total number of slaves embarked in the region during this period. Bahia was the main destination of slaves from the Bight of Benin, corresponding to 91% of the region's slave exports. During this period, close relations between the Kingdom of Dahomey and Brazil were developed. The

exchanges left important traces at both sides of the South Atlantic that still share important economic, social, cultural, religious and artistic traits.

Up to 1822, the Kingdom of Dahomey sent at least four embassies to Bahia (Brazil). These embassies sent in 1743, 1795, 1805, 1810 and perhaps a last one in 1818, were aimed at negotiating the terms of the Atlantic slave trade between the two kingdoms.<sup>5</sup> Portuguese embassies were also sent to Dahomey during the eighteenth century. These diplomatic missions are well documented in letters exchanged between the Portuguese and Dahomean rulers. Narrating the wars and the daily life at both sides of the Atlantic, these letters also describe gifts and goods exchanged between the monarchs. Some of these objects, as varied as thrones, hats, flags, pipe holders, clothing, are still available today in Brazilian collections.<sup>6</sup>

Pierre Verger stated that "never in the history of Dahomey, except for Adandozan who lost the throne because of the abuses he committed, an Abomey king has sold a Dahomean slave from Abomey."<sup>7</sup> Relying on Le Hérissé, Robin Law contended that Dahomean tradition, established by King Wegbaja, strongly prevented the sale of individuals born within the kingdom, "contravention being a capital offence; in principle this rule was enforced so rigorously as to prohibit the sale even of female captives who became pregnant while in transit through Dahomey."<sup>8</sup> However, since the eighteenth century, historical evidence indicates that selling Dahomeans into slavery to the Americas was not an uncommon practice, as Edna G. Bay explained "the selling of political rivals into the trade was an acceptable form of punishment, one that paradoxically rid the kingdom of certain individuals yet enhanced the potential status of sold exiles who were able to return."<sup>9</sup>

In Dahomey, there was no consensus on who had the power to choose the new king. Disputes over the throne, in which royal women were particularly involved, could result in members of different opposed factions being sold to the slave merchants. As Edna G. Bay pointed out, some contemporary observers assigned the authority of choosing the successor of the king to a council of ministers, others to the *migan* (prime minister or chief executioner) or *mehu* (second minister).<sup>10</sup> Archibald Dalziel has described the period preceding the choice of the new Dahomean king as a period of chaos and instability:

A Horrid scene commences in the palace the moment the King expires. The wives of the deceased begin, with breaking and destroying the furniture of the house, the gold and silver ornaments and utensils, the coral, and in short, every thing of value that belonged either to themselves, or to the late King, and then murder one another. This destruction continues till the Tamegan and Mayhou have announced the successor and he has taken possession of the

palace; which he does with all expedition, to stop the hand of desolation, which ceases the instant the new King is declared.<sup>11</sup>

Edna G. Bay also explained that during the process to choose the king: "the would-be king and his supporters worked to consolidate control, to defeat and eliminate competing claims to the throne, and to demonstrate that the monarchy could command visible and supernatural sources of power."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the final choice could come from the king himself who entrusted his last intentions to his wives, who would have the right to proclaim the king's successor. As a result, the periods of succession gave place to plots involving the mothers and brothers of the aspirant successors. Indeed, women in the palace had political power they exerted by making alliances to take over the throne.<sup>13</sup> Considering that some royal women held religious positions, they were particularly targeted during such political crisis. Among others, the extra-familial organization of Vodun religion, connecting persons of different geographic areas, was considered a threat to the monarchy.<sup>14</sup> When the new king was eventually chosen, it was not surprising that the members of the opposed factions could be sold and sent into slavery.

Historians identified some cases of Africans sold and sent to the Americas who were apparently released by their African companions or relatives in the United States, the Caribbean and Brazil, sometimes several years later: Ibrahim abd-al Rahman, the son of the former Muslim ruler of Futa Djalon in Guinea was rescued after living as a slave in Mississippi for thirty-nine years;<sup>15</sup> Sierra Leone's King Naimbanna obtained the freedom of the members of his family sold into slavery in Jamaica; John Corrente, a caboceer at Annamaboe in the Gold Coast rescued his son William Ansah Sessarakoo who was sold and sent to Barbados in the late 1710s;<sup>16</sup> the manumission of the Angolan slave Lucrecia de André who spent more than twenty years in Rio de Janeiro was paid by his brother Manuel da Costa Perico.<sup>17</sup> In Dahomey, the "Prince"<sup>18</sup> Adomo "Oroonoko" Tomo alias "Captain Tom," an interpreter of the Royal African Company, was sent to England by King Agaja, in a diplomatic mission along with Bulfinch Lambe, an English trader. On their way to England, they stopped in Barbados, and then the trader sold the "Prince" who was sent into slavery in Maryland. The "Prince" became "a social success in London"<sup>19</sup> and later returned to Dahomey where he probably occupied the position of a caboceer.<sup>20</sup> Robin Law examined the case of a Dahomean called "Iruku"<sup>21</sup> who was sold into slavery with members of his lineage by 1750. After spending 24 years in Bahia where he adopted the name of Dom Jeronimo, he kept connections with his homeland Dahomey.<sup>22</sup> During the reign of King Kpengla (r. 1774–1789) Dom Jeronimo returned to Dahomey and became a prosperous slave trader. In 1789, after the death of Kpengla, D. Jerônimo disputed the throne, but Agonglo won and became the new King of Dahomey between 1789 and 1797.<sup>23</sup> In 1801, King

Adandozan is said to have sent two of his brothers to be educated in England, but once there they were sold into slavery "by mistake" and sent to Guyana.<sup>24</sup> They returned from Demerara in 1803, after having their freedom purchased. Although in some cases there is no evidence about who rescued these individuals, as Edna G. Bay pointed out, especially in the case of Dahomey, "survival and return, then, seem to have had a particular importance in Dahomean thinking—almost as if exile as a captive in a foreign land was perceived as a period of trial or testing."<sup>25</sup> Bay also notes that Herskovits heard a prayer in which the descendants of King Behanzin invoked the names of family members: "You who have not succumbed to slavery here, act so that those three...who died for the cause of our country in Brazil be kept in the memory of all Dahomeans, and give us news of them by White strangers who come to Abomey."<sup>26</sup>

In 1797, after the assassination of King Agonglo, a new dispute started in the palace. Eventually, Ariconu, the second son of Agonglo, was enstooled. He received the name of Adandozan, that means "I have 'unrolled my mat' and 'only cowardice can roll it up again.'"<sup>27</sup> When Adandozan came to power, he and his allies punished all opponents who in some ways participated in the events related to his father's assassination. According to historian Akinjogbin, "many princes, chiefs and war leaders who had supported the losing side must have been either executed or sold into slavery."<sup>28</sup> Edna G. Bay, who relied on information provided by the priest Vicente Ferreira Pires, explained that when Adandozan came to power

[t]he royal women were tied up out of doors, fed salty food, and denied water until they expired. A total of nine hundred prisoners were taken by the victors in the two battles; some three hundred of them became slaves who were parceled out among the followers of the new king and another six hundred, including a woman named Agontimé who would later become *kpojito* to Adandozan's successor, were sent to Whydah to be sold into the overseas slave trade.<sup>29</sup>

According to Vicente Ferreira Pires' account, Adandozan took power by May 1797, and royal women who supported the losing faction were especially targeted by the new administration. Among these opponents was Na Agontimé, King Agonglo's wife and putative mother of Prince Gakpe, who would later become King Gezo (1818–1858).

## AGONTIMÉ

Like for the majority of enslaved individuals who left Africa to the Americas, there is no available written record allowing clear reconstructing of Agontimé's biography. Unlike the kings of Dahomey, written evidence about the

lives of royal women are almost non-existent. Agontimé was a wife of King Agonglo. The oral tradition indicates that she may have been the daughter of Gan Yambaku, chief of the village of Tendji,<sup>30</sup> "a town about nine miles to the northeast where the family of her mother also resided."<sup>31</sup> According to the tradition collected by Edna G. Bay, Agontimé was "the younger sister of Blé, the man who founded the Yedmaje lineage of appliqué makers to the kings."<sup>32</sup> After her marriage to Agonglo, the king may have set up Blé in a workshop in Abomey "with eight wives and eight young apprentices."<sup>33</sup> We don't know how old was Agontimé in 1797, but King Agonglo probably died at 31 years old, he was born by 1766.<sup>34</sup> As Agontimé was sent into exile because she allegedly plotted to place Prince Gakpe (future King Gezo) on the throne, the latter was born before 1797. When Agonglo died, both Gakpe and his half-brother Ariconu (future king Adandozan) were very young and had almost the same age. Gezo died in 1858, but the date of Adandozan's death is not certain. He may have continued to live in a house in Abomey.<sup>35</sup> Actually, according to Richard Burton, who was visiting Abomey in 1864, Adandozan "was put down, and still, I believe, survives, a state prisoner."<sup>36</sup> As Agonglo was the father of both Gezo and Adandozan, one can suppose they were born between 1781 and 1790. Based on the possible ages of Adandozan and Gezo, it is likely that Agontimé was born between 1767 and 1777, and embarked to the Americas when she was in her twenties or perhaps her thirties. Considering that Vicente Ferreira Pires mentioned her name in his travel account as one of the persons who was sent to prison and sold when Adandozan took power, and Pires left Dahomey on February 1798, one can assume that Agontimé was embarked in 1797, but if she remained in Ouidah for longer, it is also possible that she left only in 1798.<sup>37</sup>

It is also difficult to establish to where exactly in the Americas Agontimé was shipped. Most accounts suggest she was sent to São Luís do Maranhão in Brazil. However, local oral tradition also mentions Salvador (Bahia) and even Cuba. According to *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, between 1797 and 1800, there were 107 voyages between the Bight of Benin and Brazil, in which 29,750 Africans were embarked, and about 27,400 disembarked. In this same period, the database indicates that there were only 20 voyages between the Bight of Benin and the Caribbean (Grenada, Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad, Tobago, Puerto Rico, St. Vincent, Guyana, Barbados, Martinique, and Guadeloupe), in which about 5,490 captives were embarked and 5,060 disembarked; only one vessel transported 76 captives to Cuba. Even if the number of voyages is incomplete and the number of captives imprecise, they point to a clear tendency indicating that very probably Agontimé was sent as a slave to Brazil.

In the 107 documented voyages between the Bight of Benin and Brazil between 1797 and 1800, Bahia was the only port of slave landing. There are no records of vessels that came from the Bight of Benin that disembarked slaves in

São Luís do Maranhão.<sup>38</sup> As Walther Hawthorne pointed out, until the second half of the eighteenth century, Amazonia annually imported between five to six hundred Africans. Because of the region's economic stagnation, Maranhão's planters did not have capital to buy slaves. Also, unlike other Brazilian slave ports the region was farther from West Central African ports.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, between 1797 and 1800, most enslaved Africans who arrived in Maranhão directly from Africa were embarked in Upper Guinea and West Central African ports.<sup>40</sup> Hawthorne estimates that from 1788 to 1800, 17,043 slaves were imported to Maranhão from Africa, but only 388 slaves were shipped from the Mina Coast. In this same period, 6,144 slaves were imported from other regions of Brazil to Maranhão.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, existing evidence shows that in 1796, at least 437 slaves and, in 1797, at least 68 slaves were imported from Bahia to Maranhão.<sup>42</sup> Scholars do not have information about the place of birth of these captives. Assuming that Agontimé firstly disembarked at the port of Salvador, it is hard to know how many months or years she may have spent in Bahia before being transhipped to Maranhão.

The story about Agontimé being sent to Brazil was well known in Dahomey tradition at least since the 1930s, but the important role she may have played in the development of the connections between Brazil and Dahomey was still to be revealed. In 1948, Mãe Andresa, the highest priestess of Casa das Minas communicated to Pierre Verger the names of some voduns worshipped in the temple.<sup>43</sup> That same year, Verger discovered not only that these same deities were deified ancestors of the royal family of Dahomey, but also that by that time they were still worshipped in Abomey. Among these voduns there were "Agongono" (*Agonglo*), "Savalu" or "Azaká" of Savalu (a vodun that plays an important role in the cult of *Tobossu*), "Dadaho," (Agassu), "Bepega [Kpengla]" (son of Tegbesu), "Joti" (son of Dadaho), "Dossu" (King Dossu Agaja), "Zomadonu" (Tohosu, son of Akaba), "Togpa" (Brother of Zomadonu) and others. However, at least until 1943, the members of Casa das Minas were not aware of that the voduns worshipped in the temple were kings of Dahomey.<sup>44</sup>

By arguing that the Vodun of Casa das Minas preserves several original deities of the kings of Dahomey that preceded King Agonglo, Verger developed the hypothesis that Agontimé was the person who brought from Abomey to Brazil the royal *Nesuhwe* worship practiced in the Casa das Minas (also known as *Que-rebentã de Zomadonu*).<sup>45</sup> This temple is associated with the religious tradition of the Jeje "nation," commonly linked to the Ewe, Gen, Ajá and Fon speakers.<sup>46</sup>

Although the existence of the royal *Nesuhwe* cult in Maranhão can only be explained by the presence of Dahomeans close to the royal court that arrived in Brazil by 1797, the similarities found by Verger do not prove that Agontimé was the founder of Casa das Minas. Indeed, by the time of Adandozan's ascension to power, at least other 63 women from the palace were also sold into slavery and probably sent to the Americas.<sup>47</sup>

By working with the hypothesis that Agontimé actually introduced the royal *Nesuhwe* in Maranhão, she may have been baptized as Maria Jesuína, the Brazilian name of the founder of Casa das Minas. Although, the priestesses of Casa das Minas never revealed the African name of the temple's founder, they emphasize that African women who arrived in Maranhão in the same vessel created the temple. Based on written documents, however, Luís Nicolau Parés and Sérgio Ferretti established that the Casa das Minas temple was probably founded in 1847, although an older temple already existed in a slave quarter located at Rua da Sant'Ana, close to the former Cine Éden, in São Luís do Maranhão.<sup>48</sup> Based on this date, Verger stated that Agontimé may have spent fifty years in Brazil, and created the temple when she was already an old woman. Indeed, in 1942, Mãe Andresa told to Nunes Pereira that the founders of Casa das Minas arrived in Maranhão during the period of *contrabando* (illegal slave trade) that would mean after 1815, when the Anglo-Portuguese treaty declared that the slave trade from West Africa (including the Bight of Benin) was illegal.<sup>49</sup> Parés, who also took into account the time taken by these Africans to arrive in Brazil, to buy their freedom, and then create the temple, points out that, "the actual transfer of its religious experts may have occurred between 1797 and 1830."<sup>50</sup> By accepting the hypothesis that Agontimé had a religious role and that she or people connected to her introduced the royal *Nesuhwe* in São Luís do Maranhão, Parés explains that

in eighteenth-century Dahomey, priesthood in the cult of royal voduns was delegated to members of *anato* families, that is, persons not belonging to the *ahovi* or royal clan. At the same time, all the king's wives had to be *anato*. Therefore, Na Agontimé, who was from Tendji, may have been allowed to get involved in religious activity despite being royal by marriage, as some of the preceding "queen mothers" or *kpojito* had been.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the "consensus" on Agontimé's role as the founder of Casa das Minas, Edna G. Bay argues that none of the descendants of Agontimé she interviewed remembered her as having been a priestess,<sup>52</sup> although in a previous paper the same author stated that "Gezo's Agontime was a woman noted for her ritual powers."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Bay maintained that it was unlikely that Agontimé was a powerful figure or even participated in the coalition that led Gezo to power. Defining Agontimé's role in the history of Dahomey as a symbolic one, Bay does not provide an answer to what happened to Agontimé after 1797, why she was sold into slavery and why she became a legendary figure in Dahomean history, she points out that Agontimé's role as a symbolic figure is associated with Gezo's accession, and probable wish to reinforce the connections with Brazil, during a period when the slave trade was in decline.<sup>54</sup> Can we suppose that the origin of Agontimé's myth is part of a propaganda enterprise developed by Gezo and his supporters?

## GEZO'S PROPAGANDA

In a previous study, I contended that Adandozan's reign was a period of crisis for the Kingdom of Dahomey, because the slave trade, its most important source of revenue was in decline. Actually, according to available data obtained from the *The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages* Adandozan's reign annual average (785) of slave exports was very close to the average of Gezo's reign (759), and much lower in comparison to Tegbesu (2230), Kpengla (2137), Agonglo (1644).<sup>55</sup> Also, during Adandozan's reign, the French (1797), the Portuguese (1807), and the English (1812) forts were abandoned. Moreover, the Dahomean king was not successful in fighting the Mahi and the Kingdom of Oyo.<sup>56</sup>

The economic and political crises eventually led to Adandozan's deposition. In 1818, following a coup d'état the prince Gakpe took power. The success of the plot against Adandozan was in large part due to the support of the Brazilian slave merchant Francisco Félix de Souza (1754–1849).<sup>57</sup> During his time in prison, de Souza may have met Prince Gakpe,<sup>58</sup> who is said to have visited him, and also Dosso-Yovo, who belonged to a family in the service of the English fort, whom Adandozan also sent to prison. The tradition states that during this meeting, Gakpe and the slave trader would have decided to join together their efforts to fight Adandozan.<sup>59</sup> Francisco Felix de Souza escaped from prison and settled in Little-Popo from where he provided weapons and other products to Gakpe, allowing him to prepare the coup d'état. When Gezo was enstooled, he invited Francisco Felix de Souza to settle in Ouidah to occupy the position of King's representative in the commercial businesses:

Since I took control of my kingdom, the person who has helped me and my people the most is the so-called Francisco Felix de Souza, bringing vessels to my port, Portuguese and from other nations, as a result I gave to him the entire authority to negotiate with the white who came and who will come here to do business, because the said person is capable and all the vessels appreciate him. Honored King, I do not have nothing to send you to express my friendship, except for two young female girls and a cloth wove in a factory, and I ask Your Majesty, please accept my greetings and the heaven keep you for many years. I am your brother and your Friend. King of DAGomé.<sup>60</sup>

De Souza then became the king's partner as indicated in the letter above probably dated of 1818, sent to King Dom João Carlos de Bragança by Gezo along with a diplomatic embassy sent to Brazil. Since then the history of Gezo and de Souza are deeply connected.

If the tradition emphasizes that Adandozan was an evil king who sent Agontimé as a slave to Brazil, it usually omits that when Gezo took over the

throne he may also have killed Adandozan's children, and sold several of his relatives and supporters, including his putative mother<sup>61</sup> and one of his wives or his descendant called Mino, who was sent to Bahia.<sup>62</sup> Despite the lack of evidence, this latter, once in Salvador, is said to have become the spouse Gbego Sokpa, a Mahi from Hoko, who was baptized Joaquim de Almeida by his owner, the slave captain Manuel Joaquim de Almeida. In 1835, already manumitted by his masters, de Almeida returned to the Bight of Benin and settled in Agoué, where he became a prosperous slave trader.<sup>63</sup> According to the English officer Frederick Forbes, "Joaquim Almeida, the richest resident in Whydah, was originally from the Mahee country; sold into slavery, he has returned from Bahia, and is now a slave-merchant on an extensive scale."<sup>64</sup>

In the years following the coup d'état, the name of Adandozan was removed from the official list of Dahomean kings, and gradually erased from the official history of Dahomey. Indeed, several elements related to the transmission of power remain vague. According to certain authors such as Maurice Glèlè, the dismissal of the king would have taken place only some twenty years later. Adandozan may have continued to be king and remained living in a house of the palace, from where he gave advice to Gezo.<sup>65</sup> According to Beninese local historian Maurice Glèlè, a descendent of Gezo, Adandozan occupied the function of regent until 1838.<sup>66</sup> This situation changed only when Gezo excluded Dakpo, the *vidaxo* (the crown prince) of Adandozan, in favor of his son Zen-Majegnyin, the future King Glele. Dakpo would then have put fire on the palace and would have died in the fire. It was after this event that Adandozan was deposed; the members of his family were sold into slavery and his name was withdrawn from the list of kings.<sup>67</sup>

If Adandozan is represented as the evil king, and the symbol of disruption, Agontimé rather represents the victim, closely connected to Brazil.<sup>68</sup> Unlike his predecessors, Gezo's coup d'état "was not carried out by an alliance of a prince with a woman of the palace. [...] he did not credit any single woman by naming her *kpojito*. Rather he named as *kpojito* Agontime, who had plotted and lost 21 years previously, and who at the time of his accession was somewhere in the western hemisphere."<sup>69</sup> The tradition states that after Gezo was enstooled in 1818, he sent to Brazil one or maybe two embassies to find his mother. Thus, Agontimé's myth was also perpetuated through Gezo's presumed several attempts to rescue her. According to one tradition disseminated by the family of Francisco Félix de Souza, Gezo asked the Brazilian slave merchant to go to Brazil and to find the king's mother:

[...] To reward Chacha ... Gezo told him: "When I was sent to prison, my mother was sold, my brothers and my sisters were sold into slavery. Go back to Brazil, return to your country and find my mother." The history tells us that Chacha left to Brazil, he remained

there for two years and he found Gezo's mother in a temple in San Salvador de Bahia. Chacha brought her back and to reward him, Gezo told him: "You will leave Anecho [Little Popo], you will settle in Ouidah and will receive the title of Viceroy of Dahomey. Then, when the Europeans will come, they will see you first, before coming to see me". It is like this that Chacha became the intermediary between the King of Dahomey and the Europeans who came here to trade with the Kingdom of Abomey.<sup>70</sup>

According to this account, de Souza was granted the title of "Viceroy" because he rescued Agontimé, gracefully due to his Brazilian connections. However, there is no evidence supporting the suggestion that, after having settled in Ouidah, de Souza left Dahomey to search Agontime. In 1821, as Robin Law points out, the Brazilian merchant effectively obtained a passport to travel to Brazil, on board of the vessel *Príncipe de Guiné*.<sup>71</sup> But apparently, de Souza did not return to Brazil at this occasion neither did he do it later. It is possible that King Gezo had forbidden him to leave Dahomey or still that de Souza had legal problems, preventing him from entering Brazil. Instead of de Souza, Gezo is said to have sent to Bahia a man named Antônio Dossoo-Yavoo or as different sources refer to, "Dosso-Yovo" (1762-1887)<sup>72</sup>—the same man who had helped the slave merchant to escape from prison and who later became his employee—and the Migan Atindebaku.<sup>73</sup> According to Verger, who relied on information provided by A. D. Cortez da Silva Curado—who was the director of the Portuguese fort of Ouidah from 1885 to 1887 and who met Dosso-Yovo—Gezo's ambassadors were sent to Bahia in 1818.<sup>74</sup> In Bahia, the ambassadors waited three years, but they were never authorized to travel to Rio de Janeiro, where the Portuguese court was settled since 1808 after escaping Napoléon Bonaparte's troops. From there the Dahomean ambassadors returned to Dahomey but were never able to travel to the court. Indeed, Gezo sent a letter to King Dom João Carlos de Bragança along with an embassy that is very probably dated of 1818. However the letter does not mention that de Souza or Dosso-Yovo were traveling with the king's emissaries:

I, Gezo, King of da Gomé, go the throne of Your Majesty represented by my ambassador Amufou my legitimate son accompanied by four Portuguese vassals of Your Majesty who have been prisoners for eighteen years in my domains by the officers of my brother Adanduzam and as now I am governing this kingdom because of the cruelties and tyrannies of my brother and was informed that Your Majesty had asked these Portuguese and the first did not give attention to it, and also just after I took care of the reign, your vassal Francisco Félix de Souza, who was the clerk of the fort of Your

Majesty came and offered to send the said Portuguese along with my ambassador to Brazil [...].<sup>75</sup>

Despite other examples of enslaved Africans who were rescued in the Americas, scholars do not agree whether or not Agontimé was found and brought back to Dahomey.<sup>76</sup> Although authors like Hazoumé and Glèlè claim that Agontimé was never found, according to Edna G. Bay "a *kpojito* was enstooled early in Gezo's reign, possibly at the time of his own formal enstoolment."<sup>77</sup> In addition, according to the tradition and to some sources, Agontimé returned to Abomey prior to 1830. Some informants told Edna G. Bay, that Agontimé stayed in "Ame'ika" twenty-one years. This information allows situating her return by 1818, whereas other informants connected her first appearance to a victory over Oyo in 1823. By this time, she adopted the name Agontimé from the praise-name *Agossi yovo gboje Agontimé* that means "the monkey has come from the country of the whites and is now in a field of pineapples."<sup>78</sup> Indeed, John Duncan reports having seen an Agontimé in 1845,<sup>79</sup> and her tomb can be found in Abomey, although he also explains that it is possible that this tomb contains only her spirit.<sup>80</sup> Finally, in 1849, Forbes reported that Gezo performed a festival in honor of his "mother": "at which large numbers of his subjects and all his soldiers are assembled."<sup>81</sup>

Despite the absence of evidence, Verger's hypothesis stating that Agontimé introduced the Abomey royal *Nesuhwe* in Maranhão was officially accepted during the UNESCO conference titled "The Survivals of the African Religions Traditions in the Caribbean and in Latin America," sponsored by UNESCO, and held in São Luís do Maranhão on July 24-28, 1985.<sup>82</sup> Not surprisingly, UNESCO's director-general was represented in the meeting by Beninese historian Maurice Glèlè, a descendant of King Glèlè and King Gezo, who was the acting director of the Division of Studies and Dissemination of Cultures.<sup>83</sup> In the proceedings of this meeting, another descendant of King Gezo and King Gèlele, Alfred Kpazodji Ahanhanzo Glèlè, states that:

Oral tradition and the great historians of our continent (Paul Hazume, Le Herisse, Maurice Hanhanzo Glèlè, J. Verger) have left us proof that Na Agontime, the widow of King Agonglo and mother of King Gezo, was sold to slave-traders by King Adandozan along with several dignitaries or other members of the royal family, some time after Agonglo's death. This was an absolutely exceptional event in the history of the kingdom of Danxome, one of the episodes of the reign of King Adandozan which explained the bid for power successfully launched against him; it was also an exceptional event in the history of the kingdom. [...] On his enthronement in 1818, King Gezo (or Guezo) sent to what is today Latin America a mission

of two of his trusty subjects, with whom he first made a blood pact. One of them, Atindebaku, was none other than his own prime minister, while the other Dossu-Yovo, was a dignitary of King Agonglo's court and interpreter to Francisco de Suza, a powerful slave-trader and great personal friend.<sup>84</sup>

Glèlè states that Agontimé was found in Brazil, and brought back to Dahomey by Dosso-Yovo:

it was on his mother's return to Agbome that King Guezo changed the Queen's name from Agossi-Evo to Agontinme: 'Ha gosin yovo bo je agon tin me' (the mother-monkey leaves the white man's country for the country of the palmyra...), an allusion to Adandozan...who was surprised that his father King Agonglo, could have married 'such a monkey.' The reply of the son, who had become king, proudly includes the title of monkey attributed to his mother.... 'My Mother-Monkey has thus come back to the place where monkeys are happy, to the palmyra plantation where she can have her fill of the fruit she loves.'<sup>85</sup>

Here, by affirming that Adandozan conferred to Agontimé the title "monkey," Glèlè mixes different traditions in order to emphasize the king's evil nature. Indeed, the symbol of a monkey is usually associated with an event that happened under Adandozan when Dahomey submitted to the Kingdom of Oyo. Tired of paying tributes, Adandozan sent to the King of Oyo a parasol on which an appliqué depicted a baboon holding an ear of corn, gorging himself. According to tradition, Oyo's ruler sent back to Adandozan a hoe to encourage him to cultivate the land and pay the tributes. Adandozan then reacted by saying that "our fathers cultivated, but with rifles, not with hoes. The Dahomey kings only cultivate war."<sup>86</sup> However, because Adandozan and all his symbols were suppressed from the Dahomey dynasty list, today the image of the baboon holding an ear of corn is associated with King Gezo—who was able to expand Dahomey and liberate the kingdom from paying tributes to Oyo—and not to his *kpojito* Agontimé.<sup>87</sup>

Over the last twenty years, Adandozan has been depicted in novels and films as the symbol of rupture, as a cruel king who assassinated his enemies and who sent into slavery members of Dahomean royalty.<sup>88</sup> Scholars such as Pierre Verger, who greatly promoted the connections between Brazil, and Dahomey, contributed to disseminate Agontimé's story.<sup>89</sup> Agontimé has been celebrated in songs, novels, and Carnival at the same time as a victim of the Atlantic slave trade, and the symbol of the African heritage in Brazil.<sup>90</sup> In 1970, Judith Gleason published the novel titled *Agotime: Her Legend*, reconstructing the trajectory of Agontimé from Dahomey to São Luís do Maranhão.<sup>91</sup> In the foreword she thanks Pierre Verger "the foremost of these interpreters,



Fatumbi—of Oshogbo, Porto Novo and Bahia.”<sup>92</sup> The book was also illustrated by the prominent Argentinean-born artist Carybé. Like his close friend Verger, Carybé settled in Bahia in the 1950s, where he became a Candomblé follower and received the title “Obá de Xangô.”

In 2001, the Rio de Janeiro’s samba school *Beija-Flor* honored Agontimé in a parade which the theme, essentially based on Gleason’s novel *Agotime: Her Legend*, was *A Saga de Agontimé: Maria Mineira Naé* (“The Saga of Agontimé: Maria Mineira Naé”). More recently in 2007, Agontimé was honored again by the same samba school, which developed the theme *Áfricas: do berço real à Corte Brasileira* (“Áfricas: from the royal cradle to the Brazilian court”). In 2002, following a movement of memorialization of African heritage in Brazil, the temple Casa das Minas in São Luís do Maranhão was also added to the list of the Brazilian Institute for the National Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN, Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional).<sup>93</sup> However, because of its location far from the large touristic centers, the temple Casa das Minas is still less famous than Salvador Candomblé temples such as the Ilê Axé Opó Afonjá or the Gantois.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter showed that Adandozan has been represented as the perpetrator and the symbol of disruption whereas Agontimé is depicted as a victim, redeemed by Gezo and his supporters. Apparently, if Adandozan was almost totally erased from the official history of Dahomey, Agontimé’s legacy is alive and officially recognized at both sides of the Atlantic. The analysis of the events having led to the deposition of Adandozan and his suppression from the official history of Dahomey tells much about the political uses of history to support those who won the struggle for power. The depiction of Adandozan as a cruel and lunatic king who sent members of the Dahomean royalty into slavery conceals that his predecessors as well as King Gezo have not hesitated to send their royal opponents into slavery. Indeed, there are connections between the crisis of the Atlantic slave trade, in particular the decline of the slave exports from Ouidah, during the reign of Adandozan and his deposition, that should be the object of extensive investigation.

Unlike her male counterparts, Agontimé’s biography remains unclear and her role as an Atlantic religious figure connecting Brazil and Dahomey is mainly symbolic. This chapter contended that it is possible that the legend of Agontimé being sent into slavery to Brazil, then rescued and brought back to Abomey—as well as the suppression of Adandozan’s name from the official history of Dahomey—are the result of historical reconstruction and propaganda developed not only during the nineteenth century by King Gezo and his supporters, but also over the twentieth century by the king’s descendants, and the descendants of the Brazilian slave merchant Francisco Félix de Souza. Indeed, Adan-

dozan was not the only Dahomean king to sell members of the royal family into slavery. If Agontimé was sent to Brazil, she was neither the first nor the last Dahomean to be sold and sent to the Americas during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

Following the hypothesis that Agontimé stayed in Brazil for nearly fifty years and was connected to the foundation of Casa das Minas in the 1840s, it is improbable that Gezo’s emissaries rescued her and that she came back to Abomey in the 1820s. It is also difficult to conceive that Agontimé was able to found the temple Casa das Minas and to come back to Abomey by the 1820s. Nevertheless, having spent about twenty years in Brazil, she could have introduced the royal *Nesuhwe* in Maranhão prior to her coming back to Abomey. In this case, she did not found the temple, but her followers did, many years later. In any event, whether or not Agontimé founded the Casa das Minas or was rescued by Gezo’s emissaries, she became a legendary figure at both sides of the Atlantic. As a woman member of the Dahomean royalty who was sent into slavery to the Americas, Agontimé incarnates the connections between Brazil and the former Kingdom of Dahomey. Whereas in Benin, the promotion of these reciprocal exchanges reinforces the political importance of Dahomean royal families who perpetrated the Atlantic slave trade, for millions of Afro-Brazilians, whose ancestors lived under slavery and today represent 50 per cent of Brazilian population, Agontimé is a symbol of agency, a source of pride, and self-esteem.

## NOTES

- \* I wish to express my deep thanks to Robin Law for his comments on an earlier longer draft of this paper. I am also grateful to Edna G. Bay, who kindly answered my numerous questions regarding Agontimé. I am indebted to Walther Hawthorne who provided me precious information on the slave trade between Brazil and Maranhão, and to Daniel da Silva Dominques, who generously shared the data on the Atlantic slave trade to Maranhão, obtained from Project Resgate.
- 1. Scholars do not agree on the fact that Agontimé was the biological mother of Prince Gakpe.
- 2. Pierre Verger, *Os Libertos: Sete caminhos na liberdade de escravos da Bahia no século XIX* (Salvador: Corrupio, 1992), 69.
- 3. The Anglo-Portuguese treaty of January 1815 banned the Brazilian slave trade north of the equator. As a result, it was illegal embarking Africans in West African ports, including the ports of the Bight of Benin to Brazil. Later, in 1831, the Brazilian slave trade was abolished, but the illegal slave trade still continued until 1850. See Pierre Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo do Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos* (Rio de Janeiro: Corrupio, 1987), 27.
- 4. See David Eltis et al. *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, accessed on September 24, 2010 <http://www.slavevoyages.org>



5. Salvador was the capital of the Brazilian colony and the Portuguese fort of Ouidah was administrated from Bahia.
6. Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (hereafter IHGB), Letter from King Adandozan to the Prince Regent Dom João Carlos de Bragança, DL 137.62, Doc. 3, Lata 137, Pasta 62, fl. 6, October 9, 1810.
7. Verger, *Os Libertos: Sete caminhos na liberdade de escravos da Bahia no século XIX*.
8. Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving Port (1727-1892)* (Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Currey, 2004), 149. According to Le Hérisse, "La qualité de *Danhoménou* rendait d'ailleurs les gens inaliénables. Ce principe, auquel le roi lui-même ne contrevenait jamais, serait dû à Ouégbadja et son inobservation de la part d'un sujet quelconque entraînait inmanquablement la mort." See A. Le Hérisse, *Royaume du Dahomey: Moeurs, Religion, Histoire* (Paris: Emile Larose, 1911), 56.
9. Edna G. Bay, "Protection, Political Exile, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: History and Collective Memory in Dahomey," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 52.
10. See Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville & London, Virginia Press, 1998), 87.
11. Archibald Dalziel, *The History of Dahomy: An Inland Kingdom of Africa* (New York: Elibron Classics 2005 [1793]), 151.
12. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 81.
13. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 90.
14. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 92.
15. See Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977).
16. See Sylviane A. Diouf, *Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and The Story of The Last Africans Brought to America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147.
17. See James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 31-32; James H. Sweet, "Manumission in Rio de Janeiro, 1749-54: An African Perspective," *Slavery and Abolition* 24, no.1 (2003): 54-55.
18. Indeed, he was a member of the ruling family of Jakin and his description as a "Prince" is very probably an exaggeration aiming at promoting the personage among an English audience. See Robin Law, "King Agaja of Dahomey, The Slave Trade, and the Question of West African Plantations: The Embassy of Bulfinch Lambe and Adomo Tomo to England, 1726-1732," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* XIX, no. 2 (1991):144-146.
19. Law, "King Agaja of Dahomey," 146.
20. According to Diouf, *Dreams of Africa in Alabama*, 147, Agaja commanded the Tomo's rescue. However, Robin Law does not claim and not provide any evidence to sustain that Agaja commanded the purchase of Adomo Tomo's freedom.
21. Robin Law and Kristin Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast," *William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1999): 319.

22. Law, *Ouidah: The Social History*, 149.
23. See Law, *Ouidah, The Social History*, 117; Law and Mann, "West Africa in the Atlantic Community," 319.
24. I. A. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 200.
25. Bay, "Protection, Political Exile, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: History and Collective Memory in Dahomey," 56.
26. Melville V. Herskovits, *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom* (New York: Augustin, 1938), vol. 2, 63 quoted in Bay, "Protection, Political Exile, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: History and Collective Memory in Dahomey," 56.
27. See Judith Gleason, *Agotime: Her Legend* (New York: Viking Compass Books, 1970), 58,
28. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbors*, 186.
29. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 162. See also Edna G. Bay, "Belief, Legitimacy and the *Kpojito*: An Institutional History of the 'Queen Mother' in Precolonial Dahomey," *Journal of African History* 36 (1995): 18.
30. Luis Nicolau Parés, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 114, n38.
31. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 178.
32. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 181.
33. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 181.
34. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbors*, 199.
35. See Maurice Ahanhanzo Glele, *Le Danxome: du pouvoir aja à la nation fon* (Paris: Nubia, 1974), 120; Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 174.
36. Richard Burton, *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome*, vol. II (London: 1893), 293; Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and Dahomeans*, 200.
37. See Vicente Ferreira Pires, *Viagem de Africa em o Reino de Dabomé escrita pelo Padre Vicente Ferreira Pires no ano de 1800 e até o presente inédita* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957), 70-80.
38. See David Eltis et al. *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, accessed on September 24, 2010 <http://www.slavevoyages.org>.
39. See Walther Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38.
40. See Daniel Domingues da Silva, "The Atlantic Slave Trade to Maranhão, 1680-1846: Volume, Routes and Organisation," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 4 (2008): 487; and Walter Hawthorne, "From 'Black Rice' to 'Brown': Rethinking the History of Risculture in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- Century Atlantic," *American Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (2010): 151-163.
41. Hawthorne, *From Africa to Brazil*, 51-52.
42. These numbers are based on the data of Resgate Project..
43. Pierre Verger, "Uma rainha africana mãe de santo em São Luís," *Revista da USP* (1990): 153.

44. According to O. da Costa Eduardo, *The Negro in the Northeastern Brazil* (Seattle, London: University of Washington Press, [1948] 1966), 77 qtd in Luis Nicolau Pares, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão and in the Candomblé of Bahia," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 103.
45. Pierre Verger, "Le culte des vodoun d'Abomey aurait-il été apporté à Saint Louis de Maranhão par la mère du roi Ghèzo?," *Études Dahoméennes* VIII (1952): 19-24; Parés, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão," 91-115.
46. James Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5.
47. See Alberto da Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza, mercador de escravos* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2004), 104.
48. Parés, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão," 104; Ferretti, *Querebentan de Zomadonu*, 58; Sérgio Ferretti, *Repensando o sincretismo: Estudo sobre a Casa das Minas* (São Paulo and São Luís: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo and FAPEMA, 1995), 120.
49. Ferretti, *Repensando o Sincretismo*, 117.
50. Parés, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão," 105.
51. Parés, "The Jeje in the Tambor de Mina of Maranhão," 104.
52. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 180; Bay, "Protection, Political Exile, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: History and Collective Memory in Dahomey," 16-18.
53. See Bay, "Belief, Legitimacy and the *Kpojito*: An Institutional History of the 'Queen Mother' in Precolonial Dahomey," 25.
54. Bay, "Belief, Legitimacy and the *Kpojito*: An Institutional History of the 'Queen Mother' in Precolonial Dahomey," 25.
55. Ana Lucia Araujo, "Images, Artefacts and Myths: Reconstructing the Connections Between Brazil and the Kingdom of Dahomey," in *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 180-202.
56. Akinjogbin, *Dahomey and its Neighbors*, 187-188.
57. The extensive bibliography on Francisco Félix de Souza, includes Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port." 1727-1892* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), chapter 5; Robin Law, "Francisco Félix de Souza in West Africa: 1820-1849," in *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery*, ed. José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus/Humanity Books, 2003), 189-213; Robin Law, "A comunidade brasileira de Uidá e os últimos anos do tráfico atlântico de escravos, 1850-66," *Afro-Ásia* 27 (2002): 41-77; Robin Law, "A carreira de Francisco Félix de Souza na África Ocidental (1800-1849)," *Topoi* (2001): 9-39; Robin Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 3-21; Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza, mercador de escravos*; Ana Lucia Araujo, *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2010); Ana Lucia Araujo, "Enjeux politiques de la mémoire de l'esclavage dans l'Atlantique Sud: La reconstruction de la biog-

- graphie de Francisco Félix de Souza," *Lusotopie* XVI, no. 2 (2009): 107-131; Ana Lucia Araujo, "Renouer avec le passé brésilien: la reconstruction du patrimoine post-traumatique chez la famille De Souza au Bénin," in *Traumatisme collectif pour patrimoine: Regards croisés sur un mouvement transnational*, ed. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Vincent Auzas (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2008), 305-330.
58. Paul Hazoumé, *Le pacte de sang au Dahomey* (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1956), 29.
59. Author's translation of: "[...] s'imposant ainsi discrétion, assistance, dévouement et fidélité. Si les deux prisonniers comptaient sur le prince pour retrouver leur liberté, ce dernier avait, lui aussi, l'intuition que le 'Blanc' l'aiderait à recouvrer le trône." See Hazoumé, *Le Pacte de Sang au Dahomey*, 29.
60. Author's transcription and translation of: "depois que tomei conta do meu reino, quem tem ajudado ao meu povo hé o dito Francisco Felis de Souza, porcurando navios para o meu porto tanto portugueses como as mais nasçoens de sorte que entreguei ao Francisco Felis de Souza todo o domínio que tinha com os brancos que vinha e vem a fazerem negocio, pelo dito ser capaz e todo os navios o estimarem. Honrado Rey, não tenho nada que vos poça mandar por sinal de Amigo Senão duas Molecas e hum Pano feito numa fabrica e peço a V. Magestade queira ceitar os ceos o queira goardar por muntos adelatados anos. Sou Seu Irmão e Amigo. Rey DAGomé." IHGB, Letter from King Gezo to King Dom João Carlos de Bragança, DL 137.62, Doc. 6, Lata 137, Pasta 62, 1v. The letter does not contain any date, and although the folder indicates that the letters archived are dated up to 1811, this letter was sent later, probably in 1818, when Gezo was enstooled and sent an embassy to Brazil.
61. See Glèlè, *Le Danxome: du pouvoir aja à la nation fon*, 120; Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza*, 87; Hazoumé, *Le Pacte de Sang*, 5-6. However, as Adandozan's letter of 1810, rather states that his mother died while he was king, it is difficult to establish if the woman sent into slavery or the woman who died when he was king was his biological mother.
62. This information can be found on Fio Agbanon II, *Histoire de Petit-Popo et du Royaume Guin* (Paris, Lomé: Karthala/Haho, 1991 [1934]), 84. Based on Agbanon II, other scholars such as Guran, Verger, and Costa e Silva helped to disseminate the information. See Milton Guran, *Agudás: os "Brasileiros" do Benim* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1999), 87; Verger, *Os libertos*, 43-48; Costa e Silva, *Um rio chamado Atlântico*, 169; Costa e Silva, "Portraits of African Royalty in Brazil," 130.
63. However, Mino and Joaquim de Almeida did not officialize their union while still living in Brazil. In his Will, opened on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1857, Joaquim de Almeida declared he was single. See Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia, Judiciário, Inventários, "Testamento de Joaquim de Almeida," Salvador, December 17 1844, 3/228/1697/13, fl. 1.
64. "Enclosure 9: Lieutenant Forbes to Commodore Fanshawe "Bonetta", at sea, November 5, 1849", in *King Guezo of Dahomey, 1850-52: The Abolition of the Slave Trade on the West Coast of Africa*, ed. Tim Coates (London: The Stationery Office, 2001), 37.

65. Burton, *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahome*, vol. II, 293.
66. Glèlè, *Le Danxome: du pouvoir aja à la nation fon*, 119.
67. Glèlè, *Le Danxome: du pouvoir aja à la nation fon*, 120.
68. Edna G. Bay suggests Agontimé was rather the wet nurse to Gezo, arguing that there is no evidence to prove any direct relationship between the two, however she does not provide any evidence to prove the contrary. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 179.
69. Bay, "Belief, Legitimacy and the *Kpojito*: An Institutional History of the 'Queen Mother' in Precolonial Dahomey," 19.
70. Author's free translation of a filmed interview given in French by David de Souza to Ana Lucia Araujo, during the visit of the memorial of Francisco Félix de Souza, Singbomey (Ouidah), June 19, 2005.
71. A vessel with the same name, transporting a cargo conveyed to Francisco Félix de Souza, was seized by the British Navy in 1826. See Law, *Ouidah: The Social History*, 166, note 67.
72. The name, the year of birth and death are found in Dossoo-Yavoo's tomb in Ouidah, whose picture made by Pierre Verger can be found at the Pierre Verger Foundation in Salvador, BA. I am grateful to Angela Lühning, Alex Baradel and Roberta Rodrigues for giving me access to the copy of this picture.
73. See Law, *Ouidah: The Social History*, 177; Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 179.
74. See A. D. Cortes da Silva Curado, *Dahomé* (Lisboa, 1888), 86 qtd in Verger, *Os Libertos*, 70.
75. Author's transcription and translation of: "Eu Guezo Rey da Gome vó ao Trono de V. Mag<sup>e</sup> figurando por mim o meu Embaixador AMufou o meu Ligitimo Fio Levando Com Sigo quatro Vasalos Portuguezes de V. M<sup>e</sup> que a 18 annos se acharão Prizioneiros nos meos Domínios pela Cabo de Guerra du Meu Irmão a Danduzam e Como agora me acho no governo deste Reino por as crueldades e tiranias do dito meu Irmão e me Constou que V. Mg<sup>e</sup> mandara pedir os ditos Portuguezes e q o d<sup>o</sup> não fizera cazo, etaobem Logo que temoei Conta do Reynado mandome o seu Vaçalo Francisco Felix de Souza Escrivão que foy da Fortaleza de V. Mg<sup>e</sup> ofereceu p<sup>o</sup> os mandar conduzir os ditos Portuguezes e juntamente o meu Embaixador ao Brazil." Letter from King Gezo to King Dom João Carlos de Bragança, IHGB, Lata 137, Pasta 62, Doc. 6, ca. 1818, 1v. The letter does not contain any date and although the folder indicates that the letters were archived until 1811, this letter was certainly sent after 1811, as Gezo took power only in 1818.
76. See Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 339, note 15.
77. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 179.
78. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 179.
79. See John Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa, in 1845 & 1846* (London: Richard Bentley, 1847), vol. 1, 253-254. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard*, 80.
80. Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza, mercador de escravos*, 104.
81. "Enclosure 9: Lieutenant Forbes to Commodore Fanshawe "Bonetta," at sea, November 5, 1849," in *King Guezo of Dahomey, 1850-52*, 38.

82. See also Sérgio Ferretti, *Querebentan de Zomadonu. Etnografia da Casa das Minas do Maranhão* (São Luís, EDUFMA, 1985), 57-87; Ferretti, *Repensando o Sincretismo*, 117.
83. UNESCO, "African Cultures: Proceedings of the Meeting of Experts on 'The Survival of African Religious Traditions in the Caribbean and in Latin America,'" San Luis de Maranhao (Brazil), 24-28 June 1985, CC-86/WS/24, 9.
84. See Alfred Kpazodji Ahanhanzo Glèlè, "Vodun in the Danxome Culture and its Establishment in the Americas," in UNESCO, "African Cultures: Proceedings of the Meeting of Experts on 'The Survival of African Religious Traditions in the Caribbean and in Latin America,'" 257-258.
85. Glèlè, "Vodun in the Danxome Culture and its Establishment in the Americas," 258.
86. See Le Hérisse, *L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey: mœurs, religion, histoire*, 313 quoted by Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port' 1727-1892*, 87; Francesca Piqué and Leslie Rainer, *Wall Sculptures of Abomey* (London: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Thames and Hudson, 1999), 73.
87. In Benin, the image of the baboon is also present in Abomey bas-reliefs and the monuments situated along Ouidah's Route of Slaves. See Araujo, *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic*, chapter 4.
88. See the novel of Bruce Chatwin, *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1980 and the film based on the novel: *Cobra Verde*, directed by Werner Herzog (1987, Munich: Concorde Filmverleih).
89. About the active role played by Pierre Verger in the promotion of Yoruba-Fon traditions in Brazil, and Brazilian Candomblé in Benin, see Araujo, *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic*, chapters 4 and 5.
90. Gleason, *Agotime: Her Legend*.
91. More recently, Brazilian author Ana Maria Gonçalves revisited Agontimé's story in the novel *Um defeito de cor* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2006). In the novel, the heroin Kehinde, a Mahi freedwoman sold into slavery, met Agontimé during her Brazilian journey.
92. Gleason, *Agotime: Her Legend*, vi.
93. Process number 1464-T-00, 2002.

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