

**The Bankers of the Backlands:
Financialisation and the Calon-Gypsies in Bahia**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a PhD in Social

Anthropology

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I hereby certify that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, a population of Gypsies, *Ciganos*, living in Bahia, who call themselves Calon, have been specializing in lending money on interest. The thesis argues that the development of *Cigano* money-lending niche is a Calon assimilation of recent changes brought about by monetization of daily life transforming the Bahian tradition of seeing them as trickster-figures. Several recent developments have increased demand for cash in the Bahian interior and small-town life is now characterized by a dense financial net of various credit/debt forms – formal and informal, novel and traditional. In this context *Ciganos*-as-moneylenders are one of many existing credit institutions. Going beyond the “demand side”, the thesis explores Calon concepts and social organization of credit. It argues that money in money-lending serves both as a medium of exchange, and as a way to create an environment for Calon social reproduction. Through manipulating pragmatics of credit/debt Calon forge themselves as moral persons and create proper sociality.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My MPhil/PhD studies, fieldwork and thesis production were funded by the Marie Curie Fellowship, the Wenner Gren Foundation, the Central Research Fund of the University of London and the Anthropology Department of Goldsmiths College.

Over the two years in Bahia I relied on the friendship, hospitality, goodwill and protection of the remarkable people – Gypsies and non-Gypsies – who welcomed me into their lives. Maluco, Kiko, Paula, Luciano, Ronald, Rogério, Marly, Ronalde, Sidronio and Malu became my very good friends and made my fieldwork so much more pleasurable. Eduardo, Viviane, Romero, Beiju, Ana Lúcia, Marly, Carla, Sara, Rita, Paulo, Marly, Renato, Babaloo, Pancho, Sirley, Genilsa, Gilson, Adair, Djalma, Índio, Nelson, Wiliam, Faustão, Joana, Afonso, Malu, Wanderlei and Diego invited me to their houses and tents and allowed me to join them on their trips and participate in their celebrations. These people taught me whatever I know about life in small-town Bahia. Thanks to Jucelmo Dantas and his wife Lena for their hospitality in Feira de Santana. Thanks to Miriam Guerra and her family in Jacobina. In Salvador I would like to thank Elena Calvo-Gonzalez, Luciana Ducinni, Clarice Costa Teixeira, Gabriela Sampaio, Rita Rosário, Alison Hammond, and Gilson Jorge who added much joy to the stay in the city for my wife and me. Thanks to Peter Fry for his help and for agreeing to supervise me during my first year in Brazil. Especially warm thanks are due to Cecilia McCallum and Edilson Teixeira for all their incredible help, support and friendship.

I owe special gratitude to Florencia Ferrari and Márcio Vilar. Florencia's thesis on Calon in São Paulo, the discussions I have had with her and our common projects

shaped my own understanding of Calon lives to such an extent, that sometimes I think of my own thesis as a response to her work. Márcio, who started doing research among Calon in (Southern) Bahia about the same time as I, will recognise that I benefited from, and appropriated, many of his ideas. Or perhaps I should say that many things found in this thesis resulted from our long conversations during our road-trip across Brazil, or in pubs and cafes in Leipzig, Vienna and London. In Brazil, I also benefited from discussing my material with Luciana Sampaio, Brigitte Grossman Cairus, Diana Budur, Ana Maria Rabelo Gomes and Marco Antonio da Silva Mello. Finding literature about Gypsies in Brazil can be daunting, and I am very grateful to Frans Moonen, who made photocopies of his own collection.

Roger Sansi-Roca was exactly the type of a supervisor I needed. Encouraging, but slightly sceptical, he let me do my work, but was clear when I got lost or did not make any sense. Frances Pine, my second supervisor, carefully read and commented on the whole thesis. I am also grateful to Michael Stewart, Martin Holbraad and Stephen Nugent who supervised the first years of my doctoral studies, initially at UCL and later at Goldsmiths. Emma Tarlo and Catherine Alexander discussed my pre-fieldwork report and helped me to clarify my research plans. Sophie Day and David Graeber were on my upgrade committee – although at the time I accepted the criticisms and comments they made about my two chapters, it was only after I wrote most of my dissertation that I realised how right they had been. Thanks also to the administrative staff of the Department of Anthropology at Goldsmiths, especially Hugh MacNicol, for all their support.

I feel especially thankful for being able to participate at thesis writing up seminars at Goldsmiths and I am grateful to everybody, who, on several sessions during the two years while I was writing my thesis, bravely read, and put up with, my unclear thinking and several confused chapters: to the faculty facilitating the seminars, namely, Victoria Goddard, David Graeber, Emma Tarlo, Mark Lamont, Joanna Cooke and Nicholas de Genova, and to my fellow students, notably, Jessie Sklair, Eeva Kesküla, Gabriela Nicolescu, Muzna Al-Masri, Tim Martindale, Theo Rakopoulos, Krzysztof Bierski, Amy Johnston and Gergö Pulay; I learned a lot about authoring ethnography from witnessing their efforts, struggles and strategies.

I am most grateful to Emma Felber for helping with copy-editing the thesis. Pavol Fotta drew the kinship diagrams. I first analysed my fieldwork material and wrote what later, after much reworking, became one chapter while at Max Planck Institute in Halle – I would like to thank Chris Hann for hospitality at the Institute and the participants of the departmental seminar led by him for their feedback. I am also grateful to Prof. Bernhard Streck and his students at the Forum Tsiganologische Forschung at the Institute for Ethnology at the University of Leipzig for their welcome and inspiring discussions. Daniel Margócsy, James Grellier, Elisa Kelly, Lucia Rios, Zuzana Fedorková, Catalina Tesar and Viorel Anastasoiaie helped me at various stages of my project or looked at parts of this thesis.

Finally, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my family: To my sister, Jana Fottová, and to my parents, Ján Fotta and Nataša Fottová, for their unwavering support; although in the last months they might have avoided asking me when I was going to *finally* finish.

And my wife, comrade and best friend, Adriana Lamačková – she agreed to come with me to Bahia and even learned how to dance *arrocha*; without her, my fieldwork, and this thesis, would be a lot duller. Our daughter Matilda was born the week I started working on the conclusion – she beat me to it. Even five weeks later, her suckling at Adriana’s breast, her fingers moving around in random movement, her turning her head – somewhat belatedly – when I pass by, or her anger when we change her diaper, cannot not make me believe in the preciousness and resilience of life. And I cannot not dedicate this thesis to her and her mother.

NOTES ON TEXT

To protect people's identity I changed the names of all characters. But to keep the flavour of Calon names, surnames and nicknames, I used those encountered in newspapers or in other regions. The names of places are made up and the distances have also been adjusted.

Throughout the thesis all words in *chibi* and in Portuguese are italicised. Portuguese words are indicated by "(Port.)" following the word only when they need to be distinguished from other languages; *chibi* words are indicated by "(Rom.)". Translations are provided either in brackets or following a comma, especially when they are descriptive. Quotations from books or from my fieldnotes are marked with double quotation marks; paraphrases and glosses of quotes are indicated in single quotation marks. Larger stories, quotations and excerpts from fieldnotes are separated from main body by indentation.

PROTAGONISTS OF THE THESIS

Eduardo When I start my fieldwork Eduardo is the richest Calon in Santaluz, widely respected by non-Gypsies. He is in his early 40s and has three children – a son from a previous relationship with a non-Gypsy woman, and a son and a daughter with his current wife, **Viviane**. He has one brother, **Renato**, and four sisters, **Rita, Carla, Sara** and **Genilsa**, all of whom who live in the area.

Viviane A woman from respected, but poor, family, she married Eduardo at the age of 13. During my fieldwork she turns 30.

Kiko Eduardo's older son in his early 20s. After Viviane married his father, he was raised by his paternal grandparents. Kiko is married to **Paula** with whom he has a son during my stay. He also kills a non-Gypsy to protect his father and his family, which causes the dissolution of the Calon settlement in Santaluz.

Paula Kiko's wife in her early 20s. She becomes the best friend of my wife, Adriana.

Romero Eduardo's and Viviane's son, in his late teens. During my fieldwork his parents are trying to arrange his marriage.

Renato Renato, Eduardo's older brother, infamous for losing all his property in gambling. Married three times he has four children with his current wife.

Babaloo Renato's older son in early 20s, who has a reputation for gambling, drinking and getting into fights.

- Maluco** Maluco lives with a non-Gypsy woman. His mother died when he was a child and his father spent many years in prison. Maluco is one of my closest friends and my best informant.
- Djalma** When we arrive, Djalma, in his early 50s is the strong-man of a camp in Santaluz. A keen trader, originally from the *sertão*, he is raising an adopted son along with his wife, **Maria**.
- Paulo and Rita** Paulo, in his mid 50s, is blind. He is the author of many stories in this thesis and is often the most willing to explain things to me. His sister is married to Djalma and his wife, Rita, is Eduardo's oldest sister.
- Pancho and Genilsa** Pancho is in his late 30s and is married to Eduardo's youngest sister Genilsa with whom he has two daughters. Always on the look-out for another deal, he moves his household between settlements often.
- Zezinho and Sara** From Eduardo's family, Sara is Adriana's and my favourite person. When we arrive, Zezinho is a strongman in São Gabriel, one of the settlements that I visit most frequently, but he passes away a year later, and the camp disintegrates.
- Beiju and Carla** Beiju, in his mid 50s, is one of the most respected Calon in the area, with a history of violent confrontations. He is married to Eduardo's sister, Carla.
- Sirley** Beiju's and Carla's son, in his early 20s. He is married and has a baby son.
- Faustão and Pinto** During most of the fieldwork, brothers Faustão and Pinto live in the camp in Santaluz alongside their parents and fraternal uncles. For six years Faustão has been married to **Daiane**, but they have not had any success

with having children. Younger brother, Pinto, who is seen by many as a coward and not a very skilled trader, is married to **Sandra** and they have a baby during my fieldwork.

Índio Índio is the poorest Calon in the camp in Santaluz. He is married to **Iracema** and has one son, **Romão**, in his mid teens.

Adair The strongman in a Calon settlement in Alto de Bela Vista, in his mid 30s. He and the people in his settlements are my hosts on various occasions. With his wife he has two children. He is Paula's maternal uncle.

Nelson Nelson is Adair's younger brother. Married to Sara's younger daughter, they have two small daughters.

Diego A non-Gypsy who works for Eduardo's family as a middleman. He lives in Parnamirim with his wife and five children.

Afonso and Malu Afonso is a retired oil worker, who together with his wife, Malu, runs a small bar nearby the "Gypsy street" where I spend a lot of time. They have four children. Afonso passes away while I write up the thesis and the bar is turned into a Pentecostal church.

Joanna Joanna is a poor non-Gypsy woman in her mid 20s. She has three children with three different men and works as a cleaner.

Gilson Gilson is a high-school teacher in his late 40s.

Galeguinho A non Gypsy. Probably the biggest moneylender in Santaluz.

Seu Raimundo A non-Gypsy moneylender in Santaluz.

INTRODUCTION

“The Bankers of the Sertão”

Santaluz is that little Bahian town familiar to admirers of Jorge Amado, and to readers of ethnographies or of travel writing: a place of women-headed households, of loud music, singing songs about passions gone wrong, and of Pentecostal churches springing up on every street corner. When you ask its inhabitants, they will tell you nothing ever changes here: Two families still alternate occupying the mayoral post, dividing the town into opposing blocks during every election campaign. Some complain that in contrast with Salvador or Cachoeira where the heritage is valorised, here old buildings are replaced by “*cocós*” (shit, rubbish), Candomblé remains a *macumba* (black magic), and Capoeira a pastime of *moleques* (mischievous street kids). Even the benefits of Lula’s two presidencies have yet to be felt in Santaluz.

The town appears to illustrate a cliché about Brazil as an unfulfilled promise of progress. Many inhabitants have black and white pictures of a steam engine that used to run through the town and of the town’s centre as it looked sometime in the mid-twentieth century. They lament that today the only thing Santaluz is good for are its *curiós*, songbirds, that you can buy on the ugliest looking market place I visited in Bahia – a murky crowded place covered by pieces of tarpaulin besides a dirty river. But the new market place, *feira nova*, built by the mayor eight years ago, never took off as it was built far from the centre and nobody ever goes there.

Santaluz feels like that place in-between. It lies between two regions that dominate the image of the Brazilian North-East – between the sugar-producing region around the Bay of all Saints, Recôncavo, and the semi-arid hinterlands, the *sertão*. The soil around the town is still relatively rich, and the area was inhabited by independent peasants who used to supply the plantations with foodstuffs to feed slaves. The market that evolved in Santaluz, also served as a place where *sertanejos* could sell their animals. Its role in provisioning was so important that in the nineteenth century maroons (*quilombolas*) often attacked the town, especially in periods of heightened confrontation with authorities. Today it feels like a place in-between for a different reason; you can perceive it when you climb any small hill surrounding the town. The main BA road passes the town's outskirts with traffic heading towards Santo António, Valença, Feira de Santana, Valença, and Salvador. Because most do not have any reason to stop here, Santaluz is that place marginalised by being besides the road.

In fact, a great deal has changed. The pictures of the old town are circulated via the internet, and sometimes the *curiós* are confiscated by IBAMA, the federal environment agency. The monetary and welfare policies of the past 20 years have affected the social rubric of the town – cash and official credit play more important roles today than in the past. Some people tell you that before elections, especially the local ones, they try to sell their votes. Old peasants receive retirement benefits for rural workers, their children apply for federal loans managed by the syndicate of rural workers and if their grandchildren go to school, the family also receives *bolsa família*, a conditional family benefit. The government – federal, state and local – is now the biggest employer, and members of the burgeoning “middle class C” buy on instalments

or take up consumer loans. Inhabitants rent houses to the employees of large companies that operate in the area; many inhabitants are also employed there. Shops sell on credit as before, but besides more traditional *caderninhos* (notebooks), *notas promissórias* (promissory notes) and *cobradores* (debt collectors), many accept cheques, credit cards and have their *crediários* (credit databases) connected to Federal credit history agencies. As well as relying on patrons, friends or churches, families draw on the host of novel credit institutions – from a state micro credit scheme provided by the town hall to non-bank financial institutions. In fact, most of the new ugly “*cocós*” that replaced old buildings on the main square are banks. And if you know what to look for, on the same square you will also notice small groups of *Ciganos*, Gypsies, always willing to lend money without paperwork.

Neither Amado’s novels nor the works of non-fiction talk much about *Ciganos*, but the inhabitants of Santaluz have a lot to say about them. They tell you that *Ciganos* are rich, that *Cigano* weddings last three days, that *Ciganos* steal children. Or somebody recalls a story about an unfortunate who made a deal in which he was tricked by *Ciganos*, a version of which you have heard many times already.

Ciganos have been living around Santaluz for centuries. A few early nineteenth-century judicial documents mention them as dealers and thieves of slaves or animals. Talking about the second half of the twentieth century, people describe how Gypsies known as *Ciganos Turcos*, or *tacheiros*, used to stop for a few days selling their copper pots and pans (*tacho*) throughout the town, or how the *Ciganos tropeiros* (traders with animals, caravaneers) used to settle for periods of few months on a property of some

fazendeiro (landowner) or another, trading in animals – and stealing chickens along the way.

The people of Santaluz will tell you that *Ciganos* do not travel anymore, and that although a few of them still live in tents, they increasingly live in houses. That is because they stopped trading with animals and became moneylenders, *agiotas*, instead. Through loans, *Ciganos* acquired property while having “many people in their hands”. This recognition of *Ciganos* as a source of credit in the Bahian interior has been such, that the financial section of *Folha de São Paulo* called them ‘the bankers of the *sertão*’.¹

In this thesis, I try to describe this phenomenon. Centred on the money-lending practices of *Ciganos*, who call themselves *Calon*, whom I got to know in Santaluz, this thesis describes the functioning of the *Cigano* money-lending niche. In other words, how in the early twenty-first century Bahia “*Cigano*” became a recognised credit institution and even a synonym for a moneylender, and how this activity relates to the sociality of the *Calon*. The thesis can thus be understood at two levels. First, it builds on the literature on Gypsy economic activities. Secondly, it contributes more generally to an anthropological understanding of credit, especially in the era after structural adjustment. In the following section I introduce the central theoretical concerns pertaining to both areas.

Financialisation and Credit/Debt

Looking at the long-term cycle, Graeber (2011) describes how after Nixon suspended the dollar’s peg to gold an era of virtual money began. Placing it in a *longue durée* cyclical

¹ Billi, Marcelo. *No sertão da Bahia, cigano é "banqueiro"*, Caderno Dinheiro, Folha de São Paulo, 12.06.2005.

perspective where credit alternates with bullion, the era we are living in contrasts with the previous one that relied on powerful empires to keep the value standard of their money stable. Focusing on how monetary interactions between individuals are shaped by states and markets, Keith Hart (2000) argues that the great twentieth century experiment of impersonal markets is over. The money system reached such proportions that no state is able to control it anymore. The circulation of money is now detached from production and trade, while new technologies make access to information easier. The end result is the proliferation of credit money, or money as personalised credit tied to one's social position.

On one level, my dissertation elaborates on these themes of the rise of virtual money and life being increasingly dependent on forms of personalised credit. On another level, it focuses the picture by showing how these processes depend on state intervention, i.e. how access to personalised credit, from official as well as unofficial sources, increasingly depends “on impersonal governments and corporations, on impersonal abstraction of the sort associated with computing operations and on impersonal standards and social guarantees for contractual exchange” (Hart 2008) . Certainly, state regulation, starting with the structural adjustment programme, privatisation and monetarist policies, were influenced by the nature of the world economy in the era of “savage money” that was launched by Nixon's decision (Gregory 1997). As a consequence, as I will argue, official measures engendered the proliferation of forms of credit which unsettled previous standards of value and bases of wealth.

In the past ten years, life in the Bahian interior has been marked by economic growth accompanied by intensive “financialisation” (Gregory 2009). That is, today

official financial institutions play an increasingly prominent and even dominant role in the everyday flow of wealth and provision of money. Some authors use these terms differently. Graeber (2011: 376), for instance, equates financialisation with neo-liberalism, while Ansell (2010: 283-294) calls it monetisation. I prefer to reserve the term financialisation to describe the formalisation of financial flows. At the same time I recognise that money does not refer only to state money and that life in a small market town in the former colony tied to the world market has been monetised since the earliest era.

The picture that emerges is, therefore, known from other parts of the world. In Brazil, as in many parts of the world, the impact of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s which saw the collapse of local cottage industries, increased demand for cash and rising inequalities, had to be ameliorated by new forms of social programmes. Today, *bolsa família* is the largest programme of the so-called third generation welfare in the world. Every month beneficiaries need only to swipe their card in a federal financial institution. Writing about South Africa, James Ferguson (2007: 71-86) argued that this sort of welfare arrangement is one of a number of “neoliberal moves” that can be variously combined. He also questions the conventional oppositions and associations (e.g. between neoliberalism and social payments), while bringing the formal and informal into a redefined relation: the money comes directly from the state, requires documents and bank accounts, but unlike previous state welfare policies, it does not use full employment as a ““normal” frame of reference” (Ferguson 2007: 82). In fact, as Ferguson points out, this sort of humanitarian social transfer accepts the informality. This is a tendency which is visible in other areas. For instance, in Brazil as with elsewhere in

the world, tapping into informal economies via micro-credit schemes expanded the social space of state while disciplining people in a neoliberal fashion (Elyachar 2002: 493-513; Ansell 2007). In a process of piece-meal formalisation (Guyer 2004: 157), the moves fix some arrangements while opening space for new arrangements, questioning and negotiations.

The point I want to make is that the state intervened in directing and creating flows of money. Here economic and political liberalisation – neo-liberalism and re-democratisation – have engendered a new “distributional regime” (James 2012: 22) with the state at its centre. For instance, “formalisation” brought about by CCTs required expansion of the network of state-run banks, ATMs, lottery houses and social services. Initiatives such as agricultural lending schemes providing productive credit required the creation of cooperatives and expansion of bank services. All this led to the formation and stimulation of new financial institutions – primarily of credit, but also of savings and insurance.

In addition, unlike in other countries that underwent structural adjustment, Brazil relied on its state-owned banks rather than on private banks. Eventually, services were extended beyond providing a social safety net and productive credit. “Banking the people that were formerly unbanked”, became the primary target of the state project understood as a process of “financial democracy”. This meant the extension of consumer and productive credit, which, in combination with economic growth, resulted in shifts in social make-up of the country. The following summary from the newspaper Bloomberg Business gives some idea of changes:

“During President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva's eight years in power, from 2003-2011, 24.5 million people officially escaped poverty, and 35.5 million moved into the lowest rung of the middle class, the so-called Class C, earning \$1,100 to \$3,900 a month, according to researchers at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation university. For these strivers, credit abounds for the first time. Total consumer loans rose sixfold over the past eight years, to \$495 billion, and jumped from 24 percent of gross domestic product in 2003 to 46 percent today, according to the central bank. About a fifth of these loans are paid by automatic deduction from paychecks. Since 2004, bank credit cards have tripled, to 159.5 million, and retailer cards have nearly quadrupled, to 233.5 million. The average interest rate on credit cards is 238 percent annually, while loans from retailers cost 85 percent, and personal loans from banks 47 percent.”²

The new “middle class C”, which today means household earning between R\$1,200 and R\$5,174, became the show-case for the success of the policy – in the North East, which includes Bahia, it increased 80 percent in seven years.³ These people enter the labour market with earnings slightly higher than the minimum wage and today are responsible for most credit in small towns like Santaluz. At the same time, in August 2011 “consumer debt defaults [...] are now up 29.2 percent from a year ago. Credit

² Harry Maurer and Alexander Ragir *Brazil's New Middle Class Goes on a Spree*, Bloomberg business, 12.5.2011 <http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/11_21/b4229010792956.htm>, last accessed 30 April 2012. See also, Leahy, Joe *Brazil's tale of two middle classes*, Financial Times, 20.7.2011 <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6745ef9a-b1e9-11e0-a06c-00144feabdc0.html#ixzz1qUd3orss>>, last accessed 30 April 2012.

³ Classe média no Nordeste aumentou 80% em sete anos, n.d., <<http://www.sae.gov.br/novaclassemedia/?p=236>>, last accessed 30 April 2012.

demand is slowing from last year.”⁴ Although there is some moral panic over conspicuous consumption,⁵ most money is spent on improving or constructing private houses. Experiencing upward mobility, members of the “middle class C” petition the state for investment in services such as health care and education. Their increasing indebtedness is due to their lack of savings and relatively low wages, which hinders their effort to keep up their newly acquired lifestyle. Because a large portion of their salaries is tied up with direct deduction from pay cheques (*crédito consignado*), they increasingly turn to illegal moneylenders.

These observations are similar to those Deborah James made for South Africa (2012: 20-40). She shows that our understanding of the neo-liberal distributional regime should include middle-income groups and moneylenders. The redistribution could potentially extend even further, creating ever new flows (37). In South Africa, contrary to prevalent policy opinion, most people in debt are not the poor, but the so-called “black diamonds”, public service employees who emerged in the process of democratisation. The emergence of this class led to intensifying of registered and unregistered money-lending practices. People often approach illegal moneylenders after their access to official sources was blocked or when they are pressured by these sources. Many moneylenders are also public service employees themselves, using their stable income to finance their loan making. James observes that both official sources of credit and unofficial moneylenders rely on official infrastructure: “The readiness with which both are able to

⁴ Colitt, Raymond *Brazil's middle-class economic miracle at risk*, Reuters, 23.9.2011 <<http://in.reuters.com/article/2011/09/23/idINIndia-59511820110923>>, last accessed 30 April 2012.

⁵ Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta argues that behind this moral panic lies Brazilian resistance to equality: "Our love for titles and hierarchy is part of our Portuguese heritage. People here want to be seen as different, as superior to the others, and don't like mixing" (Cabral, Paulo *Brazil divided over an emerging middle class*, BBC News Magazine, 10.11.2011 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15668275>>, last accessed 1 May 2012).

reach into one's bank account and take the money owed – whether with confiscated ATM cards or 'garnishee' orders – make them almost indistinguishable in the eyes of the overindebted" (36).

Although in Brazil the state via its banks created its own lending schemes for public employees, and the punishment for default does not compare to the "garnishee orders" in South Africa, the picture is similar. Here too, the "middle class C" are the main category of borrowers. Although moneylenders existed in the past, they have proliferated in recent years alongside a broad variety of official credit institutions tapping into official sources and flows of money. To explore these processes of diversion, which arose from the novel "distributional regime", I focus on the point of view of ethnic credit-providers, on the functioning of the *Cigano* niche.

Cigano Money-Lending Niche

For those acquainted with literature on Gypsy economies, my use of the term niche might call for an explanation. As I will describe soon, my use is inspired by Guyer's theorisation of "niche economy" (1997). Specifically, through use of this concept I try to draw a picture of an interstice within which Calon money-lending could flourish.

Although this interstice belongs to the economic system, it is created through concrete processes through which Calon confer to it dimensions, stability and consistency (e.g. Pignarre and Stengers 2011: 110). In other words, only under specific milieu – economic conditions, flows of wealth and discourse about good and bad debt and so on – could *Ciganos* and *agiotas* become synonyms. At the same time, the image of *Ciganos* as moneylenders and interaction between them and their non-Gypsy neighbours is

historically determined and displays certain cultural logic. And from the point of view of the Calon, lending money on interest plays a role in creating sociality and forging moral persons. Through the term niche I try to describe the complexity involved in the emergence of the recognisable *Cigano* economic specialisation, while simultaneously accepting its temporal and geographical specificity, and without reducing the process any single underlying cause.

Previously, other scholars also used the term “niche” in connection with the economic activities of the Gypsies, but their meaning differed from mine. Calon can be said to occupy “a peripatetic niche”, a term elaborated by Joseph Berland, Matt Salo and Aparna Rao (e.g. Berland and Salo 1986: 1-7; Rao 1987: 1-32). Here, “the peripatetic strategy consists basically of combining spatial mobility and non-subsistent commercialism at the economic level with endogamy at the social level” (Rao 1987: 3). The niche, then, refers to a “mutable demands for goods and/or services that other communities consider inaccessible or cannot, or will not, support on permanent basis” (Berland and Rao 2004: 4, italics removed). Similarly, although she does not use the word “peripatetic”, Judith Okely (1979: 17-34; 1983) understands the “niche” of the English Travellers as the employment of skills to exploit a broad range of opportunities and to strike an advantageous “chop”, in an environment where demand is irregular. In this view a niche is seen as a “specialised mode of subsistence”, “a resource exploitation”, where mobile communities provide for geographically dispersed customers (Rao 1987: 1-32). The Calon niche fits these characteristics: they are endogamous (at least in ideology), they do not consider their places of residence as permanent, and they provide usurious loans to a clientele dispersed across a broader area.

The use of a term “peripatetics” to describe Gypsies, and of “a peripatetic niche” to describe their economic specialisation, has not gone unchallenged. As Leonardo Piasere pointed out recently, in this case Gypsies have proved to behave as sociological tricksters and escape this category as soon as it was forged (Piasere 2011: 77). To be sure there was the potential for this to happen since the beginning: to fit the ethnographic data and to avoid reductionism, in the introduction to a volume on peripatetic communities, Rao (1987: 1-32) redefined the criteria – mobility, marginality, endogamy, self-employment, and symbiosis – as continuums, leaving them, in turn, rather hollow.

The main problem is that such uses focused on the “demand side” of the niche and referred essentially to consumers. In other words, they took the non-Gypsies as the starting point.⁶ As Piasere (e.g. 1986: 1-4) points out, such approaches reduce Gypsy adaptation to economic and ecologic determinants, without looking into meanings and social organisation that gave rise to things analysts perceived as the “peripatetic niche” in the first place. Thus Piasere (1992: 279-291) agrees with Rao (1987: 11) about the importance of ideology to analyse any specific case of peripatetics, but while Rao focuses on the majority “setting”, Piasere discusses varying conceptualisations and forms of sociality among Gypsies. He shows, for example, that three Gypsy populations living among the same non-Gypsies create three different modes of “resource exploitation” (Piasere 1992) and that the organisation of production and distribution can differ within one population of Gypsies in one country (Piasere 1987: 111-132; see also Grill 2011: 79-102).

⁶ This is true even of work of Judith Okely (1979: 17-34) that describes a complicated system of impression and ethnicity management, and shows that the Travellers are aware of how they are viewed by the non-Gypsies and manipulate the non-Gypsy gaze.

It is therefore important to look at the “supply” side of the niche, i.e. what the conceptual apparatus and social relations behind any niche specialisation are. Piasere’s work, which focuses on different exchanges among the Slovensko Roma in Italy, and between the Roma and the *gaje* is one example (Piasere 1985). However, the main inspiration comes from the work of Michael Stewart (1987; 1997) among the Vlach Rom in Hungary. Although these were not “peripatetic” Gypsies, and their main source of income was factory labour, their ideological preference was for deals in the market place. Stewart demonstrates how wheeling and dealing among the *gadze* is linked to the ways in which the Rom conceptualise the relationship between gender, fertility, money and work (see especially Stewart 1994: 45-62). Although the language of resistance he uses seems to me inapplicable to Bahian Calon, his work is particularly useful in order to understand the ways Gypsies appropriate some elements of their surrounding and give them different meanings, even if they seem to be doing the same things as their neighbours.

My use of the term “niche” is based on my understanding of the concept as used by Jane Guyer in *An African Niche Economy* (1997). Dissatisfied with capitalist theories of the market, she uses the term to describe a process of competitive proliferation specific to Yoruba economic thought, where internal specialisation of interconnected niches accounts for a capability of the farming sector to provide for the expanding cities. My work is much more limited in scope and ambition, and I can only start to sketch “what kind of an economic world” Bahians “think of themselves as living” (Guyer 2004: 175). But I take from her work the understanding of niche as “specialist production”, with its product definitions, standardisations, expertise and replication, and that which is created via the medium of money, that is, fully grounded in a commercial economy. For instance,

Calon are aware of being seen as *Ciganos*, while borrowing money from them follows specific logarhythms of interests, potentiality of violence or use of collateral, which make this credit institution different from others available in a small town Bahia. In her reflections upon the term “niche”, Guyer recognises that although she was driven by keeping close to her ethnographic material, the concept turned out to resemble a Simmelian social form (Simmel 1972): “[social forms] are recognisable, and often named; they constrain and orient thought and action; they are specific, transposable, translatable; and they are small, dependent only very generally on larger social structures or economic conditions in an encompassing sense” (Guyer 2004: 177).

There is a slight irony here. In their later work Berland and Rao tried to reinterpret the “peripatetics” using the concept of the Stranger, a Simmelian social type (Berland and Rao 2004: 1-29; Simmel 1950). They correctly argue that Simmel understood the Stranger as a positive relation, a specific form of interaction. But by focusing on things such as the “low social status” of the peripatetics or resourcefulness as a form of “adaptation”, they nevertheless side with those Simmelians they criticise. They focus on relationships *of* the Stranger ignoring that the Stranger, or any social form, *is* a relational term, a “form of sociation”, not a specific person, not a “content” (Berland and Rao 2004: 6).

Fundamentally, they are not Simmelian enough and accept the Stranger as somebody coming from outside. The point should be, rather, to show how this “form of union based on interaction” (Simmel 1972: 143) is composed of a specific mix of closeness and remoteness involved in every human relationship. Put otherwise, any recognisable social form is a “positive manifestation of specific forms of interactions” (Ibid.), which gives a

fluid content of life its meaning. Social form is the way people locate themselves in continuity of life (e.g. Guyer 2004: 177).

In this thesis, I understand *Cigano* in Bahia as one such recognisable social “form”, the “content” of which changed over time – today it is moneylending. Money, of course, is the Simmelian tool of sociation, of negotiating distance and closeness, *par excellence*. It allows for the transgression of one’s physical limits and the expansion of one’s capacities in time and space (see also Hart 2000). This thesis shows how in a process through which Calon and other Bahians impose determinate identities on monetary flows created by new distributional regime, the *Cigano* niche emerges, and which, co-ordinately, allows Calon to gain value – money and moral distinctiveness from the non-Gypsies – through niche threshold.

Ciganos and Calon, Brasileiros and Juróns

This thesis is premised on the idea that the positionality in exchange is crucial. Specifically, that there is a difference between a Calon man lending money to a non-Gypsy client and the same man lending to another Calon. This is not simply a question of ethnic distinction, but the very process through which Calon remain Calon. When lending money to a non-Gypsy the man takes into account views the non-Gypsy has of *Ciganos*. On the other hand, loans and exchanges between two Calon force the non-Gypsies into the background and focus instead on creating proper sociality. Writing about the Slovensko Roma in Italy, Zatta and Piasere illustrate what is at stake:

“From a strictly semantic point of view, the distinction Roma/Gaê does not correspond exactly to that of Gypsies/non-Gypsies. The area denoted by the term Roma, as it is used by a Rom, and of the term Gypsies, as it is used by a non-Gypsy, intersect for a large part, but they do not correspond totally. To this semantic discontinuity corresponds a far more important gap in perceptions: For a Rom the Roma/Gaê distinction is the fundamental distinction; the Gaê are the “outside” by definition. For a non-Gypsy, the Gypsy is an “other” among many, a “marginal man” among many, a bit of folklore among many; in our case, a thief among many. The perceptions are asymmetrical and they reflect the way of life of the Roma in respect to the Gaê” (1990: 165).

The authors distinguish between an idea of an ethnic group (a non-Gypsy view), and between Gypsiness as the adherence to a way of life and forms of evaluating behaviour where the *gaê* serve as the “outside”.⁷ I do not think that their Bahian neighbours see *Ciganos* as a minority, or that Calon feel in confronted as a people against the majority or somehow “besieged” (Stewart 1997). Nevertheless, even in Bahia the difference between the two ways of marking difference – internal and external – is reflected in terminology: it is a difference between thinking of oneself as *Cigano/Cigana* and as Calon/Calin.

⁷ This can have curious consequences. For instance, Elisabeth Tauber notes how impossible it is for Sinti in Italy to explain to authorities that their family cannot move to the same *campi nomadi* where there is a different Sinti family, who have different “own deceased” with different modalities of respect. This respect is the basis of Sinti sociality and survival of Sinti as Sinti, and could be accidentally violated if put together in a place reserved for “the Gypsies”. Instead, they have to withstand being compared to behaving as children by authorities, in other words, for failing to behave as a (ethnic) group (Tauber 2006: 40 ft38).

Compare these two situations: “*Ciganos* are like this. If there is a pot of beans everybody eats together, until there is not a single grain left.” Here the speaker compares the behaviour of *Ciganos* to their non-Gypsy neighbours; in fact we were standing besides the non-Gypsies and the Calon soon switched to Romani. Their neighbours or the authorities recognise them only as *Ciganos*. On the other hand, when during a household conflict the same man calls his wife “Calin *doida* (mad Calin)” because she is criticising him for a bad deal; the focus is on a proper gender relationship. Although not a rigid rule and *Cigano* is used more explicitly, in the thesis I have tried to preserve the sense of them as relational categories. The distinction might seem scholastic, but it has theoretical implications. Additionally, through using these terms I hope to better convey the performative nature of Caloninity and make visible its relation to what Zatta and Piasere call the non-Gypsy “outside”.

The point to remember is this: the non-Gypsies generally do not know the word “Calon” and only use “*Cigano*”. Therefore, in the thesis when I speak from the non-Gypsy point of view (e.g. in popular representation or official documents) or describe an interaction with non-Gypsies (physical or symbolic), I use the term *Cigano* (masc.)/*Cigana* (fem.) and their derivatives. I use italics to make it clear that it is a Portuguese word and as with any local term it is context-specific. When I write about personhood and sociality among these Bahian Gypsies, I use the term Calon (masc.)/Calin (fem.) and its derivatives (e.g. Caloninity). I also use the term Calon as a name for a specific Gypsy population, alongside the Sinti, Roma, Travellers, etc. I reserve the term Gypsy to denote a sociological category, especially when drawing comparisons with other Gypsy populations. I use the distinction Gypsy/non-Gypsy only

in situations when I, as a *gringo* in a Bahian town, am the privileged observer describing an interaction between *Ciganos* and others.

But concepts describing non-Gypsies also differ. Again, to retain the dynamic flavour of exchanges – in which performances, representations and switching frames of interactions matter – I relied on the terms of distinction used by the Calon. Most non-Gypsies in Bahia know that *Ciganos* call them *gajão* (and its variations *gajon*, *gajona*, *gajin*, *gajinha*). It can be used as a form of address marking the separation, e.g. ‘do me a favour, *gajão*.’ But the Calon I knew hardly ever used this term. Instead, when talking to their clients, friends or strangers, they used proper names or forms of address common in Bahia (*a senhora*, *o doutor*, and so on). They never used *gajão* when talking about non-Gypsies among themselves. Moreover, in a classically Bahian style, subversive of fixed categories and hierarchies, the non-Gypsies appropriated this expression and address *Ciganos* as *gajons*.⁸

To talk about non-Gypsies, Calon use mostly *brasileiros* and *jurón/s*. They are generally interchangeable although there are slight differences. Firstly, terms *jurón/jurin* (sg.) and their equivalents *hurón/hurin* or *burnón/burnin*, are the most frequent. Alongside the word “Calon” itself, these are among the first words a Calon child learns; among the Bahian Calon it comes with a hand sign. Secondly, they never use it when addressing or in a presence of a non-Gypsy and most Bahians do not know that they are referred to as *juróns*. I was always struck by how strict the use of terms was: when talking to another Calon they could refer to a client as a “*jurón*” one moment, but when a non-Gypsy asked a question the client would become a “*brasileiro*”. Non-gypsies also

⁸ For example, in *Os Ciganos*, a story which takes place in cocoa-producing Southern Bahia, the author refers to *Cigano* characters as “*gajona*”, “*gajoninha*”, “*gajões*” (Neto 2006: 65-78).

know that they are referred to as *brasileiros*, since Calon use it when, for instance, they try to contrast their lives to the non-Gypsies. Third, *brasileiros* is often used in the plural. It works as a kind of a background for comparison. When a group of Calon was commenting on the looseness of sexual mores of non-Gypsy women, one Calin exclaimed that “all *brasileiras* are *galinhas* (hens).” Fourth and related to this, *jurón* is used to denote a specific person or people. For instance, ‘a *jurón* on TV did this or that’, ‘I bought this from a *jurón* on the street’ and ‘he was there in the middle of *juróns*’.

I will therefore stick to these terms to convey atmosphere of interactions. To summarise then, it could be said that there are three pairs of terms that I use, which do not overlap completely: *Cigano/brasileiro* (or *gajão*), *Calon/jurón* and *Gypsy/non-Gypsy*. When the Calon were talking about Adriana (my wife) or me in our presence, they most often used the diminutive: ‘give *huronzinho/huronzinha* something to eat’. But we were not *brasileiros*. When I asked whether Adriana was also a *galinha*, the woman responded that of course she wasn’t, but she was ‘a *gringa*’, the term used in Bahia to denote foreigners in general. This apparently explained our weirdness.

Fieldwork Setting

Since I set out to understand the money-lending niche from both the “demand” and “supply” sides, I planned to do research both with Calon creditors and their non-Gypsy debtors. Many Bahians told me that *Ciganos* were cold and that I should not trust them. My teacher of Portuguese in Salvador, for instance, could not understand why I was interested in this topic and how I was planning to do it. She told me about her friend

whose household disintegrated after the family was threatened by *Cigano* moneylenders, but she refused to give me any more details.

Not knowing what to expect, I planned to split my research into two parts: the major part was to consist of research among Calon; then I planned to move to another town to do research with clients of *Ciganos*. The move proved to be unnecessary and I stayed for eighteen months in Santaluz; I spent another five months in settlements elsewhere or in Salvador doing archival research. In fact, after a while, clients of *Ciganos* did not mind talking about their financial lives as much as I had thought. This was also made possible, at least partially, because thirteen months into my fieldwork, while I was back in London organising my visa, all the local Calon left the town. When I returned, neither of the two settlements which I knew best were where I had left them. It was not difficult to find out where the people went, but it allowed me to move to the centre of Santaluz, and focus on the research among the non-Gypsies.

Santaluz is the geographical centre of my research. Only two hours from Salvador, it is a small town, with a total population of about 25.000, out of which about 10.000 live in the rural area surrounding the town. It was one of the towns I visited during the pilot research and I imagined that I could somehow keep it all in my head. A Calon settlement was of average size and the very first non-Gypsy person I asked told me that *Ciganos* were “extremely rich”. I started my fieldwork in June 2008 and was prepared to leave Santaluz if the Calon did not accept me and gave myself three months to find a suitable fieldwork site.

I am still grateful to Ana Lucia and Cleide from the tourist office. When I arrived in Santaluz, I rented a room in a hostel and on the second day I visited the office to learn

something about the town. When I told the two women, what I was planning to do, they were excited about the idea of a “gringo researcher” and agreed to take me to the house of Eduardo *Cigano*, who they told me was the “*chefe* of the *Ciganos* here”. Not knowing what being a *chefe* entailed, I agreed.

When we came on the first evening, Eduardo was not home. Through the closed gate, I only talked to his wife who told me to come back the next day, around four. I came the next day and then the day after, but I never managed to catch Eduardo at home. It was rainy season; I was soaked and annoyed. On the fourth day I came again and Eduardo’s wife told me to wait that her husband would come back soon. I had been waiting for an hour or so, sitting in front of a shop nearby, when she yelled from her gate at me to go and talk to a guy who just walked, not to her house, but to a house nearby. He seemed to be expecting me. I asked him whether he had a few minutes and whether he was Eduardo. He confirmed this. When I explained to him that I planned to learn about *Cigano* life and learn the language, he was extremely helpful – he said he would teach me and I could come anytime to talk to them. We agreed that I could start after the weekend.

When I arrived on Monday I had to wait in front of the shop again. Then two motorcycle taxis arrived – one with Eduardo and the second with another man. Once Eduardo got off, without paying any attention to me he left. The second man just called me into the house where “Eduardo’s wife” handed him a towel. I was confused. As it turned out, the man I had talked to last week was not Eduardo, but his brother Renato – Renato basically lied to me. So I introduced myself again and explained to the real Eduardo what I was planning to do. Unlike his brother, he was not supportive and dismissed all of my plans. It was impossible to learn the language; there was nothing

special about *Ciganos*. He was intimidating but not rude, then he was rude but not intimidating, then he was nice but vague, and afterwards bored and uninterested. I continued explaining my plan; it was pouring again anyway and I had no desire to walk to the hostel. Finally Eduardo told me that I could come any time to chat with them.

In the following weeks, the situation repeated itself with most Calon – I was ignored or coaxed with friendliness, lied to and intimidated, often within one discussion. With a friendly air, for instance, people would start speaking at me in *chibi*, a form of Romani, seemingly explaining something to me or asking me a question, obviously aware that I did not have a clue. And I kept explaining to them, often with feigned excitement, that this was exactly the point, that I came there to learn. Or, we arranged to meet but nobody came. Just as I had envisioned, it took me three months and much frustration to settle somehow after all, although I never had to leave Santaluz.

One of the things Eduardo told me that first day was that if I wanted to become a *Cigano*, I had to move to a house near them, to spend time with *Ciganos* and my wife should wear *Cigana* dresses. He was right in a sense. Although Adriana would not exchange her shorts for warm dresses, renting a house on the same street turned out to be crucial. Viviane, Eduardo's wife, told me about the house which was exactly opposite theirs, on the street colloquially known as *Rua dos Ciganos*, the Street of the Gypsies. The Gypsies have lived there for decades; two Calon houses were on this street and a camp composed of about twelve tents was only about 50 metres down a muddy side road. As soon as we opened our door, we became part of the street's activities. Early in the morning the Calon men would be sitting in front of their houses, drinking their morning coffee and discussing plans. During market days, the Calin in colourful dresses passed by

on their way to the town's centre to read palms. They returned just before noon carrying grocery shopping on their heads. Non-Gypsy clients appeared. After lunch, cars blasting *música sertaneja* from speakers filling the entire trunks arrived packed with Calon from other settlements. Sometimes whole families came; at other times only men arrived to play cards.

It is the lives of the Calon around *Rua dos Ciganos*, those living in tents in the camp as well as those living in the houses, which I describe in this thesis. These Calon were related through bilateral kinship, which also connected them to people living in other settlements within the region. I got to know the extended families of Eduardo and Viviane best. When I arrived, they lived in four settlements about 40 kilometres away on average. I spent much time accompanying somebody from Eduardo's family going for a visit, to make a deal or to play a card game. When I left two years later, only one of those settlements was still in the same place. This is an important aspect to point out: at the beginning, and when I did research among the non-Gypsies, Santaluz was my geographical focus, my site. But as I got to know Calon better, individual towns receded and a different spatiality of the Calon emerged.

Naturally, my understanding of the Calon in Bahia is influenced by what I know about Eduardo's family, and sometimes I worry that the dilemmas and contradictions, aspirations and values that I identified as somehow inherent to Calon sociality, could be specific to this family alone. There was a rich Calon and his wife whom his siblings blamed for standing between him and his family. There was a gambler who lost his house with his rather invisible wife. There was an honourable man who never had much "luck" in deals and his shrewd wife who is the only one who still owes me money. There was a

valiant man who had killed five people and his tough wife who knew how to recognise a good weapon. There was a man who enjoyed deals more than anybody else I knew, and his wife who was known for her magical skills.

But maybe that is precisely the point: in a sociality that is not based on transcendent rules and offices and that relies on individual performances, people themselves become indexes of archetypal behaviour (cf. Gay y Blasco 2011: 445-461). People's behaviour is fraught with tensions, contradictions and possibilities of multiple interpretations. They are jealously watched and talked about, and most of the thesis revolves around varied assessments of thresholds when behaviour threatens to slip into something else: When does an unpaid loan become not only an abuse of trust, but also a sign of hierarchy? When does it become a "theft"? When does masculine performance on the market go against household interests? When is money-lending among kin a recognition of autonomy and equality, and when does it denote dependency and hierarchy?

A network of *Cigano* settlements in the early twenty-first century Bahia that emerged during my fieldwork, "a gap" (*décalage*, Williams 2003) in the midst of *brasileiros* within which Calon tried to behave as Calon, became the factual setting for my fieldwork.

On Methodology

No-one in Bahia sits quite as much as the Calon. And during my fieldwork I too, became a professional sitter: in the morning I sat with men watching the cockerels that they brought out to warm up in the sun; an hour later I sat in somebody's house or in a tent.

Before sitting down for lunch I often joined somebody on his visit to a client, or, more often, to another Calon settlement. There I spent a few hours sitting with others. There were periods when I spent endless weeks sitting (or standing) behind men sitting (or leaning against a table) playing cards.



Picture 0.1

Sitting in the shade of a tent

No-one in Bahia sits quite as socially as the Calon. Elena, a friend of mine living in Salvador, once quipped that seen from Bahia, plastic chairs were the world's most important invention. In a properly Gypsy-like fashion, when non-Gypsy objects (things or ideas) are appropriated to create a Gypsy way of life, I sometimes imagine that without plastic chairs there would be no Calon. Whenever they were not going to town, visiting

somebody, cooking or cleaning – all of which took a couple of hours a day at most – people spent whole days sitting in front of their own or other people’s houses and tents. For a man living in a camp it worked roughly like this: you woke up and while your wife was making the morning coffee and sweeping the tent floor, you sat and talked to her about your plans. Or you dragged your plastic chair to sit beside another man, let’s call him B, who was doing the same. Somebody from a different settlement came to visit C. Without a word you dragged your chair there; a minute later B dragged his. Now all of you were sitting talking to the visitor. But talking was not necessary. If there were no visitors, or nothing to talk about, men were just as happy to sit together quietly. After a while you stood up, picked up your chair and without any word you dragged your chair to sit with D in front of his tent.

So if my evidence in this thesis makes it sound as if I am always sitting somewhere, participating in the background, it is because it was true. Yet the curious thing is that everybody else participates in the background and things only “happen” thanks to this. After a while of sitting with others, two men would decide to swap their watches or to go and play cards; they might call men sitting in other settlements to join them. And suddenly, somebody would win or lose a lot of money. People drag their chairs not only to talk and listen to newcomers, but to hear better whenever those in the neighbouring tent are arguing. As a guest you drag your chair away from the group of men to the table, where the mistress of the house sets food out for you. Although you invite everybody else to join, the “locals” respond that they have already eaten and stay put. It feels as if you needed this multitude of Calon bodies to highlight what they treasured the most: when through movement or action they behaved as Calon; for

instance, hosting one another or striking a deal with one another. Thus, we were sitting by the fire one evening when a man came to borrow a gun. A minute later, the whole settlement was in motion with my wife, four months pregnant, still sitting on a plastic chair in the middle of a group of agitated Calon.

Here I should also note that in this “happening world”, organised around events and radically open towards the everyday, there is constant potential for violence. In order to avoid voyeurism or confirming negative stereotypes and although I will come back to it in later, I should pause here and state a few words about Calon violence in Bahia. Over time I realised that it is an important organising principle. On the one hand, in Bahia in general there is a growing criminal violence linked to drug trafficking and easy access to guns. This feeds into established cultural practices which connect lower-class masculinity to gun-ownership, of personal relations seen as volatile and of one’s family name sometimes confirmed in feuding. On the other hand, violence among Calon serves a double purpose. Danger presented by *brasileiros* who should not be trusted, akin to “state of siege mentality” described by Stewart in case of the Hungarian Rom (Stewart 1997), serves to deny sociability and to mark moral distinctiveness between Calon and *brasileiros*; in other words, it marks off the outside. But it also is a tool of sociality and, along with gender, generation and kinship, it creates a heterogeneous inside. All male *Ciganos* are expected to show valour and to be ready to defend their honour with violence if necessary. For same reasons, contact with unknown Calon is avoided, lest misunderstandings and accidental violations of respect lead to violence. Younger men are more “hot-headed” (*cabeça quente*) than older ones, although the strength (*força*) of the latter depend on their capacity to amass support in case of conflicts and especially in

blood-feuds. Violent acts also turn kin into enemies and demarcate one's home range. Violence, like moneylending, is thus an independent tool which serves to negotiate relationships with the outside and to create moments for forging of moral persons.

To come back to sitting: It became my fieldwork technique. I learned to circulate among the houses and tents, talking to people or just observing. I carried a small notebook in my cargo shorts, in which I jotted down key words or phrases. Sometimes, especially during card games, I used my mobile phone to record – I had to be inconspicuous, not only because of the tense emotions, but also so as not to be accused of ruining somebody's luck; most of the time, however, I became bored before anybody could accuse me of this. Just like with other Gypsies, more formal research techniques have proved unsuitable (see also Stewart 1987: 33).⁹ All attempts at arranging formal interviews failed. I never got beyond asking more than three consecutive questions while the answers to those questions that I was most interested in, were mostly monosyllabic, evasive or both. Without the possibility of surveys, things like collecting genealogies proved difficult and I essentially had to remember to return to the topic on several occasions. Keeping a systematic overview became particularly difficult whenever I tried to track down specific exchange histories and trajectory of objects.

Whenever I felt that I had enough information or that I would not remember everything I left for my house; eventually without a word, just like everybody else when dragging their chair. But with the Calon in Santaluz it took me a while to reach their level of fluidity, when I did not feel obliged to use any greetings, forms of address, parting words or to explain and justify myself. Once at home, I wrote more extensive notes,

⁹ This should not be seen as a rule. Elisabeth Tauber used her notebook openly throughout her research (pers. comm. 2012).

which I converted into proper field notes the following morning before I stepped out to *Rua dos Ciganos*.

I used more formal research techniques only during the second part of my fieldwork when I interviewed representatives of credit institutions (banks, shops, syndicates and so on) and people linked to moneylending (debt collectors, moneylenders, middlemen). It helped that I was living in the town's centre and spent less time with the Calon who lived elsewhere. I also interviewed several non-Gypsies – in a few cases several times – about their financial lives, focusing on their network of credit/debt. Prior to the fieldwork, and whenever I spend a longer period in Salvador, I conducted research in the Municipal Archive and the Geographical and Historical Institute in Salvador looking for historical source on *Ciganos*. For short periods I hired two assistants to do this, but they were not committed enough.

Although I had already started studying Portuguese in London, I learned it only in Salvador when I took a three month course. With hindsight, the biggest shortcoming of my preparation was that I never took a course in standardised Romani. This would have allowed me to grasp the developments and the style of the form of Romani spoken by the Calon. They call it *chibi*, meaning a language in Romani, or *língua*, meaning a tongue in Portuguese.

In a sense on that first day I met him Eduardo was right – I could never learn it, I could only pick out some words. Only slowly did I understand that it was not a language in the way I thought of one – the Calon did not think of it as I did, as one language among many with a limited (however large) number of words that could be learned from flash cards. In fact, *chibi* also includes Portuguese words with nuanced meanings and hand

signals. It should be seen as a part of the never-ending process of becoming a better Calon (Ferrari 2010; see also Matras, Gardner, Jones, and Schulman 2007: 142-184). The contradiction between Eduardo's blunt refusal of my capability to learn and Renato's excitement to teach me was a sign of this character of *chibi*. And during my fieldwork people were willing to teach me for money, taught me a few words for free, declined to teach me, told others not to teach me, inquired why I did not hire anybody to teach me, and were pleased, surprised and amused whenever I understood what they were saying. But I am still not able to speak it properly. More broadly, these contrasting views on teaching me *chibi* point to Caloninity as being based on ethical practice, which opens a space for questioning and evaluating one's behaviour and its meaning, rather than on a set of fixed rules.

I have to stress that my thesis is essentially about Calon men; I followed the marriage negotiations of young men – still boys in my eyes; I observed deals and card games of middle-aged heads of households; I partied with young men; and sat in the shade listening to the stories of the oldest ones. In a way my thesis complements Ferrari's work (2010) which is more about women. But the research turned out the way it did thanks to Adriana, my wife. Although she spent most of her time in Salvador, she came to Santaluz every week or so and stayed for a few days. She became a real friend to many people, and told me a lot about the world of the women, to which I had only indirect access (see also Stewart 1987: 33-34). Unlike men who seemed to be focused on the present unfolding of the future, women were much more willing to talk about their lives in narratives, to describe relationships and changes. It put Adriana in a difficult position occasionally as she tried to be a friend, a feminist, and a researcher's wife at the same

time. She also used the term *jurón/jurin* happily in conversation with Calon, which often confused them. Sometimes she came home telling me that she knew a secret from this or that woman, but she was told not to tell me. But as things go in relationships, I knew that what she actually meant was that she really wanted to tell it to me. I promise I only used Adriana to triangulate what I had already discovered myself.

Thesis outline

The thesis is about how Calon create value across niche thresholds, through acting as *Cigano* moneylenders. Although monetary gain is crucial, through constant transformations of money gained from *brasileiros* and through manipulating the pragmatics of credit/debt, they also create themselves as moral persons. Ultimately, the thesis attempts to describe the resilience of the Gypsies and their capability to adapt to a changing environment while remaining Gypsies; rather than about making a living, it is about a way of life.

The thesis is broadly divided into three parts. The first part (Chapter I) establishes something that might look obvious, but needs explanation: in order for *Ciganos* to be able to specialise as moneylenders, there have to be *Ciganos* in the first place – as a recognisable category with a certain history of interaction. The second part (Chapter II and III) explores the “demand side” of the niche. It describes the proliferation of credit institutions in the past decades, and the rich financial life created by credit/debt that people navigate. Seen from this angle, *Ciganos* are one among several credit institutions. The major part (Chapters IV through VIII) of the dissertation describes the “supply side” as it were – how moneylending is organised by the Calon and how it fits their sociality. It

argues that through moneylending, men forge themselves as proper Calon and through an ever-changing number of deals among themselves, which are always tied with future obligations, create Calon spaces. And the last Chapter VIII complements Chapters I through III by looking at how the Calon manage their economic exchanges with the non-Gypsies.

In Chapter I, I look into various inflections of “*Cigano*” in Brazil. In the first part I describe the development of the *Ciganologia Brasileira*, Brazilian Gypsiology.

Although the scholarly interest in *Ciganos* started in the nineteenth century and since the 1980s there has been a proliferation of academic works, the studies remain ethnographically poor and theoretically underdeveloped. In the second part I look at the history of *Ciganos* as an object of state policies. The eighteenth-century deportations of *Ciganos* from Portugal were part of a state-building project, but during most of Brazilian history only local authorities paid any attention to them. In the third part I argue that Bahians, ever-suspicious of categorical engagement, see *Ciganos* as a trickster-figure and not a Simmelian Stranger, as Gypsies have been often described in the European scholarship.

I start Chapter II with my walk from my house in the centre of the town to the main square, passing places where different forms of credit/debt can be arranged, individuals who make a living through arranging credit and different financial institutions. I discuss a view dominant among Brazilian scholars that Brazilians have a cultural distrust of money. I show that these authors understand money in a narrow sense as state money, but have failed to perceive alternative currencies and the richness of credit institutions that always underlined life in Brazil, i.e. money as credit. The process

of financialisation has increased the local demand for cash which has led to the proliferation of financial institutions created by the state and the people, which function alongside more traditional ones.

Chapter III describes how people manoeuvre and combine these various credit institutions. It revolves around on three case-studies of inhabitants who come from different social backgrounds but represent the majority of inhabitants of the town. I draw a picture of dense financial network, where at any moment people have various credit/debt relationships. The last section looks at the institution of the moneylender, *agiota*, and how this form of diverting wealth depends on flows of the (neo-liberal) distributional regime. The last part describes the *Cigano* as a specific kind of moneylender.

Chapter IV turns to the Calon. I describe Calon spatiality and how the character of settlements relates to kinship, movement and constant potentiality of violence. Organised around strong-men, settlements – composed of varying combination of tents and houses – are unstable assemblages of bilaterally related kin. Settlements do not possess identity beyond households that create them and cannot be understood without links to households in other settlements. Although there is a slight preference for virilocality and patrilocality, people often move between settlements within the region where their relatives and known Calon live. I show that reasons for moving vary, ranging from boredom, through economic opportunities, to violence. The constant potentiality of violence destabilises temporary arrangements of settlements and through feuding delimits the space any Calon can use.

Zooming into settlements, Chapter V has Calon households as its theme. By telling the story of Eduardo's family over two years, I describe the constant effort that goes into the establishment and stabilising of households, and argue that the ties that make Calon families strong are also the ones that cause their fragility. I follow how this family tried to re-establish itself after fleeing the town and the imprisonment of their older son, all the while trying to arrange their younger son's marriage. My concern here is to reveal the role of money and monetary debts. I argue (*pace* Holbraad 2005: 231-254), that the amount of money in loans to *juróns*, as Calon call the non-Gypsies, which is envisioned by people as a multiplicity, serves to register relationships with others. I show how the creation of this environment relates to money's role in the life cycle of Calon households: men use money given in dowry to establish themselves through individual exchanges with the *juróns*. Their efficacy is most visible in helping to find and stabilise the households of their children.

How one's actions, such as deals on the street, are perceived by others is crucial and Chapter VI describes some means of evaluating men's behaviour. First, Calon use an expression "to make the future" to describe a capacity to behave as a 'man of action', attuned to his environment and ready to seize his opportunities. This behaviour places each man between a *besta* (Port.), a beast of burden, associated with children and non-Gypsies, and the dead, *morto* (Port.) or *mulon* (Rom.), who do not enter into exchange relationships anymore. Secondly, a Calon man has to be able to show his valour and back up his claims with physical force whenever appropriate. Thirdly, there is a distinction between the poor and the rich and I argue that, rather than a class, they mark temporary states; Calon believe that these could be changed when a proper opportunity is seized. I

discuss strength, *força*, as the last, and composite, means of evaluation. A strong-man lives in the centre of a settlement and inspires others to live around him, has money, can create opportunities and is willing to stand up himself or is capable to mobilize others. His opposite is a widow, who as an index of a dead man, is dependent on others and lives in the outskirts of a settlement.

Chapters VII and VIII return to the question of moneylending from the point of view of the Calon. In Chapter VII, I argue that the Calon world is created through constant proliferations of deals among themselves. Sales and loans always result in an agreement to pay a sum of money in the future, creating an ever-changing network of future obligations, or rather hopes for future behaviours. Building on their strong sense of autonomy, Calon focus on *acts of* payment or renegotiation, rather than on *promises to* repay; on “exchange” rather than “hierarchy” (Graeber 2010; 2011). I trace various types of deferred exchanges among the Calon and show how they create “morally informed spaces of interaction” (McCallum 2003: 71): small subsistence loans define relations within the settlement, loans defined as “help” mark relationships of parents to their children and between affines, “deals” are done with people from one’s broader region and one never borrows from an enemy.

By focusing on how Calon manage their loans to *juróns*, in the last chapter I connect Calon sociality to the themes discussed in the first three chapters. I argue that although the clients of the Calon come from all social backgrounds, the majority come from new middle classes who are trying to preserve their newly acquired status. Calon are aware of their cold and money-driven image, and manipulate it, in order to ensure that their loans remain “impersonal” (Hart 2005) and do not turn into other forms of

reciprocity. Unlike in the deals between Calon men, women and other family members also become involved. The ideal is one of a life without effort, when through an unequal relationship money flows one way to *Cigano* households from long-term non-Gypsy clients; the most successful men, who have the most secure position vis-à-vis *brasileiros* of any town, also usually become strong-men of settlements. Due to contingencies of life, throughout their lives households build up a network of clients spread across the whole region. Yet, I show their loans are often unsuccessful and especially those loans that were meant to bring large gain often threaten men with equally spectacular failures.

I. GYPSIES IN BRAZIL, THE BRAZILIAN GYPSIES: *CIGANOS* IN SOCIAL SCIENCE, HISTORICAL SOURCES AND POPULAR REPRESENTATIONS

Introduction

The date was 9th of December 2009. It was the first day of the State Meeting of Traditional People and Communities (*Encontro Estadual de Povos e Comunidades Tradicionais*). The lobby of the hotel in Salvador was full of colours: *pais* and *mães de Santo* – priests and priestesses of Afro-Brazilian religions – all in white with large bead collars around their necks; shepherds from the *sertão* with small round leather hats; Indians dressed sparingly in leather and adorned with feathers; *Ciganas* in colourful dresses, fingers heavy with golden rings; maroons in capoeira trousers. The aim of the meeting was to draft a plan for the sustainable development of communities identified as traditional by the state of Bahia – *quilombolas* (maroons), *indígenas* (indigenous people), *extrativistas* (women who gather from mangrove swamps), *pescadores artesanais* (traditional fishermen), *comunidades de fundo e fecho de pasto* (the herdsmen of the *sertão* who hold pastures in common ownership), *povos de terreiro* (the people of Candomblé *terreiros*) and *Ciganos*.

After the opening, representatives of each community hailed the participants and offered rituals to bring about the meeting's success. First, the indigenous representatives greeted their ancestors singing and dancing clockwise. Then, the people of Candomblé formed a semi-circle and sang to *Orixás*, especially the *Orixá* of communication. The *Ciganos* were called up next. They

lined up in the front facing the audience. Jucelho Dantas, their spokesman, explained that this was the first time, that *Ciganos* were present at a meeting like this and because of their lack of similar experience and the history of exclusion, *Ciganos* do not have any special ritual for such occasions. Calon have *jaimpem*, Jucelho continued, a lament for the deceased or relatives who do not live in the same camp sung in the “evening by the fire”, but nobody here knew how to sing it. Instead he prayed in “Romani”, the language that “has many dialects” and has been used by *Ciganos* for centuries “to protect themselves from persecution”. When they turned to leave, Neide de Oliveira whispered something to Jucelho and the *Ciganos* stopped. From a leaflet she then read out a prayer to Santa Sara Kali, “the patron-saint of *Ciganos*”.

This event documents a process through which in the early twenty-first-century Brazil, *Ciganos*, defined as a traditional community, are becoming an object of state intervention. A proposal for the National Programme of Human Rights (2002), for instance, specifically identified “the situation of the *Ciganos*” among those areas of human rights that had previously not received adequate attention and in 2006 the Ministry of Culture included them in its list of Traditional Peoples and Communities. Such recognition is a state-led initiative, and *Cigano* representatives were identified and selected by the authorities themselves. Unlike the maroons, indigenous peoples, and *Candomblé* practitioners, the Calon do not have a tradition of grass-roots self-organisation, or a history of struggle for land-rights and cultural recognition.

People like Jucelho are only learning the language of the contemporary version of Brazilian multiculturalism and often draw inspiration from scholarly works about *Ciganos*. Later during the event Jucelho read out a statement that started with the history of *Cigano* arrival to Brazil and the Holocaust and described the past of nomadism and fires, invisibility and persecution. Here, such things as a mention of chicken stealing, that one Calon representative jokingly proposed as a part of their history, had to be omitted. They were aware of this popular image. In fact, in the final document drafted at the meeting, the fight against the negative image became the only point pertaining specifically to *Ciganos*. Jucelho's mention of the Holocaust and his description of Romani betray the influence of academia and of the pan-Romani political movement. During my two-year fieldwork, not once did the Calon I spent almost two years with make a reference to the Second World War or Europe, nor did they use the term "Romani" to talk about their language.

But there is still a lot to learn. In the current mode of identity politics in Brazil, ritual and dress become central for defining cultural difference based on "representing" one's culture for others. Although during the meeting, *Ciganos* could be clearly recognised by dresses of their women and their language, the opening salutation led to a small crisis. Jucelho succeeded in justifying their incapability, by pointing to *Cigano* social and political marginalisation, even suggesting that *jaimpem* could serve as a public condensation of the *Cigano* culture. I am curious about this development, since Jucelho and his brother had failed to record *jaimpem*¹⁰ in the past.

¹⁰ The Calon in Bahia do not know the meaning of the word. Linguistically it is based on the verb "džal" meaning 'to go', and the nominal suffix 'ipe', thus it means a journey (Yaron Matras, pers. comm. July 8, 2011).

The prayer read by Neide is different, because it builds on images easily recognisable by the audience. Neide, a non-Gypsy, was raised by a Rom family related to Miriam Stanescon, a Roma activist and a fortune-teller in Rio de Janeiro. Thanks to Miriam's activities, the presidential decree of 2006 declared the day of St. Sara, March 24, the National Day of *Ciganos*. Miriam also promotes a certain vision of Gypsiness, which is characteristic of large urban centres such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, but uses symbols foreign to Bahian Calon. *Cigano* culture is seen through so-called *Cigano* dances, fortune-telling, violin music and magic and it also fits with image of *Cigano* spirits in Umbanda, a Brazilian syncretic religion (e.g. Bomfim da Fonseca 2002; Vos 2006). Miriam, who was also present at some workshops prior to the meeting, is also the author of the prayer to St. Sara read out by Neide.

I describe this incident, because in a condensed manner it demonstrates how multifaceted and ambiguous the image of *Ciganos* in present-day Bahia is. Although this is a specific kind of event, in everyday life Calon also have to negotiate ways they have been viewed and characterised by Brazilians. In this chapter I describe three ways of framing *Ciganos*. First, I provide a brief overview of *Ciganologia*, as Romani Studies is known in Brazil. I then turn to outlining the history of *Ciganos* in Bahia complemented in some cases by sources from other parts of Brazil. The third section deals with the *Cigano* as a stock character of the Bahian social universe.

1.1 Ciganologia Brasileira

“Popular books and reviews ignore them,” wrote Richard Burton, a co-founder of the Anthropological Society of London, “but the peasantry regard them with disgust and

religious dread” (1898: 284). This observation about *Ciganos* has held true for over a century now. Although they live in most Bahian towns and everybody has something to say about them, it is difficult to find any academic studies about *Ciganos*. Bookshops carry esoteric books on *Cigano* spirits, magic or millennial culture, but the only scholarly books available are an anthology of essays (Mota 2004) , a reprint of two books from a nineteenth-century folklorist (Moraes Filho 1981) and a history of *Ciganos* in Minas Gerais (Teixeira 2007a).

Yet, the “scholarly” interest in *Ciganos* started relatively early. On 4 May 1839 members of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute, amateur scholars from among the elite listened to a presentation about *Ciganos* in Brazil (1839: 134). In 1885 and 1886 Alexander José de Mello Moraes Filho, who prior to the abolition of slavery was the only person to study African cultures in Brazil (Skidmore 1993: 57), published the first books on *Ciganos*. A folklorist, he was the immediate predecessor of a growing group of intellectuals who aimed to stimulate national pride on the basis of Brazilian traditions. In his work on *Ciganos*, valuable mostly for its descriptions of life rituals, he tried to carve out a space for them, alongside the three constitutive races. The only attempt at any comprehensive study of *Ciganos* in Brazil up to today – *Os Ciganos do Brasil* by Oliveira China – was published in 1936. Although tedious and repetitive he connects ethnographic, historical data and linguistic material collected through network of his collaborators in diverse regions of Brazil.

Despite the good reception of these works, after 1936 *Ciganos* appeared only in a few articles in regional journals, or as a side note in works on folklore and on street argot (see also Cairus 2012). Moreover, most folklorists denied the special role of *Ciganos*

arguing, that superstitions that Moraes Filho attributed to *Ciganos*, were in fact of a broader Iberian origin (Gouveira 1926, in Bettencourt 1957: 32) and that although *Ciganos* were a separate “race”, they had not influenced in any way “the spirit of our people” (Magalhães 1960: 17ft 6 [1939]).

Published master’s dissertations by ethnographers Locatelli (1981) and Sant’Ana (1983), mark the beginning of the academic interest in *Ciganos*; it is related to the opening of discussion on minorities and ethnicity in Brazil and the process of re-democratisation. In fact, in recent years, many anthropologists have also been personally involved: For instance, Frans Moonen, a founder of the *Núcleo de Estudos Ciganos*, accused Miriam Stanescon - with whom he was in the 2006 working group on *Cigano* cultures (*Grupo de Trabalho Culturas Ciganas*) of the Ministry of Culture – of ‘self-promoting’ ‘false’ leadership; and in 2009 Patricia Goldfarb and Erisvelton Sávio Melo were among the researchers of the Brazilian North-East, who denounced systematic violation of the human rights of traditional populations.

About two dozen theses and dissertations in history, geography and anthropology have been written about *Ciganos* after the late 1990s. Generally, the best works are historical or done by historians (e.g. Teixeira 2000;Alves de Souza 2006;Borges 2007).¹¹ Most anthropological works lack ethnographic research, create an image of the ahistorical diasporic people and in most cases can be salvaged only for facts. Many also codify certain way of writing about *Ciganos*. For instance, they start with the discussion of *the* Indian origin of Gypsies and their wanderings through Europe; a few available authors are canonised; concepts are often taken from others without context or ethnographic evidence. The studies that decry exoticisation of *Ciganos*, build uncritically on the

¹¹ For an updated list of theses and dissertations see (Moonen 2011).

analysis of Anti-Gypsyism in Europe and end up treating *Ciganos* as automatically marginal. For instance, anthropologist Frans Moonen, who most systematically tried to define *Ciganologia* as an academic field, specifically aimed at mapping out anti-Gypsyism in Brazilian society and at linked it to history of the Gypsies in Europe, including the Holocaust (1994;2007). This becomes a challenge especially for historical studies that are based on shallow reading of official sources, and which end up reducing the history of *Ciganos* in Brazil to a history of persecution.

In 2004 Patricia Goldfarb received the first PhD (in sociology) on the basis of her research among the Calon. Largely a reworking of her master's dissertation, it stands out among other works by its use of a wealth of ethnographic data. Unfortunately, as Ferrari (2010: 88) correctly points out, Goldfard does not sufficiently explore Calon concepts and instead in her analysis uses concepts taken from non-Gypsy thought, such as “tradition” and “culture loss”, “nomadism” and “sedentarism”. The only ethnography that tries to understand how the Calon see and construct their world using their own conceptual apparatus is a 2010 thesis by Florencia Ferrari. It deals with the Calon notion of personhood and ways the difference from non-Gypsies is created. Since in my thesis I explicitly engage with Ferrari's work, I will leave any commentaries to places where specific issues arise.

Overall, it could be said that although the field of Brazilian Gypsiology, *Ciganologia Brasileira*, started already in the first years of the 1980s – i.e. not much after modern anthropological interest in Gypsies started, and the first ethnographies were published, elsewhere (e.g. Gropper 1975;Rehfish 1975;Kaprow 1978) --, it has developed only weakly. No published ethnographies compare to those produced during

this period within the French-Italian (e.g. Williams 1984;Piasere 1985;Tauber 2006) or the Anglo-American (e.g. Okely 1983;Stewart 1997;Gay y Blasco 1999;Lemon 2000) anthropological traditions. The picture of a *Cigano* that emerges from the existing academic output in Brazil is a mixture of the “ethnographic present” described as tradition, stress on marginalisation, and the split between the (nomadic) past and the (sedentary) present. As the event in Salvador and especially of the content of Jucelho’s speech showed, this portrayal corresponds and informs the identity discourse on *Ciganos* as one of the traditional communities; in fact, many anthropologists today discuss governmental documents, foregoing the fieldwork research. As Florencia Ferrari correctly observed, within Brazilian anthropology there is not a *Cigano* ethnography that could be considered a “classic” (2010: 87) and I argue elsewhere, from the point of view of anthropology in general, writing about *Ciganos* in Brazil remains rather impoverished (see also Ferrari and Fotta 2012).

1.2 History¹²

Blasphemers

The first names of *Ciganos* in Bahia show up in records of the First Visit of the Holy Office in 1591 – eight *Ciganas* figure in seven denunciations as both accused (six cases) and accusers (five cases) (Mendonça 1925); an additional *Cigana* confesses within the period “of grace” (Mendonça 1935). Four denunciations for various blasphemies were against Violante Fernandes; she also confessed to saying that it rained heavily because God pissed on her, wanting her to drown. Other *Ciganas* were accused of denying the

¹² For a general history of Gypsies in Brazil see Os Cigano do Brasil (China 1936) and História dos Ciganos no Brasil (Teixeira 2007b).

judgement day, of renunciation of God and of sorcery. These Inquisition documents also reveal a few things about lives of these Gypsy women: most were married to *Ciganos*; some worked as peddlers of second-hand goods (*adellas*); one *Cigano* couple served as jailers. Overall, there seems nothing unusual about the treatment of *Ciganas* or suggestive of special association with heretical or magical practices. Rather, the cases reflect popular religiosity in the colony more generally, which preoccupied the religious authorities in the first place (Souza 2003). But since out of seven accusations four were by one *Cigana* against another, one can speculate about the distance from non-Gypsies and the intensity of relations among the *Ciganos* in Salvador.¹³

The Inquisition records also attest to the colonial politics of difference. People are classified as Old, New or Semi-new Christians; in fact, the control of proper religious practices of the Jewish converts (the New Christians) exiled to colonies was a prime motivation of the Inquisition's visit. Their places of birth are noted. Lastly, in about ten percent of cases "race" is given (Quirino 1966: 34 ff) with *Cigano* as the only "race" specified for old Christians born in Portugal. Overall, these characterisations betray the peculiar *Cigano* character of being not quite white, not quite Portuguese and not quite Catholic.¹⁴

¹³ Husbands of all but one *ciganas* were *Ciganos*; Angelina and Tareja claimed witnessing Violante blaspheming while peddling with her; and Joanna Ribeiro is accused of taking the placenta of Brianda's newborn while visiting her after the delivery, then salting and hiding it in a wardrobe, which killed the baby.

There is also collective effort against Maria, alias Violante, Fernandes. Of four cases when one *Cigana* accused another, three were against Violante; another was by an official of the ecclesiastical court who was told about Violante's blasphemy from *cigana* Tareja (who heard it from *cigana* Angelina). Violante was a tough "a woman of the world", also accused of stealing a share from a robbery from *cigano* Francisco.

¹⁴ "Race" categories of those "born" in Brazil were *negro*, *índio*, *mistiço*, and *malemuco*.

Although the proportion of *Ciganos* in the Inquisition records for Bahia is small – about 2 percent (Quirino 1966: 32)¹⁵, the stories of the *Ciganas* reveal how the Crown dealt with Gypsies. In Portugal of this period, the term *Cigano* started to denote a specific lifestyle and habits. As their relationship to the centres of power, the Crown and the Church, became increasingly problematic, *Ciganos* begin to be exiled overseas (Donovan 1992: 33-53). For instance, Violante Fernandes and Apolonia de Bustamãte (both born in Spain) had been deported for theft of animals (Mendonça 1935: 57, 127) while the records note that Tareja Rois stressed that she came to Brazil on her own will (Mendonça 1925: 400).

Exiles

The system of *degredos*, of royal edicts by which people were exiled to colonies or to galleys, reflected authorities' preoccupations with Portugal's underpopulation and the quality of its population. While the colonial empire required inhabitants and explorers, not everybody could be allowed to leave freely to the colonies. Those that stayed should be as productive as possible. Hence, "[T]he small demographic base and global requirements translated into a reality that each and every citizen was simply too valuable to waste" (Coates 2001: 188). By using *degredados* – prostitutes, orphans, major and minor criminals, New Christians and *Ciganos* – it was possible to populate the colonies in a relatively controlled manner.

¹⁵ In 1618 during the second visit of the Holy Office in Bahia, only one out of 135 denounced is a *Cigano* (BNRJ 1927).

In connection with *Ciganos*, *degredos* developed as a part of the attempt to expel them from Portugal.¹⁶ In these laws *Ciganos* were defined broadly as those leading gypsy lives and sharing gypsy customs.¹⁷ In fact, only a century after Gypsies were first documented in the Iberian Peninsula (Saragosa, 1425) already the second law passed in Portugal dealing with *Ciganos* (1538), ordered them to leave the kingdom. Those who did not conform were to be deported for two years to African colonies (Costa 1999: 56; Coelho 1892: 231). Over time, destinations for deportations changed and around 1686, with the opening of the Brazilian hinterland, Maranhão and Ceará replaced Africa as the main destination.

As was the case with *degredos* in general, besides expulsion of undesirables, the legislation also aimed at disciplining the remaining population. For instance, the law of 1538 already stipulated the same treatment for non-Gypsies “who live as *Ciganos*”. Such control of population became more urgent after the War of Restoration (1640-1668) when lack of public safety, criminality and economic recession made *Ciganos* into “obvious and non-controversial subjects of social control” (Donovan 1992: 37). In the long run, legislation also helped reify *Ciganos* as different and associated with socially undesirable characteristics and practices. In a law of 1708, for instance, *Ciganos* were accused of frequent theft and deceit (*engano*). Like the previous regulations, the law confirmed galleys for men and deportation for women – for *Ciganos* as well as those associating with them – unless they gave up wearing *Cigano* clothes, speaking *Cigano* language,

¹⁶ For more details see: Adolpho Coelho (1892), Elisa Maria Lopes da Costa (1997; 1999: 49-91; 2001: 223-232; 2005: 153-181), Bill M. Donovan (1992: 33-53).

¹⁷ For instance, a 1686 royal letter to the judge of Elvas describes *Ciganos* as “sons and grandsons of the Portuguese but of Gypsy habits, type (*género*) and lifestyle” (Coelho 1892: 252).

practicing palmistry, living together, walking together, or trading with beasts of burden (Coelho 1892: 223).

As these laws dealt differently with men and women, exile also impacted conjugal relations (Costa 2001: 225). In a law from 1592, for instance, *Ciganos* who did not leave the country were sent to galleys, while *Ciganas* were to give up Gypsy “habits” and language or be exiled to Brazil for life (Costa 2005: 158). The *Ciganas* mentioned in the Inquisition records already give a sense of consequences for individuals: one *Cigano* living in Salvador was rumoured to have another wife elsewhere; two *Ciganas* had been separated from the *Ciganos* they had lived with in Portugal; Violante claimed to be a widow, but apparently had a husband in galleys.

The sheer variety of legislative measures passed in the seventeenth century aimed at expelling *Ciganos* from the kingdom shows their ineffectiveness, a fact explicitly recognised by the 1708 edict of a new king João V (Coelho 1892: 256). In February 1718 he ordered that all *Ciganos* along the Portuguese borders be imprisoned and deported (Ibid. 1892: 257). Unlike before, whole families and communities were rounded up and no period to leave the country or a possibility of giving up a *Cigano* lifestyle was offered. On the March 10 *Gazeta de Lisboa* reported that 50 *Ciganos*, 51 *Ciganas* and 43 children were imprisoned in Limoeiro (Costa 1995: 167). Their deportation was heavily publicised and in combination with the usual spectacle offered by departures and arrivals of ships, it served as the demonstration of King’s will (Donovan 1992: 38).

Such mass deportations continued throughout the century. The last known shipments from Portugal to Brazil – of 400 *Ciganos* – occurred in 1780 and 1786 (Ibid. 1992: 52 ft50). The total number of *Ciganos* exiled as *degredados* is unknown as the ship

registers are often unavailable. There are only two registers of *Ciganos* arriving to Salvador in the Public Archive of Bahia – one of five *Cigano* couples and their children brought by a ship to Bahia in 1718,¹⁸ another of eleven *Cigano* couples – without children – on their way to Angola in 1756.¹⁹ The Archive also holds a letter dating 11 April 1718 that accompanied the register. Addressed to the governor of Bahia, it stated that *Cigano* families would continue being shipped to Salvador, because of their “scandalous behaviour” in the kingdom.²⁰ Once in Bahia, they were prohibited from using their language and the governor was to ensure that it was not taught to children.²¹

Highwaymen

In July 1719, only a year after the spectacle-deportation from Lisbon, the governor of Bahia ordered all captains to capture “without hesitation or any dodging” three *Ciganos* – deserters from Salvador – and a *Cigana*, a mother-in-law of one (BNRJ 1946: 148). As none of them appear on the 1718 name list, they must have arrived on different ships. In August of the same year, the governor sent another similar letter, and in November, he ordered the captains to imprison “discreetly” and “with diligence” all *Ciganos* and *Ciganas*, young and old (BNRJ 1946: 233). These orders betray an increasing preoccupation caused by the deportations of *Ciganos* to various Brazilian cities simultaneously. Larger numbers of *Ciganos* required employment (e.g. as soldiers),

¹⁸ Arquivo Público da Bahia (APEB). Seção Colonial e Provincial, série Ordens Régias. Livro 12, doc. 46.

¹⁹ Arquivo Público da Bahia (APEB). Seção Colonial e Provincial, série Ordens Régias. Livro 54, doc. 65.

²⁰ Accioli de (Cerqueira e Silva 1925: 155) mentions that *Ciganos* arrived also in January 1715, but I did not find any record of it.

²¹ The same letter was sent to governors of Rio de Janeiro, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Angola, Cabo Verde e São Tomé (Costa 1995:166).

policing and a place to live, especially since, officially, they were also prohibited from leaving Salvador.

According to a letter by the Count of Arcos dated 1755, *Ciganos* exiled to Salvador settled in the Bairro da Palma, which became known as *Mouraria*, a place of the Moors, but as their population grew, they were allowed to settle in Santo Antonio Além do Carmo and other parts of Recôncavo (Neves 2005: 27).²² The letter was an opinion solicited by the *Conselho Ultramarino* in a case of a complaint by the municipal council of Salvador dating 5 July 1755; a similar complaint was sent by the council in Cachoeira (Cerqueira e Silva 1925: 155 ft59)). Both pleaded with King to “free them” of these “damned people”, who traded with horses and encouraged slaves to steal from their masters.

But their main complaint was about the *Ciganos*' theft of horses from caravans coming from Minas (Cerqueira e Silva 1925: 155). The petitions therefore have to be seen in the context of both the preoccupation with public safety and the importance of mining. Gold was discovered in Minas in 1695 and although officially prohibited from entering Minas, there are documents showing that *Ciganos* from Bahia started arriving early in the 1720s, often after being expelled by authorities there (Teixeira 2007a). The *sertão*, through which the above-mentioned caravans had to pass, remained an extremely violent place throughout the eighteenth century. In Minas itself, authorities blamed disorder on the “bad quality of the population” (Anastasia 2005: 14); regulations dealing with *Ciganos* are a part of this effort to control the “unruly” and “mobile” population, *o povo* (Schwartz 1999: 103-125), of which they were an easily identified segment. Common

²² In a 1761 letter, the interim governors estimated the number of Gypsies at “several thousands” (Coelho 1995, pp. 228-229).

complaints against *Ciganos* included their carrying weapons, stealing slaves and animals, and being *salteadores dos caminhos*, highwaymen, a crime that after 1766 applied to anybody caught wandering throughout the *sertão*.

Prompted by the complaints from Salvador and other colonial authorities, on 20 September 1760 King José I passed a charter in which he specified how “such useless and coarse people” should be made to take up “civilised lives”. The king ordered small *Cigano* boys to be handed over to craftsmen and men to become soldiers or to be employed on public works. *Ciganos* were not permitted to wander, to carry arms, to live together in one neighbourhood, to trade with slaves and beasts of burden. Those that broke this law were to be deported to São Tomé and Príncipe summarily (Coelho 1892: 262). A year later, in October 1761, the interim governors of Bahia reported that “*Ciganos* want to take up ordered lives, because they are being imprisoned all over the country. [...] totally give up their illicit trade and libertine lives”. They admitted, however, that boys were rarely handed to craftsmen, because they married very early (BNRJ 1909: 482).

Itinerant Traders

Up until now the sources that I have reviewed have dealt primarily with criminalisation and disciplining of *Ciganos*, representatives of an undesirable lifestyle. Starting in the nineteenth century, however, thanks to Brazilian memoirists and foreign travellers we can catch glimpses of the *Cigano* way of life. Travelling through Pernambuco in the late 1830s, George Gardner made this observation:

“[*Ciganos*] seldom come near the large towns of the coast preferring more thinly inhabited, and consequently more lawless districts; they wander from farm to farm, and from village to village, buying, selling, and exchanging horses and various articles of jewellery; like those of Europe they are often accused of stealing horses, fowls, or whatever they can lay their hands upon; the old women tell fortunes, in which they are much encouraged by the young ladies of the places they visit. Although they speak Portuguese like the other inhabitants of the country, among themselves they always make use of their own language, always intermarry, are said to pay no attention to the religious observances of the country, nor to use any form of worship of their own” (Gardner 1849: 147).

In the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, *Ciganos* lived in houses as well as in camps along roads: Richard Burton (1898: 284) spent a night in a *Cigano* tent, while Jaques Debret (1975: 191-194) depicted the interior of a house of a gypsy slave trader. The two modes of living were not separate. In a letter dated August 1761, the Bahian interim governor wrote that the *Ciganos* lived in “set-apart neighbourhoods” and were “used to leaving their houses often and going bartering and trading throughout the *sertão*”. Lady Callcot visiting Botafogo in Rio de Janeiro – in early 1820s still a village inhabited only by “fishermen and gipsies [sic.]” – writes that “part of their [gypsy] families is generally resident at their settlements but the men rove about the country and are the great horse jockies [sic.] of this part of Brazil” (Graham 1824: 253). Travelling through Minas Gerais in the late 1880s, James Wells (1886: 378) bought mules from a settled *Cigano* owning a *fazenda*, whose relatives used it to camp temporarily.

Ciganos travelled in groups composed of several families. When they came close to towns they were often chased away, accused of disturbing public order and stealing slaves and animals. In 1726 in São Paulo, *Ciganos* were given 24 hours to leave since they were “harmful to the population because they walked around organizing games and other disturbances” (Teixeira 2007a: 33). A year later, the bishop of Rio de Janeiro complained of *Ciganos* in Minas “performing immoral operas and comedies that insult the sacred teachings of the Holy Church” (Borges 2007: 28). Probably referring to Rom who began arriving from Eastern Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, Gilberto Freyre mentions *Cigano* circuses with bears, “real and fake”, monkeys, and boys who had been “sometimes kidnapped”, doing acrobatics on horses that were “generally also stolen” (1951: 155).

As a source of goods and animals, *Ciganos* were tolerated by the wealthy, especially outside large cities, while *Ciganos* sought out their protection in order to be able to camp or to earn their living. When travelling through Ceará in 1828, Patroni was approached by a group of *Ciganos*. Thinking he was being assaulted, he told the *Ciganos* he was a judge and immediately “all of them at the same time saluted me with bows, and pleaded that I provide them with patronage in the town of Icó, where they were going to trade” (Patroni 1851: 44). Ten years later Gardner encountered *Ciganos* between Ceará and Pernambuco who, according to him, “are generally disliked by common people, but are encouraged by the more wealthy, as was the case on the present occasion for they were encamped beneath some large trees near the house of a major in the National Guards, who is the proprietor of a large cane plantation” (Gardner 1849: 146).



A Brazilian gypsy.



Picture 1.1

*Ciganos in Brazil in the 19th century*²³

²³ From top left: An illustration of James W. Wells' *Three Thousand Miles Through Brazil*, Vol. 1 (1886: 378), "Tsiganes iles du Parana" by Edouard Riou published in a magazine *Le Tour du Monde* in 1874, and "Intérieur d'une maison gitane" by Jean Baptiste Debret, 1823.

As early as 1591 the Holy Office refers to *Ciganas* as ambulant vendors (*adellas*) of second-hand goods across Recôncavo Baiano and the above mentioned 1761 letter of the governors of Bahia refers to their ambulant trading. In the nineteenth century travellers describe *Ciganos* trading with trinkets, horses and slaves; they belonged among *mascates*, the itinerant traders. Travelling in groups of relatives made crossings of dangerous areas possible while dispersed communities and self-subsistent *fazendas* hampered development of fixed establishments (Goulart 1967: 70). According to some, they were the first “*gringos*”, a term that was used in the North-East for itinerant traders of non-Portuguese origin (Freyre 1951: 133 ft4 & 155). In addition, an investigation into a *quilombo* (a maroon community) near Recife, Pernambuco, uncovered, for instance, that weapons, of the same kind that the army used, were supplied by *Cigano* Genoíno Dantas (Carvalho 1991: 18).

Itinerant traders in general and *Ciganos* in particular, were viewed with suspicion. Goods were considered overpriced or stolen. Freyre’s suggestion that *Cigano* horses were “generally stolen” reflects this sentiment; the *Cigano* implicated in selling weapons to the *quilombo*, was also charged with catching run-away slaves, who he resold instead of returning to their owners. Similarly, when a *quilombo* in Abrantes near Salvador was destroyed in 1827, one of accusations against it was that these run-away slaves were getting revenge by stealing the children of their former masters and selling them to *Ciganos* (Cerqueira e Silva 1933: 431).

Vagabonds

Thanks to the richness of sources, *Ciganos* of Rio de Janeiro of the beginning of the nineteenth century are the best documented community.²⁴ They specialised as *comissários*, i.e. small-scale traders and re-sellers of slaves (e.g. Alves de Souza 2006, especially Chapter IV).²⁵ One French traveller describes *Cigana* ambulant vendors of slaves (Goulart 1967: 166); but they were mostly associated with Valongo, the main slave market. The market, which closed down in 1831, consisted of about 50 establishments containing about 300-400 slaves each and many ran by *Ciganos* (Soares 1988: 50).

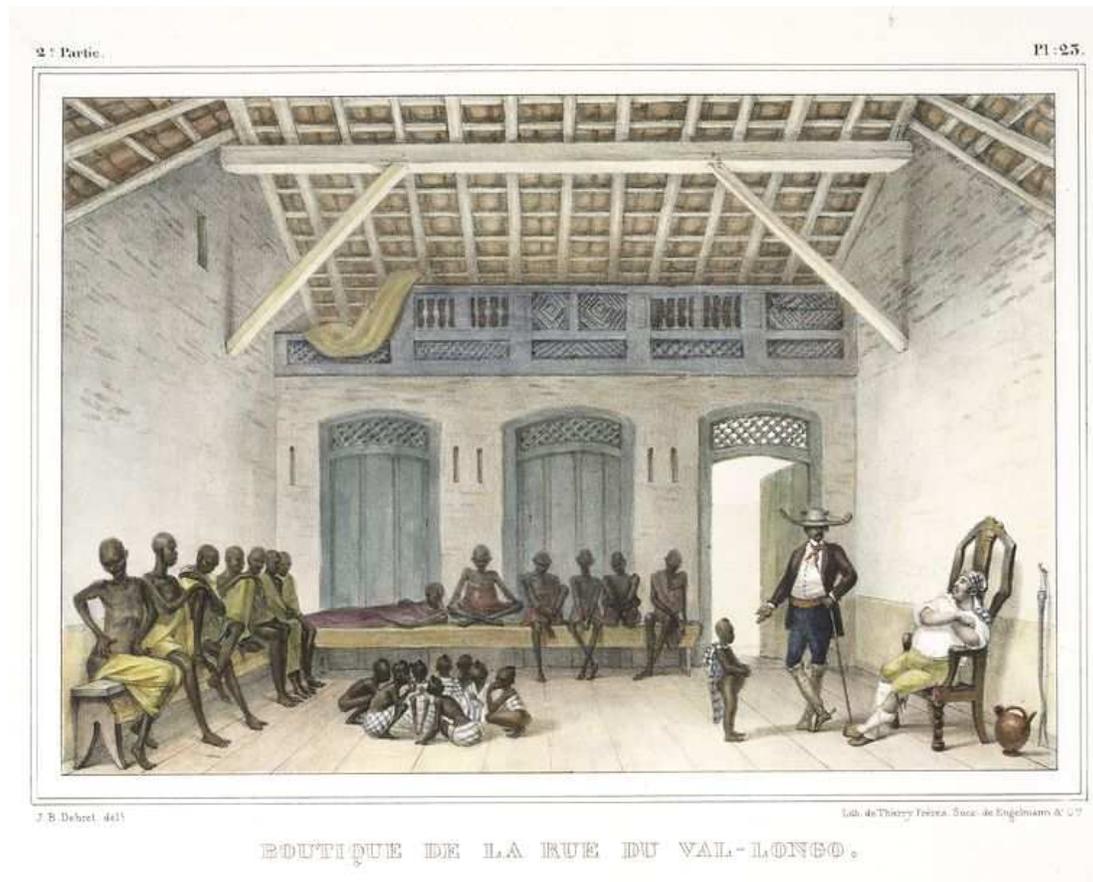
According to Robert Walsh, an Anglican chaplain,

“[W]hen a cargo of slaves arrives, it is generally purchased by people who are called *Ciganos*, or gipsies, and who nearly resemble all the individuals of the race which I have seen in different parts of the world. They have dark olive complexions, black eyes and hair, in common with many Brazilians; but they have that obliquity of aspect, and sinister expression of countenance, that at once marks them as a peculiar race; and on all occasions they display callosity of feeling, and a ferocious and wild temper, that assimilates them with their kind, and unfortunately fits them for the traffic which they almost exclusively exercise in Rio” (Walsh 1831: 178).

²⁴ Alexander Caldcleugh (1825: 81) estimated the population of Rio de Janeiro in 1821 at 135,000, out of which 400 were Gypsies.

²⁵ Slave trade in Rio de Janeiro involved many *comissários* – ship captains, muleteers from São Paulo and Minas Gerais, Portuguese peddlers, African freedmen and *Ciganos* (Karasch 1987: 51)

This scene from one such establishment, depicted by Jean-Baptiste Debret, shows a poorer *Cigano* trader talking to a buyer from Minas Gerais:



Picture 1.2

Valongo Slave Market

Although in the interior of Brazil *Ciganos* were suspected of stealing animals, the only specific cases I encountered deal with thefts of slaves, primarily within Rio de Janeiro. For instance, in 1820 Joaquim José Roiz was imprisoned suspected of having stolen and sold more than one thousand slaves to Minas and in 1836 a group of *Ciganos* was caught with 60 stolen slaves (Karasch 1987: 54).²⁶ An anonymous letter to the chief of police in 1834 states that one such *Cigano* gang “is protected by persons of high

²⁶ Rio de Janeiro was special because of a high number of slaves, a size of the slave market, amount of written sources as well as organisation of its police force.

esteem” (Soares 1988: 86). They were also suspected of buying stolen slaves from gangs of freemen, of kidnapping freemen and turning them into slaves (Soares 1988: 78 ff), and were generally deemed responsible for the transportation of stolen slaves outside the city (Soares 1988: 87).

Some *Ciganos* in Rio de Janeiro served as *meirinhos*, lower court officials (Mello, Alves de Souza, and Couto 2004). They also performed during celebrations of the wedding of the Prince Regent to the Infanta of Spain in May 1810, and of the birthday of the Prince Regent in October 1810. To celebrate the elevation of Brasil into the Kingdom in 1815, João VI accompanied by the entire court and foreign delegates, spent an evening of merrymaking in the *Campo dos Ciganos*, the Rio’s bohemian neighbourhood (Donovan 1992: 47).

This visibility, romantic valorisation and insertion into the slave economy did not imply general acceptance of *Ciganos*. Henry Koster, who lived in Pernambuco between 1809 and 1815, never met any *Ciganos* there because “the late governor of the province was inimical to them, and some attempts having been made to apprehend some of them, their visits were discontinued” (1816: 400). Besides the continued accusations of the theft of animals²⁷, *Ciganos* were targeted under the fight against *vadiagem* (vagabondage), a new crime under a new Royal Criminal Code of 1831. During this period, they came to be seen as a part of a class of poor non-working free people – *malandros* (rascals), *vadios* (vagabonds), *moleques* (street children living off petty theft), *capoeiras* (free negro highwaymen hiding in the *capoeira* forest) and so on – feared for their criminality, rebelliousness and involvement in kidnapping of slaves (Goulart 1967: 177-8). In Minas

²⁷ See, for instance, a 1858 governor’s report about the crime in Sergipe (Relatorio da Presidencia, p.5, <<http://brazil.crl.edu/bsd/bsd/1053/index.html>>).

Gerais, for instance, while the early municipal ordinances treated *Ciganos* as suspect of the theft of animals and slaves, the latter once turned repressive and aimed at expelling them from the cities (Teixeira 2000: 29).

In Bahia, meanwhile, food crises, federalist revolts and slave rebellions led to similar concerns with safety. The above-mentioned case of the *quilombo* in Abrantes and the panic about runaway slaves selling the children of their former masters to *Ciganos* is one example of the effect on *Ciganos*. Another is provided by Castelluci Junior (2009: 197), who described the impact of an 1831 gathering of judges. The judges, coming from several towns of southern Recôncavo, elaborated a new code, which was to help in catching runaway slaves and criminals, as well as in disciplining vagabonds. Passports were issued to control movement of people, and to prevent both the kidnapping and the fleeing of slaves. It also dealt with *vadios* and elaborated regulations against *Ciganos*. *Ciganos* without employment, and farmers, who let *Ciganos* to camp on their land, were to be punished. In 1833, *Cigano* José de Palma, resident of Santo Antônio Além do Carmo, got caught in this system when he tried to deliver four slaves to a customer in Jaguaripe. Lacking passports for the slaves he was imprisoned and the investigation revealed that he had not paid tax on the slaves, and that one of them had been stolen and sold to him by kidnappers.

Degenerates

The First Republic (1889-1930) further elaborated the concept of *vadiagem* in connection with two modernisation projects: The hygienisation and public health arose from ideas of modern urban planning, while the disciplining of labour force and redefinition of work

was necessitated by the collapse of slavery and the twentieth century European migration. These projects were interlinked. For instance, already in the 1858 municipal regulation of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, which regulated begging, also prohibited *Ciganos* from staying for more than 24 hours in the city and city inhabitants from trading with them. The police as well as public hygiene authorities were responsible for the implementation of this regulation (Borges 2007: 43). Although Juiz de Fora was a special case of a town undergoing fast industrialisation, the strategies employed here were similar to those in Bahia (e.g. Fraga Filho 1996).

In this view, the *Cigano* lifestyle was incompatible with progress. Their anachronism was seen predominantly in hereditary terms (e.g. Freyre 1951: 155 & 216), although *ciganos* were peripheral to discussions about the racial degeneracy of the Brazilian *povo*, sometimes deemed as the cause behind some specific ills, such as trachoma (e.g. Ribeiro da Silva 1916: 68-93). Bahian Newspapers, the self-appointed guardians of modernity, provide insight into these views. They reported “infestations” by *Cigano* “hordes”.²⁸ They enlightened people by reporting latest developments in science (including eugenics) and fought superstition by detailing *Cigano* tricks.²⁹ They documented movements and activities of *Ciganos* and encouraged police to chase them out,³⁰ closely reporting police actions against them³¹ and praising the police for their successes.³² Often the local population demanded and participated in police repression. Such was the case of Juiz de Fora, in Minas Gerais, in 1903 when police and the lynch

²⁸ *Mais de 200 ciganos apavoram o município de Bom Conselho*, A Tarde. Salvador, Bahia, 5.4.1925.

²⁹ *Ciganas embusteyras*, Diario de Notícias, Salvador, Bahia, 28.6. 1912.

³⁰ *Ciganos perniciosos*, Diario de Notícias, Salvador, Bahia, 9.5.1913.

³¹ *Bando de ciganos*, Diario de Noticias, Salvador, Bahia, 29.5.1907.

³² *Horda de ciganos*, Diario de Noticias, Salvador, Bahia, 3.3.1909.

mob attacked a camp of Serbian *Ciganos*, killing three men and two children (Borges 2007: 71).

The Serbian *Ciganos* belonged to the Eastern European Roma who started migrating to Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century. In the North-East they are also referred to as the *Ciganos Turcos*, or, because they often worked as coppersmiths, as *tacheiros* (from *tacho*, a copper pot). In large cities some women, known as *madammes*, opened future-telling parlours (Oliveira China 1935:107-108). A newspaper article from January 1935 provides some description of the lives of Russian *ciganos* in Salvador: They lived in tents and houses, men working as blacksmiths and women reading future from cards. Theodoro Michlos was born in Crato, Ceará, travelled across Minas Gerais, before arriving to Salvador in November 1934. Sometime after the Feast of Bomfim (January 6) they were planning on moving to Sergipe (China 1936: 121-123). Many Roma only passed through Brasil (Cotten 1951: 19) and some were true cosmopolitans: Brazilian Roma carrying American passports who were imprisoned in Serbia in 1930s had wandered for some time in South Africa; they spoke Romany of the Roma living in Vojvodina, Portuguese, English and some Afrikaans (Prince 1930: 139-143). Further immigration of *Ciganos*, however, was officially prohibited in 1938, one year after the Estado Novo was established. The law banned entry to “beggars, vagabonds, *ciganos* and the like”, even if they held a valid visa. This law remained the only piece of national legislation pertaining to *Ciganos* until 2006.

To summarise, looking at the historical evidence, it seems that apart from a short period of the eighteenth century, Brazilian authorities were ambiguous about *Ciganos*. Most of the time they ignored their presence and there is little documentation about them. But they also saw *Cigano* lives as “irregular”³³ and viewed their activities with suspicion and their customs as marks of difference. *Ciganos* belonged to the mass of free poor people but were also seen as distinct from others. The tenuous members of the *povo*, the people, their position was amenable to transformations through politicisation of difference, and depending on specific circumstance authorities problematised *Ciganos*.

Accounts of travellers are potentially more useful in revealing something about the *Cigano* way of life. Most, however, are silent about them despite the fact that as a Scottish naturalist George Gardner observed, *Ciganos* were present in almost every town in the North-East (1849: 146; see also Patroni 1851: 46). Burton, for instance, complained that “many English residents of long standing ignore the existence of gipsies [sic.] in the [sic.] Brazil” (1869: 62). Only in the first decades of the nineteenth century, during a brief period when *Ciganos* in Rio de Janeiro became uncharacteristically visible, foreign travellers mentioned *Ciganos* more often.

It is unclear what criteria travellers used to identify *Ciganos*, however. Felte Bezerra, the author of *Etnias Sergipanas* (1950), notes that “among us, a Gypsy, carries a cultural rather than ethnic meaning, and designates a nomadic lifestyle sustained through exchanges and wheeling and dealing” (cited in Freyre 1951: 133 ft4). Augusto Zaluar, who explicitly set up to “catalogue civilising elements” of the Brazilian nation, was, for

³³ In a letter to the Governor of Minas Gerais in 1737, a captain of dragoons argued that it was not worth following “ten or twelve *Ciganos*” and lose a horse in the pursuit, since “not one of them has any crime on him, other than a disgrace of being a Gypsy used to leading an irregular life (*costumando a uma vida irregular*)” (Costa 1999: 87).

instance, accused by his friend and editor Affonso Taunay of mistaking a camp of *caboclos* (or *bohémios americanos*) living in huts along the road for *Ciganos* (1939: 361).

1.3 Popular Image

Shortly after George Gardner had met some *Ciganos*, his horse was stolen and the inhabitants of the town accused *Ciganos*. Later the horse was found badly hurt and it turned out that a local stole it “to hunt down cattle on his estate” (1849: 147). For James Wells, who bought two mules from a *Cigano* in Minas Gerais, “lowness of the price was very suggestive of their being stolen property” (1886: 383). And Richard Burton confirms the existence of a “common rumour which charges them with being robbers of poultry and horses, and with doing at times a trifle in the way of assassination” (1898: 284).

According to Burton, Brazilian peasants viewed *Ciganos* “with disgust and religious dread”, but *Ciganos* were “hardly worse than the “Morpeticos” (lepers) who are allowed to haunt the country” (Ibid. 284). Filipe Patroni, later an important politician of Pará, admits that although he met many “hordes” of *Ciganos*, he never heard anybody complain about them. “Quite on the contrary, I observed that they entered all kinds of farms and settlements and maintained commercial relations with all castes of people rural and urban, poor and rich” (1851: 46).

From these nineteenth-century accounts of travellers, *Ciganos* emerge as ambiguous characters, about which everybody has strong opinions. They were seen as

skilled traders, but suspected of theft or of selling stolen and worthless goods. They were also distrusted for carrying arms, although this was not unusual for the hinterland of the period. Today, *Ciganos* are likewise seen as interested only in gain and as opportunistic thieves; they are assumed to have plenty of money without any work. Some Bahians see them as “cowards”, who walk in groups to intimidate, quickly pulling out arms or running away from trouble; others become suspicious of *Ciganos*’ using unknown language, especially when negotiating. In this concluding section, I explore what these images have in common and try to interpret a figure of *Cigano* within the Bahian social universe.

Cunning Traders

A young Calon and I were sitting in a local bar in Santaluz and chatting with the bar owner and the only two other customers. Suddenly, one of the customers started telling me what happened to him several years ago, when he wanted to buy a mule from a *Cigano*. He asked the *Cigano* if there was anything wrong with it. The *Cigano* answered that “*defeito tá na vista*”, a defect is ‘in sight’. The man examined the mule carefully, but not *seeing* anything wrong with it, he bought it. Only the following day he found out that the mule was blind. The defect was indeed in the *vista*. I was amused. Not because I believed him, but because I had read the same story prior to my fieldwork in a book about folklore from the Brazilian Northeast (Pinto 1961: 98-100).

In the eyes of other Bahians, *Ciganos* belong to the street and the market, and as in the past, they are seen as eager and skilled traders. Sometimes clients assume that *Ciganos* sell things cheaply because they are stolen. At other times, they seem to be able

to sell things for more than they are worth, through their skills of persuasion, intimidation and magic. Alternatively, as in the story above, they are suspected of concealing the real qualities of their goods. This meme is so ubiquitous that a contestant in the Big Brother Brazil 2009 exclaimed about a singer who came to the house to entertain them, that he was very handsome and “fancier (“*mais enfeitado*”, literally more fancified) than a Gypsies’ mule.”

The writer Guimarães Rosa developed this theme in the story *Corpo Fechado* (1966). The main character, Manuel Fulô, lived with *Ciganos* who thought he was a simpleton and taught him their tricks with animals. With this knowledge Manuel became a successful animal trader until one day, in a deal with *Ciganos*, he exchanged two worthless horses – after he had covered up their faults – for two much better ones. After that, because he had deceived even *Ciganos*, nobody in the region wanted to negotiate with him anymore.

An English naturalist Alexander Caldcleugh, who travelled in Brazil between 1819 and 1821, tells the following story: “I was engaged early this morning in buying a horse. I liked the appearance of the animal, and offered 25 mil reis, but the owner demanded thirty: while I was in the midst of the barter, a man passed me rapidly and whispered “*cigano*” (gipsey) [sic.]. I immediately withdrew my offer. Within half an hour afterwards I learned that the horse had received a kick, and was occasionally lame” (1825: 219). Caldcleugh concludes that “this wandering people, whether gold washers in Hungary and Transylvania, tinkers in England, or horse-dealers in Brazil, preserve a character for duplicity and cunning which pre-eminently distinguishes them above their fellow men”(1825: 129).

Despite such translocal character of these attributes, they also reflect specific local circumstances. Debret (1975: 107) gives this advice when buying from *Cigano* slave-traders in Valongo: “they do not lag behind their kinsmen who trade with horses; therefore, whenever one wants to buy a negro in one of these establishments, one has to take precautions and bring along a surgeon [to examine the slave]” . And the folklorist Luiz Pinto noted that the figure of a *Cigano* is still particularly strong in those folk songs and stories that relate to animal markets (1961: 98). Such markets, with animals and other goods, are still important in lives of many Brazilians.

Child Thieves

Most Bahians see *Ciganos* as opportunistic thieves, but *Ciganos* are also rumoured to snatch children. Just like their cunning in trade, this image also goes back to the Iberian Peninsula of the sixteenth century (Charnon-Deutsch 2004). The first documented – but unproven – accusations of baby-snatching and related anthropophagy in Brazil come from the nineteenth century (Teixeira 2007a: 121-122) and the trope is still widespread. In Bahia almost everybody told me that when they were little their mothers told them that *Ciganos* kidnapped children. Moreover, during my research at least two accusation of child theft – one from São Paulo³⁴ and another from Minas Gerais³⁵ -- appeared in the media. The trope is also exploited in contemporary cultural production: for instance, in a silent film from 1927, *Dança, Amor e Ventura*, the heroine is kidnapped by *Ciganos* as a

³⁴ *Desaparecimento de menino, Matheus Dias, completa um ano*, Jornal Cruzeiro do Sul via Jornal.us, 13.2.2010 <<http://www.jornal.us/article-4303.Desaparecimento-de-menino-Matheus-Dias-completa-um-ano.html>>, last accessed 1 July 1 2011.

³⁵ *Criança sequestrada é vista com ciganos no interior de MT*, Notícias Capital, 25.2.2010 <<http://www.grupocapital.com.br/index.php?mega=noticia&cat=Pol%EDcia&cod=25336>>, last accessed 1 July 2011.

child from a wealthy family; in *O Indigitado*, a 2001 novel by Heitor Cony, a boy is raised by non-Gypsies after a deliberate switching of babies by two *Ciganas*.

As with other translocal attributes of Gypsies, “in each culture where it surfaces, the stereotype of the Gypsy baby thief responded to particular configurations of power and stages of national development” (Charnon-Deutsch 2004: 38). For example, in Brazil, Indians have also been accused of baby-snatching. The trope also reflects popular misgivings, especially around the family life and the historical position of *Ciganos*. During slavery, for instance, *Ciganos* were slave-traders while their spells were sought out when looking for run-away slaves (Mott 1996: 128). But they were also accused of kidnapping freemen and selling them into slavery, and of buying children stolen from their former masters by their runaway slaves. As Robert Walsh observed, purchasers of slaves were greatly disturbed by more white-looking children sold (Koebel 1917: 367). The point is that, because *Ciganos* crossed the boundaries of this predatory system and in many ways served as its conduits, they threatened to subvert its hierarchies and expose its contradictions.³⁶

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the recently-arrived Roma seem to have used the kidnapping accusation to draw law-enforcement authorities into their internal disputers, a strategy similar to that identified by Sheila Salo in the US of the same period (1988: 25-41). In 1913 Estephanwi Petrowichi accused João Petrowichi of kidnapping his daughter (12) to marry João’s son (9). It turned out that the daughter had been married for

³⁶ Gilberto Freyre is famous for arguing that the sexual relations between masters and slaves resulted specific intimate warmth of the Brazilian slavery; children were born of these interactions. But he also suggested that *Ciganos* were probable authors of “mysterious” thefts of (free) children, later sold as slaves (1951: 790).

two years, but João did not pay the agreed-upon bride-price.³⁷ In 1935 a man in love with a renowned *madame* Helena accused her father of having “sold” her to a *Cigano*; newspapers decried as scandalous both the “sale” of Helena and her capability to make money through fortune telling (China 1936: 109).³⁸

Salo suggests that in the US the majority of cases involving non-Gypsies that were closed by the police, related to “romantic kidnapping”. Such romances, where either a minor leaves with Gypsies against wishes of parents, or a woman marries a Gypsy but later decides to leave, also occur in Brazil. For instance, in a fascinating case-study Ferrari describes a demanding process through which a non-Gypsy woman, initially drawn by her often romantic projections about *Ciganos*, is transformed into a Calin (2010: 16 ff). In 2010, a 12 year old girl who fled with *Ciganos* insisted she went on her own accord and that she was in love. But when the case made the news, the *Ciganos* brought the girl back.³⁹

There is a possibility that the suspicion about kidnapping arises from others seeing non-Gypsies living among Gypsies and a few accusations in the U.S. were by former employees. In Brazil, the Roma families also include *agregados*, i.e. adult non-Gypsies who either work with them living in their households, or children raised by them.⁴⁰ The Calon households I know do not include adult *agregados*. In Santaluz, I know only of one non-Gypsy boy, who, still a toddler, was given by his parents through an informal adoption process to be raised by a childless Calon couple. But this is not one-

³⁷ *Negocio de ciganos*, *Diario de Notícias: Bahia*, 17.7.1913.

³⁸ Among some Roma, a young women’s potential to make money in reading fortunes is reflected in higher bride-price (Andersen 1981: 11-28).

³⁹ *Ciganos devolvem menina raptada*, *Jornal da Alterosa* 2ª Edição, 11.8.2010 < www.dzai.com.br/jornaldaalterosa >, last accessed 4 July 2011.

⁴⁰ Aline Miklos, March 4, 2009, personal communication.

directional. A couple of deaf-mute Calons, who were among the poorest in Santaluz, gave two children to *brasileiros*. Such dynamics have to be seen in the context of diverse forms of child circulation ranging from a temporary raising of a child to an adoption outside of the state purview (Fonseca 1986: 15-27). Nevertheless, it is possible that the continuation of the child-snatching suspicions feeds on the existence of flexible and often difficult children-raising arrangements among the poor.

Fortune-tellers

In Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* the heroine, Esmeralda, is stolen as a baby, only to grow up into one of the most seductive Gypsy women in European literature. Such enticing *Ciganas*, at least partially influenced by the European (French) Romanticism, also appeared in Brazilian theatre at the end of the eighteenth century (Donovan 1992: 46). If rumours are to be believed, the desirable *Ciganas* also influenced the history of their people in Brazil: behind the fervour of João V to rid Portugal of *Ciganos* was an unhappy love-affair with a beautiful *Cigana* (Ibid. 38); João VI – during whose reign *Ciganos* became exoticised by the *carioca* elites – was rumoured to be “fascinated by one particular cigana” (Ibid. 47); Pedro, the emperor of Brazil, as a young man liked partying with *Ciganos*, particularly the women (Teixeira 2007a: 42).

But consider, what happened to the figure of Esmeralda herself after she arrived to the Brazilian North-East. A *cordel*⁴¹ *O testamento da Cigana Esmeralda* (Barros n.d.)⁴² provides advice on fortune-telling and interpretation of dreams. Apparently, it is a

⁴¹ Popular and inexpensively printed booklets or pamphlets containing folk novels, poems and songs (source: Wikipedia).

⁴² By Leandro Gomes de Barros (1865 - 1918).

testimony left behind by Esmeralda and brought to Brasil by *Ciganos* coming from France. Thus, although desirable when young, *Ciganas* are seen primarily as fortune-tellers and eventually sorceresses (*feiticeiras*) especially when older.

This connection has been fairly constant throughout the *Cigano* history. *Quiromancia* (palmistry) could lead to deportation from Portugal in the seventeenth century. The card-reading parlours of Romani *madammes* in the early twentieth are another variation of such belief in *Ciganas*' capability. A 1912 newspaper article warns about a new technique that four *Ciganas* who live in Santo António in Salvador use to obtain money from their gullible customers;⁴³ another article from the same year reports that a man filed a complaint at the police station at Conceição da Praia, Salvador, because he had paid two *Ciganas* R\$30 for a treatment, but a few days later his disease had still not disappeared.⁴⁴

For many Bahians, then, *Cigana*'s access to the supernatural is a constant potentiality. Among the Calin I knew, the most common practice was to read palms and to bless (*rezar*) for small change. Sometimes, especially among tourists this can result in more substantial cash. These acts rest on the understanding that *Ciganas* mediate with magic and prescience, where even the blessing of money notes can be efficacious. Ferrari (*pace* Bateson 1972: 177-193) analyses how such interaction relies on a *Cigana* redefining a frame against which the interaction involving her and a client is interpreted (2010: 188 ff). The change of frames results from a temporary alignment of any particular *Cigana* reading one's hand with the worldview where some *Ciganas*, at least, have such capabilities. Here, not giving money to the *Cigana*, refusing to give more, or

⁴³ *Ciganas embustieras*, Diario de Notícias, 28.6.1912.

⁴⁴ *Ciganas expertas*, Diario de Notícias, 8.11.1912.

discontinuing the reading, places the responsibility for the future outcome solely with the client.

Tricksters

Such images – of deceitful traders, baby-snatchers and sorcerers – have something in common. Consider the expressions: *enfeitar* – to embellish a mule so it looks more tempting and it defects hidden; *feitiço* – an artifice and a spell; *feitiçeira* – a sorceress. These expressions have a long history and refer to a “true” reality hidden behind a seductive or made up appearance of any entity (Sansi 2011: 21). Besides charms, in Bahia such distrust of reality also gives rise to a variety of trickster or devil characters (Pina Cabral 2007: 477-525) – ambiguous, mischievous, capable of disturbing appearances, but associating with whom could also lead to true gain. Similarly, although *Ciganos* might seem greedy, sometimes to the point of stupidity or cruelty, people interact with them in hope that this will open up new opportunities.⁴⁵

This position of *Ciganos* can be characterised as a specific manifestation of the Simmelian stranger (Simmel 1950). For Simmel, social forms are materializations of specific social interactions and some scholars have described Gypsies and other peripatetic communities as a specific example of the stranger (Berland and Rao 2004: 1-29). The stranger stands apart from social relations seen as characteristic for any given society. For one of the most famous interpreters of the Brazilian civilisation, Gilberto Freyre (1951: 790), *Ciganos* did not adapt to the Brazilian “patriarchal system”, but fitted to it only marginally as traders, their specificity disappearing over time. The stranger is

⁴⁵ For the figure of a Gypsy as the European trickster see (Piasere 2011: 57-85).

also mobile, a “potential wanderer”; “inorganically appended” to a society, “yet an organic member”; a “special proportion” of nearness and distance and “tension” produced by it. Such relations are never solely dyadic. Authorities decried the itinerant traders for frightening and corrupting the *povo*, for instance, while others lauded them as “agents disseminating civilisation and progress” and a respite from patronage (Goulart 1967: 71; see also McGrath 2005: 178-192).

Simmel’s stranger enters societies of fixed social relations, closed economies, demarcated identity and shared common features; of “cognitive clarity” and “behavioural certainty” (Bauman 1990: 146). It was precisely when Brazilian authorities, the State, tried to bring about such fixity and “order” to disorderly *povo*, that *Ciganos* were scapegoated in the past (compare Bauman 1990: 155ff.). Life in Bahia and especially among the Brazilian poor, however, has defied such closure. Trust here is non-generalised leading to localised patronage. Dyadic relations are potentially volatile bringing about violence. Unpredictable ways of making the living require special navigation, a *jeito*. Religious beliefs are syncretic and often contradictory. Such moments when uncertainty prevails give rise to a more specific social form, which anthropologists and folklorists call the trickster (see e.g. Radin 1988; Hyde 2008).

In Brazil, the most famous trickster-figure is *malandro*.⁴⁶ This “paradigmatic figure of the Brazilian social world” (DaMatta 1997: 252) emerges from specific Brazilian conditions and social interactions. Almeida’s *Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias por um Brasileiro* (1854) depicts the adventures of “the first *malandro* of the Brazilian literature” and gives an impression of realism because it is “constructed

⁴⁶ “According to tradition, the Brazilian petty criminal [...] mischievous but harmless rascal [...] it describes an urban character who wants to have a good and easy life, surviving through unofficial forms of work” (Schwarcz 2010)

according to a general rhythm of the society, seen through one of its sectors” (Candido 1993: 45). The characters in the novel, just like in the contemporary society that inspired it, constantly mediate between order and disorder. Such recurring liminality characterises the dialectics of *malandragem* where any closure and fixity is impossible; all people can hope for, is some provisional avoidance of a disaster or a momentary gain. In the *Memórias*, *Ciganos* appear beside the *malandro*: the main character grows up with them; they are of the same order. They often make transitions from order to disorder possible, for instance, when the priest is seduced by the *Cigana*.

The point I want to make is that *Ciganos* are not “strangers”; they do not enter this world from outside.⁴⁷ They have been part of it since the beginning, their character embedded in specific social interactions. They are “the catalysts of the ambiguity between order and disorder in society, [the ambiguity] represented by *malandro*” (Ferrari 2006: 86). But *Ciganos* can never be incorporated into “the order”. Similarly to other tricksters, they are always wandering (“nomadism”), non-reproductive (“baby-snatching”, “endogamy”), constantly hungry (“love of money”). It will therefore come as no surprise that the figures of *Cigano* and of *Cigana*, have been incorporated among other trickster and the street entities of the Afro-Brazilian religions (e.g. Vos 2006; Thiele 2006; Thiele 2008: 135-154).

Although the specific content of *Cigano* activities has changed over time, many Bahians view them in similarly as in the past. Through mediating on the thresholds, the figure of *Cigano* helps to define internal and external limits and show their arbitrariness.

⁴⁷A characteristic, which Bauman (1990:149) call stranger’s “unforgettable and hence unforgivable original sin of the late entry” and which “makes of his presence an event in history, rather than a fact of nature”. It is clear that in Brazil, everybody arrived at a certain point, bar the indigenous, but who were presented through the idiom of lack (no king, no law etc.) as anachronistic.

Guimarães Rosa's Manuel Fulô who tricked *Ciganos* showed such limits for the predatory trade, while child-theft reminds people that most valuable things might be of a dubious origin. If grasped correctly, however, a *Cigana's* blessing could bring success in love, a poor child could turn out to be an aristocrat, or one can sit on the pot of gold. This understanding of *Ciganos* as tricksters plays a role in the dynamic of the Calon money-lending. Poorer Bahian families borrow money against their welfare benefits. Emerging members of the lower-middle classes, often take up loans to preserve their newly acquired lifestyle and to meet their other loans. Here, the engagement with *Ciganos* opens space for manoeuvring, but also constantly raises suspicions of duplicity, of shifting frames, of doubts about who is gaining.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined views the non-Gypsies in Brazil have of *Ciganos*. In popular representation they represent one of many *trickster*-figures capable of crossing various domains. In academia, they emerge as representatives of a sociological category of Gypsies, more or less explicitly linked to Brazilian political circumstances and compared to Gypsies in other countries and periods. Within the historical sources the link to actual *Ciganos* is uncertain and it is unclear what categories and criteria authorities used to identify *Ciganos*. The picture that emerges is therefore a history of how authorities constructed *Ciganos* for purposes of making the people (*o povo*) legible and disciplining them, a process that depended on historical and geographical circumstances.

These images are not discontinuous. Recently, for instance, the *Ministério Público*, Brazilian body of independent public prosecutors, motivated by a fight against prejudice against a traditional community, asked a judge to order Houaiss dictionaries to be taken out of circulation, because one definition of an entry “*Cigano*” given there is that of a miser, a moneylender and a person skilled with money. The publisher retorted that it is one among many definitions of *Cigano* in the dictionary and, besides, it is clearly marked as pejorative. It was included in the dictionary because it reflects the current use of the word in Brazil.

How they are seen, influences the space for Calon activities. Although details have changed over time, ways of interacting with *Ciganos* and their position of people specially placed within Brazilian society remained relatively stable. Seen in this light, money lending, which replaces animal sale as *the* activity associated with *Ciganos*, is both novel – because it emerges from within changed economic situation – and an elaboration of an already existing cultural logic. This logic is generative: the Calon could become one of the available credit institutions and specialize as moneylenders, because other Bahians recognise them as *Ciganos* endowed with special character. Here Bahians use *Cigano* loans as an ambiguous tool to navigate monetary flows that changed as a result of financialisation.

II. FINANCIALISATION AND THE PROLIFERATION OF LOCAL FORMS OF CREDIT

Introduction

In summer 2010 I rented a house in the centre of Santaluz. It was the ideal location from which to pursue my my plan to focus on clients of *Ciganos*. The only problem was that I could not stay in bed for long in the morning. Next to my window, a neighbour had a loudspeaker installed which, every day apart from Sundays, played the town's radio station. It started at 8am with a song celebrating the town, paused for two hours at noon with another song about Bahia, and finished at 6pm with Ave Maria. My days soon adjusted to its programme – I was procrastinating if I caught a biblical “thought of the day”; it was time to get my evening bread rolls when the requests for love songs came on. But only while living in the centre I did realise the multiplicity of financial institutions, and the density of credit forms in a small town.

To illustrate this, consider my effort on Monday, 9 August 2010 when I set out to note all credit institutions that I passed on my way to interview Marly, a shopkeeper. There is no need to pay attention to all the details, since I will return to the credit institutions at the end of this chapter. Some individuals will also appear in the next chapter. My point is that most people, if they stopped and decided to think about it, would see at least what I saw: a disorienting variety of credit forms and multiple connections between them.

The radio comes on as usual. One of the first announcements is about a public presentation, held at 9 o'clock in the town hall, about a retirement benefit for rural workers, *aposentadoria rural*. Apart from the commercials that I now know by heart, the radio also repeats one for Guaibim, a furniture store where most people buy goods on hire purchase. It has a special offer for Father's Day: buy this week and start paying only in November.

I open the shutters to my bedroom. In front of my house stands a red car with a huge loudspeaker on its roof. Every day our neighbour drives around the town at about 20 km/h playing commercials. The advert of the past weeks has been for a non-bank financial institution, *financeira*, ABC, which offers credit to public employees, those on the *INSS*⁴⁸ retirement and military personnel.

I set off towards Marly's shop. It is located on the main shopping street about two minutes from my house. Behind the first corner I pass the house with a large garage that is hired out for events – for instance, for fundraising *bingos*. A month ago, I watched a comedy skit there performed by a group of locals about the lack of style of poor Bahians. At one point the play discussed *vaquinha* (literally a little cow), a money collection by a group for some (common) purpose, and how ridiculous it was for somebody to give a christening party and ask the guests to contribute. Walking on, I pass *Colônia dos Pescadores*, the Fishermen's Syndicate, which among other things provides loans to its members.

After turning onto a side street, I face the house of Seu Raimundo, one of the biggest *agiotas*, moneylenders, in the town. I met him at a barbeque a couple of weeks ago and tried to arrange an interview, but I failed. He hates being called

⁴⁸ National social security.

an *agiota* and, instead, the whole afternoon he insisted on discussing the irresponsibility of most Bahians with their money. I will not get a chance to talk to him because he went to Salvador after being assaulted. I enter the main street. Most of about eleven *financeiras* are on this street and I pass two of them.

Unfortunately, Marly is ill at home, so I chat with her sister, Gabriella. There aren't any customers. A moment later a woman in her 30s walks in. She is here to pay her *nota promissória*, a promissory note, which expires today. Gabriella takes a stack of *notas* in a rubber band and without asking for the woman's name starts looking through them. When she finds what she is looking for, she tears it along the perforated line, keeps one third, on which she notes that the debt was paid off, and hands the rest to the woman who gives her R\$27. After the woman leaves, Gabriella opens the woman's account in the shop's *crediário* and notes the transaction.

Crediário is a shop's system of sale on instalments. By extension it also means one's account in such a shop or a debt one acquires there. Marly's *crediário* relies on the information from SPC, an official credit rating agency.⁴⁹ Smaller stores rely on their own systems (often also using computers) and employ debt-collectors (*cobreadores*) to collect long-outstanding debts.

Bars, restaurants, *botequims* and small shops (*venda*) also sell *fiado*, on credit: In the Bar do Barbudo on one of the side streets, customers sign receipts attesting to their consumption. Most bars also have messages pinned to their walls

⁴⁹ From the official mission: "SPC Brazil is an information system of the Chambers of Shop Directors, making it the biggest database of credit information about natural and juridical persons in the Latin America, helping corporations throughout the country to make a decision about credit extension" (www.spcbrasil.org.br/, last accessed 30 March 2012).

against *fiado*. In the luncheonette São Jorge, on the main square, they mark *fiado* sales in a small notebook, although above the cashier hangs pinned a message that reads “*Fiado suspenso*”, “*Fiado discontinued*”.

Some larger storeowners are also known *agiotas* and some shopkeepers lend through a system of patronage whereby loans can be paid off in cash as well as in kind (including labour). In the past, some clients also stored their cash with these shopkeepers-patrons.

I leave Marly’s shop and walk towards the main square, *praça*, which is just around the corner. A few houses down the road, but in the direction opposite to mine, is the syndicate of rural workers. It provides loans for small farmers and rural workers, and is funded through PRONAF, a federal programme of micro-credit for farmers. In the town hall on the *praça* is the office of the town’s micro-credit program, Credibahia, financed by the Bahian state. The majority of its clients are women running “informal” enterprises, such as door-to-door vendors or hairdressers.

I enter the *praça* passing luncheonette São Jorge. In front of it, just like most days before noon, sits Codó; jokingly, he calls this his office. When I enter, he is talking to a woman; a second later he is called to a car of Seu Barbosa, a shopkeeper, who gives him a few one hundred-real notes. Codó is a Jack of all trades of financial flows: he sells and rents houses for commission; he looks for clients for one *financeira*; he is a “*ponte do agiota*”, a middleman (literally “a bridge”), for several *agiotas*; he always has a *rifa* (a raffle) to sign; he buys votes

for political candidates; he collects drinks and food for events in his neighbourhood; he sells the Federal Lottery.

Normally Codó is an expansive personality, but today he looks distressed. Galeguinho, a notorious *agiota*, was released after barely two months after being arrested and now is after his money. In his house, which lies on a street parallel to the main street, and almost in a mirror position from mine, the police found guns, drugs, and a huge quantity of bank cards. Rumours put the number of these cards withheld from his clients anywhere between 600 and 5000.

There are three banks in the centre, all of which I pass: Banco do Brasil is on the main street, Bradesco and Caixa Económica Federal are on the *praça*. Itaú is being built there now. Six months ago a director of Bradesco was fired because a client to whom he extended more credit than permitted defaulted. The client comes from an important family which often occupies the post of the mayor.

I notice two *Ciganos*, Maurício and Eduardo, standing in front of Bradesco; later I also pass another three by a bridge leading to the marketplace. *Ciganos* arrive from surrounding towns, offer money to people they know and wait for their debtors to pay. But because Monday is not the market day, there are not many of them around. Maurício is waiting for his father who is in Bradesco and when he comes out they leave. Eduardo and I cross the street and stand exactly in the middle of the square; Eduardo wants to be visible. His wife comes and joins us. Eduardo talks to a few people; Codó and later Eduardo's middleman stop by. About 20 minutes later, when the husband of Eduardo's niece appears, they all leave.

Once they are gone, I observe a plastic table besides a newsstand. Behind it sit two women in blue T-shirts with *Credit Cartão* written on them. “*Oi senhora*, come and see if we couldn’t make a credit card for you,” they call trying to attract a woman passing by. “You will get a discount of 10 percent in a grocery store even if it’s a small shop.” Their SuperD cards, either Mastercard or Visa, are bright green with one rounded corner. The advantage, they tell me, is that I only need my ID and to fill in my personal details, CPF, employer, income, list other cards I own and where I have my bank account. Unlike banks, they inform me, I do not need a proof of income; I only fill in the form and they will call me on my mobile phone letting me know what credit I can get. To increase the credit limit, I would not need to go through a complicated process as in a bank, but simply call them. I thank them and leave.

My walk shows a variety of financial institutions in Bahia today. Forms of available credit differ in their degree of formality, use of collateral, ease of access, interconnection to other institutions and so on. The *praça* is the real hub, where the financial services are most dense. In fact, people often talk about their name being “dirty on the square” (*nome sujo na praça*), when they do not have access to credit. Many credit institutions found around the *praça* existed in the past, but both local and official institutions proliferated in recent years.

In this and the following chapter, I explore the effect of the financialisation on daily life in the Bahian interior. In this chapter I argue that the richness of credit forms is not novel, but reflects a way Brazil has been inserted in the global economy. In the past

decades, however, the state policies aimed at “financial inclusion”, to use the term of the Brazilian Central Bank, and monetary policies have led to the shift in the source of wealth and flow of money: today more people rely on direct transfer from the state or through institutions established by the state. This shift also influenced the functioning of local credit institutions, which often tap into official flows. At the end of this chapter I return to my walk, and list various credit institutions available.

2.1 Anthropology of Money and Debt in Brazil

Personalism vs. Impersonal Money

It is impossible to discuss anthropology of debt or the role of money in the lives of Brazilians without mentioning the work of Roberto DaMatta, which in many respects it presented a theoretical turning point in the anthropology of Brazil (1982: 11-44;1997a;1997b). In contrast with previous conceptualisations, DaMatta argues that there are not “two Brazils” – one modern/capitalist and another pre-modern/precapitalist. Rather, he suggested there are two codes – one hierarchical/personalistic and another egalitarian/individualistic, which operate in lives of people simultaneously. In their interactions people constantly oscillate between individualism and personalism, between warm harmonious authoritarianism and deceitful impersonal egalitarianism. This dynamic of “the house” and “the street” can by analogy be extended to other spheres. In the public domain, Brazilians often call for universalism and equal treatment equated with modern (state) institutions, but at the same time they refuse to be reduced to individuals. DaMatta’s is essentially a Dumontian framework – it posits a modern (Western) individual against a person of the non-Western hierarchy (Pina Cabral 2007:

95-111). In Brazil, despite constant striving the former, human interactions are always encompassed by the latter.

Through these lenses, issues such as patronage, godparenthood or *jeitinho* appear as mediating resources used by people against impersonal forces. *Jeitinho*, denotes a capacity to navigate official rules, to find your way around them. Patronage, a keystone of Brazilian social organisation – essentially a debt couched in familiar terms – is portrayed as based on vertical warmth despite its oppressive sides. In other words, it is “part of the story that Brazilians tell about themselves, a story in which their human warmth opposes the cold anonymity of egalitarian citizenship” (Ansell 2007: 17). Brazilians also apparently prefer the personalism of social relations to the impersonalism of money of capitalist societies, which are based on the Protestant ethics (e.g. Oliven forthcoming). Analysts using this framework show how almost heroically and somewhat romantically, personalism always encompasses cold and calculating impersonalism: transactions, including market exchange, seem to be exempt from cold calculation, while difficult and even ruinous at the same time.

It would be easy to place *Ciganos* into this arrangement: loans from these ethnically distant people, who fit only imperfectly into localised social relations, help people to achieve respite from relationships of patronage. Alternatively, *Cigano* services enhance people’s freedom to manoeuvre and personalise impersonal relationships, when, for instance, a loan is used to bribe an official or a way to pay alimony ordered by court. Such positing, however, does injustice to ethnographic and historical data. In the previous chapter I already argued that *Ciganos* are not Simmelian strangers coming from outside into a closed system of relations. They have always been part of this world where the

ambiguity of social relations is caused less by switching between two opposing codes, than by an openness and fluidity of the system itself. And as I argue in this thesis, *Cigano* moneylending niche emerges from within the system itself.

Beyond Personalism

Looking specifically at conceptions of money in Brazil, Sansi-Roca (forthcoming) provided a criticism of the personalism paradigm. He argues that at the heart of Brazilian (and Lusophone) distrust of money, lies a “merchant machine” and not the personalist culture. Echoing the dependency theorists and inspired by anthropology that in conceptualising money takes both the role of the state and of the market seriously (pace Hart 1986: 637-656), Sansi-Roca argues that Brazil has since colonisation been ascribed a subaltern position in the capitalist world system. This made it difficult for the Brazilian state to control money as the standard of value and as a consequence people’s participation of the market, their linking with others, has always been fraught with contradictions and uncertainty.

The point is this: the issues of indebtedness, dependency and money have been recognised as central to descriptions of social arrangements in Brazil, but have not been adequately explored. Part of the reason is that personalism, as a dominant paradigm, which took Western modernity as a measuring rod, has obviated the diverse and multiple monetary repertoires and a variety of credit institutions. As Keith Hart (2005) shows, it is impersonalism that needs explaining, however, since in practice personal and impersonal are hard to separate and the cultural effort to achieve such separation is huge. From this point of view, state capitalism – associated primarily with Europe in the first half of the

twentieth century, when centralised bureaucracy, financial interests and (social) science aligned to create a social world, including the market and money, according to impersonal processes – is a historical anomaly (see also Hart 2000).

Several recent studies began to provide a more complex picture than the dominant personalist narrative would allow. I will mention just three. Collins (2008: 237-255) looks at how most of the inhabitants of central Salvador were removed from the historical centre while their practices were repackaged as patrimony. He shows how these people mobilised patron-client networks to deal with these dislocations and to make profit. Sansi-Roca (2007: 319-339) shows that the prominence of money in Pentecostalism is not an exceptional consequence of neoliberalism, since popular Catholicism and Candomblé have always included such practices. What is novel is that behind the Pentecostal use of money is a project of the hegemonic take-over of the state; in other words the state is accepted as a source of money's value, but not the ultimate one. Ansell (2007) describes the creation of cooperatives by the Brazilian state in a pilot programme of Zero Hunger, a project at least partially justified by a need to undermine patronage and to reorder its vertical intimacy into a horizontal association of free individuals. The project aimed to replace traditional regimes of value and social hierarchies, with a neoliberal vision where the state is an initiator of value-generative welfare aimed at creating “market peasants”.

These studies unravel different value registers people use and their complex relationship to money. They highlight the crucial role of the Brazilian state on the “distribution regime” and the impact of what they term “neoliberalism”, whether understood as monetarism, as a form of intimacy, or as an ideology.

2.2 The Financialisation of Life in Bahia

Credit Money in the Past

Since the earliest days of colonisation social relations in Bahia were constituted by debt.

Debt served for powers-that-be as an instrument to create ““extroverted” political economy” (Roitman 2003: 212) and was a founding social relation at a local level.

Probably the most famous example is the nineteenth century *aviamento*, a system for rubber-tapping in Amazonia organised through credit extended from international export companies, via a system of middlemen to individual tappers. The rubber flowed in the opposite direction and served as a payment for the debts. Diverse and fluid categories of intermediaries, who formed a part of the commercial system supplying goods to Minas Gerais after the discovery of gold, also relied on credit to function. Among other things, these intermediaries also sold on credit, lent money or accepted pawned things (Furtado 2012: 245-263).⁵⁰ In the Bahian Recôncavo, where the major export was sugar, the post-mortem records of plantation owners show, that 41 percent of their wealth was tied in debts and only 6.9 percent was formed by credit to others (Mattoso 1986: 641).

Until recently, daily life was characterised by the scarcity of money and its instability. To bridge their needs, people relied on various credit institutions and a variety of credit forms, perpetuating a generalised state of indebtedness. Analysing post-mortem inventories from the nineteenth century Bahia, Mattoso discovered that most people had

⁵⁰ The list of some names provided by Furtado gives a sense of the specialised proliferation of intermediaries: *negociantes de grosso trato, mercadores a retalho de secos ou molhados, lojistas, taverneiros, tratantes, tendeiros, caixeiros, escriturários, mascates, viajantes nos caminhos, lavradores que comerciavam seus gêneros, comboieiros de escravos, condutores, volantes, condutores, vendas and tavernas.*

higher debt than credit; most acquired shortly before death, pointing to people's vulnerability in face of cash shortage (1986: 642). The chronic lack of capital led to proliferation of so-called "written money". In the nineteenth century there were of various type – known as *letras de câmbio*, *letra de crédito*, *letra da terra*, *notas de crédito*, *notas promissórias* and so on (Mattoso 1986: 509). At the beginning of the twentieth century, merchants, municipalities and property owners in the North-East signed *borós* of various values, notes that circulated as a substitute for money (Figueiredo Filho 1962: 46).

In mid-twentieth-century Ceará people purchased pigs and staple crops as form of saving or insurance (Johnson 1971: 96)⁵¹ while their survival depended on short-term purchase on credit from shopkeepers (ibid. 1971: 117). There were communal forms of reciprocal help such as *mutirão*, first documented in 1808 (Cândido 1975: 67). During his research in mid-twentieth-century in the interior of São Paulo, Pierson noticed on a wall of the principal *botequim* "a piece of paper on which is printed, in pencil, in large letters, the following verse" (1948: 98):

O fiado me da penas

Credit brings me worry

As penas me da cuidado

My worries cause me pain

Para aliviar-me penas

To relieve myself of worry

Não posso vender fiado.

I cannot sell on credit

(his translation)

⁵¹ It is possible that the characteristic of the "ocular" wealth susceptible to evil eye and which unlike the cash from the government could not become part of an open discourse (Ansell 2009: 96-109) is linked to use of animals as the storage of value and a source of social reproduction.

It was a poster against selling *fiado*, on credit and similar notes were apparently common.⁵² Pierson interpreted them as “[recent half-hearted] efforts to limit the amount of credit extended” (ibid.). I question his conclusions. Sixty years after Pierson, shops in Santaluz still had posters against *fiado*. Some messages, just as the one in luncheonette São Jorge I mentioned above, were quite blunt. Others were more creative: “*Fiado é coisa do cão, aqui não é o inferno*”/ “*Credit is a thing of a devil, and Hell is not here*”. A concept of *fiado* also covers other exchanges on credit, besides those in these small establishments. And just like during Pierson’s time, also today shopkeepers complain about it.

Although this overview is far from comprehensive, I hope to have given a sense of the broad variety of credit institutions that existed in the past. Here monetary debt formed a basis of social relations and wealth creation was based on debt relations. I should also note that the role and forms of credit and debt differed between regions. While peasants in the *sertão*, might have had little use for, and trust in, money and rely on reciprocal labour instead (Ansell 2010: 285; see also Pierson 1948), the places where I did fieldwork produced for the regional market since the earliest day of colonisation. This is the area of small independent farmers, whose crops – manioc and beans – fed sugar plantations of the Bahian Recôncavo that produced for export (Barickman 1998). A part of monetary economy, the instability and scarcity of money, demanded various forms of credit. Many of the same credit institutions still exist today, but the past two decades have also brought about significant changes.

⁵² From the verb *fīar* – to trust, to have confidence.

Democratisation and Neoliberalism

Today in Santaluz more products are bought in shops, task employment is paid in cash rather than in kind, local politics depends on money available and so on. These changes are related to two processes – neoliberalism and democratisation, which led to the expansion of the particular form of redistribution. Through stimulation and direct creation of official credit institutions, a process I call financialisation, the state redefined the “distribution regime”. It is the single most important source of wealth and it also redirected its flow.

First, this resulted from the monetarist policies – a state project to build a strong currency through controlling its flux. President Fernando Collor, elected in 1990, adopted a series of authoritarian policies which stopped the inflation, but led to the increase in inequality as well as dismantling of state companies in order to pay off the foreign debt. This “shock therapy” also opened a way for other neoliberal reforms (Sansi-Roca 2007: 320-322). Supported by the excess liquidity of the international finance, in 1994 Fernando Henrique Cardoso created a new currency (Real), pegging it to the U.S. Dollar. But other structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) caused a falling of staple food prices and collapse of cottage industries, while increasing people’s reliance on supermarkets for food (Ansell 2010: 285). Although the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, popularly known as ‘Lula’, elected in 2003, managed to pay off the IMF debt early, he did not to reverse these policies.

Second, Cardoso’s government also introduced several measures that aimed at remedying the worst impacts of the SAPs, and which would be later expended under

Lula. In 1990 the *aposentadoria rural*, a non-contributory retirement benefit for rural workers, was created. Experimenting with “the second generation” of neoliberal policies, the Brazilian government created a system of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) aimed at increasing human capital (Hall 2006: 689-709). *Bolsa Família*, a showpiece of Lula’s social policies, is a family benefit whose payout is conditional on vaccination, school attendance and so on. With 12 million families, by 2004 it was the biggest CCT programme in the world.

Third, the stabilisation of currency and CCTs combined with the expansion of access to official credit. Four strategies used by Brazilian governments have been the “banking” (*bancarização*) of the lower classes, the expansion of both consumer credit and of productive microcredit, and support for targeted productive microcredit through secondary institutions (e.g. cooperatives) (Barone and Sader 2008: 1249-1267). For instance, in 1996 Cardoso’s government launched PRONAF, a federal micro-credit programme for family farmers. It was quickly successful: after two years 56 percent of its beneficiaries were those that had never taken out an official loan and in 2003 it had 1,1 million contracts making it one of the biggest programme of its kind in the world (Abramovay 2004: 32). Building on his predecessors, Lula’s government supported *bancarização* and expansion of consumption credit using state banks. In 2003, for instance, Caixa Econômica Federal started opening bank accounts for those without a permanent address aiming to reach 500.000 accounts a year later, but already in two months more than 474.000 accounts were opened (Abramovay 2004: 29). Another mode to increase access to credit was Lula’s expansion of the *crédito consignado*, loans from financial institutions whereby a payment is directly deducted from one’s bank account.

The advantage is that money is lent even to those, who have a “dirty” name with SPC or Serrasa.

The stabilisation of currency, CCTs, higher minimum wage (to which unofficial wage is customarily pegged), and novel access to credit can be all seen as aspects of the expansion of the third generation welfare state. Due to them, in 2004 more than a half of the income of the poor came from federal cash transfers (Hall 2006: 707). As Perry Anderson (2011: 3-12) observes, “[R]einforcing these effects was the introduction early on of *crédito consignado*: bank loans for household purchases to those who had never before had bank accounts, with repayment automatically deducted from monthly wages or pensions.” Overall effect was that, in seven years between 2003 and 2011, 24.5 million people officially escaped poverty, and 35.5 million reached so-called “middle class C” status.⁵³ Related to it, life in small towns like Santaluz became increasingly monetised. In politics, for instance, patronage based on long-term reciprocities is being replaced by short-term clientelism, which requires cash (Ansell 2010: 283-294; Villela 2005: 267-296). This increased demand for cash, however, often cannot be met through official institutions alone.

2.3 Credit institutions

Proliferation of Local Financial Institutions

In the process of financialisation, Santaluz saw several new credit institutions created.

But by fixing some arrangements these changes also provided a framework for further

⁵³ Harry Maurer and Alexander Ragir *Brazil's New Middle Class Goes on a Spree*, Bloomberg bussiness, 12.5.2011 <http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/11_21/b4229010792956.htm>, last accessed 12 March 2012.

development and multiplication of financial services beyond official control. In addition, traditional credit institutions, such as *fiado* or *vaquinha*, still sustain people's lives, although often in a changed manner.

Going back to the introduction of this chapter, a few examples will illustrate forms of credit that were not available two decades ago. Although *agiotas*, moneylenders, are a traditional institution in the hinterland their functioning changed due to formalisation of people's income. *Agiotas* like Galeguinho and Seu Raimundo today accept checks and especially CCT or bank cards as collateral. They note transactions on same official *nota promissória*⁵⁴ that shopkeepers use and which can be bought in shops with office supplies.



Picture 2.1

Nota Promissória

Or consider the Fishermen's Syndicate, just around the corner from my house. Its credit provision is financed through federal transfers and aims at improving the productivity of the fishermen and *marisqueiras* – collectors of sea or mangrove

⁵⁴ A promissory note. Also called a *letra promissória* (or *letra*), or a *promissora*. Officialised by the 1908 law.

crustaceans and molluscs. Pedro, its chairman, showed me a number of old loan contracts that were never paid. Some people even died without repaying, but he does not report on it and in order not to lose support from the Ministry, he has to carefully maintain the balance of defaults. He also knows that sometimes people become members although fishing is not their source of income, but their neighbours, who already are members, are willing to serve as guarantors.

In Marly's shop it is possible to purchase things in four different ways – with cash, a credit card, or against a *nota promissória* for cheques or cash. The latter is the most popular, but it is available only to those who are in the store's *crediário*. Here their credit, their name, is guaranteed by SPC. When buying on a *nota*, the instalments are paid with cash or on pre-dated bank cheques. Each payment is noted into the *crediário* and at the back of the *nota*, which Marly keeps. The note is handed over to the customer only when the whole sum was paid off.

For instance, a friend of mine, Gilson, prefers to buy with pre-dated checks because as a friend of Marly, he feels he could renegotiate payment if he ran into difficulties. But he would not give pre-dated checks to everyone. He trusts that Marly will not cash them before the date, since a bank cashes it whenever the check is brought in. Taking money from his account on a different date than he had planned, would interfere with Gilson's plans. It could also cause problems, when there is not enough money in his account. Any transaction between Marly and Gilson is thus stabilised by the whole scope of actors: personal trust; *notas promissórias* that can be used as jural evidence; these are linked to the store's *crediário* linked to credit history agencies, which have a license from the state; the state pays Gilson's wage into the state bank and he transfers it to a private

bank; from this bank, where a director is his friend and gives Gilson advantageous deals, Gilson receives his cheques that he hands in pre-dated to Marly. Some parts of Gilson's purchase in Marly's shop are officially regulated, but as a whole it cannot easily be reduced to personal/impersonal, formal/informal and even new or old.

New credit institutions, which were created with support of the state, sometimes run parallel to, and sometimes are elaborations of, older forms and institutions, which might be less directly dependent. The twin interaction of neoliberalism and welfare democratisation has led to the multiplication of forms of credit. With people's continuing indebtedness, and just like in colonial times, credit remains the single most important source of money in Santaluz. But today, it is fuelled with novel demand for cash and made possible because of state policies. In this new distribution regime, people variously combine traditional and novel credit institutions.

A Taxonomy of Credit Institutions

It is not my intention to describe all financial institutions and forms of credit available in small town Bahia, only to draw attention to the role of novel formalisations and interconnections between various institutions. Nevertheless, before concluding I provide a taxonomical overview of institutions I encountered in Santaluz.⁵⁵ Although I list only the (dominant) credit services, it should also be kept in mind that most institutions (e.g. banks or cooperatives) provide a range of financial services.

⁵⁵ I also draw on work of Magalhães (2005), who studied farmers' cooperatives in Feira de Santana (150 kilometers away).

Table 2.1

Credit Institutions in Santaluz, 2009

| Institution | Description (main services) |
|--|---|
| Family/Friend | Loans without or with interest (often at inflation rate). |
| <i>Vaquinha</i> | Contribution of small amount food towards some goal, in which contributors participate. |
| <i>Mutirão/Boi</i> | Mutual exchange of (agricultural) labour usually within a neighbourhood. |
| <i>Roubado/Batalhão</i> | |
| Shops/Bars | (1) Sale on credit (<i>fiado</i>); (2) Small Loans; (3) Storage of money |
| Bingo | A fundraising event in which people pay to participate. Usually related is <i>balaio</i> – a collection of goods to serve as prizes. |
| <i>Campanha/Offerta</i> | A collection of money within a community, often for an extended period of time. |
| <i>Caixinha/ Consórcio</i> (unofficial) | A rotating credit association sometimes with goods; a trustworthy person who organises it gets a commission. |
| <i>Rifa</i> | A raffle organised by a person who usually sells 100 numbers. Last two digits in the National Lottery on the agreed day win. Prices are lower than money collected. |
| <i>Agiota</i> | Loans with varied (usurious) interest. Pawning. |
| <i>Cigano</i> | Loans with high monthly interest. |
| <i>Consórcio</i> (official) | Rotating credit towards a specific good (e.g. a car or a motorcycle). |
| Stores | (1) Sale on instalments using <i>notas promissórias</i> and <i>crediário</i> ; (2) Some offer credit cards. |
| Banks | Loans; Credit cards; Cheques. Limited to those with stable income or property. |
| <i>Financeiras</i> | <i>Crédito consignado</i> , credit cards and “buying off” individuals’ bank debts (i.e. refinancing their loans). |
| Micro-credit | The program of micro-credit organised by the state of Bahia |

(Credibahia).

Cooperatives/Syndicates

Loans to members with funds allocated by the Federal Government.

The list is roughly organised along the level of formalisation and the direct state involvement: cooperatives offer to their registered members money from the Federal Government, *agiotas* tap into CCT accounts while a person might ask a friend a loan, because the friend is a public employee. In the state of Santa Catarina one independent consultant (of microfinance) identified 21 forms of credit (Brusky 2004: 175-213); it depends on how one is counting.⁵⁶ Institutions are created and disappear. A company shop that sold to the company's employees on credit does not exist in Santaluz anymore, while in towns close by people experiment with alternative currencies.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that credit/debt and credit money have been integral to the Bahian society since the earliest day of colonisation, reflecting Brazil's integration into the global economy and the capacity of the state to define the regime of value. Despite its importance money as credit has been ignored by the Brazilian social science which

⁵⁶ It should also be kept in mind that names differ across regions and in time. For instance, *mutirão* (of Tupí origin) is, beside the other two names that I give, in Brazil also known as *ademão*, *adjunto*, *ajuri*, *ajutório*, *arrelia*, *bandeira*, *boi de cova*, *junta*, *muquirão*, *muxirã*, *muxirão*, *muxirom*, *pixurum*, *ponxirão*, *punxirão*, *putirão*, *putirom*, *putirum*, *puxirão*, *puxirum*.

⁵⁷ Four municipalities within an hour drive from my fieldwork use such alternative currencies. Bonfati, Cristiane *Moedas sociais alternativas ao real circulam em 65 localidades do Brasil*, Correio Braziliense, 23.10.2011
<http://www.correiobraziliense.com.br/app/noticia/economia/2011/10/23/internas_economia,275178/moedas-sociais-alternativas-ao-real-circulam-em-65-localidades-do-brasil.shtml>, last accessed 23 November 2011.

instead focused on a radical discontinuity between the modern and the pre-modern world (or Anglo-American/Protestant vs. Portuguese/Catholic). In this view, the fragility of state money and the continued existence of informal credit were seen as a cultural trait, rather than as one of many permutations that money always takes. At the same time, the state-induced financialisation of the past 20 years, which includes a range of processes from market liberalisation, through “financial inclusion” to third generation welfare, led to proliferation of credit institutions. Some credit forms that today exist in small town Bahia were directly created or stimulated by the state, while people created others by, for instance, diverting flows of money and processes opened up by state formalisation. Besides these, there are still traditional local institutions. But such development might not be completely novel in Bahia: in the nineteenth century, during the period when new bank institutions were being created, people also increasingly relied on moneylenders (Mattoso 1986: 508).

In the following chapter I will show that the complexity increases because most credit forms are variously combined. Promissory notes can be passed to another person. A person can let another buy on her account in a store or a market stall, for which the former is responsible. There is a whole market with the SPC credit histories where people “sell” their credit, for instance, their capability to buy in a furniture chain store. Stable wages and CCTs are accepted as collateral by *agiotas*, while wage earners also become moneylenders or guarantors to other loan seekers at formal or informal institutions.

III. “DENSE FINANCIAL LIVES”: MANOEUVRING THE MONEYLENDERS AND OTHER CREDIT INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

State policies during the past two decades have brought about intense financialisation of small-town Bahia, in the process of which a great variety of new credit institutions were established and new credit forms proliferated. Some older institutions remained almost unchanged, while other altered ways they functioned. For instance, *agiotas*, moneylenders, either Gypsy or non-Gypsy, today tap into resources distributed directly by the state or through channels created by the state. Calon sometimes explained to me that this or that client could be trusted because he ‘was retired’ (*aposentado*), or that that another would pay because ‘the state owed him’ money. People with stable incomes could have their debt in a bank refinanced through a *financeira*, but once they reached a limit there, they turned to moneylenders.

In other words, traditional, novel, local or official credit forms can be variously mobilised. Each individual’s access to the myriad credit institutions and credit forms is determined by her class and employment status, as well as her relationships with other people. Institutions vary in the amounts they provide, their use of collateral, their dependence on official regulation, or mode of enforcement. Some institutions satisfy long-term needs, whereas others are used to mobilise short-term capital. Looking at three case studies, in this chapter I first describe a financial network of credit institutions and ways people juggle them. In the second part I describe the functioning of informal

moneylenders, *agiotas*, and show how they partake in the current distribution regime in a way that is recognisably neo-liberal (James 2011; James 2012: 20-40). I conclude by outlining the character of a *Cigano* as a moneylender and argue that although the identification of *Ciganos* as *agiotas* arose in recent times, their economic activities in the past were also often related to credit and debt.

3.1 “Dense Financial Lives”, Autumn 2009

Viewed according to the official class division used by the Brazilian statistical office (IBGE), the following three households come from three out of five classes and represent most people in the town. Gilson belongs to the middle class A/B, which in 2009 means a household income above R\$4.557.⁵⁸ Afonso and Malu are a lower border case of the “middle class C”, set at monthly household income between R\$1064 – 4571. Joana, with income far below R\$768, belongs to the lowest income segment, class E.⁵⁹ As snap-shots of individual debt/credit nets taken between October and December 2009, the three accounts illustrate “*a densa vida financeira*”, the “dense financial life”, in Bahia today (Abramovay 2004: 21-67).

⁵⁸ The exchange rate in October 2009 was 1EUR = R\$1.57; the official minimal wage was R\$465.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, full accounts that would do justice to the temporality and that would map the interconnections between institutions were beyond my capacities in the field. I would, for instance, need to arrange several people to keep financial diaries.

Afonso and Malu

Afonso and Malu have been married for 28 years and have four children. They live in their own house, built in 2000, together with three of their children. They also raise the little daughter of their poorer neighbour. Their household spends about R\$150 per week on food and another R\$120 a month on water and electricity. Afonso receives a INSS retirement of R\$960 per month and since 2007 the couple has also been running a bar near their house, which on a good month brings in about R\$450. Malu does not work, but she is registered as a *marisceira*, a collector of molluscs and crustaceans in mangroves. Two sons who have several odd jobs contribute from time to time; for example, by buying a gas canister.

A few days before I interviewed them, they had called Eduardo, a *Cigano*. Five months before, they had borrowed R\$560 with a “20 percent” interest rate – i.e. a monthly interest of R\$100 on R\$500 – from Kiko, Eduardo’s son; Kiko had agreed to add R\$60, because they were neighbours and he often played dominoes in Afonso’s bar. Because Kiko had been in prison for a while, and they had money at that moment, they were eager to pay their debt. Otherwise, the interest would accumulate during Kiko’s term.

In the past they had borrowed also from non-Gypsy *agiotas*. While still working, Afonso used to gamble and borrowed money with predated cheques; for instance, he would exchange a cheque for R\$240 to be cashed in one month for R\$200 in cash. But he quit playing; out of all of the men who played with him, he says proudly, he is one of the few who still owns a house. Neither does he have unpaid cheques “on the street” any more.

Afonso prefers borrowing from *agiotas*, because he says they are closer and when everything adds up the interest in banks is much higher. There is also too much bureaucracy in a bank. In addition, he cannot currently take out a loan from an official institution. Two years ago he borrowed money from a *financeira*, guaranteed by his retirement benefit. Payments were to be deducted directly from his bank account, but at some point, and without him realising it, they stopped. A few months later the bank manager called him to say that the *financeira* was demanding that he pay a large amount of interest. He refused to pay it, closed the bank account and now receives the retirement benefit into his savings account. As a consequence, SPC has him registered a defaulter.

After having paid the *Ciganos*, the household's remaining significant debt is one to Guaibim, a chain of furniture stores, where the couple bought supplies for their house (a door, a floor, a bathtub) for R\$3060. They put down R\$1000 and split the rest into ten monthly instalments worth R\$273. Afonso had given the shop ten predated cheques and each month when another cheque is cashed, Malu picks up a *nota promissória* that goes with it. In the past Malu had also received a loan from the Fishermen's Syndicate.

About ten bar customers owe them money, which Afonso keeps noted in his small notebook (*caderninho*). Some debts are a year and a half old, dating from the time when the bar opened, and the highest is R\$250. A few months before our interview, a hand-written poster hung next to the bar's entrance, announcing that if the debtors failed to pay their debts, he was going to sell it to *Ciganos*.⁶⁰ It apparently helped – two people paid their debts.

⁶⁰ The poster read (a literal translation): "We would like to let our clients in debit (*débito*) know, that your debt is due 30/5/2009, otherwise, we will pass the debt onto *Ciganos*. Signature: the head office"

Sometimes, they make their bar available for fundraising *bingos*. I did not win anything when the Fisherman's Syndicate organised a bingo game to fundraise for the feast of *Iemanjá*, the sea goddess. A year previously, neighbours held another to pay for an operation for a disabled man. In most community bingos, prizes are donated by people through an institution called *balaio*, literally a large basket made of bamboo or straw used primarily for transport, which figuratively designates a system of, and a place for, material donations.⁶¹

Joana

Joana, 27, and her children live in a small adobe house (*taipa*) on the outskirts of the town. The house was bought for R\$5.000 by her ex-boyfriend, who had since moved out. Only intermittently employed, Joana mostly survives on *biscate/bico* – on one-off tasks for money, on street-vending or selling a *rifa* (raffle). She usually sells 100 numbers for R\$1 and whoever gets the last two digits from in the Federal Lottery that week wins R\$70. Mostly, though, she does not sell everything, falling short of the maximum profit of R\$30. Two fathers of her three children, while acknowledging their paternity, do not pay child support; she had already filed legal complaints against them.

Mid-October 2009, when I interviewed her, was particularly difficult. Joana had been employed as a cleaner in a *Cigano* house – three hours a day, for R\$120 per month plus lunch. But in June the *Ciganos* fled. In July her *bolsa família* stopped, because her son had dropped out of the schooling provided by the *PETI*, a programme for the eradication of child labour. She started working as a cook in one restaurant for a small

⁶¹ By extension it can also denote a canister, where offerings for *Iemanjá* are given in the sea.

sum, but quit after 20 days, because the restaurant was too far away. She had also arranged for her oldest daughter (13) to live with an old lady as her companion, but a few weeks later, her daughter had still not been paid and Joana made her quit. After a few futile attempts to get the amount owed to her, Joana gave up.

Joana spends about R\$50 per week on food. Electricity is about R\$12 per month and gas about R\$35. Water is illegally connected to the municipal distribution. She doesn't know how much money she spends monthly, because she buys things or pays off her debts whenever she can. For example, two weeks ago she asked the restaurant owner for an advance on her wages. She bought some new clothes to wear that night at a party where her new boyfriend was singing. Then she looked for her mother at the market-place to ask for money for a hairdresser; she also met her ex-boyfriend who refused to lend money to her, claiming his card was blocked; and for one hour she waited around the *praça*, hoping to spot a colleague from the restaurant who had borrowed R\$50 a few weeks earlier.

Besides the ex-colleague, her neighbour owes her R\$20 that he had borrowed to pay for the cooking gas. Another man who had owed her R\$80 finally paid her after a year and a half. Joana had lent him money when he was threatened by an *agiota*, but he had avoided paying her back until she threatened to report him to the police.

When she is in dire need a few friends lend her money. One of them has a line of credit (*conta*) at one market stall, and he sometimes allows her to buy clothes there. She puts things she buys on his account and pays him – without interest – whenever she has money. Her debts exceed what she normally earns in one month (when she worked for the *Ciganos* and received the *bolsa família* it was about R\$250). She cannot buy

groceries *fiado* as no shop owner trusts her. Currently she owes R\$40 for a perfume, R\$100 for a pressure cooker and a small sum for a cake from her neighbour. She also owes R\$140 for *cesta básica* (a basic food package) to a door-to-door trader who agreed to sell it to her on two instalments because he used to date her niece and Joana had bought from him in the past. When she made the purchase she was counting on money from the restaurant, but in the meantime she quit.

Only once, by claiming to be a street vendor, she inquired about a micro-loan from Caixa Econômica Federal, in which she has had a bank account for five years. But the paperwork was costly and anyway it was unlikely she would get it.⁶² Two years ago, she also borrowed money from an *agiota* on advice of her “friend”.⁶³ It was Christmas Eve. Joana and her children were living in a rented house for R\$60 per month and they had nothing to eat. The *agiota* lent her R\$90 in exchange for her *bolsa família* card. She had planned to retrieve it the following month, but falling short, she kept paying only the interest (*juros*). For one year, every month the *agiota* took out R\$122 from an ATM, gave her R\$90 and kept R\$32, until her new boyfriend gave her money to buy the card back.

In November, after four months, she started receiving *bolsa família* again. Since her son had dropped out of the PETI it was lowered from R\$132 to R\$102. Nevertheless, she says it is “good little money” (*dinheirinho bom*). “You know already what you will do with it”. It allows her to plan things, to borrow or to pay off a debt. The family also moved into the house of her current boyfriend.

⁶² She has another account empty of money in Banco do Brazil Popular.

⁶³ The irony stressed by Joana.

Gilson

As a teacher at two high-schools, one municipal and one state, Gilson (49) receives around R\$4800 per month. But he tells others that it is only R\$2000; it is nobody's business, he says, and people often ask to borrow money from him. Since 2005, he has been living with his sister (42), also a teacher at a state high school, in a rented house. They divide the costs: Gilson pays the rent of R\$250 per month and the internet; his sister pays for the water, electricity and the phone bill. The salary of their 'domestic' is R\$510 per month and they each pay half. He calculates for me that monthly he spends about R\$400 on food, R\$460 on car payments, R\$200 on gasoline, R\$480 on private health insurance, less than R\$100 on clothes and between R\$300-500 on alcohol and going out. On top of that, there are *ad hoc* and irregular costs: last month he spent R\$300 on a post-surgery treatment and the following month he will have to pay the annual car insurance.

For decades he has had a bank account in Bradesco, where he receives his municipal salary. To draw the state school's salary, a few years ago he was obliged to open another account in the state-owned Banco do Brasil. When the money comes to the latter, he pays all of his bills, his credit cards and drinks he has bought on *fiado* in the Bar do Barbudo, although when the month is difficult, he negotiates to pay those later. Whatever is left from the salary, he moves to the savings account in Bradesco.

He says he does not have many debts these days: first, there are the instalments on a new plasma TV in the furniture store Guaibim; he wanted to have the instalments deducted from a credit card, but to avoid interest he brings a cheque every month instead. Second, there are the above-mentioned car payments. Third, a few days ago, just as usual, he bought groceries in a supermarket in Palotina with a predated cheque that will be

cashied shortly after his salary comes.⁶⁴ Fourth, six months ago he had given his dentist ten cheques predated for ten months – R\$380 each. Fifth, he and his sister sued their health insurance company for some changes in rules but they lost. They were ordered to pay what had accumulated since 2007 when the court first pre-emptively stopped the payments – Gilson R\$2700 and his sister R\$1800. Luckily, the insurance company made them an offer: if they paid everything at once, they would get a 40 percent discount. Gilson borrowed the money from Bradesco for both. He will be repaying the loan for twenty-four months at 2.6 per cent annual interest without his sister contributing anything.

He complains about his sister. She has too many credit cards and much of her salary is tied up with *crédito consignado*, i.e. payments taken directly from her account. He paid for her extra training required by the state. He tells me how a few years back he had two additional credit cards made that were tied to his – one for his boyfriend and another for his sister. While the boyfriend used it only sporadically and in small amounts, his sister spent R\$760. Although she kept paying, because of her limits, the debt kept increasing. Gilson only learned about it when the debt reached R\$2000 and his own card was blocked. He negotiated a new payment plan and the bank even wrote off part of the debt. To this day Gilson is paying R\$160 per month, while his sister has stopped paying this debt.

Gilson also “helps” his cousin by occasionally giving her some money. For the past few weeks, a common friend of ours has been nagging him to finance a luncheonette

⁶⁴ Besides the interest, he sees another advantage in buying on *notas promissórias*, or predated cheques (but only to those you can trust not to cash before the date): “If [you are short of money and] you pay with a credit card on, let’s say the 20th, they deduct the payment already on the 1st.” With the cheques one decides on the date of payment (the usual upper limit being one month – “thirty days”, “*trinta dias*”. One can also re-negotiate a new promissory note.

she is planning to open. So far he has refused; she still owes him a considerable sum from three years ago when he financed her now closed restaurant. A few months ago he lent money to another friend, who paid it back, but the last week came to borrow again. He served as an *avalista*, a guarantor, in a bank loan of yet another friend. He only learned that this friend did not pay the loan, when he found out that the daily limits on his credit card and *cheque especial*⁶⁵ were lowered.

Gilson believes that he only managed to renegotiate the responsibility for his friend's loan and the new payment plan of his sister's debt because he is a loyal customer to Bradesco. Besides the savings account and now the loan for twenty-four months, he has a car insurance, life insurance, and *cheque especial* with this bank. As a public service employee he can borrow from any bank relatively easily, but he does not think banks are that much better than *agiotas* – although the interest is low, because it is extended for a long period, one ends up paying a lot.

He has three credit cards with Bradesco: one with a limit of R\$4500, the second with R\$3500 and a special card for public service employees, with low interest. He also has two cards with Banco do Brasil, a debit card with a telephone operator, a *credicartão* with a *financeira* to buy in shops (with a very high interest), and a new one with Itaú bank.

⁶⁵ Cheques which allow him to go into R\$3000 debit without any interest if he pays the debt within one week.

Of the three examples, Gilson's monthly income is the highest and combined with his sister's salary, the household income reaches around R\$7000 per month. This contrasts sharply with Joana who even in her better days when she was working as a cleaner and receiving *bolsa família* earned only R\$250 per month. Unlike Afonso and Malu, neither Gilson nor Joana own their own house, but while Joana has to rely on the goodwill of her partners and was constantly anxious about where to live, Gilson is planning to take a state guaranteed loan for an apartment in Salvador shortly before he retires. Although these are not the richest people in Santaluz they represent the majority of people in the town (excluding peasants). More specifically, they illustrate how people in Bahia today combine diverse credit forms and negotiate a variety of financial institutions – both informal-local and official.

As the case studies show, people are involved in an intricate network of credit/debt facilitated through various credit institutions. Their debt is not just a result of conspicuous consumption, but often reflects long-term investments, obligations and ideas about “sanctioned” sources of wealth (Roitman 2003: 211-237). Joana fell into debt trying to provide for her children and Gilson constantly helped his friends and family and even invested in his sister's education. Or take Afonso and Malu. For many Bahians, a house (*a casa*) serves as the point of continuity (Marcelin 1999: 31-60); in fact, a house or the lack of one, was one thing that came out most frequently during interviews. Afonso and Malu acquired debts in Guaibim to improve their house; taking a child of their neighbour to be raised by them is also a part of this ideology of relatedness centring on the house. In addition, they provided their bar for neighbourhood bingos for free and, despite the poster, Afonso was not really planning to sell his neighbour's debts to

Ciganos. Rather, just like the posters about *fiado* hanging in shops, Afonso's threat can be seen as a confirmation of a shared world through social relations constituted by debt, where "hope of an accomplishment is the confidence in the future" (Roitman 2003: 223).

In all three cases, the stable monthly income comes from the state in a form of a salary, retirement benefit or a conditional cash transfer. The state also intervenes either indirectly by stimulating creation of official financial services or directly using its own institutions or as a source of income. It is critical that both, formal institutions (banks, shops and *financeiras*), as well as informal moneylenders, try to tap into a seemingly inexorable flow of money to one's bank account (James 2012: 37). In small town Bahia, where only a minority of people have formal employment with a legally required "signed" work book (*a carteira de trabalho*), individual households' stable income comes often directly from the state in a form of retirement benefit, public service employment (e.g. a hospital) or a CCT. Gilson's negotiating position with Bradesco was strong, because of his relatively high stable income; in Afonso's case, the *financeira* deducted money directly from his bank account where he received his contributory retirement; in Joana's case, Galeguinho withheld her *bolsa família* card and took the money from an ATM every month.

3.2 Agiotas

All three households had experience with Gypsy and non-Gypsy *agiotas*. Joana borrowed to buy food for her children, Afonso to finance his gambling and to cover bar costs.

Gilson, too, had an experience with non-Gypsy *agiotas* and *Ciganos*:

In 2001, Gilson needed money for a small enterprise he had established and which was going badly. He asked for a loan from an acquaintance about whom he knew was lending on interest. The acquaintance did not have enough money, but he offered to arrange a loan from *Ciganos* on 40 percent monthly interest. Gilson agreed. The next day they went to a *Cigano* settlement in a neighbouring town, where a *Cigano* told Gilson to come back alone the next day and he would not have to pay the middleman. They agreed on 20 percent interest and the *Cigano* told him to return in five days. Meanwhile, however, Gilson managed to defer another payment, “gained time”, and did not need to borrow anymore. But in five days he went back nevertheless “to talk to” (*conversar com*) the *Cigano* and to thank him: “I did not know if I would ever need him again.”

“But *Ciganos* are not the only *agiotas*”, he stressed. Besides them, there were those “of white collar” (*de collarinho branco*) and he told me how in 1998 his father borrowed R\$100 from Seu Raimundo – the same *agiota* I failed to interview– using Gilson’s cheque as the collateral (*garantia*). For the next few months the father kept paying only the interest, gave the *agiota* another cheque from Gilson after a year, but never fully repaid the loan. Then in 2001 his father had a stroke. A few months later, Seu Raimundo asked Gilson for a new cheque and told him that his father’s debt had risen to R\$1800. Gilson managed to get away with paying only part of the debt by threatening him with the police and because it was not really his debt.

In a different way Gilson's case illustrates the sentiment that Joana also expressed when she told me that one could never get a card from *agiotas*, because they only want the interest. "In reality it is not a loan, but a pawn (*penhora*)," a former right hand of Seu Raimundo told me when he was explaining how Galeguinho operates. "When somebody comes to borrow, he hands in his card. On a day when the loan is to be paid, Gil [Galeguinho's right hand man] goes with him [a client] to a bank who takes money out of his account. Let's say you should pay 500. He would go to a bank with you, you would take the money out, and he would take his interest plus your card and gave you the rest. Until you also paid your principal. He never lost/took on a bad debt (*nunca tomou calote*)."

So why do people borrow money from *agiotas*? Gilson is convinced that his father would have got a loan in a bank. He had a bank account and was a friend of the director,⁶⁶ but it would take too much paperwork and his father needed the money urgently. Most people told me that money from an *agiota* is "fast money", "without any bureaucracy", and does not require a proof of income. Afonso, who as a former gambler should know, stressed that he knew these people and could visit them any time, to either borrow or renegotiate. A director of one bank in the interior told me that he thought that the role of *agiotas* was decreasing, because more people borrowed from official sources. I do not have any way to disprove or corroborate this, but the high level of default on official loans among the middle class C in recent years suggests the opposite. Just as Afonso's case illustrated, upon defaulting on their loans, people's access to official sources is blocked for five years, a period during which they often turn to *agiotas*.

⁶⁶ Similarly to the manager fired during my stay, this bank manager had been also removed for too many defaulters; apparently from among the town's politicians.

There are at least ten big *agiotas* in Santaluz, most of them shopkeepers. Seu Alberto owns a shop with construction materials; Galeguinho started as a barber at the town's market. *Agiota* is one of the most common local credit institutions (e.g. Abramovay 2004: 21-67). But although *agiotas* existed in the past, their functioning has slightly changed and their role intensified in the process of “financialisation”. While writing this chapter, I read about a mayor from southern Bahia, who had bought construction supplies worth R\$100.000 with cheques. The cheques bounced, since the mayor used the Federal money allocated to the town (*verba*) to pay his debt with *agiotas* and *Ciganos*.⁶⁷ I also witnessed how a loan from a *financiera* was used to pay a loan to *agiota*.

This often is a complex operation: People “sell” their lines of credit (in *financeiras* and stores) which makes *agiotas* their only remaining option; in the furniture store Guaibim there were posters warning against the practice. Or, military personnel first borrow informally and then borrow maximum *crédito consignado* from a *financeira* for four years. Then they legally divorce and because their wives start receiving 40 percent of their salary, instalments to *financeira* are automatically lowered and the repayment period doubled. In both of these cases then, the state policies have had an impact on temporality of credit/debt, opening a space for negotiation meanwhile.

And then there are the poor who can borrow from *agiotas* using CCT cards as collateral. In fact, predated cheques, CCT and bank cards with PIN numbers and sometimes also ID cards, “formalised” the relations and solved a major problem for an *agiota* – imperfect information about their clients. By often drawing money directly from

⁶⁷ Cristiano, Jackson, Aurelino Leal - *Prefeito é acusado de passar cheques sem fundo e pagar agiotas e ciganos com dinheiro do povo*, Ubaitaba Urgente, 23.10.2011 <<http://ubaitabaurgente.com.br>>, last accessed 3 December 2011.

bank accounts “forms of social collateral like trust are simply not required” (James 2012: 37).

Most clients of *agiotas* are public employees, who leave their bank cards with them. Although his view is probably biased, Gilson was convinced that most borrowers are teachers: “I know one, from whose house a *Cigano* took even a kitchen blender ... many people have problems with SPC and Cerrasa ... only *financeiras* lend to them. And this is taken directly from their bank accounts [i.e. *crédito consignado*] – there is no way how one can avoid paying it. So it is much easier [to borrow from an *agiota*].”

But often the line separating borrowers and moneylenders is blurred by middle class people using their stable income as a fund for their money-lending activities (compare James 2012: 25). “They tried to involve me in *agiotagem*”, Gilson told me. A few years ago a friend asked him for money to borrow. Because Gilson had just received a larger sum – an accumulation of several delayed salaries from the municipal school – he agreed. “10 percent, isn’t it, Gilson?” suggested the friend automatically when she came to pay back the loan. “I am not an *agiota*,” he said appalled, “You pay me only at the rate of inflation.” The grateful friend suggested that she could arrange people for him to lend money to, but “at least at 10 percent”. Gilson declined.

Loans to friends and families are made with zero interest or at the inflation rate. Often, considerations of kinship and friendship complicate the issues. For instance, a former right hand man of Seu Raimundo, who used to be a small scale *agiota* himself, told me that he gave it up after he was disgusted with his friend who for four years avoided paying back the loan. As Gilson’s story makes clear, besides the large *agiotas* and *Ciganos*, in Santaluz there are people who could be classified as “small”

moneylenders, who often try to supplement their state guaranteed income through lending part of it on interest.

Before concluding, I want to turn to the place of *Ciganos* in all this. For instance, unlike large-scale *agiotas* they do not like to lend withholding CCT cards. But unlike the small moneylenders, this reluctance is not caused by considerations of long-term relationships. Depending on circumstances, *Ciganos* can be seen as specific *agiotas* or distinguished from *agiotas* proper. Gilson stressed that *Ciganos* are not the only *agiotas* and the article about the mayor from southern Bahia also distinguished between *agiotas* and *Ciganos*. It is telling of social distance and their respective modes of functioning, that the *agiotas* were interviewed by the journalist directly and told him that the mayor owed them R\$200.000 which he was paying with predated cheques. On the other hand, the journalist referred to the “people” (*o povo*) that said that “*Ciganos* are frequently seen looking for the mayor”, always the 10th, the 20th and the 30th of the month when the federal money arrives.

3.3 *Ciganos*

In the introduction, I mentioned the 2005 article in the financial supplement of *Folha de São Paulo* that announced that “in the Bahian backlands, a *cigano* is the banker”. The article described how for the agave peasants in Valente, *Ciganos* are the second most important source of credit after agave merchants who own storage places and organise transportation. Other sources of credit – banks and a cooperative – are less popular; the cooperative does not even spend the money given by the Federal Government. The

merchants, in a system of patronage pay against the future crop,⁶⁸ financing the planting in turn. In a circle of dependency, the peasants receive less than what they could get on the market, stalling any possibilities of saving up for a next year. *Ciganos* do not require bureaucracy and their interest is “high” – “10 on every 100” per month. The peasants know they can find them on the main street, although many prefer borrowing money in the evening when nobody can see them. And the stories circulate in Valente about people who “lost everything” to *Ciganos*.

These *Cigano* characteristics are widespread. Once I knew where to look I could spot *Ciganos* in most small towns, alone or numbering up to twenty, more or less conspicuous, on a marketplace or in front of a bank. Their popular image portrays them as callous and sometimes obtuse tricksters always hungry for money.⁶⁹ They are notorious for the ease with which they seem to obtain money, for their high interest rates, and for their potentially violent debt collection. In some regions, merchants and storeowners also hire *Ciganos* as *cobradores* – debt collectors. The point is, that *Cigano* and moneylender are increasingly synonymous. Elisabeth Thiele, for instance, reports that in some places in Bahia *Ciganos* are known as the “informal bank” (2008: 144). This despite the fact, that *Ciganos* are involved also in trade and even farming.⁷⁰

It is unclear when moneylending turned into the dominant mode of livelihood among the Calon, but there were other periods and places when *Ciganos* were known to lend money on interest. A 1957 dictionary of slang from Rio de Janeiro, for instance, under the entry “*cigano*” gives as a synonym-definitions two expressions that mean a moneylender (Viotti 1957): *agiota* and *onzeneiro*. *Onzeneiro* is derived from a word for

⁶⁸ The system known as *comprar na folha*.

⁶⁹ See chapter 1

⁷⁰ Those in Valente planted agave themselves.

eleven (*onze*), a percentual height of an interest rate and dates back to at least sixteenth-century Portugal.⁷¹ Other synonyms of *cigano* that the dictionary offers – *sovina* (a miser) and *espertalhão* (a confidence man) – also point to a *Cigano* as a person involved with money in a way that violates appropriate sociability.

It is likely that in Rio de Janeiro the link between moneylending and *Ciganos* is much older. A *Cigano* José Rabello was at the beginning of the nineteenth century one of its richest inhabitants, who even organised “Gypsy parties” for the Court. Vivaldo Coaracy writes, that “Rabello, who received a position in the military, dedicated himself to financial and bank operations. In other words, he was a *prestamista*. On interest, naturally” (1965: 74). Coaracy tells of a legend that circulated in Rio de Janeiro of the period, that Rabello had so many golden bricks hidden under the roof of his house, that they caused the ceiling to collapse. The legend “was probably invented by some of his clients,” he concludes. Such financial activities were possibly also connected with the role of *Ciganos* as lower court officials (*meirinhos*), a profession that they passed on hereditarily until the 1950s (Mello, Alves de Souza, and Couto 2004). Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Moraes Filho notes that “they were the gypsies of Cidade Nova, who showed off, the old justice officers, who set up home in the gallery underneath the terrace, waiting for notifications of court orders and writs of garnishment (*á espera de citações e mandados de penhora*)” (1904: 141).

It should be kept in mind, however, that even for the early nineteenth century, Rio de Janeiro was unique for its level of inclusion of *Ciganos* into the urban life.⁷² Similarly, I did not come across any suggestions that *Ciganos* specialised or were recognised as

⁷¹ A figure of *onzeiro* appears in a 1517 moralistic play of Gil Vicente *Auto da Barca do Inferno*.

⁷² See chapter 2.

agiotas in other regions or at other periods. On the other hand, as I described in the previous chapter, trade in Brazil was mostly done on credit. In fact, the project of the Portuguese Empire was based on a dense net of debt relations into which *Ciganos* entered on various terms. For instance, just a paragraph above his description of *Cigano* slave merchants in the Valongo in Rio de Janeiro, Robert Walsh notes that slaves were sold on credit up to ten years (1831: 322). And in a commentary to the painting *Boutique de la rue du Valongo* that depicts a *Cigano* slave trader with a buyer from Minas⁷³, Debret discusses the difference between buying on credit and in cash: “the temporary depreciation of paper money (*papel moeda*) doubles the price of a negro [bought on credit], but the inhabitants of São Paulo or Minas with cash ready (*com dinheiro na mão*), buy him for the exchange rate of a day” (Debret 1975: 190). On the other side of the Atlantic, bush traders in Angola, many of whom were exiled *Ciganos* and Jews, accepted goods on credit from Portuguese merchants in ports before going into the interior in search of slaves (Solow 1993: 141). Incidentally, the word *prestamista*, which Coaracy used to describe Jose Rabello, has been used in the North-Eastern Brazil to denote an ambulant trader who sells his goods on instalments (*prestação*).⁷⁴

All this suggests that the emergence of moneylending as the main *Cigano* activity for making money arose from a general economy of credit of which the Calons were a part. In the past, animals – which *Ciganos* mostly traded in – were used to store value. As recently as a few decades ago, owing to a general cash shortage and the character of the

⁷³ See Picture 1.2, page 75, above.

⁷⁴ According to the Houaiss dictionary the word *prestamista* is first noted in 1873 and means: 1) an individual that lends money on interest 2) a holder of state bonds (*títulos de dívida pública*) 3) one who buys on instalments/prestations 4) Regionalism: North-East Brazil. an ambulant trader that sells on instalments.

“Prestamista” also means usurer in Spanish-speaking Latin America.

The root verb *prestar* means to concede, give, but also for a person to have value and be of a good character.

agricultural cycle where cash from selling crops alternated with its lack, majority of animals in Bahia were bought and sold on credit (*fiado*). A man from an established farming family in Santaluz told me that he was so well acquainted with some *Ciganos* because some were born on his family's *fazenda* where they often camped in the past. His family bought animals from them, with most transactions done on credit. The *fazendeiro* argued that this is how they became *agiotas*. Such practices were widespread and went in both directions. When Manuel, a Calon, whose story I describe in the following chapter, died in 1983, his older sons paid his debts to a farmer from whom Manuel had bought animals on *fiado* because they wanted to continue dealing with him.

The story of a rise of the *Cigano* moneylending niche seems to go as follows: at the time when life in small Bahian towns was becoming more financialised, Calon opportunities for making a living from itinerant trade were becoming limited. Demand for animals decreased and the Calon could not compete with established stores although trade was still done on credit. Between 1980 and the mid 1990s, a period of transformation attested by several authors (e.g. Silva 1999; Goldfarb 2004), many Calon built houses and limited their daily trade rounds to adjacent municipalities easily reachable by cars; the Calon in Valente, above, claim to have settled in the town in 1993. Thanks to cars and roads Calon men do not need to travel with their whole families and in larger troupes, but can return the same evening after their daily round. But as I will show in the following chapter, they have not simply become sedentarised. Rather, there is an intensive movement between settlements and switching between tents and houses.

During this period, moneylending became Calon's primary (pre)occupation. Whether a transformation of their previous activities, such as sales on credit, or the

intensification of already existing moneylending practices, the fact is that in Bahia today, under the conditions brought about by financialisation, *agiota* has become a synonym for a *Cigano*; the term replaced *mascate* (an ambulant trade) or *negociante* (a trader) of past three centuries, and *gringo* (a foreign ambulant trader) of the seventeenth. *Ciganos* are one of many local credit institutions, and although they are not the only *agiotas*, they are the *agiotas* of a specific kind.

Conclusion

People in Santaluz are constantly being entangled in a dense network of credit/debt through which they meet their daily needs and invest in the future. This network is not purely local. Rather it emerged out of the state's intervention which redefined the distribution regime (e.g. James 2012: 20-40). Even local forms of credit, such as the moneylenders, are tied to flows of money coming from the state or via official financial institutions. One's personal credit, even in informal exchanges, is influenced by this "formalisation" (Guyer 2004). Poor people, who depend on CCTs, can obtain loans using their cards as collateral. Public employees are often sought out by their friends asking for loans and become small money-lenders themselves. But they are also the most common customers of *agiotas* to whom they hand in predated cheques or their bank cards. In other words, through involvement of the state, relationships with *agiotas* have become more formalised and less personalised in the traditional sense.

Within this financialising framework Calon started to make a living through lending money on interest. This does not seem as a totally new development. On the one

hand, the ambiguity of the moneylender is strengthened by *Ciganos* being seen as trickster-figures, as I defined it in the first chapter. On the other, in the past *Ciganos* were one among many intermediaries in an economic system that ran on the basis of credit/debt. Today, *Ciganos*-as-moneylenders arise out of the distribution system which allows for novel diversions of wealth. Therefore, after having described the “demand” side of the *Cigano* moneylending niche in the last two chapters, I now turn to explore how this diversion is organised.

IV. CALON SPACES: THE EMERGENCE OF SETTLEMENTS THROUGH MOBILITY AND VIOLENCE

Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, London's *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* noted that the Muras, an indigenous people of mobile hunter-gatherers who defied "pacification" by the state, were also known as the "gypsies of Brasil" (1842: 90). Recently a family who made a living through travelling across Brazil selling medicinal plants and were described by journalists as Indians-Gypsies (*Índios ciganos*), insisted that they were of indigenous origin and had nothing to do with *Ciganos*.⁷⁵ Or consider this 2010 story from Santa Catarina: When the municipal council wanted to expel *Ciganos* who had built tents in the centre of one town, the *Ministério Público* intervened and forced the council to offer alternative camping grounds instead.

These snippets give a sense of the extent to which in Brazil a nomadic lifestyle has been perceived as a symbol of *Ciganos*; which, under the current regime of multiculturalism, is even becoming *the* ethnic trait in a need of protection. But *Cigano* "nomadism" (*nomadismo*) is viewed ambiguously: erecting camps can cause tensions with authorities and behaving like *Ciganos*, i.e. being "nomads", can serve as a label for an indigenous people in conflict with authorities. Today, as in the past, authorities often

⁷⁵ *Índios ciganos pedem que justiça conceda liberdade provisória a familiares presos*, Acesso Notícias. 27.01.2012 <<http://www.acessenoticias.com.br/noticia/ndios-ciganos-pedem-que-justica-conceda-liberdade-provisoria-a-familiares-pr/5957>>, last accessed 04.04.2012.

see mobility as problematic, while much academic writing and popular discourse sees “nomadism” as *the Cigano* characteristic.⁷⁶

What normally perplexes their neighbours the most is the fluidity and instability of any Calon settlement. When I started my fieldwork everybody in Santaluz knew where to find *Ciganos*. The identification of that place with *Ciganos* and the intensity of their presence were such that even our bills came addressed to *Rua dos Ciganos* (The Gypsy Street), rather than using the official street name. Yet, two years later all Calon disappeared from our town. Such disappearances are not unique. There are many more places across Brazil with names such as Grota dos Ciganos, Descida dos Ciganos, or Baixada dos Ciganos, while many towns used to have such locales in the past. Only those interested in history know, for instance, that *Ciganos* in Rio de Janeiro, who in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were barred from settling within the city, concentrated around what is today Praça Tiradentes, which for this reason used to be known as Campo dos Ciganos (Green 2006: 181-204). And a memoirist recalls that somewhere in Salvador used to be Beco dos Ciganos but that his “generation forgot where it stood” (Leal 2000: 172).

Starting with this chapter, I want to shift the focus from the non-Gypsy views of *Ciganos* which I have been describing until now, and explore how Calon construct and view their world. Concretely in this chapter, I address the ways in which Calon spatiality relates to Calon social organisation. I argue, using DeLanda’s operationalisation of a Deleuzian concept, that Calon settlements are unstable “assemblages” (DeLanda 2006).

Assemblages are composed of elements brought together through relations of exteriority. Parts can be detached and form other assemblages with different interactions

⁷⁶ See Chapter 1

between elements, while the characteristics of any assemblage cannot be reduced to properties of any of its parts. Focusing on interaction between parts, assemblages can be studied along three axes: roles of component parts on a material-expressive axis; stability of elements on a territorialisation-deterritorialisation axis; and according to expressive media consolidating identity of assemblages on a coding-decoding axis. Seen from this perspective, on the material-expressive axis there are no fixed social roles and no political authority in settlements. Settlements are weakly coded: they do not have specific names on their own; there does not exist a way to represent them as totalities; they are not parts of larger assemblages – such as state zoning or some Calon territorial structure – that would be able to fix their identity. Settlements are also constantly deterritorialised through violence and movement. Moreover, individual subjectivity, one’s knowledge and feeling of “the presence of absence” (Fowles 2010: 23-41) that relate primarily to places that have Calon left because of mourning and violence, become important, but these cannot be collectively represented.

A settlement is therefore as much a temporal event as a spatial discontinuity – a Calon space, “a gap” (*décalage*) as Patrick Williams (2003) put it – created within a seamless non-Gypsy whole (cf Rivière 1995: 202). In this chapter I argue that the dynamics of Calon sociality stymies creation of any fixed order making settlements fluid and ephemeral. People decide to live somewhere, negotiating a series of dyadic relationships. Here principles of autonomy and of looking for better opportunities make people relatively free to leave and join other camps. Readiness to move elsewhere is part of a legitimate effort to improve one’s position among other Calon. Lastly, the permanent

potentiality of violence influences spatial distribution and gives meaning to the cleavages separating Calon.

4.1 Organisation of Settlements

The Settlement in Santaluz

This chapter is about Calon settlements – visible geographical locations of Calon. I take the term “settlement” from a description of another “minimalistic society” (Viveiros de Castro 1986: 265-282) that lacks formal social groupings or corporate social structure. Writing about the Trio in the Amazonian Guiana, Peter Rivière (1984) described their settlements as constantly changing, small and impermanent, composed of individualistic people who prefer living with kin (Rival and Whitehead 2001: 3). Although the Calon are not Trio, “in the absence of any clearly defined social structure among these people” I also find settlements to be “an invaluable mode on which to hang their descriptions” (1995: 189).

Let us return to the Calon settlement in Santaluz. Within the last three decades, due to town growth and land-ownership issues, the camp changed location five times. For some time it stood in a neighbourhood called São Lázaro, then it moved to Graça, the biggest neighbourhood (*bairro*) in town. Graça is one of the poorest neighbourhoods with many people occupying land illegally; most drug-related violence happens in this part of town. In Graça, a tent camp first stood by the river next to a metal foot-bridge, until the mayor started building a small football field there in the run-up to the election. The camp moved to *Rua dos Ciganos*, where Djalma owned a plot at the end of the street. At that

time, another rich Calon from a town about 95 kilometres away also bought a house on this street.

About six years before my fieldwork Djalma sold the plot and the camp moved to a new location not far from the street, where I found it. When I arrived, the Calon lived in two double houses on *Rua dos Ciganos* and in a camp with a fluctuating number of tents, about fifty meters away down a dirt road. Djalma was a strongman in the camp and many people had lived there for the past six years. The place had previously been a flat grassy unoccupied piece of land owned by a man who lived abroad; by the time I arrived to do my fieldwork, new construction was limiting the options of the Calon again. The two houses, about twenty meters from each other and each containing two flats, belonged to Eduardo. He started constructing his one around the same time when Djalma moved to the present camp; Eduardo's older son and Eduardo's brother divided the two apartments of the second house. Our house was also on this street.

Brazilians call Calon settlements *acampamentos Ciganos* (Gypsy camps) when dominated by tents, or *ruas dos Ciganos* (Gypsy streets) when houses dominate (or "alleyways", "squares", "plazas" and other urban spaces). In terms of composition, what I call a Calon settlement can consist of tents or houses in various combinations. A settlement comprising only tents⁷⁷, I refer to as camp, from Portuguese *acampamento*. But settlements can also be composed of a house (or few houses) surrounded by tents, or a few neighbouring houses (with or without tents). Even on Gypsy streets, Calon are seldom a numerical majority. Consider other settlements that I know well: in São Gabriel, besides several houses scattered across one neighbourhood among non-Gypsy houses,

⁷⁷ The tents are rectangular usually 10x8 meters and 2,5 meters high in the middle. Their structure is made out of wooden poles covered with two pieces of tarpaulin – one for roof and another for sides. The whole tent can be taken apart in an hour and transported to another destination by a lorry.

there were two settlements – a camp composed of twelve tents perched on a hill next to the entrance of the town (São Gabriel A), and a settlement composed of a house surrounded by six tents in the centre of the town (São Gabriel B). In Bomfim, a rural zone within the municipality of Santaluz occupied by small farmers, there were more than forty tents in three camps separated by dirt roads and peasant houses. Although settlements composed of houses tend to be more stable, as I show below, this a matter of degree. Calon families often move house, and move from houses to tents.

Calon do not have a specific word which signifies ‘a settlement’ and nor do they have names for individual settlements. When referring to settlements from outside, they use the names of towns. They say they go to “Bomfim”, “São Gabriel” or “Santaluz” and one can assume they are going to visit other Calon there. Otherwise, they use geographical descriptions. Calon in Santaluz who lived in the houses, talked about the camp as “*lá em baixo*”, “down there”, because it was closer to the river; I will use this term when talking about the camp in Santaluz. When a year into my fieldwork, Eduardo bought a plot and organised a new settlement in São Gabriel, it was called as the “*terreno*”, “a plot”. A camp in Alto de Bela Vista, where Kiko’s in-laws lived they called “*roça*”, “a field” because it was in the rural zone. Most of the time, though, Calon use a person who lives in the place as a referent: “come with me to the house of my mother”; “he is there at Paulo’s”. When somebody calls and a person is in his own settlement, the person answers: “I am here. In my *rancho*.” A *rancho* is the term used most commonly to refer to one’s own tent (*barraca*, a tent, is also used, albeit less commonly).⁷⁸

⁷⁸ According to Houaiss dictionary, etymologically *rancho* means a temporary rural shelter for those who are not local inhabitants, such as soldiers. It can also mean a camp made out of such shelters.

In other words, settlements do not have a fixed identity. They are not known even according to a person who owns a plot or a strong-man around whom a camp is organised. In this way, Calon downplay any possible hierarchy in relation to settlements, which could result from ownership or wealth. A settlement is an assemblage of individual households composing it, where an outsider refers to the closest person there, somebody he or she is visiting or to a geographical characteristic.

Most of the families living in Santaluz had lived in this area for the past 20 years, but during this period the same households did not always “ranch” together. Rather, they have been moving within the area settling variously in interlinked settlements within the broader region. Therefore, although settlements are not corporate or political bodies, they are sociological phenomena. At their core is bilateral kinship and they centre around the figure of a strong-man.

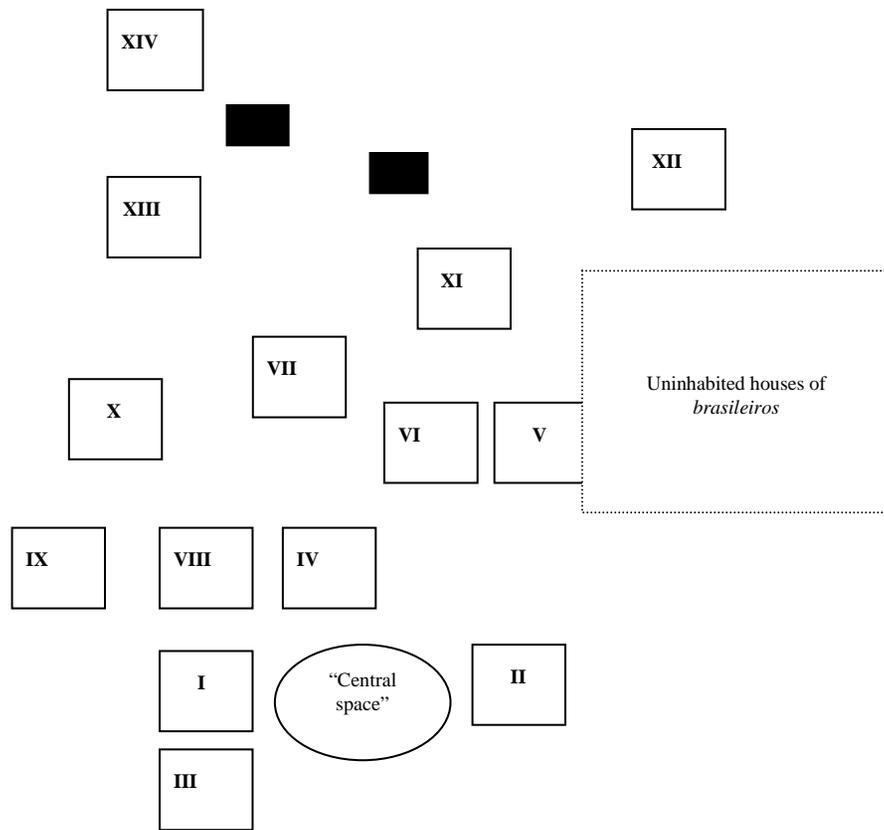
Kinship and Settlement Organisation

Every settlement is organised around a strong-man who inspires others to live around him through his prestige among *brasileiros*, his claim to the land under the settlement, kinship links, protection and help. Reflecting local and historical specificities, the figure has also been known as *o chefe* (Ferrari 2010), *o líder* (Goldfarb 2004) *o barão* (Silva 1999), or *o capitão* (Wells 1886;China 1936;Thiele 2006). Although Calon I knew sometimes also used the expression *chefe* or *líder*, as a sociological category I prefer to use the term strong-man. This also reflects an important Calon concept of strength, *força*.

The position of a strong-man is not given, but varies over time and across settlements. As a rule, however, it is impossible for anybody to move into a settlement

when this is opposed by the strong-man. At the same time, he cannot force anybody to live with him; he has to invite people, who in turn might invite others. A strong-man generally has more established claims to the locality of the settlement. After Calon moved to the neighbourhood of Graça in Santaluz, they first lived on Djalma's plot on *Rua dos Ciganos*. When the camp moved "down there", he was the only one who owned the lot under his tent; others were allowed to stay by a caretaker of the plot, who happened to owe several of them money. Zezinho, the strong-man in São Gabriel A, rented a plot where the whole camp stood and was responsible for paying the rent and water, provided through a hose from a neighbouring house. Turista, a strong-man in São Gabriel B, did not own the plot, but it belonged to his youngest son whose wife brought it as a part of her dowry. In Volta Redonda, Barão owned a large walled plot where his large house stood surrounded by small houses of his sons and son-in-laws. Only in Bomfim, where there was little official control, did most Calon occupy land without any legal titles.

Households that habitually form a settlement and change locations together refer to themselves as *turma*, a cohort. In the camp "down there" in Santaluz, the following four households formed the core of the *turma* (Map 4.1): Djalma (a strong-man) and Maria (tent I), Paulo and Rita (II), Valdeli and Jacira (VI), and Índio and Iracema (XIII) (see Map 4.1 below). By the time of my fieldwork, these households had lived together for five years continuously. Wanderlei and Sonia (III) also belonged to this core, although when I first arrived they were spending some time (*passar um tempo*) with their other daughter in Bonital. The sons of Valdeli and Jacira built their tents next to their parents after they got married and other people variously joined and left this core.



Map 4.1

Spatial layout of the camp “down there” in Santaluz, 20 October 2008

Numbers refer to the same households as in the text and Figure 4.1.

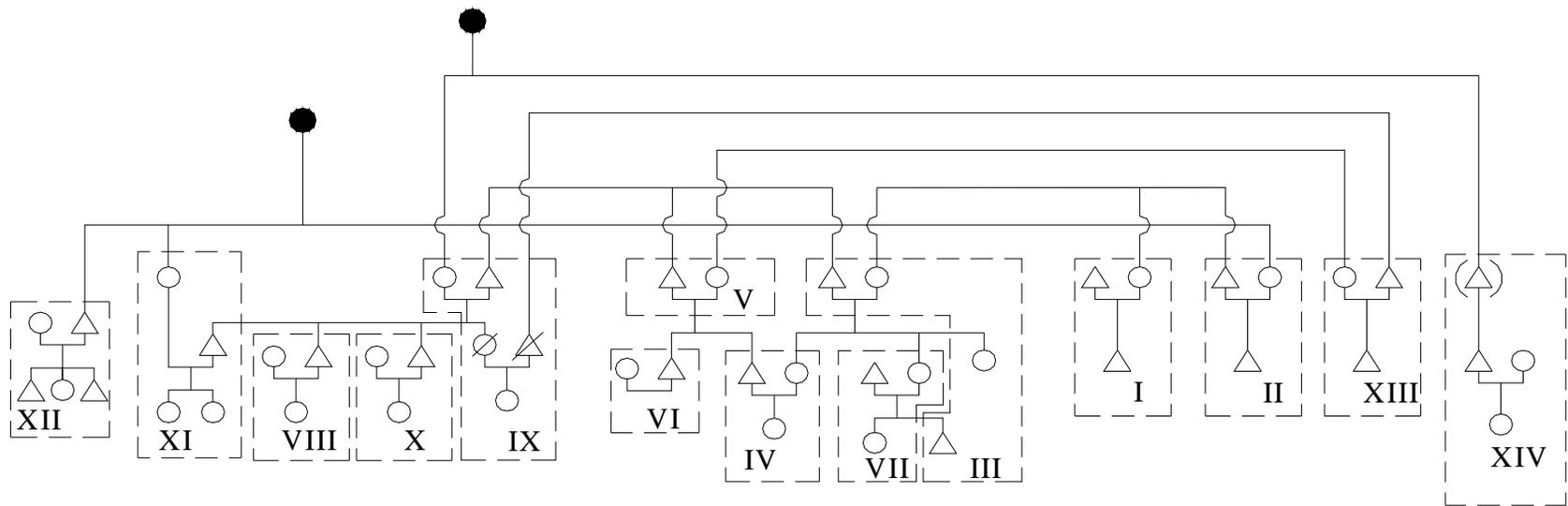


Figure 4.1

Kinship relations among households in the camp “down there” in Santaluz, 20 October 2008.

Numbers refer to the same households as in the text and Map 4.1.

Although there is certain preference for the closest relatives to live together, camps are not reflections of kinship groups. However, there is a general preference for what Gay y Blasco termed endosociability, a preference to live and spend time with, those with whom one grew up with, or provided care when one was a child, and to whom a person feels strong affective ties (2004: 167). These people are usually glossed over by the Calon as *família* and include parents, siblings, paternal uncles and a few cousins. Other consanguinal and affinal relatives are referred to as relatives, *parentes*. Since Calon usually marry other known Calon, most of the people have some kind of bilateral kin in most settlements of the wider area of which theirs is a part.

Settlements also show the preference for patrilocality and virilocality known from other Gypsy groups (e.g. San Román 1975: 169-199; Okely 1983; Gay y Blasco 1999), but it is not a rule. This preference was most visible in São Gabriel B and Volta Redonda. The camp in São Gabriel A was composed of sisters and their husbands and the kinship relations for the camp “down there” in Santaluz can be seen on the Figure 4.1 above. The core of the *turma* is composed of men related to Djalma through affinity. Here too, we find groups of brothers – households III, V and IX; sons of V (tents IV and VI) and of IX (tents VIII, X and XI).

Any settlement can also be visualised as a set of concentric kinship circles: a person is surrounded by his closest relatives who happen to live there. These principles combine with the “strength” of people, *força*, i.e. a capability to influence flow of things into a camp, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. Here it suffices to say that in Santaluz only Djalma owned a plot under his tent. He also helped others through small subsistence loans, had most deals with *juróns* and with Calon outside Santaluz, and with his guns

could provide some protection. In Santaluz, most deals were concluded in front of Djalma's tent, that I marked as the "central space". In many settlements this space was covered with tarpaulin on wooden poles.

Djalma was the main inspiration for people to live in the camp "down there". Djalma's tent (I), in which he lived with his wife Maria and their son adopted from non-Gypsies, stood in the centre, not a geographical middle but a centre of social relationships. His tent lay furthest from the river and from uninhabited houses and from non-Gypsy houses built illegally. Because he did not have any brothers and he himself came from the *sertão*, he was surrounded by his wife's relatives. In front of him was the tent of blind Paulo (II), his brother-in-law. To the right of Djalma lay the tent of Maria's sister Sonia and her husband Wanderlei (III); to the left, that of his niece Sandra (IV). With Sandra's tent another circle began: Sandra's father-in-law who lived across a patch of grass was also her father's brother (V). Next to it was her husband's brother (VI) and her sister's (VII). Such co-centricity can be described for the whole settlement "down there" in Santaluz and it is observable in other settlements too.

The density of kinship relations, the concentration of "strength" and related temporal stability are the highest in such a centre of a settlement. On the other hand, furnishings, the amount of money in circulation and the capacity to mobilise others, worsen towards the outskirts while a propensity for moving out increases. Thus Renato and Sonia (XII) stayed in the camp only for two weeks, while Pancho and Genilsa (XI) moved into and out the camp the most (see below). Índio (XII), on the other hand, came from the *sertão* and had only one brother with whom he refused to communicate. He was the poorest man in the settlement, and lived with this *turma*, because he got along well

with Djalma; neither he nor his wife Iracema were related to either Djalma or Maria, but Iracema's sister Jacira lived in the camp (V). The last tent belonged to Maluco (XIV) who only had cousins in the camp and was married to a *jurin*. Between Índio and Maluco were the tents of two widows – Neide (black left) and Raimunda (black right). The first usually followed her son Renato and the second, her grandson Pancho. Their tents were the smallest, made of single tarpaulins and without any furniture.

So far I have argued that Calon settlements are not independent entities; they are composed of bilaterally related people. At the centre of settlements lie households of strong-men. Although there is a preference for patrilocality and virilocality, as I will show next, any decision to settle is a result of negotiation and depends on a range of factors – from getting along with people in any settlement and economic opportunities in the area, to the degree of support in cases of violence, especially with other Calon.

4.2 Settling Down And Moving Elsewhere

One Family During Twenty Years

Where one lives is not prescribed by any special functions or by membership at corporate groups. Moreover, despite the preference for endosociability, contingencies of life and the character of the household lifecycle often cause dispersal of relatives throughout the region and even across state borders. Apart from small children, most Calon I knew were not born in the towns where I met them. Tellingly, the settlement in Santaluz disintegrated during my fieldwork.

Seen from the long-term perspective, the stability of settlements has not changed much over last decades. To illustrate this, I turn to the family of Manuel Borges da Costa.

In the following account I describe this family's coast-hinterland-coast trajectory between the 1970s and the 1990s.

Manuel was born in the semi-arid *sertão*, but for the past few years he had lived along the coast, close to Salvador, selling mules and donkeys to *cambiteiros*.⁷⁹ In 1979 he and his wife had arranged the marriage of their oldest son Jorge. Because the wedding was to take place in the *sertão* where the bride lived, in October 1979, twenty-three people on mules and horses started their journey of 675 kilometres, which would last several months.

Their plan was to come back within a few months after the wedding. But while camping in Salgueiro on the lot of the local *coronel*-mayor, whose family had been dealing with these Calon families for years, the mayor suggested that they settle in his town. Manuel accepted and they started building two houses – one for Manuel and one for Jorge. Manuel's daughter Mariazinha was also due to get married to her cross-cousin Claudio, the son of Manuel's youngest sister. Manuel's wife was a fraternal cousin of Claudio's father, Eraldo.

The newly-weds moved to the neighbouring town where they lived with Claudio's family. About two years later, Claudio and Mariazinha appeared at Manuel's house visibly anxious: A few hours previously, Claudio had gotten into an argument with his father, Eraldo, and pulled a gun on him. In the midst of the following confusion, his mother had stepped between them and been hit by a bullet. Claudio had not meant to shoot her; he said he was not trying to shoot his father either. Manuel's sons were against the couple staying at their camp. They

⁷⁹Transporters of sugar canes to mills for refinement.

did not like Claudio and, anyway it was not clear yet what the repercussions of the shooting would be. In the end, Manuel arranged for the couple to stay at the farm of an acquaintance.

His sister died the next day in hospital. There was no way Manuel's sons would accept their brother-in-law living with them now. Manuel even suggested to Mariazinha that since they did not have children yet, she could leave Claudio. She followed him instead, afraid that she would be gossiped about for leaving her husband and unable to marry again. The couple moved to Uauá about 200 km away.

A year later, news reached the Calon in Salgueiro that Mariazinha was being abused by Claudio. Manuel and his second-oldest, Giovanni, immediately drove from Salgueiro to Uauá. Before entering Mariazinha's tent they talked to other Calon in the vicinity, who confirmed the rumours; Claudio had apparently even beaten Mariazinha during her pregnancy. When Manuel appeared at his daughter's tent he offered to take her and her baby with them. Otherwise, not wanting to see her suffer, he would never set foot into her tent again. Mariazinha accepted. During the days and weeks that followed, Claudio began to drink even more, squandering his money and getting into fights. In June 1984, in one such row he was killed.

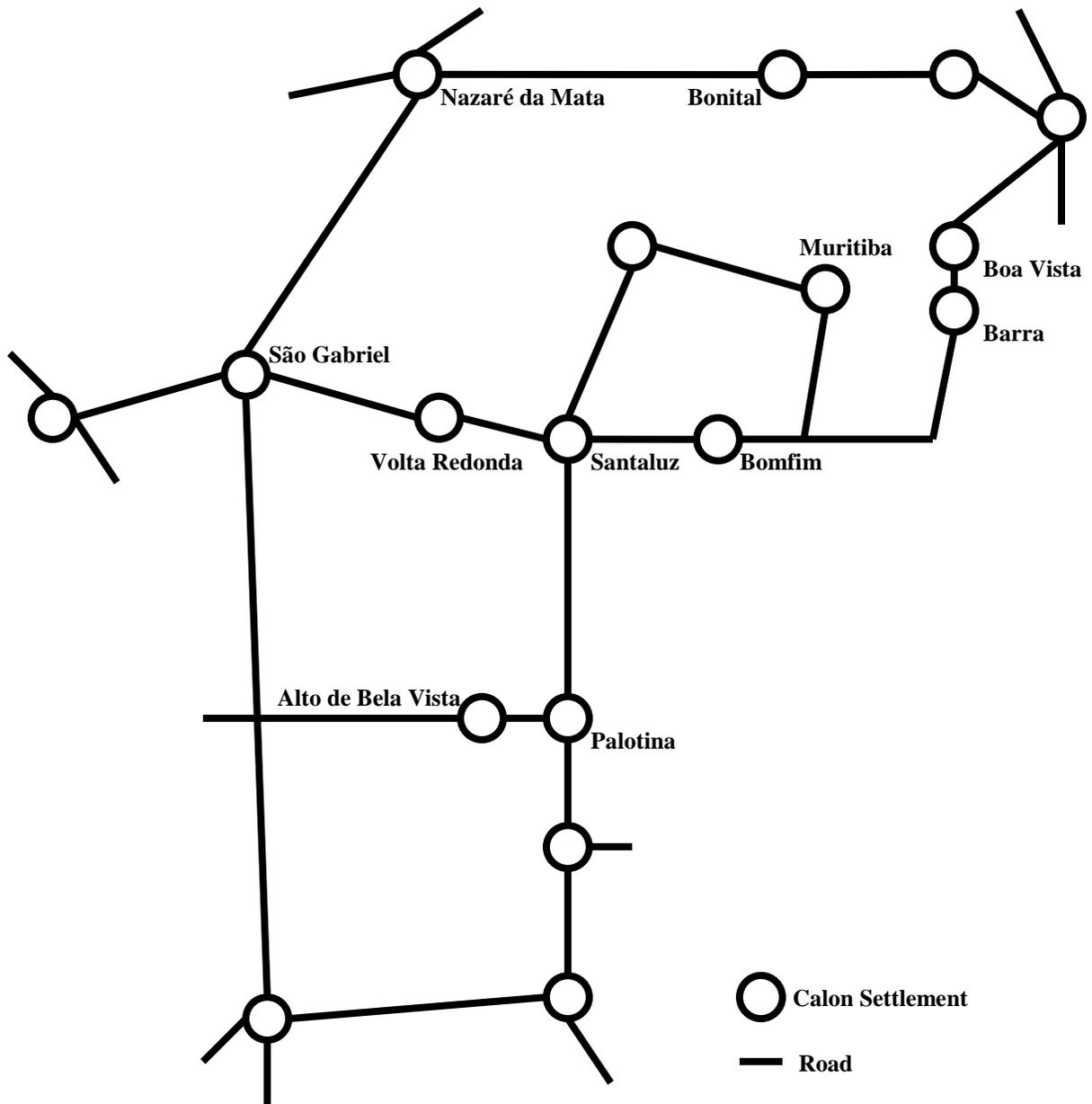
Eraldo, Claudio's father, blamed Manuel, his former brother-in-law, for his son's death. The way he saw it, after Manuel had taken Mariazinha and the child away, Claudio had become uncontrollable and was subsequently killed. Therefore one day in March 1985, aided by a non-Gypsy friend, Eraldo killed

Manuel at the market-place in Salguerio. Within a few days, people who used to live around Manuel in Salgueiro moved to neighbouring Brejo Santo where they built new houses and tents. The oldest brothers were especially angered by their father's murder, so when a few months later Eraldo was imprisoned for illegal possession of firearms, they arranged for him to be killed in prison.

The brothers and their widowed mother lived in Brejo Santo for the next twelve years. In 1997, during the wedding of their youngest sister, a local councillor and a policeman appeared at the camp claiming that one of their cousins had bought a gun from the councillor, but had never paid for it. They demanded that the cousin accompany them. The Calon suggested that they pay for the gun and settle the issue, but in the midst of the following row, both the policeman and the councillor were shot dead. The family of late Manuel fled Brejo Santo, returning back to the humid coast.

This account shows some reasons for movement and for settling down. The family moves to arrange a marriage, seizes an opportunity to stay in Salgueiro, leaves the camp because of the death of the strong-man, and flees because of violence. Such dislocations can be intra-regional and mean starting anew, often among unknown *Ciganos*. In thirty years some things have changed though: thanks to cars and roads, men who strike deals often hundreds of kilometres away from their camps do not have to move with their whole families anymore, but return the same day. In 1979 Manuel's trip took several months because the family stopped along the way to make a living. At one wedding during my fieldwork, the groom's family arrived to the town where the bride

only a few days before the wedding lived and rented a house there for two weeks. My point is that travelling patterns did not change much, although the speed and ease of travel did. But Manuel's story as described above hides a variety of smaller movements that occur between such regional dislocations.



MAP 4.2

Settlements visited most frequently by the Calon from Santaluz

One Settlement in Five Months

When I arrived, the camp in Santaluz was composed of ten tents occupied by 25 people. Within six months it grew to seventeen tents and 46 people. Within fourteen months, it was completely abandoned. The following is an account of movement from and into the camp between September 2008 and February 2009. The numbers in brackets refer to households in the Figure 4.1 and the Map 4.1; the towns can be found in the Map 4.2. It should also be remembered that in the following account every male name, unless specified otherwise, stands as shorthand for his whole household, i.e. his nuclear family:

11 September. The camp has 24 people and ten tents. Wanderlei (III) arrives from Bonital, 85 kilometres away.

14 September. Renato (XII) moves into the camp. His brother, Eduardo is planning to refurbish the house on *Rua dos Ciganos* where Renato lived until now.

15 October. Pancho (XI) arrives from São Gabriel, 40 kilometres. Pancho's business was not going well; Genilsa, his wife was also eager to leave the town. They were hoping that her rich brother, Eduardo, would help their business. Pancho's grandmother, builds her little tent at the edge of the camp (black tent/circle right).

16 October. The caretaker of the plot gives *Ciganos* ten days to move out.

20 October. Gel (IX) moves in from São Gabriel. He has two brothers and two sons here already and his third son, José (X), arrives with him. Mudo (VII) moves his tent to accommodate for these new arrivals.

30 October. Babaloo, Renato's oldest son, has been drinking and gambling heavily and hurt himself in a motorcycle accident. Renato (XII) moves to São Gabriel, where his other two sisters live. Pancho (XI) moves his tent onto the spot covered by concrete that remained from a wedding a few years back and where Renato's tent stood until today.

27 November. Maluco (XIV) moves out. His *jurin* wife is going to give birth soon. They will live nearby in the house of his mother-in-law.

30 November. Maluco's father escaped from prison. Maluco goes to see him in São Gabriel and sells his tent to him. He stays there for a month missing the birth of his daughter.

11 December. Widow Neide (black tent/circle left), follows her son Renato to São Gabriel.

14 December. The caretaker erects wooden poles around and across the camp.

6 January 2009. Mudo (VII) leaves to Nazaré da Mata, 75 kilometres. People have not been supportive of this family composed of a deaf-mute couple and their daughter. Faustão (VI) moves his tent beside Wanderlei's (III).

9 January. Pancho (XI) moves his tent closer to the camp. He is afraid of living far from the camp, separated by a row of houses.

10 January. Uelson (VIII) leaves the camp for Boa Vista, 58 kilometres away. He does not get along with his father Gel.

28 January. Jenilson moves into the camp from Bomfim, 18 kilometres away, after getting into an argument with a man there. His widowed mother, who has two other children, builds a tent next to his. She is Djalma's sister-in-law and has two sisters and a brother living in the camp already. Jenilson's cousin Val and his widowed mother come too.

4 February. Faustão (VI) moves his tent again. A *jurón* started building a house on a place where it stood until now.

8 February. Widow Neide returns to Santaluz from São Gabriel after her son Renato hit her. The land-owner gives the Calon thirty days to vacate the plot.

13 February. The camp has 46 people. José (X) moves his tent away from his father Gel (IX) and closer to his oldest brother Pancho (XI); although married with a child, José has a male lover in town, a fact which irritates his father.

14 February. Maluco (XIV) comes back to Santaluz and moves to the house of his mother-in-law; in São Gabriel, he did not get along with his father's wife.

22 February. Pancho's grandmother leaves for São Gabriel.

23 February: Pancho (XI) leaves for São Gabriel. Kiko, his nephew, told me that Pancho managed to gain only one stable client. "You know how it is, Martin," Kiko explained, "whenever a *Cigano* sees that there is no future (*não tem futuro*), he moves to a different place." Heavy rains, which last week flooded several tents, are the immediate cause for Pancho's departure.

I chose this period of five months because nothing dramatic happened in the camp “down there” in Santaluz. Nevertheless, the intensity of tent relocation in Santaluz was high, reasons for movement diverse and in this regard I find no reasons to suspect that this period was somehow unique. Every time I visited any settlement after one month or so, its composition differed.

The first thing to note is that whenever people decide to move into to the camp “down there” in Santaluz, they already have some relatives living there. They also move from settlement within the area which I call “home range”. From the point of view of any Calon, it represents an area within which known Calon live and which is characterised by a dense network of exchange relations. Second, people are readily mobile; a house or a tent is not a fixed point of reference. People also move out of tents to houses and from houses to tents. Renato, for instance, moves out of a house to a tent; he also used to live both in houses and tents elsewhere in the past.

Third, movement is literally a way to change one’s positioning. People move in order to be able to make better deals, to live closer to their kin or to deal with unforeseen events, such as fights and evictions. This change of positioning is what Kiko means, when he says that ‘when there is no future, a *Cigano* moves’. In Chapter 6, I will return to the concept of the future, *futuro*, and how movement associated with life relates to creating opportunities. Here it is sufficient to say that an increase in inhabitation of houses in past decades presents a mixed blessing. There is a tension between the Calon understanding of active life understood as movement and the character of fixed domicile that threatens to stop life – to bring about “velocity zero” (Ferrari 2010: 268). Ferrari

notes that “flux seems to come to a halt when they start to inhabit [a house]. Although they stress the advantages of living in a house, such as water, electricity, and the ease of cleaning, this mode of life is thought of as “still life” (*vida parada*), that is, it calls attention to the lack of flux” (Ibid., 266).

““Still” (*parado*) creates an image of a world of bad quality, moribund, sick” (Ibid., 267)(cf. Okely 1983: 86) and Calon associate healthy life with “travel” (*viagem*) of the “before” (*antes/antigamente/atrás*) (e.g. Goldfarb 2004). But as the description of five months in Santaluz showed, even today there is no shortage of movement. Despite various changes in mode of travel and threats of a fixed domicile, the ideal of movement, can still be achieved by changing one’s tent’s location. In addition, there are various ways to move or to halt, and related rich conceptual apparatus (Ferrari 2010: 268-273). For instance, men often drive around town, *andar na rua*, or visit different camps, *passear*. The following story illustrates this:

In November 2009 Leo seemed to be settling. A few years back, after his uncle died, he had sold his house in Barra and moved to Bomfim, 32 kilometres away. Recently he bought a huge plot here and built the largest tent in the settlement complete with a concrete floor and brick bathroom beside it. That day at noon he had just come back from Santaluz, 18 kilometres, ate lunch and was immediately getting into his car with me and two other men. He was ready to drive to another town. “I cannot stand still (*parado*),” he told us while on the phone with a client, “I just eat and go again. It’s an agony remaining [still] here (*ficar [parado]*).”

Not all movement is prompted by new opportunities arising elsewhere. Jenilson moves to a camp in Santaluz, because a fight he got into in Bomfim. Pancho arrives from São Gabriel looking for better economic opportunities, but leaves, dissatisfied, within a few months; others talk of him as moving too much. Deaf-mute Mudo moves often within and without the camp itself and eventually leaves to go to Nazaré da Mata. In other words, if a strong man is the stable centre around which the camp emerges, those who move the most, are often weak, *fracos*. They lack money, have a small number of deals “on the street”, and are weakly related to others, especially to the strong-man.⁸⁰ Although movement is not always deemed positive, people decide according to their settlement’s composition and the hope for opportunities elsewhere (cf. Piasere 1992: 279-291). But both are constantly changing.

One Family in One Year

A settlement-as-assemblage emerges when interests of several households and other characteristics (such as land-ownership) collude. I will illustrate how this process happens with the example of the extended family I know the best – that of Eduardo and his five siblings – Renato, Rita, Sara, Carla and Genilsa (Figure 4.2).

⁸⁰ The complexity of Calon “cosmology of nomadism” (Ferrari 2010) does not allow reducing mobility to poverty and the stories in this chapter show that rich Calon also move. Secondly, there is no fixed pattern comparatively speaking. Similarly to Calon, among the Californian Rom even within one extended family some households are more mobile and more powerful Rom tend to move less. But unlike Calon, Rom also explicitly divide and control territories between and within families (Nemeth 2002: 165-186). In contrast with both the American Rom and the Bahian Calon, among the English Travellers richer families travel more often and for longer distances than the poorer ones (Okely 1983: 149).

In March 2009, the family lived in two settlements – in Santaluz and São Gabriel.

Eduardo and his sister Rita lived in Santaluz – Eduardo in the house on *Rua dos Ciganos* and Rita in the camp “down there”. Their sister Genilsa, who is married to Pancho, had just left Santaluz, and moved to São Gabriel A. There, the household joined Genilsa’s sisters Carla and Sara, and her brother Renato; Sara’s husband, Zezinho, was the strong-man of this camp. The following account describes how six months later, following a series of events, both settlements were gone and the siblings living in different settlements in a changed combination.

In early July 2009 Kiko, Eduardo’s older son, killed a non-Gypsy man from Santaluz. Fearing retaliation, all Calon fled the town. Most people from Djalma’s camp “down there” built their tents in Bomfim, planning to wait until emotions calmed down before returning to Santaluz. Bomfim was an obvious immediate option. Only 18 kilometres from Santaluz, it meant that even people without much cash could afford a lorry for their belongings. Many had relatives living there and as a large flat open space of scattered peasant abodes, it made it possible for them to easily find a place to construct their tents. A few used it only as a temporary stopping place and within the next month moved elsewhere.

Eduardo first joined his three sisters and the brother in the camp in São Gabriel, but a month later he rented a house nearby the camp after selling one of the two houses he left behind in Santaluz. Rita could not go to São Gabriel to join all of her siblings. Her blind husband Paulo depended on help from Djalma, his

brother-in-law. In addition, a few years previously, her son separated from a woman whose family lives in São Gabriel. Because she remained unmarried, Rita and Paulo feared for their son's safety.

In August, Zezinho, Sara's husband, died of heart attack. Within a few days, the settlement disintegrated with about twelve households abandoning the locale.⁸¹ In her grief, Sara burnt their common bed and tent, and either destroyed or sold the rest. Her son-in-law, Nelson, rented a house for his family and Sara on the other side of the town. Genilsa joined Rita in Bomfim, 45 kilometres away. Carla, Renato and a few other households from Zezinho's settlement moved to a plot in São Gabriel that Beiju, Carla's husband, rented from a non-Gypsy. But Renato did not like the muddy camp next to the highway and moved his tent twice within it. Meanwhile, his older daughter separated from her husband and moved into her parents' tent. Since her ex-husband was in the camp every day visiting their son and Renato became worried that his daughter would be unable to find a new husband, in late September they left and came to Bomfim.

In Bomfim, too, some were thinking over and discussing their possibilities. In October, describing how Santaluz was better and how she missed it, Genilsa found out that a few others from the original camp in Santaluz wanted to go back. A few days later, this was the general opinion. Unfortunately, Genilsa's husband found out that the plot they used to live on had already been sold it and there was no other suitable place at that moment.

⁸¹ I suggest viewing settlements as relational entities, not only a geographical concentration of relatives. Among the American Rom, who live scattered between *gadze* within a 5 mile perimeter, "a death at home in any Rom family in the Los Angeles settlement precipitated an immediate change of residence" (Nemeth 2002: 178).

Meanwhile Eduardo and his wife Viviane were spending a lot on court-expenses to free Kiko and had to borrow money. They were having intense discussions about what to do next: now, they planned to leave to the *sertão* as soon as Kiko was released; now, Eduardo was asking another Calon about a plot for sale in São Gabriel; next, he was telling everybody that he was selling his second house in Santaluz; and then, to the horror of his relatives, he was talking about returning soon to Santaluz. In early November Eduardo bought a plot, “*terreno*”, in São Gabriel and soon he had a brick wall built around the new camp and started constructing two houses. He and Viviane planned to move there after Kiko’s release. He also invited people – his affinal relatives – who he trusted. Nelson, Sara’s son-in-law, who talked him into buying the “*terreno*”, did not want to live alone and pay rent anymore. Beiju, Carla’s husband, had a reputation for his courage and Eduardo hoped that his presence would provide some security to Kiko. For his part, Beiju did not get along with his brother-in-law living in the same camp as him. Their camp by the highway was “dead” – all the men were poor and there were no deals. Thinking especially about his son, Beiju saw advantages in moving in with rich Eduardo.

To sum up, by December 2009 six siblings had passed through several living arrangements. Renato, Genilsa and Rita now lived in the camp in Bomfim, while Carla and Sara were in the new settlement (“*terreno*”) in São Gabriel, which was founded by Eduardo. Similarly to that Mauro’s family, this story illustrates that the intensity of movement is the highest following unpredictable events. In both cases, deaths and

killings made some places inaccessible and forced people to reconsider their positions. But finding a more durable arrangement requires effort and, as Eduardo's story also showed, disturbing events are followed by a period of experiments with living arrangements.

Although the events are clearly quite singular, the story is useful in helping us to realise that behind any alignment lies households' readiness to move and the constant search for better immediate positioning. Their decisions take into account their surrounding environment. They judge their various options on the basis of people who live in specific settlements, interests of other members of households, economic circumstances, space, ownership issues, costs, safety, and so on. The process could be understood as social navigation in an unstable environment (Vigh 2009: 419-438), although social "wayfaring" (Ingold 2007) would be more appropriate; people do not evaluate each possible position on a continuum with a fixed future point in mind, but on the basis of feedback reference to changes in positions around them. Calon men and women imagine themselves as active and capable of dealing with uncertainties – in gambling, in loans, in their living arrangements and so on – and adept at gaining advantage in the process. Therefore, it seems imprecise to conclude that in Calon "nomadic cosmology" "[it is] not a Calon that is in movement, but the world which is around him" (Ferrari 2010: 268). Rather, Calon talk about the world in motion, a happening world, exactly when they know they are moving.⁸² This is why Beiju thinks of his camp by the road as dead and responds by moving in with Eduardo.

⁸² One woman interviewed by Ferrari (2010: 263) makes a similar point about nature of travelling and time. By travelling the world passes by, while during a "still life" there is a fixed reference - a clock: "...and today, the time passes and we can see even hours and minutes of moments. And when we used to travel

Such social wayfaring is not easy since the environment – the absolute and relative composition of all settlements – is unstable. It requires constant alertness to the present, which is achieved by means of conversations with others and visits, for instance. These visits also make relations visible and people decide to settle with others judging their behaviour. As a consequence, a person with whom one camps today might not be the same tomorrow.

Households make choices with different people in various camps in mind who are simultaneously also evaluating positions of their own households. In the story above, individual interests and personal relations, lead Eduardo, Beiju, Nelson and their dependents to end up in one settlement, after their previous settlements fell apart. The settlement thus emerge as a collusion of such judgements, on the basis of a temporary harmony of these households, rather than of any fixed order (cf MacDonald 2008: 5-21). Such interaction of kinship obligations and financial deals, emotions and evaluations of others' behaviour, constantly changes the quality of places. It represents a kind of complexity described for other “anarchic societies”, where based on personal ties, complicated psychological requirements, a great number of potential arrangements characterised by randomness of results are possible (MacDonald 2009: 15); this form of self-organising allows a variety of outcomes while the overall system persists (Strathern 1995: 20).

In this section I extended the description of Calon spatiality by looking at the question of mobility. I argued that although people have some preferences with whom and where to live, contingencies of life often disperse relatives within and without their

(*viajar*), we did not think of it. For us the world was passing by and we did not realise what time it was.” As if a passing clock-time could not change anything – it was only a handle moving.

region. At the same time, autonomy, personalised relating to other people and looking for better opportunities, mean that people are ready to change their location. Settlements arise around strong men, such as Manuel, Djalma or Eduardo, whenever other people think that living around them could improve their position. But their cases also demonstrate the impact of violence on settlement composition and mobility. Violence delimits people's regions and closeness or distance from others. As one expression of autonomy and personalised relating to others, it causes fragmentation and dispersal, and limits the possibility of hierarchy developing.

4. 3 Space and Violence

Revenge and Segmentarity

A relative preference for virilocality and patrilocality is influenced by seeing other Calon as *valentes* – valiant or courageous – and *brasileiros* as *perigosos* – dangerous.⁸³ Eraldo killed Manuel to avenge his son, Manuel's sons had Eraldo killed to avenge their father; Kiko killed a local outlaw to protect both his father and a brother; Beiju killed a man who had killed his father and so on. While the fragmentation of space which results from violent acts is similar to other Gypsy groups described by anthropologists, revenge is justified by emotions – sadness or anger – alone and not by an appeal to any “Gypsy law”. Revenge involves only small agnatic groups, what Gay y Blasco (1999) calls *patrigroups*, and results in a blood feud, i.e. in the killing of a perpetrator by agnates.

⁸³ About Spanish Gitanos Gay y Blasco writes that: “Feuding and fear of feuding are premised upon and reinforce links to paternal kin, and are essential in constructing an emotional universe where Gitano persons face a hostile world in which not only the threatening Paoyos, but also unrelated Gitanos are potential sources of danger. In other words, feuding and fear of feuding go a long way towards displacing ideals and feelings of unity, harmony and cohesiveness to the margins of the Gitano imagined community” (2004, 166).

Like emotions, it does not travel well across generations, although it might take time. For instance, many years back, a man had killed his wife, who was Beiju's and Camarão's sister. They in turn killed the man. A decade later, however, Beiju married his son to a woman from the man's family while his brother Camarão still refuses to talk to the "enemies".⁸⁴

This stands in contrast with the Iberian Gypsies where patrigrups often merge into larger segments "descended from a common ancestor through male links" (San Román 1975: 171). These are called *razas* in Spanish and *raças* in Portuguese and there is a specific term associated with feuding among those – *ruinas* or *quimeras* (Sp.) or *desordens* (Port.) (San Román 1975: 171; Gay y Blasco 1999: 147-151; Seabra Lopes 2008: 158). In the case of a murder, "any member of the offending *raza* are liable of retaliation" (Gay y Blasco 1999: 149; see also Seabra Lopes 2008: 70). The Bahian Calon do not have terms for larger segments, nor for long-term feuds between them.

Following Evans-Pritchard (1940: 160), I distinguish between blood feuds and feuds. The latter refers to a rare warfare between larger segments, while the former designates a much more common vengeance which is restricted to kin alone. Without overstressing the similarities between the Brazilian Calon and the Iberian Gypsies, Evans-Pritchard's analysis of segmentarity among the Nuer allows us to hypothesise about the roots of absence of feud among the Bahian Calon. He suggests that the rise of feuding among the Nuer, between "primary" and "secondary" sections of a tribe, was related to pressure from Arab and European colonisers, the need for expansion and

⁸⁴ Similarly, Ferrari (2010) describes a case of a boy in the state of São Paulo who married a daughter of a man who had killed his father. Others said that the boy had nothing to do with the murder, since he was very small when it happened. Similarly, Vilar (2011: 39 ft4), writing about Calon in Rio Grande do Norte, mentions how younger people distance themselves from older blood feuds by talking about "enemies of the old ones".

competition for economic opportunities. In the case of Spanish Gitanos, while in past patrigrups in conflict tried to avoid each other, since the 1960s “government policies have dictated the growing concentration of Gitanos in shanty towns, housing estates and even Roma-only, purpose-built ghettos. This state incursion made it difficult for patrigrups to scatter themselves among the Payos, and led, in the 1960s and 1970s, to high levels of *ruinas* (feuding) and later to the development of novel political institutions such as *caciques* and mafia-like networks” (Gay y Blasco 2004: 165 citations removed). On the other hand, the Brazilian State had not paid much attention to Gypsies and there were no attempts at forced settlement into designated areas. People avoid the escalation of violence by leaving. Such was the case of Jenilson (above) who left Bomfim because of the argument. Other people I knew moved elsewhere, because there was “too much talk” in their settlements. In a case where conflict results in killing, kin overcome with emotion resort to blood feud (*vingança*, revenge) and avoidance.

Within their home range, people move into settlements occupied by their relatives. Violent outbursts, however, can also drive families apart and turn kin into enemies. In fact, enemies (*inimigos*) are most often former kin (*parentes*), especially the affinal relatives; almost by definition they cannot be the unknown nameless Gypsies (*Ciganos desconhecidos*) with whom one has no previous relationship. Exogamous affinity, which involves creation of intensive relations with people with whom one might not share memories of co-living, seems especially prone to violent breakdown. When feuding involves several deaths or particularly high emotions, it can drive patrigrups apart: Djalma and Índio, both *caatingueiros* (of the hinterland), live on the coast. Beiju left Southern Bahia after he had killed an uncle; Eraldo’s sons avoided Manuel’s sons

after the killings of their fathers and at least some never returned to the town where their father was killed.

Violent Relations

Violence is a basic organisational principle (see also Kaprow 1978; Gay y Blasco 1999).

It delimits use of space and fragments it into what Ferrari calls “political regions” (2010: 273) and I, in order to highlight the ego-centric character of these spaces, call home ranges. The case of Manuel’s and Eduardo’s stories illustrated how violence influences family dynamics and composition. However, due to the character of settlements, violence impacts all their inhabitants, causing flight or at least a reconfiguration of alliances.

Violence thus influences people who are not directly related, might not observe loyalty in the same way, or even refuse to participate, but who live in the same settlement or are related to the people who do.

Unknown Gypsies are potentially dangerous.⁸⁵ *Praianos*, living on the coast, would not, for instance, voluntarily move to live among unrelated *caatingeiros* in the

⁸⁵ Ignorance is relative in both senses. Calon are aware that individual links vary and are often able to trace possible relationships if they try hard enough. There is always somebody to refer to. Sometimes it is enough to ask “who is he a son of” or “what is his family name” as surnames tend to dominate specific regions.

Alternatively, the process can be more elaborate. One day I was watching *Tarabatara* (2007), a documentary about a camp in Alagoas, with about six men in Candeias, Bahia. Although none of the men was in touch with the people in the film, collectively they established their connections. They did it through various sets of dyadic relationships that men had with the people in the film. Giovanni Borges Costa first thought that he had met the oldest Calon from the film 25 years ago. A young man, who married into Candeias, was discovered to be a son of a cousin of one man in the film. Through discussions and identification of various links, they established that “he [the young man] is their *parente* (relative). But he does not know them...” Suddenly new connections materialised. Knowing a possible connection, the men hypothesised that a brother of one man in the film was *that* man, who killed another *Cigano* in XY a few years back.

interior.⁸⁶ Even when forced by events, one does not go alone. Calon from elsewhere are generally portrayed as more *valente*, valiant – for those in Bahia those in Pernambuco, for those in São Paulo those in Bahia. A region outside one’s home range is also often where one’s enemies (*inimigos*) live. After all, a conflict between relatives is often the main reason for flight or evasion. For these reasons weddings are the most explosive events and all weddings that I attended, had *Polícia Militar* or *Polícia Civil* watching; they were normally invited by the brides’ parents. People who are in conflict can meet at a wedding accidentally, or, because information about weddings spread, people can search out their enemies there. In addition, men, fortified by alcohol, display their masculinity much more overtly.

While *Ciganos* are dangerous because they are expected to behave as *Ciganos*, i.e. to be *valente* and protect their autonomy, *brasileiros* are dangerous, *perigosos*, in an unpredictable and unspecified way. Pancho moved his tent closer to others; although others in the camp told him that in Santaluz a *jurón* had never attacked a *Cigano*. When the owner of the plot under the camp “down there” threatened to evict the Calon, some were worried that if Djalma stayed alone, he would be attacked by *pistoleiros*, armed bandits. One reason that Eduardo gave me for not wanting to go back to Santaluz was that the town was not worth it, because there were too many shootings. In larger towns, which usually had several settlements of sometimes unrelated Calon, people also felt that they were harassed by police. In addition, there is always a possibility of violence in a

⁸⁶ From *caatinga*, an ecoregion of the *sertão*, North-Eastern Brazil, characterised by the plant of the same name. From *praia*, the beach.

Calon in Bahia often distinguish themselves as *caatingueiros* (the hinterland), *mateiros* (Southern Bahia), *praianos* (the island of Itaparica), *recôncavanos* (from around Santo Amaro), *mineiros* (Minas Gerais) and so on. It should be stressed that this is not a fixed divisions and does not denote nations, clans, tribes or even “groups”. Rather it refers to a place where one has significant relations, especially the dead.

debtor-creditor relationship and when Índio, who had left to collect debts for shopkeepers in Santaluz, did not return home on time, I met his wife and a crying son looking for him in panic. In fact, Índio was threatened by an armed debtor on another occasion, when he went to collect the payment.

It is impossible to separate this fear from the reality of criminal violence. TV programmes showing murderers and their imprisonment were popular with Calon in Santaluz. I was also always warned to be careful when going to Salvador, which seemed particularly dangerous. But the impact of non-Gypsy violence and discourse about it are amplified by divisions that separate *brasileiros* from their moral universe. Stewart (1987: 173) talks about the Hungarian Rom as sharing “a state of siege” mentality. On a more subtle level, however, there is also something tragic in being alone among *brasileiros* and Ferrari argues that is impossible for a Calon to live alone (*sozinho*) and stay a Gypsy, since as one of her informants said: “free is a person together with others, with her family. She is not free alone. Never is a Gypsy free alone” (2010: 202).

But the distance goes both ways. Despite the reality of violence endemic to such marginal neighbourhoods such as Graça in Santaluz, *Rua dos Ciganos* was relatively safe. Thanks to *Cigano* presence and monitoring, the fear and respect that people had for them, theft or violence was not frequent on our street. I did not realize the weight of their presence until the Calon were gone. While during the first year we lived on this street together with them nobody was killed on our street, once they fled, within three months four people were shot dead on this and adjoining streets. Our neighbours, who in the evening used to chat in front of their houses under a street lamp, started locking up at six o'clock and some were even talking about to moving away. One reason why their

presence was so effective was that *Ciganos* are considered violent by their neighbours. This can sometimes turn against them. After the killing in Candeias of a non-Gypsy by a *Cigano*, the camp there was burnt and police claimed that somebody misused hatred toward *Cigano* money-lenders to get even. In any case, leaving Santaluz after Kiko killed the man was not such a bad idea, given especially that the man was popular, but also a criminal.

In Bahia, there is growing criminal violence related to drug-trafficking and easy access to guns. Although Calon in the region of Santaluz are not involved in trafficking, they are not immune to it and many also buy stolen goods and guns; guns are actually used by many people in a small town as a storage of value. Furthermore, there is a state violence, the legitimate or illegitimate use of force by police, which Calon avoid through escape and hiding. The impact of police and criminal violence, which often cannot be separated in practice, is further amplified by the media discourse. Then there is violence specific to the region. From the internet alerts that I receive it seems to me that most killings between *Ciganos* came from Sergipe, Pernambuco, the interior and southern Bahia. The first three compose so-called the hinterland – the *sertão* – notorious for widespread long-term family feuding, *vingança sertaneja*, as well as the use of weapons to solve daily conflicts (e.g. Marques 2002).

I want to stress here, that the constant potentiality of violence in Calon lives is an important principle. It is the principle of coding the space – it divides it between one's home range and the space of unknown *Ciganos* and enemies. It is also a form of sociality – it is a denial of commonality with *brasileiros* and places a limit to sociability among the Calon. Feuding becomes a way to show ones' Gypsiness (Gay y Blasco 1999) and as an

“apparatus of counterpower” (Graeber 2004: 32), interpersonal violence limits the size of settlements and prevents the development of hierarchical order.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described the logic of Calon spatiality. I argued that a Calon household moves within the home range occupied by relatives and known Calon. Within this space they create settlements of related people around strong-men. Violence plays a central role as a source of fragmentation and dispersal and delimiting one’s area. Although there have been some changes in mode and ease of travel, and although many Calon now live in houses, there are still many reasons to travel; neither physical houses, nor tents serve as fixed points of reference. Trying to earn money, men leave camps almost daily often going to neighbouring or distant towns. There are also many reasons to change one’s location, such as the possibility of living close to other relatives, an economic opportunity, an argument or simply boredom. Because all households make such decisions, the overall environment is unstable and places the onus on every household to evaluate its options and opportunities.

These spatial characteristics relate to the social organisation of money-lending. One of the characteristics of strong-men is that they have the most deals within and outside settlements. Every settlement is criss-crossed with small subsistence loans especially from them. Violence is a structuring principle guiding financial deals: one helps those that stand up for him and never lends money to unknown *Ciganos*. People move to improve their capacity to strike deals – here physical movement is conceptualised as a way to create opportunities for monetary flow. And thanks to

dislocations, over the course of their lives, men create long-term customers in many towns across the region.

Before exploring money-lending in a systematic manner, I shall address the position of households and the character of Calon masculinity, which served as the background for the present discussion. I mentioned that Calon see themselves as “men of action” attuned to surrounding opportunities and on the move, which include physical movement. For their part, households are the basic components of settlements. Objectified in tents or houses, and occupied by a couple with unmarried children, the network between such households demarcates spaces as Calon and not *gaje*. But as I go on to show, constructing and preserving a household is far from easy.

V. “TAKING CARE OF ONE’S LIFE”: HOUSEHOLDS, EMOTIONS AND MONEY

Introduction

Every afternoon Viviane washed her hair, put on a clean dress and jewellery and when Eduardo came “home” from “the street”, they sat down in front of their house on *Rua dos Ciganos* in Santaluz. With a cup of sweet coffee, accompanied by their sons and their daughter-in-law, they observed the street and talked to passer-bys. These *Ciganos* were visible, self-confident and such moments of contentment contrasted with the days’ busyness and constant movement; it was a proof that everything – deals, card-games, cooking, cleaning – went well and problems were resolved. This is how I remember the period between four and six o’clock, before their older son and his wife retired to their own house. My house was just opposite theirs and often I sat on our veranda, shouting across the street at each other; most of the time, however, I sat with them.

Eduardo, a short balding man, was always clean shaven. With a cigarette stuck in the corner of his mouth under a huge moustache and money in his wallet, he was always ready for another deal. Viviane, a pretty woman, had a new dress made each month and wore custom-made jewellery of real gold. She ran the household with a help of a cleaner and kept a close eye on her daughter-in-law. She also had a detailed overview of Eduardo’s deals and lent money in the name of their younger unmarried son Romero. Although Viviane did not know how to read, when a customer came and she went inside to get his promissory note, she always brought the correct one.

I never managed to interview Eduardo or to ask him more than two consecutive questions. He seemed to have few explicit theories and very little taste for explaining the obvious. Mostly he listened to others with a superior air. Not that he minded my presence: I spent good portions of most days at their house or travelling with them and whenever we were too lazy to cook, that is most days, Adriana and I ate at their house or their son's. Through this family I got to know other Calon, who described me to others as the *gringo* who "lives with Eduardo". Eduardo's older son, Kiko, became my friend and informant; Eduardo's daughter-in-law, Paula, Adriana's best friend. We were with them for the birth of Eduardo's first grandchild and the death of his mother. We followed the marriage negotiations of his younger son, Romero, and the unfolding of the marriages of his two other children, Kiko and Josiene.

Those images of dusks in front of their house contrast with the low points I witnessed later: Kiko's time in prison, failures to marry Romero, moving to new settlements, a life in provisional arrangement. Through Eduardo, I learned that even for a rich man, behaving properly as a Calon and stabilising one's positions in the uncertain environment requires a constant effort.

Focusing on the story of Eduardo, this chapter aims to convey two messages. Firstly, it shows the highly negotiated quality of Calon sociality, where visible individual action is crucial. Specifically, the story shows Eduardo's difficulty in achieving what I see as the prime goal of a Calon man – to live in an "established" manner,⁸⁷ meaning, in his own household surrounded by households of his sons whose marriages he had negotiated.

⁸⁷ From the verb *estabelecer*

An adult man, building on his connections, aspires to be a centre of households, preferably surrounded by his married sons; those without sons, like Djalma who was a strong man of the camp in Santaluz, live surrounded by their sons-in-law and affines. In any case, most settlements can be viewed as consisting of one or several father-sons clusters. If there is any predictability in Calon spatial arrangements it is this: a man and his married son live in the same settlement. This does not mean that none of his sons live elsewhere, only that at least one of them lives alongside him. This preference, at least partially, reflects questions of personal safety in the world perceived as dangerous; here, the father-son bond becomes most visible in blood feuds. A father and his sons will often cooperate in economic activities; the father “helps” (*ajudar*) his sons through drawing them into further deals or borrowing money from them; he prefers travelling accompanied by them. Successful marriages of his children, the wedding and the dowry he pays for his daughter and the dowry his daughter-in-law brings to the new household, are the signs of his efficacy and reputation. But establishing oneself is not easy in the uncertain environment the Bahian Calon live in, where relationships need to be constantly negotiated and confirmed, and where many activities that mark proper behaviour lead to further instability.

Secondly, Eduardo’s story highlights the centrality of money. In this world, money objectifies relationships or, rather, it makes relationships between people visible. A dowry objectifies the marriage and relationships between parents and children; the money a father spends on getting his son out of jail shows his paternal love; the money a family spends on saving a dying man expresses the love his relatives hold for him.

The observation about the importance of money is not limited to the Bahian Calon. Michael Stewart showed that for the Hungarian Rom money is also a “food for sociality” (1994: 45-62; see also Stewart 1997). Like the Bahian Calon, Rom are passionate about their deals on the market and see the desire for money as a legitimate concern. Money’s ability to circulate allows the acquisition of distinction in market transactions. The money Rom earn in factories is often spent on *mulatsago* (a communal drinking) which expresses the ideal of brotherly behaviour and sharing. They also gamble frivolously, thus annihilating the arduous (*gažo*) work that went into making the money. In all three modes – in deals, *mulatsago* and gambling – through a process of the ideological disengagement both from *gažo* and from their households, men use money to create a world of abundance, where positive qualities attributed to them as Rom are foregrounded. Even deals on the marketplace are not evaluated solely according to a monetary gain.

But the differences between the Rom and the Calon are revealing. The Calon do not earn money in *gaje* factories, but in moneylending to *gaje*, which, as Stewart observes, is an ideal way of making money since it flows in one direction without any intermediary object (1987: 284). Calon do not create a world of “brothers” through spending on shared drinks, for instance. Rather, violence is a constant potentiality, one’s trust and space need to be constantly created. Man’s activities “on the street” are not conceptually opposed to household interests, but even serve as a basis for the creation of his children’s households. Money is a tool for sociality among the Calon not thanks to the process of ideological disengagement, but through their manipulation of the

characteristics of money, its capacity to slip into alternative regimes of value (Keane 2002: 65-90).

Here I draw especially on Holbraad's analysis of money as a "purely multiple" object.⁸⁸ Holbraad (2005) argues that when money is used in Cuban Ifá cults, it is an object of expenditure and not of (abstract) calculation. In fact, its expenditure silences its qualities for commensuration; in other words, one cannot use it for anything else at that moment. It is not consumed as a determinate quantity (value), but "consummated" as a special qualitative entity. Money's quantitative quality makes it divisible and thus highly mobile. But it is also capable of "registering displacement". When a specific whole (a sum) is exchanged for something else, that parted whole can be visualised as missing from the original whole. In Ifá cults money is therefore a medium in a double sense – it is "an object that gets exchanged, but also provides an 'environment' that allows exchange to get going" (247).

This quality of quantity of money is important for the way Calon conceptualise relationships. People constantly discuss and keep track of how much money any man has "on the street", i.e. in the loans to *brasileiros* and other Calon. This sum is specific, but its "accuracy" depends on one's closeness. For instance, Calon distinguish between "hearing about" and "witnessing" any transaction. Only Eduardo's family was in the car with him when he declared that he had "160.000 on the street". His family had a better idea of his wealth then, than they had about that of unrelated Pedro, living outside of their home range. Still, they told me, Pedro could spend R\$400 thousand on getting his son out of jail, because he had R\$3 million in bank. Such awareness of people's sums starts

⁸⁸ Or as Simmel put it, in order to function as money, whatever the absolute amount, it always has to remain "a lot of money" (1990: 137).

already with the public character of the dowry a bride brings to the union, and is later constantly approximated through conversations and rumours.

Certainly people deliberately obscure how much money they have, especially to avoid pressure from their relatives to spend or borrow it. They also complain about individuals who “cry a lot” that they do not have money, despite having so much (a specific sum) “on the street”. At the same time, I was surprised how easily they discussed each other’s wealth and how much they knew about specific transactions with each other. This is not only a way of keeping track about another’s reputation (although this is certainly important, as I will show in Chapter 7). Here I want to problematise the way that Calon use money – as specific sums – to keep track of one’s reputation. As a specific, partible, multiple object, it is effective in making one’s relations evident, because a specific whole spent can be imagined in relation to the (amount of) money one has “on the street”. When people talk how much money somebody spent on dowry, on help, on bail or lent to somebody, the discussion always turns around precise sums while people have an idea of how much these parties have “on the street”.

But, thanks to the same dynamics – since money can be withheld, hidden, increased, obtained through loans from others and so on –, people can be accused of calculating and not behaving properly. Until the last moment it is unclear, for instance, how much money a bride will bring in dowry or even whether the wedding will take place. So the two central themes this chapter – the negotiated quality of Calon social life and the role of money in making relations visible – are connected. I will try to make it clearer, through describing developments in Eduardo’s family during a two-year period. I show efforts to stabilise households and their place, tracing the arduous process of

arranging Romero's wedding and the disruption caused by Kiko's imprisonment. I then turn to describing the instability of households in a more systematic manner before returning to the role of money in creating and sustaining households.

5.1 Stabilising the Uncertain Environment

August 2008: The Richest Calon

Eduardo (42) and his wife Viviane (30) were the richest Calon in Santaluz. Of all Calon in Santaluz, they were the only ones who lived in a house and they also owned a house where Kiko (20), Eduardo's son from a previous relationship, and his wife Paula (19) lived. Eduardo also built a house for their married daughter Josiene (15) who was living in São Gabriel. Eduardo was the only one who owned a car, who always had a mobile phone and several guns. He played cards only with other rich Calon, sometimes for weeks on end. He was also the best known *Cigano* moneylender in the town.

Eduardo and Viviane had not always been rich (*ricos*). They used to live in a tent in a camp with the others and Viviane, who comes from a *valente* (valiant) but poor family, had to go begging. The couple gained their wealth through Eduardo's association with his paternal uncle Lima. He "helped" Eduardo and because he was childless, when he died in 2002 his property was divided between his *jurin* lover and Eduardo, his favourite nephew. Eduardo also inherited Lima's clients and the middleman.

Other Calon commented on the couple's riches, and complained of their coldness, stinginess and secrecy. Unlike their relatives, the couple never seemed to lack money. They did not live in the camp together with others, and were left out of small subsistence loans. People were not totally incorrect in suggesting that they were avoiding others on

purpose. Eduardo often claimed that he preferred to live alone and he did not try to surround himself with his relatives, although he visited them or was visited by them almost daily. Unless he went to play cards or to intimidate somebody, he always went alone, and like everybody else he obfuscated the exact details of his deals. He discussed bigger deals only with Viviane; the bank account was in her name, and whenever he needed to go to cash a check or withdraw money, she went with him.

When we moved in, to become fully “established”, Eduardo only needed for Romero to marry and to move next door into a house he had ready for him. All of his children would then be married with his sons living in houses next to him. Therefore, soon after we moved in, they started negotiating the marriage of Romero to a rich girl from a town about 70 kilometres away. But the wedding negotiations kept failing.

Negotiating Romero’s Marriage

In late August 2008, Doido asked me in a secretive tone, “Do you know where Eduardo was on Sunday? They went to Palotina. To arrange (*arrumar*) a bride for Romero.”

A week later, when his brother and father returned from Feira de Santana where they went to buy a fighting cockerel, they stopped in Palotina where Romero’s future in-laws lived. “The *Cigana* will come next week,” Kiko announced. “This week she has no money.”

“But I do not want to get married,” pleaded Romero. Kiko murmured something attending to the cockerel. Romero, who met his future bride only twice, repeated, “But I do not want to get married”.

Eduardo and Viviane had noticed Luiza (14) at Kiko's wedding in Alto de Bela Vista; Luiza's mother was a maid of honour (*madrinha*) to Paula, Kiko's bride. A few days afterwards they asked Luiza's mother if she would be interested in marrying Luiza to Romero. By the end of August, all Calon in Santaluz knew about the negotiations and commented on the respective wealth of the bride and the groom and on the potential dowry. "She is rich," Romero's cousin opined, "but not richer than Romero". Non-Gypsy neighbours also learned about the upcoming wedding. Everybody knew that Romero was not happy.

Early September, Romero, dressed in his best clothes and accompanied by his parents, visited Palotina for the first time. In the following months, almost every other week Luiza and her mother (her father had been killed) came to Santaluz; always with somebody else from her family. Sometimes, the women also visited other of Romero's relatives living in the camp in Santaluz. After all, these were the people among whom Luiza was to live.

In October, the wedding date was finally set for mid-January. Soon Romero quit high-school and Eduardo started refurbishing his son's future house. But the biggest challenge was finding a way for Romero and Luiza to like each other. Luiza was happy to marry him, but Romero did not want to marry her. Whenever they met, their parents encouraged them to spend time together. During one wedding, for instance, Romero's parents started dancing with their future daughter-in-law and a few minutes later Eduardo literally dragged Romero to dance with Luiza. Romero did not look at her and left as soon as the song finished.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Although during the wedding men and women stay separated for most of the time, taking into account the murmur and the looks, Romero's statement was clear.

At the end of December 2008, two weeks before the wedding, Eduardo postponed the wedding after his *colega*, a Calon peer from a neighbouring town, died in a car accident. It also suited Luiza's mother, who lacked the money for the wedding anyway. When Luiza and her mother came next, they brought along presents for Kiko and Paula's baby that was to be born in early February. Meanwhile the dresses arrived: Viviane, Paula, Luiza and her mother had three dresses each made by a seamstress in Salvador. During this period Eduardo and Viviane together and Paula's parents needed to intervene in a crisis which threatened to split Kiko and Paula.

At the beginning of February 2009 the second date was also cancelled. Luiza's mother called and told the family that a debtor had not paid her and she did not have enough to pay for the wedding. A new date was to be set soon.

In late March Eduardo bought Romero a car and a week later sent Romero, accompanied by another young Calon, to visit his future in-laws. He went, but otherwise whenever Eduardo was not around Romero repeated that he did not want to marry Luiza. Moreover, he was still in love with his *jurin* girlfriend.

Finally, by the beginning of April 2009 the wedding date was set for 10 May. The last thing needed was for Luiza's mother to arrange a priest. Around this time Viviane told Eduardo that their son still did not want to marry Luiza. Later that day they were sitting in front of their house, with Romero sitting to one side not far from them. When Eduardo saw his son "alone" (*sozinho*) and focused on eating pop-corn, he felt sorry (*sentir pena*) for him. "He is such a child" he commented, and suggested to Viviane that they cancel the wedding. Viviane was horrified: "How could we, when she already bought the dresses?" "She will return them, then," answered Eduardo tersely.

Most Calon did not think the wedding would be cancelled. “It would ruin him,” suggested one. But some also pointed out, that Luiza would not get accustomed to living in Eduardo’s family. She loved *festas*; every week she was on a beach with her friends, but the men in Eduardo’s family did not take their wives out. By Good Friday Viviane and Eduardo were engaged in a silent domestic conflict and did not talk to each other beyond the necessary. Eduardo was scheming to cancel the marriage and was especially annoyed with the way negotiation dragged. Thus when Luiza’s mother (who was Evangelical) called that she had not arranged a Catholic priest, but the wedding would take place in the mayor’s office, he gave her the ultimatum: either the wedding would take place in a Catholic church, or it would be cancelled. They agreed to meet the following day. That evening, Viviane, who liked Luiza, was trying to persuade her husband not to cancel the wedding, while Romero, sensing his opportunity, kept repeating that he did not want to marry.

When the following day I entered Eduardo’s house, Viviane, Eduardo, Romero, Luiza and her mother were sitting in a semi-circle in the *quintal*, the back yard. Eduardo, tapping Luiza’s back affectionately, asked, “How much did you spend?”

“10.000 and will still spend 12”, answered Luiza’s mother.

“And what is still missing?”

“The furniture is still missing” responded Luiza and added that they were going to buy it soon. Her mother was shaking with tension: “I do not understand what the problem is... what the problem with the priest is...and now Romero is saying that he does not want to get married”.

“The most important is how they get along (*convivencia*),” interrupted Viviane.

“And not whether there is a priest or not”, Luiza’s mother concluded.

Unfortunately, I had to leave. But Eduardo accepted the women’s arguments and later I saw the women walking to the couple’s future house. Luiza and her brother also came to the *fiesta* downtown that evening, where they joined Romero, Kiko, me and others.

On Sunday morning Eduardo received a text message from Luiza, saying that Saturday was the worst day of her life. After Romero had gone with the men to the *fiesta* and she stayed in his parent’s house, Luiza explored Romero’s phone. There she found a text message to his *jurin* girlfriend in which he called her his “only love” and stated that the wedding was “forced”. To add insult to injury, when Luiza arrived at the *fiesta* that evening, Romero kept ignoring her and despite the best efforts of Kiko and Luiza’s brother, he spent time with the *jurin*. Luiza told Viviane and Eduardo about it. They asked her not to tell her mother, because she would cancel the wedding. Viviane, eager to salvage the arrangement, said that she would go and talk to the *jurin*, but Eduardo said that he would go instead, because Viviane would curse her.

Driving in a car with Romero the next day, Kiko appealed to his brother, “There is no future in spending time with *juróns*... you have to think ahead...if you want to live with *jurón*, you should have married a *jurin*.” As if pointing out the advantages, he added that Romero should really put large speakers into his new car and that later he could ask Luiza’s mother for more money. The following week, Romero and his parents drove to Palotina taking along presents from the Easter Fair. The wedding was set for 16 May, with a Catholic priest, and a party in a private club.

But two weeks before the wedding, Luiza's mother called to say that she did not want the priest after all. Eduardo told her, that because she insisted on the wedding being in a mayor's office, he was cancelling it. One hour later she called again telling Eduardo to forget their previous conversation, but he insisted that the wedding was over. Luiza's brother called next, but Eduardo remained stubborn. A few days later, Luiza's mother called Eduardo and told him that he should reimburse her for the furniture she had bought. He told her to bring it over along with the receipts and she never called again.

The Calon in Santaluz blamed Luiza's mother for the breakdown of the *trato*, the agreement to marry. She was only interested in money, they said, since she insisted on the marriage being in the mayor's office. If they separated, the Calon reasoned, by appealing to the court Luiza would be able to receive more money. Romero was beaming; the following week he returned to high school. Eduardo was glad too. He had started to feel sorry for his son but had been afraid that he would have to bear all the costs. The incident, by placing the responsibility on Luiza's mother, provided a way out. Even Viviane was satisfied, since Luiza's mother proved to be "complicated" (*atrapalhada*) and would have interfered too much after the wedding. A rumour circulated, that Viviane had at first been against the marriage cancellation, because she feared that Luiza would kill Romero. Luiza apparently told one his aunts, that "if she could not have him, nobody would". Upon hearing this, Eduardo exclaimed that if Luiza killed Romero, he would kill her and her family.

Soon afterwards, I left Santaluz. When I came back in September 2009 many things had changed. The whole settlement in Santaluz dissolved after Kiko killed a man. In the following section I describe how Eduardo's family dealt with this dishevelment.

Kiko In Prison

From what I could gather, one Saturday morning in June 2009, while Eduardo was playing with his grandson, Kiko stood up, tucked a gun inside his shorts and walked out. Neither Eduardo nor Kiko's wife Paula noticed anything. A few hours later Kiko shot a *jurón*. He was convinced that the man had been planning to kill his father and his younger brother. After the murder, Kiko and Paula fled to her relatives in Alto de Bela Vista. On Sunday evening Eduardo called Kiko and told him that nobody suspected anything and that he should come back. But on Monday morning, just a few minutes after Kiko had walked in, the police stormed Eduardo's house and arrested Kiko. In the house they found bullets that matched those Kiko had used, and two old guns that belonged to Eduardo's father, but they did not find the gun Kiko used and which Viviane hastily tucked under her skirt. Sobbing, she swore that there were not any other guns in the house, and the police soon left – they had enough evidence against Kiko anyway.

“He was a *bandido*, but a son of Santaluz” a woman who worked in the town hall told me about the man Kiko killed. He came from a town's large family, was generally liked, although a few knew about his criminal activities. Since the Calon in Santaluz feared that man's friends would try to revenge him, the day Kiko was imprisoned they fled the town.

In the series of dislocations which I described in the preceding chapter, Eduardo's household, which now included Paula and the baby, first joined a camp in São Gabriel where Zezinho, Eduardo's brother-in-law, was a strong-man. A few weeks later they rented a house nearby. In August, Zezinho died and that camp dissolved; some left for other towns, other established a camp next to a busy interstate highway. Consequently,

when I met this extended family⁹⁰, the two settlements where they had previously lived no longer existed. The uncertainty over Kiko combined with the grief over Zezinho had heightened the overall feeling of despair; even Kiko in prison had a beard in mourning.⁹¹ Unlike a few months ago, Eduardo and Viviane now lived close to their relatives and depended on them for everyday emotional comfort. Whenever Eduardo travelled anywhere – to collect money in Santaluz, to visit a lawyer in Salvador, or to borrow money from a Calon in the *sertão* – he took somebody along.

In October Eduardo was weighing up the various possibilities to leave the rented house. Eventually, he bought a piece of land, a *terreno*, in São Gabriel.⁹² Soon he started building two houses and a wall around it, and planned to move there with his sons. In November, he invited Nelson, Beiju and Beiju's son, who used to live in Zezinho's camp, to build their tents on his *terreno* and to live alongside him. Sara, Zezinho's widow, also moved in, sleeping in an unfurnished tent on a wooden palette.

Eduardo hired Dr Henrique to get Kiko out of prison. He had been a lawyer to various Calon in the past, including Eduardo's distant relative who recommended him. Initially, Eduardo paid the lawyer R\$7.000 and gave him his new car. To everybody's dismay, however, four months later, Kiko was still in prison and had yet to face trial. This was at least partially down to Dr Henrique, who wanted to avoid *júri popular* (a people's jury), which would condemn Kiko. Eduardo was frustrated, accusing Dr Henrique of not doing enough. He felt that the judge, too, let him down, although he had "done so much"

⁹⁰ See Figure 4.2, p. 163.

⁹¹ The distress became most obvious to me when more than two months after Zezinho's death, I visited some of his relatives for the first time. It was a rainy period and a camp of six tents besides a busy intra-state road and next to an illegal dump was muddy. Bearded and unkempt men walked in and out of tents, or sat in small groups hiding from the rain. They left the camp where Zezinho had been a strong-man within three days of his death. As Zezinho's widow explained to me, "*Ciganos* do not live where someone has died".

⁹² See Chapter 4

for the judge in the past. In fact, Eduardo had been certain that the judge would willingly sign Kiko's *habeas corpus*, maybe for money, while even a temporary release would allow them to flee to the *sertão*. Unfortunately for Kiko, the judge himself was being investigated for corruption and was not going to let the *Cigano* out, especially since the popular opinion was overwhelmingly against Kiko.

"*Agoniado*" (anxious), as others described him, in early November Eduardo visited Roque, the richest Calon in São Gabriel, looking for advice. Roque suggested hiring another lawyer. Eduardo was willing to pay more and have two lawyers, but when he called Dr. Henrique that night to ask him why he had not shown up for a few weeks, the lawyer told him that a hearing would be held the following Wednesday and that there was a good chance that Kiko would be released on a procedural mistake. During the hearing the judge questioned the witnesses testifying to Kiko's reputation (*testemunhas de carácter*). Those on Kiko's side were brought by Eduardo's non-Gypsy middleman and some were paid by Eduardo. On that day, though, the judge only postponed his decision.

Two weeks the judge rejected the *habeas corpus*. The decision was now to be signed by a tribunal made of so-called *desembargadores*. Dr Henrique was certain that he could bribe some of them and asked Eduardo for another R\$30.000.

Every Thursday Paula, Viviane and Romero visited Kiko in the municipal prison in São Gabriel. They could see him for ten minutes and hand over a plastic bag with his official name written on it containing a few permitted things. Kiko's in-laws came almost weekly. Besides them, each week there were other people – most often his sister and her husband, a cousin, one or two *colegas*, i.e. Calon peers from the region, of Eduardo and

me. People came “to give Kiko strength”, to tell him to “stay calm” and to “keep his head low”. Eduardo never visited his son in the prison, but stayed outside and asked others about his son afterwards.

In mid-November, a new couple and their daughter Tania visited Kiko. I learned that Tania (14) was going to marry Romero and from then on they came every week. They were well-off and her brother was married to Romero’s cousin and Eduardo’s niece. Romero and Tania liked each other and both agreed to get married. But the *trato* lasted only until January 2010 and as soon as it was over they stopped visiting Kiko. According to Viviane, Tania’s mother was “*atrapalhada*”, complicated, and nobody was good enough for her, while her father was tight-fisted with the dowry. To me they did not seem committed. Around the time when Eduardo asked for R\$20.000 in dowry, which they were unwilling to pay, I met Tania’s parents in the house of Romero’s uncle. They complained to everybody about being unable to reach an agreement with Eduardo; “he [Romero] is not getting married to money, but to my daughter, isn’t he?” On another occasion, Tania’s mother, who had just given R\$50 to an old *Cigana* who blessed (*rezar*) Tania so she would marry well, commented to her husband that another rich Calon had paid R\$500 for his daughter.

As Kiko’s case dragged, the opinion in Eduardo’s family prevailed that Dr Henrique was useless and he only wanted to “eat money” (*comer dinheiro*). I will not describe the various manoeuvres and the work of two lawyers who got involved after Dr Henrique stepped down for “health reasons”. I only wish to stress that Eduardo was active, constantly called the lawyers, sought advice from others and incessantly

worried.⁹³ Other relatives also tried to contribute. A cousin offered to collect payments from Kiko's clients, Beiju suggested killing the judge for turning his back on Eduardo, and Viviane asked me to give her a photograph I had taken of the judge and the prosecutor. She passed it onto her mother, known for her magical skills.

Hiring lawyers, bribing officials, and buying witnesses cost Eduardo a great deal of money. He also bought the *terreno* and paid for construction there. To amass sufficient cash, he sold one of his large houses in Santaluz, tried to collect money from the Calon who owed him and borrowed a large sum from a Calon in Serrinha. Viviane was especially upset. "Children do not know how much the parents suffer," she often sighed heavily. During most of this period, five people lived in a rented apartment in provisional conditions. On top of that, the lawyer suggested by Roque requested R\$100.000. Viviane was worried that they would have to sell their remaining property; that they would be poor again; that her own son Romero would have to marry a poorer bride.

Many Calon criticised Eduardo for the way he handled the situation. They criticised him for telling Kiko, who had hidden with his in-laws, to come back. "He should have escaped," said Eduardo's sister. Echoing the prevalent opinion, she suggested that Eduardo should have made Kiko disappear and come back only with a lawyer. Some thought that Eduardo called his son back, because being a "friend" of the judge he did not think Kiko would be imprisoned. Others hypothesised, that he did it either to punish Kiko, or because he feared that he himself would be imprisoned. Over

⁹³ This is not unusual. Lawyers I talked to recognize this anxiety, impatience and scheming as characteristic of *Ciganos*. One lawyer from the *sertão* told me, that whenever he agreed to take a *Cigano* case, *Ciganos* had to agree that they would not call him, but he would only call them. "Otherwise, when I tell them that I have an appointment with a judge in the afternoon tomorrow, they call me at six in the morning [that day] to see what is new."

time, the Calon from the region were growing sceptical about Kiko's release. They criticised the lawyers for not doing enough and compared his case to those of other Calon. "Only ten days ago a *Cigano* was caught and he is already out. He [Kiko] should not have let himself be imprisoned," Camarão argued. Criticisms increased after a Calon accused of a notorious murder was released. At first, some claimed that the man had had three lawyers and had spent R\$1.3 million, but later settled on R\$400.000 and one lawyer. And as Kiko's case dragged on, and the outcome was uncertain and Eduardo secretive, most became convinced that Eduardo did not want to spend money (*saltar dinheiro*).

The uncertainty and accusations were mingled with fear. During the only public hearing in early November, I arrived at the courtroom in Santaluz with Kiko's uncle, aunt and a cousin. While we waited, the Calon became increasingly worried until suddenly the uncle and the aunt left explaining that Eduardo had told them to leave. It was untrue, since they had not spoken to Eduardo, who himself had been advised by the lawyer not to come.

The relatives especially feared for Kiko, who was alone among the *brasileiros*. When some prisoners tried unsuccessfully to break out of the prison, Kiko told his family that others suspected him of having informed the guards. Distressingly, after such periods of unrests, visits were temporarily suspended and some prisoners were transferred to other municipal prisons. The biggest panic happened just after New Year when Adriana and I were staying in Eduardo's house. One evening a known Calon called Eduardo and said that he saw Kiko being put into a police van and driven somewhere. Immediately, all of us left the apartment and went to Eduardo's *terreno* where his relatives already lived.

There was much discussion about what could have happened. In the prison in São Gabriel nobody was picking up the phone, in Santaluz a policeman confirmed that he was not there, and the lawyer was not answering the phone. Only after several phone-calls, Eduardo found out that Kiko had been taken to a municipal prison in a small town nearby. This prison was in the town hall building and at night there were apparently no guards. Fearing that somebody could break into it and kill Kiko, Eduardo arranged for a few non-Gypsy men to guard there at night.

Such continuing uncertainty also strained relations between Paula and her parents-in-law, and they increasingly held grudges against each other. For instance, one day after a meeting with Kiko, Dr Henrique brought a letter for Paula. He gave it to Eduardo who opened it before giving it to her. In it, Kiko, who had never before showed any affection for his wife, wrote that he loved her more than anybody else. Eduardo got offended, that “now he does not think of his brother and father anymore.” The conflict peaked around Kiko’s transfer. After Paula’s visit to her family over Christmas, Eduardo and Viviane thought that Paula had changed her behaviour and become distant. They accused her of planning to leave Kiko. She was not speaking to them beyond a necessary minimum, and they learned that some of her relatives had encouraged her to leave Kiko. When Paula complained to Eduardo’s sisters about how her parents-in-law were treating her, they told her that Eduardo went mad (*endoidar*) from worrying, but the whole thing was really Viviane’s fault: she never liked her step-son and now everything was about him.

When in mid January 2010, Adriana and I were leaving Eduardo’s rented house in São Gabriel, Eduardo, Viviane, Romero, Paula and her son – dressed in their best clothes – were going to Palotina. Some said it was because he wanted to show Tania and her

parents that he could do better, that Romero had decided to marry Luiza after all. Luiza agreed and now they were going to resume the arrangements. The wedding was to take place as soon as Kiko got out of prison.

August 2010: In A New Settlement

When I returned in June 2010, Kiko was out of prison. He and Paula did not move in with Eduardo, but left for Alto de Bela Vista to live alongside her family. The tensions between Paula and her in-laws, the fear that somebody could recognise Kiko, and the general exhaustion of the whole family, all played a role in their decision. Despite the fact that relatives, whom they had invited last year, were already living there, and although they had started constructing two houses eight months before, Eduardo and Viviane also not move to the *terreno* either. Instead, Eduardo exchanged his second house in Santaluz for a house in Muritiba. There, he started constructing a future house for Romero and Luiza who were to marry in July.

At the end of June, Paula called her father-in-law to tell him about growing tensions between her brother and Kiko on one side, and her older brother and her uncle on the other. I was sitting in a car with Eduardo and Viviane, driving to Santaluz to see some customers, when Eduardo changed directions and drove to Alto de Bela Vista. Kiko, Paula and their baby son, drove back with us; her younger brother and his family also left the town. A week later, Kiko was putting down a concrete floor and poles for a tent on his father's plot.

Two weeks before the wedding, Romero moved into the house of Luiza's mother in Palotina. His parents and his brother arrived a week later and stayed in a rented

apartment. The dowry had not been set, but Romero knew he would receive a car. Unfortunately, I missed this turning point as well.⁹⁴ I soon heard that during the festivities the night before the wedding (*véspera*), Kiko got into an argument with Luiza's cousin who was provoking him, testing his recently acquired reputation for valour. When Luiza's uncle went to his car for a gun, he was spotted by a policeman arranged by Luiza's mother to watch over the wedding. Soon reinforcements arrived, stormed the party and imprisoned the uncle.

That night, some tried to convince Luiza's mother to cancel the wedding, which she did at six in the morning on the wedding day. One hour later, after Luiza had begged her, she called Eduardo again and asked for the wedding to take place after all. "I have 160.000 *na rua*, Romero does not need her money," murmured Eduardo after he hung up, but agreed to come back. After a few phone calls, even the people who were already driving away returned to Palotina.

The wedding took place in a Catholic church and the party was a sumptuous event. In the middle of the *feira* Luiza's mother stood up and taking a microphone from a Calon singer announced that she was giving the dowry of R\$30.000 and a car worth R\$12.000. That evening Luiza showed a white sheet stained with blood to the closest relatives of both spouses.

A week later, Eduardo's mother died.

The newly weds came to Muritiba two weeks after the wedding and two years after I first learned about their *trato* (deal). When I saw her in August 2010, Luiza was bored, Romero ignored her, and she was often left home alone. "She cries all the time," commented Paula. The house was small; the furnishings supplied by her mother and

⁹⁴ This time, I was not arranging my visa, but giving a paper.

things given by her relatives did not all fit. Even prior to the wedding, people had commented on the quantity and quality of presents she received. “I am used to being with people,” Luiza complained. She hated her married life, while her parents-in-law thought her spoiled.

I limited this narrative to two years between August 2008 and August 2010 which overlap with most of my fieldwork. It shows the tensions that arise from personalised relations and attempts at behaving properly – for instance, tensions between interests of siblings, children and their parents, between step-relations and own children, between the affinal relatives. But the instability does not stop there. By the time of editing this chapter, in April 2011, Luiza had married another man; efforts to secure Romero’s marriage have now lasted three years and included three women, four sets of broken-off negotiations and a divorce. Shortly after the death of Eduardo’s mother, his daughter’s settlement dissolved because of a series of unlucky events, and Josiene moved from São Gabriel to Bomfim. Later, Eduardo himself left Muritiba and constructed a new house in Bomfim. Nevertheless, I hope to have showed that stabilising one’s own and children’s households and dealing with unpredictable events that destabilise them, requires constant effort. In the following section I want to make a few observations about this process.

5.2 Negotiating the Relational Grid

Rather than singular flows, a Calon life trajectory is better approached in a grid-like fashion where different paths are taken depending on bottlenecks, accidents and

opportunities. For instance, Romero's wedding was postponed because somebody failed to return money to Luiza's mother, because the family wanted to wait until Kiko's release, because A. died. Take the last one: Although unrelated to either the groom or the bride, A. lived a neighbouring settlement and Eduardo felt close enough to grow a beard after his death. Demands of respect for the deceased and his relatives made it impossible to celebrate the wedding and imposed a different temporality (of mourning) on the prearranged date-as-event.

One's trajectory also has to be placed within the context of other relationships which change almost shape every day. Violence, for instance, is a constant potential which influences sociality and the use of space. Within the two years described above, besides his older son ending up in jail, there were other occasions when Eduardo felt obliged to help out or to at least visit relatives of imprisoned men: when a car with his brother and two brothers-in-law was searched by the police who found a gun; when his older son's brother-in-law was imprisoned after shooting in the air when drunk; when a man living in his daughter's settlement was imprisoned for selling drugs.

Weddings are also constantly being organised or a marriage crises being resolved. If nobody in one's settlement is currently negotiating a marriage, a relative or a known Calon somewhere else is or, at least, there is a wedding to attend. Take, for instance, the marriage histories of fifteen households in Santaluz at the time of our arrival. Between August 2008 and August 2010, two boys got married and one girl (all first cousins) went through a failed negotiation. One couple who had lived together for six years separated and got back together two weeks later. Two young women who lived elsewhere left their husbands and with their small children moved to their parents' tents. One of them

returned to her husband a few months later, but only after a short marriage negotiation. Because most partners come from surrounding settlements, the picture can be replicated for the whole region.

At a level of one's individual family (*família*) the picture looks similar. In Eduardo's family,⁹⁵ apart for one niece who lives in a distant settlement, all ten nephews and nieces live in four settlements within the area of Eduardo's everyday business and live less than 60 kilometres apart. By the time his youngest niece (age 10) gets married, the oldest will be negotiating marriage for her older daughter (age 7). Kiko's first marriage was frustrated by a fight during the *véspera*, the evening before the wedding; he married Paula a few months later. Josiene, Kiko's sister, married at the age of 12, separated a year later, and remarried. One Eduardo's nephew divorced after three years and lives with his parents. During my fieldwork another nephew got together (*juntar*), separated and remarried (*casar*); a niece left her husband after two years, and returned to him after a short effort to marry her cousin; her sister had a problem with finding a suitable husband with at least one *trato* broken off. This excludes all failed negotiations and stalled attempts to establish a *trato* over years.

Household creation, therefore, has to be seen as a process, which sometimes starts when a bride and a groom are still children. Households-as-projects bring structure to people's social lives, also because their success demands much parents' attention. Take the example of Junior, a young man who liked partying, while ignoring his wife and her complaints. One night when he did not come back home, his pregnant wife became so anxious that she fainted and needed an ambulance. The next day his in-laws arrived,

⁹⁵ Leaving out his affinal relatives.

staying for a few days and showing their support, while his father made him sell his motorcycle, hoping that this would make it more difficult for Junior to leave the house.⁹⁶

Violence always lurks in the background. When Faustão sent Daiane, his wife of six years, and her furniture back to her father, he immediately borrowed a gun. Indeed, a car with five affines arrived the same night. His father-in-law variously threatened Faustão, asked him to take Daiane back, and demanded R\$100.000. Over the next few days, other people from Daiane's family called or visited Faustão or his relatives and at the end Faustão agreed to take Daiane back. His father-in-law bought a whole new set of furnishing for their tent and invited Faustão to live in their settlement to "help them".

Besides the potentiality of violence and the ubiquitous preoccupation with new households, people continuously negotiate their relationship to the dead. When I attended my first Calon wedding, I was told that the singer had a beard "because his mother died". From then on I started noticing men with beards (or small black patches on chest pockets): Wanderlei, who moved to Santaluz soon after I had arrived, had a beard that he shaved a few months later "because of his nephew"; Beredege in a neighbouring camp, shaved his beard only five years after his son's death. Similarly to the French Manoush (Williams 2003: 7), these practices of "deep mourning" are influenced by the time passed and the kinship distance. The closer a man feels to the dead, the longer he wears a beard or observes a self-imposed taboo.

Such signs of "deep mourning" (e.g. beards), as well as individual silent "sorrows" that follow (e.g. names that are not uttered), make relations among the living and their limits visible. The three times that Eduardo wore a beard during my fieldwork,

⁹⁶ In similar situations (or in cases of domestic violence), women often leave for their parent's house and negotiations start in the same manner.

most other men I knew also wore them – only in such situations, through their common respect for the dead, some sort of Calon “group” emerges (Williams 2003: 14). Individually, people keep objects that remind them of their dead, which, unlike everything else, cannot enter into exchanges. The places where Calon live are directly related to the places from which they “abstain” (Williams 2003: 47). For instance, in late August 2010, several people from the settlement in São Gabriel, among them Eduardo’s daughter, moved to Bomfim because of the death of a young woman and the imprisonment of a man made their location “*azarento*” (unlucky). They had come to São Gabriel several years previously, after a death in Barra. People also respect each other’s mourning. In January 2009 when Luiza’s family visited Eduardo’s, Kiko asked me to go with him and with Romero’s future brother-in-law to a pub. He did not want to drink because this would upset Eduardo, who was mourning for A., but at the same time he was trying to be generous to his brother’s future affines. So he paid while we drank.

In sum, achieving the ideal of a stable place surrounded by one’s closest relatives (preferably sons) is a Sisyphean effort precisely because relations are so personalised. Efforts to stabilise a place for one’s household cannot be viewed in isolation from the context within which they arise. They do not stop until one’s death and in a complex way combine with the actions of other people. Money serves as a common thread through these movements and transformations.



Picture 5.1

A bride and a groom

5.3 Money and Households

Eduardo's story also gives sense of a household lifecycle. Romero's marriage saga shows how the formation of new households depends on parental actions. Eduardo's negotiating Romero's wedding, getting Kiko out of prison and stabilising his own life illustrate how an adult man's success or failure depend on the breadth of his relations with others – Calon and *brasileiros*. The physical destruction of the household and the dissolution of the camp after Zezinho's death, objectify the end of households, on the one hand, and the

relational nature of settlements, on the other. All these processes are accompanied by specific movements and earmarking of monies to which I now turn.

Weddings

A groom comes to his new house or a tent “only with his clothes in a bag”, Paula once told me. Everything else is brought by the bride. Although most things are paid for by the bride’s parents, other members of her family contribute (“presents”); sometimes they can be asked to provide a specific piece of furniture. Things are assembled prior to the wedding and after the wedding they stay associated with the wife: Faustão sent his wife away together with their tent’s furniture; after six years of marriage he moved back to his parent’s tent with just his clothes.

A dowry (*dote*) brought by the bride to the union comes in two parts – furnishing and money. While the furniture is associated with the wife, money is given explicitly to a husband to “make the future” (*fazer futuro*), or “take care of one’s life” (*cuidar da vida*), – for himself and his new wife, and especially for their children. Tellingly, among the Calon in São Paulo the bride’s family brings pots and pans to the tent of the newlyweds, while the groom’s mother fills them with meat and other foods.⁹⁷ In Bahia, the husband’s capacity to provide for his household is also sometimes talked about as “bringing food”: Sara told me that with Zezinho she never lacked anything while Doido maintained that Zezinho was a great man who “always came from the market with the bags loaded, and there was never shortage of meat in his house”. In other words, although it is a man’s

⁹⁷ Florencia Ferrari, personal communication, 16.10.2011.

activity in the wider world which is assessed, this is always done in relation to his household.

Married Couples

A household is the nexus of a relationship between husband and wife and their proper behaviour is evaluated in relation to it. Married women are expected to behave differently from unmarried ones (Ferrari 2010: especially 234-245). For the husband, the dowry money is loaded with purpose and orients his behaviour. It is a way for him to interact with others outside of the household, explicitly given to gain a living, and to establish (*estabelecer*) himself. Only a handful of women I knew read palms or go begging and the money earned this way only complements their daily subsistence. Financing households – buying new furniture, arranging a dowry or paying major weekly shopping at the Saturday market – is the responsibility of their men and money came from their deals “on the street”. These deals depended on their reputation and relationships with others. But only a necessary portion of this money is spent on food. Most is dealt again, while a bigger house, a new car or a wedding of one’s child become visible signs of the man’s efficacy.

A capacity to make money on the street is assessed even prior to the wedding. Potential parents-in-law inquire about the groom’s reputation (including his family’s reputation for domestic violence) and evaluate the strength (*força*) of his father and the family. Because the couple first moves in with the husband’s family, they will “help” the

couple.⁹⁸ Besides his clothes, a husband into the new household also comes with his deals, prior relations and reputation (i.e. his potential for further relationships). Eduardo, a rich man, could try to marry Romero to unrelated Luiza with a sizeable dowry. On the other hand, Babaloo had a reputation for drinking, gambling and partying, while his father Renato was a gambler who had lost his house in cards and was talked about as being *morto* (dead). Babaloo did not find anybody to marry in a proper wedding so he “got together” (*se juntar*) with another young Calin, who herself had troubles marrying because she had been married twice already. In addition to the tent furnishing she brought R\$5000 in cash and her father promised another R\$5000 if Babaloo proved himself.⁹⁹ Within three months Babaloo lost the money in bad deals and cards. People commented that he lost all the money of his wife. The father-in-law was not going to give other R\$5000, conditional on Babaloo’s performance.

In an inverse way, utilising both its capacity to circulate and its capacity to register displacement, the most secure way to establish one’s reputation while “making the future” is to keep the dowry money separate and live off one’s skills and money. The dowry money is still invested by a husband (less often by a wife) but as “his wife’s” or “his son’s” money. Such earmarking requires wealth or thrift (cf. Zelizer 1997). For Índio, the poorest man in Santaluz, preserving this separation meant that he was an outsider. He did not play cards; he did not socialise with men. Kiko kept money for food, money for deals, Paula’s money and money for entertainment separated. He lent out his

⁹⁸ Goldfarb notes that among the Calon in Sousa, PB, that although the young husband is responsible for sustaining his wife, in reality it is his parents that take care of them after the wedding (Sulpino 1999).

⁹⁹ Miriam Guerra (2007) tells a story of a poor young man, who received weekly payments from his father-in-law, which he had to reinvest. This strategy was successful and the young family is one of the richest in the area now.

wife's money only with her knowledge.¹⁰⁰ A man's reputation, then, is based on how much money he has "on the street", which is never certain but always guessed. When the husband does not need his wife's money, which he keeps for his children in circulation while living off *brasileiros*, his (moral) reputation increases (cf. Williams 1984: 291).

Because the bride's parents pay for the wedding and the dowry, for most it is a financially ruinous affair; many become indebted and others sell their property. It is also the only long-term plan I heard people discussing: When his daughter was born, Pinto applied for family benefits, planning to open a bank account in his wife's name and to accumulate the payments there for his daughter's dowry. Another woman argued that she would consider selling a retirement benefit card in the future, just to marry her daughter.

As traditional structural-functionalist analysis of dowry would predict, the existence of dowry among Calon, viewed above all as the property that comes to the union, comes with the centrality of the conjugal couple, the existence of bilateral kinship system, the importance of negotiations and the focus on alliance (Comaroff 1980: 1-47). Among Calon, these aspects can be mostly seen in tensions accompanying affinal relations – I show elsewhere that a good portion of violence occurs between affinally related people. Or take the case of Kiko, described above: after killing a man, he escapes to hide among his affines, who are also the wife-givers and whose parental household paid the dowry that Paula brought to the union. The brothers-in-law and his mother-in-law are also the ones who, apart from his *família*, visit him regularly in prison. After his release, Kiko's household moves to their settlement in Alto de Bela Vista, but a few months later the household is forced to leave the place after Kiko gets into conflict with

¹⁰⁰ However, that does not mean that the dowry money was hers to spend. It is more like money that represents the financial stability of a household.

his older brother-in-law. As I will show in the last chapter, this brother-in-law accuses Kiko of, among other things, not wanting to lend him the money for a good car deal. On their part, Kiko and Paula blame her relatives for turning their back and not providing any help with the daily subsistence of their household.

Significantly, among the Calon the only real attempt at equivalence in deals is when a couple separates. The dowry money is a commodity transformed into a gift to be transformed into commodities; it can be seen as the initial credit for a new household project. Equivalence at divorce prevents a man from living on the other man's money, from "eating" another man's money and trying to "establish" himself in this manner. Thus Faustão's father-in-law demanded R\$100.000 (lowered to R\$25.000) when Faustão left Daiane. The value of Daiane's dowry was much lower, but because they were married for six years, the demanded sum included the increased costs of remarrying Daiane (and a probability of not remarrying) and the calculation of how much money Faustão could have earned during his period of being married with the dowry – his father-in-law's money.

Deaths

With wife and a household as a stabilising background and children's weddings as the long-term aim, throughout his life a man generates a variety of debt-creating deals with the people living in his area. This money gets his son out of prison and his deals inspire others to live alongside him. When he dies, others leave the settlement. His household disintegrates and in grief his widow burns the furniture, which at the beginning came with her dowry. Other objects are sold to *brasileiros* and the money gained goes to his

sons.¹⁰¹ The widow becomes dependent on her children. Some photos and small reminders are kept but hidden away for some time; it is too painful to look at them, just as places left behind are too loaded with memories (e.g. Vilar 2011: 35-49). Thus while the living Calon in their households are non-attached to land, the dead, whose households were destroyed, remain attached to places where they died (cf. Williams 2003). The movement of people and of money, an attribute of life and especially of masculinity (cf. Manrique 2009: 97-111), is possible only within a household.

At the time of his death, the deceased has debts and others owe to him. When he died, Zezinho had more debts than money owed to him. As he did not have any sons, his son-in-law Nelson inherited *letras*, or *notas promissórias*, on which Nelson was able to collect money from *brasileiros* and from other Calon. Zezinho's debts were never to be paid off, which all Calon creditors understood. It is as if their "money on the street", which included money Zezinho owed to them, registered Zezinho's death by leaving a hole in the total sum other men – his creditors – have on "on the street". Nelson talked about this money as *dissimulado* – hidden, false, or virtual. But he was also reminded by one man that if he gave any of Zezinho's *letras* so his brother could recover some money Zezinho owed him, "there will be blood." On the other hand, the debts to the dead are inherited by his sons. After all, their father's "making the future" was justified by the interests of his household, and a condition of their own.

A man's extraneous activities are given structure and meaning by his wife and the nexus of their relationship – a household. His wife's dowry furnishing creates the fundamental relation-position from which he interacts with the wider world, while dowry

¹⁰¹ English Travellers also burn or sell the deceased's belongings, including his trailer, while money is inherited (Okely 1983: 222). Among French Manoush, who also burn the deceased possessions, money can be used only to pay for funerals and tomb decorations (Williams 2003: 4).

money serves as a credit to finance his activities. The two are connected but he tries to keep them differentiated – ideally he provides for his family using his own money (what he received from his parents) while preserving his wife’s money for his sons. He improves the material quality of his household while also reinvesting most money he makes. His reputation is built on the basis of his behaviour, which is made visible also through the ways he uses the money. When a man dies, furniture – his individual household – is destroyed while the money is inherited by his sons. It is as if money *is always there* but needs to be personalised through actions of individual men.



Picture 5.2

An old widow in her tent on the outskirts of a camp

Conclusion

During the two years I described in this chapter Eduardo struggled to stabilise his and his children's households within an uncertain environment. He used various strategies, but his efforts were constantly undermined by the same dynamics which demanded his efforts in the first place. He sold a house to gain money to get Kiko out of prison and to buy a plot where his house and the houses of his sons could be built. But he also became indebted and sold the plot when a better opportunity for them arose. During the period when he was marrying Romero, bailing out Kiko or buying a new plot for the settlement, Eduardo also lent, borrowed, and paid money. Some Calons even refused to lend to him, because they were worried that Eduardo was becoming too indebted and incapable of paying off his debts. In other words, money "on the street" served as a background against which his present and future behaviour emerged and was evaluated: is his reputation such, that his son can marry a rich woman? Is his older son still in prison, because Eduardo, a rich man, is avoiding spending money on lawyers and bribes? Did the events of past two years mean that Eduardo is not so lucky anymore and he will be unable to pay his loans? Money is therefore not only a tool of exchange, but as one's whole "on the street" – which is to some extent visible since people keep track of their relative's wealth – it creates a space for negotiation and evaluation. The "quality of multiplicity" (Holbraad 2005: 231-254) makes it an efficient way to create and record proper relations between people and to become the "food for sociality" (Stewart 1994: 45-62).

Such Calon space is created prior to a man's marriage, with the assessment of his potential for making money on the basis of the reputation of his family. But it is

intensified after the marriage when dowry money, which is public, is given to finance man's "making the future" – his entering into exchange relationships with others. The extent of his achievements becomes visible through the position of his household in relation to others and especially during the weddings of his own children. Throughout his life, the negotiated and specific sums he uses to save a dying man or gives as dowry, which are taken out of circulation in loans, reproduce Calonymity. They highlight the efforts of individuals which are recognised by others as truthful and meaningful.

Bloch and Parry (1989: 1-32) described that some exchanges for individual gain deemed positive, because they reproduce a larger social whole. That money is used in social reproduction because thanks to the existence of the transcendent sphere, some of it is morally assigned there and becomes marked by permanence. But Gypsies do not think of themselves as a transcendental group or a community (Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999; Ferrari 2010) and there is no transcendental sphere. Rather, Gypsiness is individually enacted and money's capability "of keeping track of what people do with each other" (Hart 2000: 255) serves as a useful tool to evaluate one's behaviour. Because different paths and choices always exist, when money is used, its displacement from the whole "on the street" merges man's actions with social reproduction, while obviating calculation (cf Holbraad 2005: 250 ft.14) – if you spend it on dowry or on saving a dying man, you cannot spend it on loans. In this way, money works as a "double medium": through monetary "flows" – through loans, payments (bribes), gifts (dowry) – Calons constantly create themselves as moral persons, but co-ordinately also create the environment for these flows, i.e. a medium which can register as a displacement of a particular sum.

I should note here, that Simmel (1990) also suggested a similar dual property of money – first as a means of exchange and then as the environment that makes modern exchange possible, which follows after relations between objects have been redefined in terms of relations between monetary sums; these equivalences in turn also confirm adherence of exchange partners to the social group (178). Simmel argues essentially that money fills in the gaps which are created when objects are taken out of the total system of exchanges (124). However, following Holbraad (2005), I want to argue that for the Calon this environment is not transcendent (universal) in any way, but remains personalised, seen in terms of the money each man has “on the street” that consists of total money a man will receive from various other men at various points in the future. In this manner, each man creates his own environment through relating to others. I will argue in later chapters that any creation of society is precluded, because Calon constantly redefine transactions as singular dyadic exchanges witnessed by others. Hence, the knowledge about other’s people’s deals is not only a way to assess their liquidity, but also creates a separate sphere of known Calon. In other words, in acting as Calon by using money, they also create the space for their Caloninity. But how Calon assess what they and others do with money, the meaning and truth of their behaviour, depends on Calon criteria for evaluation. Therefore, in the next chapter I turn to Calon masculine values and specifically how they relate to exchanges.

VI. “ONLY THE DEAD DON’T MAKE THE FUTURE”: HOW MEN NEGOTIATE UNCERTAINTY

Introduction

It was a few days after Romero’s and Luiza’s wedding. Romero was still in Palotina with his wife’s family. I had just returned to Muritiba and was sitting with Eduardo, Viviane, Kiko and Paula. We were watching the workers finishing the house for the newlyweds, when Romero called. Over the phone he told Eduardo that he had just bought a sound system for R\$1500 to be paid in one year, which he was going to install into the car that came with Luiza’s dowry. His father was upset. It seemed to him that Romero was tricked by his new affinal relatives and he told Romero to renege on the deal. After Eduardo hung up, he and his older son Kiko concluded that the sound system was not worth the money – they have seen it before. Moreover, Eduardo grumbled, the man Romero made the deal with had tried a few years ago to prevent Kiko marrying Paula and recently, while Kiko was in prison, suggested to Paula that she should leave him; the man, Paula’s paternal uncle, wanted her to marry his own son. Insinuating where the loyalties lay, they also agreed that Romero’s own brother-in-law, cunning as he was, knew about the value of the sound system, but convinced Romero that it was worth buying. After a short discussion, however, Viviane and Eduardo told Kiko to call Romero again and tell his brother not to cancel the deal,

but to accept it. Otherwise, Eduardo was dictating, Romero would “fall into shame in front of the men (*cair na vergonha na frente dos homens*)”.

We can see what is happening here: because Romero (age 17) went to Palotina a week before the wedding, this is his second week alone among the relatives of his new wife. He is spending most of his time with men, especially his brother-in-law. Eduardo and Viviane are worried about the impression Romero will make and know that the other men will try to involve him in transactions. I shared their concern. My wife and I often half-joked privately that ‘Romero did not really want to be a *Cigano*’. Unlike his father or his older brother, he did not play cards, did not care about fighting cockerels and did not seem to enjoy negotiations during transactions. From their house, his mother still lent out his money, although he would often carry it in his pocket. She would not go after these debtors alone; at least once when she sent him to collect the money, he hesitated for a few days despite his brother urging him, that it was the end of the month when the debtor, a hospital employee, received her salary. Like many young Calons, Romero spent much time with *brasileiros* and dated a *jurin*, which led to various problems during the wedding negotiations.

In a sense, as I described it in the previous chapter, a marriage negotiation can be seen as a process of shifting the focus, an introversion of moral orientation. After his wedding, a man’s behaviour is judged and commented upon more thoroughly by others. At the same time, the wedding also starts a more systematic engagement with the wider world – as Kiko told his brother, when Romero jeopardized his wedding, ‘if he wanted to live as a *jurón*, he should marry a *jurin*’ and, in the same breath, that ‘there was no future

with *juróns*'. The dowry his wife brings establishes the necessity for a man to "make the future" and to intensify his transactions "on the street". Success is assessed with respect to Calon morality, with dowry establishing the basis for such evaluation: did a woman marry well, or did her husband squander her dowry in cards? Is he sharp or a fool "without a future" who cannot provide for his household? If he is successful and has a lot of money on the street, how big will the dowry of his daughter be?

This confirms observations other anthropologists have made, namely, that Gypsiness is performative and it is not enough to be born in a Gypsy family – one needs to forge oneself a Gypsy man or woman through behaviour (Okely 1983; Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999; Ferrari 2010). Among Calon, *o homem*, a male self, has to be given expression every day and in many activities. Inversely, Romero's failure to live up to expectation would threaten this claim. But there are no fixed rules for behaviour, stable or authoritative morality and I never heard Calon talk about "good" or "bad" Calon individuals without referring to specific singular acts; what is more, the evaluation of any specific situation by the same people often changed over time or in presence of different individuals. Rather, there is a system of reasoning, a manner of problematising, a chain of questions about meaning of actions, akin to Foucault's "ethical practice, which, while involving codes and rules, consists of manners and exercises for self-understanding within a nexus of relationships" (Roitman 2005: 190-191).

As Ferrari (2010) convincingly showed, at the core of this Calon problematising lies *vergonha* (Port.) or *laje* (Rom.), which can be translated as 'shame'. Kiko calls Romero to warn him not to reverse the deal, because he would "fall into *vergonha*" among ("in front of") his in-laws. As a disciplining concept *vergonha* orients practices;

through it Calon also create themselves as moral persons. Used in a variety of expressions, in ways that are not easily recognised by non-Gypsies, Ferrari argues that it is both a value and an emotion that people feel. Thus, a woman's dress is the sign that she has (*ter*) *vergonha* and man's refusal to go after his Calon debtor, and thus show his dependence on another's returning the money, is justified by being ashamed (*estar com vergonha*). It is not shared by *brasilerios*, or more precisely, Calon do not judge *brasileiros* within its framework. As a consequence of this encapsulation *vergonha* is interiorised starting with the female body, but through successive encompassments, *vergonha* turns to be the mode of being Calon (*jeito cigano*) itself (Ferrari 2010: 157). Through knowledge of this superior way of being Calon differentiate themselves from the *gaje* (see also Gay y Blasco 1999). In this sense, it is the Calon theory of the relationship between the Calon and the *gaje*, and a key to Calon conceptualisations of the *gaje* (Ferrari 2010).

I am less interested in the conceptual basis that transforms behaviour into Calon behaviour, than in what Ferrari's analysis suggests about the "productivity" of *vergonha*: how through the concrete internalised strategies Calon produce themselves as moral persons and participate in a highly dense Calon social space. Calon *vergonha* or its lack always relates to intentions made visible, that "appear" (*aparecer*) (Ferrari 2010). It presupposes third parties being witnesses to one's actions. Each self-fashioning of a *homem*, whether in a narrative and an act is a triad: although a relation with another (e.g. a transaction between Romero and the man), it also requires a public (Romero's in-laws, his family, other Calon). It happens, as Eduardo suggested above, "in front of" others. Romero's exteriorizing potency in eyes of others – his reputation among Calon – can

only be established by means of his exchanges with other Calon and *brasileiros*. Men feel proud of their capabilities to make money in uncertain money-lending deals on the street and obtain pleasure from the thrill that comes with seizing of fickle chances, but they also gain in reputation among others (cf Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1998). The reverse is also true: people cannot assume that others are motivated purely by financial gain or that their transaction is isolated. In the example, Eduardo is upset because Romero buys the sound system from a man whom Eduardo accuses of plotting against his family. Romero's risk lies not only in the money but also in placing his claims to manhood under scrutiny – here and now (Is he aware what is going on in the transaction?), but also as a promise for future accomplishment and for other transactions (Will he pay R\$1500 once he is not among them? What will other people think of him?).

In other words, man's actions effect their spatiotemporal control (Munn 1992) and in the previous chapters I suggested some forms this spatiotemporal control might take. It is visible in money a man has in deferred payments among other Calon, which, together with loans to *juróns*, comprise the total sum “on the street”; here publicly known acts of repayment and renegotiation that occur at different moments literally oblige another to come and talk to the man, to recognise his agency and autonomy. People also decide to move to a place where their relatives' reputation promises that their own position might be improved through intensifying their relationship – a strongman inspires others to move to a town; a deferred exchange multiplies people' possibilities. Thus, although the actions of men are evaluated according to internal criteria (*vergonha*), the questioning that it allows leads to the reshuffling of relations and elaboration of social space. Unlike Spanish Gitanos, Calon do not have a concept of a “Gypsy law”, but rather a manner of

pondering the truth and meaning of people's behaviour. Nevertheless, here too, one's reputation for being a *homem* determines' his "ability to influence the course of their own lives and the lives of others" (Gay y Blasco 1999: 4). Romero's brother-in-law is thought to have undermined Romero's reputation and Romero should not trust him completely.

Behaving as *homem of vergonha* serves as a means of ranking within egalitarian context and constantly reorders social space. In this chapter I look at how this done through four specific ways men's actions are ranked, and how in the process Calon produce themselves as well as reorder the social space. All four criteria, relate directly to men's activities "on the street", to their ability to gain spatiotemporal control through exchanges with Calon and *brasileiros*. First, I argue that men fashion themselves as men of action attuned to seizing fickle chances and to creating opportunities, a capability glossed over as "making the future". Second, men are also quick to react to any sign of disrespect and I argue that valour as a quality is linked to their alertness. Third, their long-term success in economic exchanges is made visible in their wealth. Wealth, however, is conceived of as a temporary state and cannot be transformed into long-term hierarchy. At the end I return to the question of households and settlements, and show how "strength", a capacity to control and divert the flow within one's environment, is spatially distributed.

6.1 Seizing Fickle Chances

"Making the Future"

When I returned to Santaluz shortly after all Calon had fled, I expected everybody to blame Kiko. Indeed, they blamed Kiko for his carelessness and the traces he left behind

to be found by the police. They criticised Eduardo for the way he handled the situation. But nobody commented on the morality of the murder. Even more surprisingly, they did not blame Kiko for the impact his actions had on them, even though some had had to flee from the place where they had lived for more than six years.

The camp “down there” dissolved as a result of actions by a man who had not even been living there. This served as reminder to people that contingency makes it impossible to commit oneself to very specific goals, and that plans can “only be imagined provisionally pending whatever dramatic upheaval will inevitably come” (Johnson-Hanks 2005: 376). In the previous chapter I described “social wayfaring” as being based on constant attention to changing composition of settlements. In this one, I similarly want to suggest that for Calon, decisions are not a part of a conscious creation or shaping of the world based on middle-run temporality with a fixed referent in mind. Rather, decisions and events are acts of chance that need to be uncovered and seized upon, where effective action does not follow prior intentions, but a “judicious opportunism”(Johnson-Hanks 2005: 363-377). The choices people make are not independent, but every choice changes other options and calls for recursive evaluation. Nor are one’s choices provided all at once, since not all of them are readily apparent and require people’s actions to be made visible.

Within this uncertainty, of which risk in money-lending is a part, Calon masculinity emerges. Successful bending of unpredictable opportunities – improvisation and flexibility – allows men to make names for themselves. Their expression *fazer futuro* – to make the future – that they sometimes use, summarises the act of seizing one’s opportunities. I already mentioned two specific uses of *futuro*: man multiplies his

exchanges after the wedding and “makes the future”. Leaving a settlement, because there is “no future there” brings new opportunities through a change of location. The logic behind it is opening new opportunities through movement and transgression; and as Simmel (1990) showed, money is one of most appropriate tools for it. Conversely, when a man is seen as lazy, as an addicted gambler, a sit-at-home or incapable of arranging things with non-Gypsies, people talk about him as being without future – *sem futuro*. In addition, despite the meaning of *futuro*, as I will argue in the next chapter, the idiom motivates strategies of radical presentism that are not much different from ideas of living for the moment found elsewhere (Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1998).

Opening new possibilities through unsettling and keeping options open is crucial for seizing chances where uncertainty is the rule. Michael Herzfeld observed that among the Glendiot shepherds “each successful demonstration of *eghoismos*, especially when manifested in the bending of fickle chance is to the actor’s own ends and the comfort of his guests suggests an infinite swathe of possibilities” (1985: 136). Among the Calon such “swathe of possibilities” is opened through change of velocities – diverting flows in time. In card-games, one sees one’s “future unfolding” literally before one’s eyes with each draw of cards and each bet (e.g. Malaby 2003). In money-lending dividing sums and punctuating time multiplies opportunities. Michael Stewart observed that when a Hungarian Rom horse-dealer is not able to sell an animal for months, he will at least try to swap it “in the hope that one increase in the velocity of his dealings will lead to two” (1987: 230). Similarly among Calon, on days where everything seemed to have stopped, people at least played cards for small change or swapped like-things as if destabilisation was able bring about more opportunities. The word for deal, *o rolo*, has such

connotations. It means a rotation, a tumult, a disturbance of order; Calon used it to describe most deals, but specifically swaps. Any next move should alter the situation completely by bringing about the opportunities that lie in its wake.

A disturbance of the status quo, especially if unexpected, also opens space for people to perform. The consequences of the murder committed by Kiko allowed other men to react appropriately through showing their ability to make use of chances, displaying their courage, renewing their kinship bonds and generally trying to force upon life's contingencies their own will; i.e. to move. It follows that risk involved in moneylending needs to be seen as “productive” and not a rupture (Zaloom 2006). All of these situations allow for the foregrounding of men’s abilities to manage contingencies which arise from their complete absorption into their environment.

As Bestas

Like the futures traders in Chicago described by Zaloom, Calon men engage with fatefulness and risk which lie in passing time while they value self-determination and free will (Zaloom 2006: 106). They downplay the role of others, while often using the language of luck (*sorte*). These two are not contradictory, but call for an extended understanding of the meaning of *futuro* – it stands not only for temporal unfolding, but is also a fate; indeed the other meaning of *futuro* in Portuguese is the ‘destiny’. Any destiny requires that a man recognises the opportunity, differentiates it from an unpromising offer, seizes the chance and stabilises odds – he “makes the future”.

Such constant alertness is most visible in games of luck. Often when driving around, men tried to remember number plates of cars that appealed to them. Reasons

varied: the number plate could be “nice” or one had made a good deal with the car’s owner. Later they played these numbers in a lottery. The following story shows how dreams can be used in a similar way:

A group of men from various towns was sitting in front of Eduardo’s house. They recounted recent events, about people who won in lottery or in *rifa*, and what numbers were drawn. “Tell them, how Paulo bet,” Maluco urged Eduardo, “and how 4422 was drawn.” Eduardo then told of how Paulo dreamt about guns the other night and how the next morning he asked Eduardo what was the biggest calibre he had. Because it was 44, Eduardo explained, “Paulo put down 44 and then half [of it]. 4422. And 4423 was drawn.” “But he should have put 23,” added Maluco, “because he dreamt about three people.”

Many things from dreams can be thus interpreted: guns, birth-dates or ages of people in dreams, years when they died. Although I never saw it succeeding, it is accepted by the Calon to work as a general principle. Discussing the practice of *khoutala*, a type of scapulomancy practiced by the Glendiot shepherds, Herzfeld suggests that it does not fix the future, but emphasizes the dangers of ever relaxing. For Calon, dreams, number plates and other signs, similarly “provide a performative context in which men explore the deep uncertainties that may one day enable them to show off their true prowess” (Herzfeld 1985: 247). This suggests that being alert to one’s environment, to grab opportunities, to “make the future”, is not automatic.

Among the Hungarian Roma *baxt* – luck, efficacy, prosperity, happiness – associated with success at the marketplace, is “the rightful consequence of righteous behaviour” (Stewart 1994: 45-62). *Baxt* is a sign of personal efficacy, but a man needs to prepare for it prior to the market, through avoiding contact with polluting objects or people, for instance. There are thus two types of knowledge, or awareness, at play here: on the one hand, there is an immediate acumen denoting capacity to recognise an opportunity in a space which is essentially beyond one’s control, to persuade a transaction partner, to get a good price, and so on. But a man’s efficacy also depends on his knowledge of proper behaviour, on a sort of moral discipline. In the same vein, the Gitanos in Spain explicitly distinguish between *conocimiento*, associated mainly with “men of respect” and which refers to knowledge of proper behaviour (a wisdom), and *saben* which refers to being on top of things (Gay y Blasco 1999). Calons do not have expressions for two modes of knowledge, although a verb *saber* (to know) has various connotations and it can refer specifically to knowledge about *vergonha* and respect. On the contrary, *esperto/a* (or *sabido/a*) refers to one’s acumen, which is primarily financial. But such an ability to recognise an opportunity or a bad deal and to react accordingly to a novel situation is something which comes only through proper behaviour based on knowledge gained with age.

It is possible to illustrate how this works through looking at negative categories related to this conceptual system. People can be judged as “without future” (*sem futuro*) especially when they are seen as passive; significantly, there is not a state of being “with future” (*com futuro*). They can also be seen as without luck (*sem sorte* or *azarento*), when

they fail repeatedly.¹⁰² Efficacy and acumen is also denied to *brasileiros* and boys, because they do not know (*saber*). They are seen as *bestas*, beasts of burden, i.e. stupid. They cannot be expected to be *espertos* and do not lose reputation because of their bad deals. Not surprisingly, Calon terms for specific non-Gypsies – *jurón* and *burlon* – originate from words for a mule, *jumento*, and an ass, *burro*.

Once, for instance, I asked Índio why he was still lending his son's money. Romão was 14, an age when some boys are having their wedding arranged. Índio explained to me that "Romão is still *besta*". On the other hand, because he was now lending "his [Romão's] mother's money" (i.e. her dowry), in a few years "Romão will have his own money".

Índio clearly thinks that the state of *besta* can be eventually overcome. And as I argued in the introduction, there is a sense that the real turning point of moral introversion is induced by a man's wedding, when simultaneously the demand for him to behave as *esperto* increases. Going back to Ferrari's reading of Caloninity (Ferrari 2010), young boys can be said to be *bestas* because they lack knowledge of proper behaviour. In other words, they have not differentiated themselves as Calon through *vergonha* yet and cannot be trusted with money. Hence, when in an argument between two married brothers, one called another a *burro*, their nephew and niece both jumped in reminding him that "he is talking to a *Cigano*".

But this points to a particular conception of Caloninity, not based on the transcendent moral codes but a capacity to force one's recognition onto others – that one

¹⁰² This is how I understand Paulo's argument about his son, an addicted *gambler*. Recently Paulo had to sell his retirement benefit to pay off his son's debts. He argued with other men about a card game and admitted that although that particular type was purely based on chance (*sorte*), his son knew how to play it, but he kept losing because he did not have luck (*sem sorte*).

is “talking to a *Cigano*” – the dynamics to which I will return below when discussing Calon notions of strength. Notice that Romão does not have any money and thus cannot show his acumen. He remains *besta*, while the real turning point in evaluation will occur with his marriage. I also argued in Chapter 4 that according to the logic of the “cosmology of nomadism” the world moves because one is on the move; the “future” as a destiny and luck occurs only when one is not passive, when one “makes the future”. Similarly, as described in Chapter 5, through multiplying his transactions with others, a man creates an environment – a total sum of the money “on the street” – against which others – who are the people to whom he also lends or refuses to lend the money – will evaluate him. For these reasons a man in Santaluz, who did not have any close family, was poor and married to a *jurin*, was nicknamed Maluco; one way to keep those who fail in so many ways as *Ciganos*, is to conceive of them as crazy – *doido* or *maluco*.

Os Mortos

I have argued that “making the future” is associated with creating movement and increasing of velocities in the present. Taking advantage of fickle changes requires alertness which cannot be achieved through being passive. This is consistent with the logic of the Calon “cosmology of nomadism” (Ferrari 2010) whereby people are readily mobile. Such a view which posits (primarily masculine) movement as Calon, can be extended to other areas. A location with bad business is stopped, *parado*, or dead, *morto*. Inadequate men can be seen as *sem futuro*, but also dead, *mortos*. A “shadow concept” (Strathern 2008) behind any still life – sickness of the sedentary life or man’s lack of business – is death.

I should note here, that the expressions *futuro* or *parado* are not exclusively Calon. Joana, the poor non-Gypsy woman mentioned in Chapter 3, often talked about “resolving her future” (*resolver o meu futuro*), for instance. Writing about sources of frustration that give rise to (sometimes deadly) face-to-face confrontations in São Luiz, Ceará, Daniel Linger describes being *parado* as “a culturally recognized condition” of “the disturbing state of motionlessness” (1992: 124 ft11). “To be stopped is to rot or fester spiritually and emotionally, and to be incapable of resolving personal or other problems” (*ibid.*). The efficacy of these terms for Calon relates to their meaning for *brasileiros*, and how through a combination of various procedures (e.g. conservation of old, borrowing, recontextualisation) (Williams 2011: 43-56), such *gaje* concepts connect to social reproduction and their knowledge of appropriate behaviour.

For Calon, stillness shows man’s incapacity to move things, his loss of efficacy to make the future. It ultimately results in loss of his social standing. No *homem* wants to be seen as dead, without agency recognised by others, and even a rich man, who could live fully from lending to *brasileiros*, still borrows money from other Calon. This logic can be seen in common joking insults: *pai do meu avô* (father of my grandfather), *o urubú* (a vulture), *sem futuro* (without future), *a carniça* (a carrion), *o defunto* (a deceased one), *mulon* (dead in Romani), *morto* (dead), *o agouro* (a bad omen, a shadow) and so on. But people worry about how they are perceived, that such jokes might contain a kernel of truth:

Two cousins Sirley and Romero were calling Nelson, who lived in the same camp, “Abelardo” – a name of a very old Calon from a neighbouring settlement.

At first Nelson played along and called them names too. But because the two continued he was becoming annoyed and asked them to stop. He complained loudly: “I already have no luck and you call me these names”.

This story illustrates that *parado*, *morto* or *mulon* are not figurative expressions, but real concerns. For example, nobody would lend to a person who is considered “dead”, which decreases his capability to “make the future” in turn. Men, who lose all their money and are not expected to make more, are said to be *mortos*. Although they might be respected for their knowledge, their reputation for entering into transactions is low. Following the same logic, living among the *brasileiros*, which presents a threat of assimilation, a failure of differentiation as relations with others are limited, is also associated with death (see also Okely 1983: 228). When Maluco stayed in Santaluz after everybody had fled, his uncle described him as *mulon*, dead (Rom.). For the same reason, old men see their capacity for gain decrease; a loan to them is potentially lost. The real dead become tied to places where they died, their tents – on which justification of their interaction with the world was based – burnt. They do not move anywhere, they do not open new opportunities; “they don’t make the future”:

After a short discussion, Kiko’s lawyer left a parking lot in a black Chevrolet Astra. It was new and Eduardo, who was still paying the instalments, had given it to Dr Henrique as a payment for his services. All of us entered into a VW Gol that Eduardo had bought from another Calon. I was sitting in the back with Beijú, who

looking at the Astra turning onto a speedway towards Salvador commented: “You should not have given that car to the lawyer.”

“I will buy a new one,” Eduardo dismissed it, “and a better one.”

Viviane, sitting on the passenger seat, turned to us and told her uncle assertively: “Only the dead don’t make the future (*só os mortos, não fazem o futuro*)”.

“Making the future”, as an idiom grounded in movement, is thus doubly productive: a man creates himself as *homem* while relating to others. His relation to his wife might be his *raison d'être* for creating and evaluating new opportunities, but these in turn established his reputation among others. At death this process stops.

So far, I have argued that a Calon life requires constant alertness in the present. One does not know where a chance lies and what opportunities can change one’s life completely. This is not something automatic, but has to be learned over time through progressively becoming a proper *homem*. Young boys and *brasileiros*, who lack awareness of how their behaviour is seen by other Calon, act as *bestas* and cannot be expected to be *espertos*. This failure brings with it a threat of death and creates a feedback loop: Calon embrace uncertainties to demonstrate their Calon manhood, which leads to further uncertainties. It also structures relations between people since acumen is something that all Calon are expected to share. But such symmetry has to be backed up.



Picture 6.1

Building a tent

6. 2 Backing up Claims

Respeito

Being a Calon man requires a capacity to create a flow or to divert flows as a way of engaging with one's "future" or of "taking care of [one's own] life". But to be successful, others have to recognise one's will and intentions. Calon call this 'taking seriously' (*tratar sério*) or 'respect' (*respeito*). Inversely, men are keen to show that whatever they are doing is due to their own will and are quick to react to any suggestion otherwise. Any infringement and bending to the will of another can trigger a violent response even to the point of financial loss. When I was once discussing his violent history with Beiju, who

had killed five men, he remarked that all of this had caused him only a loss (*prejuízo*), but at least others respected him (*me respeitam*).

In other words, violent acts send a “message of manhood” (Herzfeld 1985) by making one’s complete presence and value of self-determination visible. Consider a conversation I had with Eduardo and Kiko one evening, a few months before Kiko killed the *jurón*. While we were sitting, observing the street, Kiko told us about his dream and what had happened to his brother-in-law. This led him to comment on the nature of masculine valour.

Kiko, who had just sat down beside his father and me, started telling us news about his brother-in-law, Wiliam, whom he visited. Wiliam lives on one of the side streets of Alto de Bela Vista, away from his family. Apparently, sometime last week a *jurón* tried to force his way into the house to kill Wiliam. Since their house is a former shop with a rolling door, as the man was pushing the door up and asking Wiliam’s wife whether Wiliam was at home, she could already see his gun. She told the man that he wasn’t, but behind her back directed husband to escape. When the man managed to open the door and see inside, Wiliam was already gone.

When Kiko finished the story, he started telling his father how close he was to betting on a correct number in *jogo do bicho*¹⁰³: “The whole night I was dreaming of 32 *na cabeça* [one mode of betting]. And today in *jogo do bicho* 35 was drawn.” The inspiration for that number came from the calibre 32 of Eduardo’s revolver: “It was a *Cigano mineiro*. Beiju and Pancho were walking

¹⁰³ A type of popular lottery illegal in Brazil.

down the street and the *Cigano* gunned them down. Then he wanted to shoot you, but I... *Pau! Pau!* ... and he dropped dead.”

His father did not pass comment on this dream and the conversation moved to other things. They started discussing the money that Darcy owed Kiko. After a while Kiko said approvingly that Darcy was not fearful (*medroso*). “There is not one *Cigano*, who is *medroso*. I don’t know any *Cigano* like that,” concluded Kiko.

“And what about Pinto?,” I challenged him. I knew that many saw Pinto as a coward and *sem futuro*.

“Yeah, what about Pinto?” repeated Eduardo and turned to his son.

“Pinto, José, the son of Gel, Faustão, Valdeli, Índio would cross the road if I so much as yelled at them,” responded Kiko. “From that family, only Gel is not *medroso*.”

For my part, I did not doubt his assessment of Gel, who when I met him had a bandage over part of his neck, where a bullet had passed through. Kiko’s stories show how violence is constitutive of proper Calon manhood and suggests ways it builds sociality. I discussed some dynamics in Chapter 4 when I argued that violence lies at the core of Calon segmentary social organisation and separation from *brasileiros*. The story Kiko tells about William is a reminder that *brasileiros* are dangerous, *perigosos*. At the same time, no *Cigano* should be *medroso*, fearful and fainthearted, but *valente* (or *corajoso*), bold or valiant. Kiko has to admit that there are individual men who do not live up to this, but crucially, he does not compare individual Calon to *juróns*: there is

nothing unmanly about Wiliam escaping although members of Gel's family are seen as cowards when interacting with other Calons. *Ciganos* are expected to behave according to the ideal of Calon manhood, to share a commonality (Gay y Blasco 2001: 631-647).

As a consequence, unknown *Cigano*, *Ciganos desconhecidos* – sometimes known as *Cigano mineiro*, a Gypsy from Minas – could represent a potential danger. This became clear to me when once while I was watching the documentary *Tarabatará* (2007) in Candeias with six men. During one scene, in which a Calon man sings, one of the men asked rhetorically: “He looks very *sofrido*. Do you think he is *valente*? (*Será que ele é valente?*)” *Sofrido* is used to describe somebody who has passed through a lot of hardship; people talked about life in the past associated with one's deceased relatives as *uma vida sofrida*, a life of hardship. In the context of a man's valour it serves the same purpose as *prejuízo*, a loss, when Beiju above says that his manly acts have caused him only *prejuízo*, but at least he is respected. Both foreground a difficulty in living up to the ideal and are one of the reasons why *Ciganos desconhecidos (mineiros)* or those “before” (*antes*) seem to be always more violent.

The knowledge of what proper behaviour entails, establishes the Calon claim to moral superiority to *brasileiros* (cf Gay y Blasco 1999: 108). It also distinguishes between Calon and non-Calons violence. When Calons use the word violence – *violência* – it is always in a sense reflecting common Brazilian discourse and concerns. Just like their neighbours or the media, they talk about *vagabundos* (tramps), *traficantes* (drug dealers) and *bandidos* (gangsters). But *violência* is not the term used to describe Calon actions. In fact, there is not an abstract term encompassing Calon violent acts. Rather, in

their narratives people focus on individual events and the characteristics of those involved. This is a short description of one such conversation from my fieldnotes:

A few men in Santaluz were talking about how Pedro, the father of Beiju, was killed by a Calon called Lúcio. Almost 20 years later, the events were described in vivid details, recapturing the nature of claims to manhood of the main protagonists. They recounted how Lúcio, coming to marry Ira, got into an argument and killed her father.

“Lúcio was very *valente*. Índio [his brother] is *medroso*” commented someone.

They recalled exactly how tents in the settlement in Bomfim were laid out, which way Lúcio ran, and how passing around a tent pole, Beiju slit his throat.

“He was a good looking man, wasn’t he? I saw a picture,” asked Kiko.

“They both were very good looking,” Paulo confirmed.

Such narratives recreate messages of manhood and men often recalled such deeds involving themselves or others – fights, confrontations, revenge (*vingança*) but also flights, bizarre and ridiculous situations, especially involving *brasileiros*. Such stories and vignettes are not only forms of entertainment, but carry moral messages. For a violent act to be meaningful and successful, justified and credible, “it needs not only to have the expected consequences, but also to be judged appropriate” (Whitehead 2004: 5). Only when such claims are recognised by others do they lead to respect, *respeito*. Kiko’s dream shows not only his personal craving for recognition, but illustrates the most

legitimate reason to use violence: to defend one's family and to avenge a member of one's patriline. In his dream, Kiko imagines himself saving his father after two uncles, in real life known for their acts of boldness and loyalty, were killed. Beiju, for instance, avenged his father and his sister, while Pancho is known for being beaten for several days by policemen but not telling them the whereabouts of a Calon who was hiding after avenging his relatives. When a few months after his dream Kiko killed a *jurón*, it was because he feared that the man wanted to kill his father and brother. In a way, then, because the murder made sense, people could not blame Kiko for their flight from Santaluz.

Images of Courage

In the story he told us, Kiko configures his manhood and realigns the world through foregrounding paternal and familial relationships, showing the potential danger an unknown *Cigano* represents and reaffirming morality different from *brasileiros*. But the dream also reminds him that he should be attentive: He could gain in the *jogo do bicho* if he knew how to interpret his dreams. But also, his family could be killed any time.

Such preparedness is expressed in aesthetic terms; above, Paulo confirms that Lúcio and Beiju, both *valente*, were handsome. There is thus an intimate relationship between respect and the physical person (e.g. Pitt-Rivers 1977: 4) where willingness to use violence when necessary needs to be visible. I first noticed various strategies to achieve this at a wedding when a few men stepped out of their cars and started walking towards the wedding place. On a dusty road, in a country style outfit – pointy boots, large buckles and white shirts – they walked slowly, legs wide spread; I could almost hear the

harmonica. Such bodily postures are encouraged from the early age: “Father was angry with you,” a young man told his unmarried brother. “You cannot stand there with your eyes down. You should stay straight, so the *Cigano* knows he is talking to men (*homens*).”

A gun is another way to show such attitudes. Goldfarb argued that owning one and especially walking around with it, is another sign through which men refashion themselves as “men of courage” (*homens de coragem*) and especially their alertness, their “quick wittedness” (*rapidez de pensamento*). They share this aesthetic with the popular classes of the *sertão* in general (Sulpino 1999: 97-100). Other less tangible expressions of the individual body are also important: talking and protesting loudly and quickly reacting to the slightest insults. As a consequence, to *brasileiros Ciganos* often seem unpredictable and without empathy.

Calon are aware of their double audience. Any violent act, by focusing on messages of Calon manhood and since it pushes other considerations into the backgrounds, violates the context (Herzfeld 1985: 11). Unsurprisingly, although valour is the ideal, only a few really earn their reputation for it. “You kill and you will go to jail” or “I have two sons to take care of” were some arguments I heard in discussions about guns. Most confrontations, *brigas*, are ritualised and do not end in physical violence; just like the temporary leaving of a camp, their point is to show one’s preparedness. They happen mostly among young men forging their reputation. But even older men who have already achieved this recognition are still expected to demonstrate their boldness in order to protect their autonomy and their self-determination and to enforce respect.



Picture 6.2

Packing up

6.3 Avoiding Class

Signs Of Prestige

Romero married Luiza because she was rich and brought a large dowry to the union. Luiza married Romero because, being the son of Eduardo, he had good prospects for providing well for their household. I am not suggesting that other considerations did not play roles and I described, for instance, how Romero opposed the marriage and how Luiza's relatives jeopardised it because they did not want her to marry into Eduardo's family. But I also showed that from the beginning people discussed the wealth of their respective families and the dowry. In other words, certain representations of wealth have

social significance. After all, it is “known” (or “said”) how much money a man has “on the street” and this serves as a background to judge adequacy of behaviour; for instance, Eduardo’s family often blamed him for not helping his siblings. I want to suggest, that seen from the male point of view, wealth is a visible sign of one’s capacity to engage with the world grounded in Calon notions of autonomy.

Despite what *juróns* in Santaluz thought, not all *Ciganos* were rich and they differed greatly in the amounts of money they controlled. While Eduardo played card games with fifty-Real-notes, often losing and winning thousands in a single game, the men in the camp “down there” played mostly with two-Real-notes and the stakes in one round did not exceed R\$20. Many households had difficulties meeting their daily expenses, and relied on small subsistence loans from people living in the camp or on women’s begging or palm-reading. Or, consider the two dwellings from Santaluz which represent two sides of the wealth distribution. Índio and Eduardo were approximately of same age and they both lived together with their wives and sons:

Índio’s tent was standard sized of 4x6 meters lying on the outer edge of the camp “down there”¹⁰⁴; the old side tarpaulin had holes in it. The tent looked rather empty: the kitchen section contained a gas stove and a rack with only a few aluminium pots hanging from it. The sleeping section consisted of two beds alongside both sidewalls of the tent and a wooden chest and a TV with a DVD player placed on a makeshift wooden construction stood alongside the rear wall. There were no decorations. Two plastic chairs stood in the middle of the tent turned towards the TV; there was no table. The chairs, the central pole and back

¹⁰⁴ See Map 4.1 and Figure 4.1, pp.148-149, above.

sides of the bedsteads separated the kitchen section in the front from the sleeping section in the back. All furniture was placed on bricks to protect it from earth and water.

Eduardo owned two large houses on *Rua dos Ciganos* – to build each of them, two smaller houses had been pulled down. The one he lived in was divided into two apartments, one above and one below. Eduardo’s family lived on the bottom; the apartment above was unfinished. The house had four rooms: a master-bedroom, Romero’s bedroom, a living-room, and a kitchen opening into the *quintal*. The kitchen equipment was of better quality than in any of the tents, Viviane also had more pots; a large table, with about ten plastic chairs, stood in the *quintal*, the part-covered back yard. Another table with six ornamental chairs stood in the kitchen. The living room was delimited by a sofa facing a cabinet with a TV set in its centre and surrounding shelves with crystal glasses, bottles, plastic flowers, family photos placed on doilies. The master-bedroom contained a double bed with wooden chests and a TV set on one; Romero’s room had only a bed. None had any decoration.

In Chapter 4 I argued that Calons are readily mobile, that houses or tents are strictly occupied by nuclear families and that as physical structures in space they do not serve as fixed long-term references. From this point of view, even Eduardo’s house could be considered “temporary”. I was also struck by the lack of decoration or appropriation in the bedrooms of Eduardo’s house and “little interest in establishing practical or symbolic holds over places where they are made to live” (Gay y Blasco 1999: 16). Unlike their

neighbours who were constantly adding something to their houses, from the moment it was built nothing was done to improve the house; in fact, broken things were never replaced. Rather, their disorganisation of bedrooms and clothes piled up on top of chests, gave the impression of a family that had moved in only yesterday. In some sense the aesthetic aspects or the use of trunks instead of wardrobes, seem to suggest change and flexibility (e.g. Tauber and Tauber 2009: 70) and continuity between houses and tents.¹⁰⁵

But the material aspects of dwellings have their significance of which this lack of fixity is a part. At the core of a physical household from which a husband sets out to engage with the world lies the dowry; the wife brought the furniture within it and also the money for further deals of her husband. In fact, a marriage, as a founding of a household, can be seen as a founding moment of evaluation, after which man cannot be *besta* anymore, although he can be *sem futuro*. As a consequence his capacity to make money “on the street” needs to be made visible and recognised by others. From this point of view, Eduardo’s houses demonstrate his skills on the street and his capability for taking care of his family. These dynamics are similar to those of the houses of Romanian Roma which have dowry coins placed in their foundation. Here too, prestige implied by the dwellings are “moments of public discourse whose protagonists are the different Roma families building their own prestige in the community” (Tauber and Tauber 2009: 71).

Given the spatial instability, from the Calon point of view, more revealing is the location of individual households in the cartographic relation to other tents. I argued the emergence of a settlement depends on a complex process of negotiating dyadic relationships where money serves as a tool of relatedness – a way to relate to others

¹⁰⁵ Rena Gropper noted that in the interior decoration of a house, sleeping habits and ways of cleaning the house, the Kalderaš in New York preserved “aura of the tent” (Cotten 1951: 36-43).

through exchanges but also to create a background against which relations are judged. A settlement can be seen as a concretisation of relations with other Calons which depends on one's success in diverting money "on the street". This can be glossed over as "strength" to which I will come in the last section. Here it suffices to remark that the biggest house in any settlement is usually the house of a strong-man surrounded by houses of his married sons and daughters. Conversely, Índio's tent, the poorest in the camp "down there" lies on the outskirts.

Ricos And Puros

Seen from another angle, a lack of material fixity seems to be part of a recognition that people's fortunes change over time. Eduardo almost got 'ruined' following Kiko's arrest; Beiju suffered *prejuízo* as a consequence of his concern with honour; Pancho used to be well off, but behaved "like a rich man" and wasted everything in bad deals; Renato lost his house in a card game. Such changes in fortune constantly reminded Calons that to behave properly one not only needs to stay attuned to possibilities of gain, but also be prepared to compromise everything.

In its pragmatic consequences, this instability prevents development of a fixed structure that could lead to hierarchy. But Calons also try to prevent wealth conveying moral qualities. I already showed some means of doing so above: men jealously guard their autonomy and should be willing to back it up by violence; the threat of stillness, on the other hand, which makes a man irrelevant for social life and his agency unrecognised, forces even rich men, who could live on loans to *brasileiros* only, to engage with others and to open their actions to evaluation (cf. Durham 1995: 111-128). But Calons also deny

that the money one makes and which can be made visible in houses or cars can translate into superior status. In other words, they recognise failure and success, poverty and affluence, but at the same time constantly reclaim equality. This is most readily apparent in their use of concepts related to abundance or lack of money – *rico*, ‘rich’, and *puro* (or *liso*), literally ‘clean’:

It was the first card game I watched in Santaluz. Kiko, who had called me, explained that he was not playing because he was “*puro*”. I still had problems with understanding the Portuguese spoken by these Bahian Calon, and also I automatically assumed that he could not compare to these men. So I asked him if the men playing were not *puros*, too. From my point of view the men, including deaf-mute Mudo, were definitely poorer than him – he was the only one living in a house, for instance. He looked at me perplexed and answered that they weren’t. They were *nivelado* (levelled).

The contrast in perception is telling: Kiko is baffled because if the men are playing they clearly cannot be *puros*, while I am lost since I do not understand how Kiko can be “more *puro*” than the men. What I am not aware of is that there is no “more” or “less”. Calon avoid referring to themselves, or those who can hear them, in terms of status and to describe their lack of money, they say that they are *puros* which describes a moment when one’s intentions are stymied: “A man wants but cannot”, as Índio explained. Inversely, *rico*, rich, used to describe people like Eduardo, should be seen as

the expression of a moment. Alternatively this pair is constituted as (*não*) *ter como* or (*não*) *ter condições*, (not) to have means to or (not) to have conditions.

Rico was also used to talk about winning in a card-game, or in a successful deal. As a temporary status it was assumed that it could go down and sometimes even people like Eduardo were *puro* and had to borrow money to play a game. Even more tellingly, a man could have money at home (earmarked for deals or his “wife’s money”) and still be *puro* and not be able to go to a bar; he might even decide to borrow from others. *Puro* and *rico*, then, denote a capacity for action, and wealth is one way to engage with the world. However, since monetary wealth tends to be stabilised in time through houses, loans to others or bank accounts, and could be transmitted into another household through dowry, *rico* is relatively durable.

Nevertheless, to fix economic status in any way would be a denial of one’s individual skills to change anything, to bring about a series of successful deals through seizing a chance. It implies one’s loss of autonomy in relation to others. Although they are aware of it meaning among *brasileiros*, when referring to themselves or when others can hear, Calon avoid words such as *pobre*, poor; and I never heard them use expressions such as *classe popular*, working class, or *classe média*, middle income class. They only used the word *pobre* when talking about their life in the past, as if to point out to their improved position. They also use it when talking to *juróns*, for instance when petitioning the state officially.

Asking for money from somebody who has more of it illustrates this double morality well. When women in Santaluz asked for change from their relatives, they made it appear as a test of loyalty and generosity and avoided any suggestion of dependency, or

a suggestion that their husbands could not provide for them. Requests came abruptly and were not repeated. On the other hand, when asking money on the street, a woman stressed her own poverty and called the non-Gypsy *patron/patrõa*, a patron. Meanwhile, her husband often stood beside her, as if he did not notice anything.¹⁰⁶

Through constructing their own world of dyadic exchanges, Calon opt out of the *gaje* logic of hierarchy. To use Sahlins' words, Calon might be *puros* and "have few possessions, but they are not poor. Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all it is a relation between people." (1972: 37). Of course, people were aware that having money significantly influenced their options – although they were not blamed for it, since they did not have much "money on the street", poorer men could not get their sons out of prison, for instance. Nevertheless, I want to stress, that there were constant attempts to prevent the translation of economic superiority to fixed statuses and therefore to moral superiority. Calon consistently refocused on one's momentary standing among others. In this way the logic behind *puro* and *rico* is a part of the same one according to which, after men die, their tents are burnt and settlements where they died abandoned. While their money is inherited by their sons to make their future, memories of the deceased were too tied to places and objects. At the same time, in combination with silence over names of the deceased, such destruction of objectified aspects of personhood prevented the inheritance of reputations.

¹⁰⁶ This reminds Pitt-Rivers's distinction between "shameless" and "accidental" begging in honour-based societies (1968: 21-24;1972: 61-62;1977: 102-104).



Picture 6.3 *“Whenever a Cigano sees that there is no future, he moves to a different place.”*

6.4 Stabilising Odds

Força

Being ready to seize and to create opportunities and to back up claims with violence is an embodied practice on which men base their claim to Caloinity. Their actions lie at a boundary between social failure and success and complete presence orders spatial relation between households. People use engagement with their uncertain surrounding to manoeuvre social and physical position – good knowledge of *juróns* allows for the creation of opportunities “on the street”, marriages create new alliances with people elsewhere, “making the future” results in a change of settlements. But in a constantly

shifting environment where any event can lead to radical change and people depend on the behaviour of others, some are more able to stabilise odds and to “demarcate and constitute space” of their immediate actions (Vigh 2009: 419-438). This level of potency, one’s value that co-ordinately gives rise to spatiotemporal control (Munn 1992), can be summarised as *força*, strength.

Like *futuro*, *parado*, or masculinity seen as a man-gun hybrid, the concept of *força* is shared with their non-Gypsy neighbours. Especially in *sertão*, *força* refers to a (patriarchal) capacity to project one’s name over one’s family, to control voting behaviour through patronage or to impose one’s family name over a territory (e.g. Marques 2002; Ansell 2010: 283-294). Calon *força* is not a clear-cut ideology and its use varies with context: In Djavan and Diana (2008), a documentary about a wedding in São Paulo, the groom’s father exclaims, that “*papai* is still strong (*forte*) enough” and explains that he will “help” the newlyweds. In other words, his skill of engagement with the world, almost as a substance, will enhance the capacities of his own newly married son to engage with the world. *Força* can also be “given” (*dar força*) to others, for instance, by supporting people in conflicts through which new limits on their home range regions were set. Alternatively, a family dominating a region is a strong family, *a família forte*.

Wealth, a reputation for valour and acumen “on the street”, do not, however, translate directly into *força*. Beiju, although highly respected and feared, lacked money for deals to make other people want to join him. Eduardo, on the other hand, preferred to live alone and not to build a following. “Look at Eduardo, he could be a *chefe* of everybody (*todo mundo*) here,” Kiko, his son once told me, “But he doesn’t want to.” He

was pointing to the visible separation between Eduardo and the rest of his family who were living on Eduardo's property. He explained that Eduardo would be able to become *chefe*, by being more generous to others, "not giving them money, but lending them money, you know." Strength, then, is a generic value based on one's name, as it were. It is also a capacity to impose on all demonstrations of manhood a sign of one's *força* – one is not only courageous or sharp, but his acts show, and thus extend, his strength. *Força* then summarises a man's efficacy to behave properly in eyes of others and thus his social standing.

Inversely, a man who lacks strength, whose value is low and whose name therefore does not extend much in time and space, is *fraco*, weak. Maluco complained that he was *fraco* and therefore could not buy a Gypsy dress for his *jurin* wife. Márcio Vilar, who did research among the Calons in Southern Bahia, reported that when some men failed to visit the graves of their relatives on the All Souls Day, a woman explained to him that that they were *fracos*.¹⁰⁷ An individual's *força* then can be seen as liquidity, a reputation, an ability for stabilising odds and forcing luck going his way.

Força is visible in the space for strategising it creates – in one's being "established", *estabelecido*. I have shown how settlements emerge around men I called strong-men. These are usually men with married sons, who have the highest "capital *gaŕicãno*" (Piasere 1985: 146) – good relationships with important non-Gypsies. In the past they negotiated municipal permits and spaces to camp with landowners; today they have the most solid claim on land on which settlements stand (through ownership or rent), have the most deals outside the settlement and know local policemen. Their position varies: Some present themselves readily as *liders*, others would never claim to be

¹⁰⁷ Personal communication 2011.

one and nobody would believe them.¹⁰⁸ Individual households, including their married children and brothers, leave or join their settlements following their own recursive evaluation and no respectable *homem* would accept orders, show dependency or forgo a better opportunity.¹⁰⁹

Creating Calon Gaps

Strong-men play an important role in bringing about spaces for Calon sociality – often literally, such as when they find place to camp. *Força* is therefore also a capacity to rip things – money, a plot, a retirement benefit, a grave in a local cemetery – from the *gaje* world and make them basis of Calon sociality, to create a Calon “gap” or “disturbance” in midst of *gaje* (Williams 2003). Tied to individual men, it demarcates the space of one’s action and *força* can be illustrated spatially.

Distribution of *força* is also objectified in the cartographic character of a settlement. The most powerful man, who is usually also the richest, lives in the most expensive tent or a house, located in the centre of the settlement. He is surrounded by those whom he supports financially and who can back up his claims. In turn, living close to a strong-man improves the capacity of others to behave properly: to strike deals, to organise weddings, to resolve conflicts and to “make the future”. The outskirts of any settlements are always occupied by the *fracos*.

¹⁰⁸ The varied nature of leadership even between neighbouring and even interrelated communities has been noted also for other Gypsy groups (Salo 1981: 71-97). It seems to me that in areas where there is a higher density of Calon *turmas*, competition for space or authorities’ interference, strong-men are more readily to use title, such as *líders* (see also Kaminski 1987: 323-356; Stewart 1999: 27-44).

¹⁰⁹ Of position of chiefs or kings that lead *vitsas* of the American Kalderaš, Rena Gropper writes that “the men of a *vitsa* are always ready to listen to anyone who promises efficient leadership” (Cotten 1951: 19).

To illustrate what I have in mind, consider the camp “down there” in Santaluz. When I arrived it had nine tents. I will discuss two extremes of the distribution of *força* – Djalma, a strong-man, on the one hand, and Índio and Maluco, on the other; tents I, XIII and XIV respectively, on Figure 4.1 and Map 4.1. I hope to show how the strategies of manhood that I described above, are not only personal performances, but also give rise and order to the social space.

Djalma’s tent stands in the centre of the settlement. The tents of his closest relatives create a semi-circle around him; as Djalma does not have married children or siblings these are his affinal relatives and their children. In front of his tent lies “the central space”, the most public area of the settlement where deals are struck and games played, where people argue. Being “established” requires a constant effort and people do not settle with Djalma automatically: Djalma is the only one who owns the lot underneath his tent and he planted a fast growing tree in front it to provide the shade for the “central space”. He ‘helps’ his relatives through subsistence loans; he borrows money from other people living in the camp and is known for repaying before the due date. He is the only one who always has a gun and is a self-proclaimed “*pistoleiro*”, gunman. Out of all people in the camp, he has most deals with *juróns* in the area of Santaluz and over the years has created a stable customer base; many *brasileiros* come directly to the camp to borrow money from him. Most Calon men, who come from other settlements to visit somebody in the camp “down there”, stop to exchange a few

words with Djalma; he is always ready for another Calon to come and ask him: “Djalma, make a *rolo* (a deal) with me”.

If the ground in front of Djalma’s tent and in the “central area” is beaten and without grass, there is only a trodden track through tall grass leading to Índio’s tent. It lies separated about fifteen meters from other tents and is followed only by the tent of Maluco and of a widow. Índio and Maluco do not “make the future” easily: Índio mostly collects debts for shopkeepers and is also considered fainthearted; some even call him “a dog” behind his back. *Maluco* or *Doido*, literally a crazy one, is a source of embarrassment. His mother is dead and his father is in prison. He runs errands for Eduardo and Kiko and he lives on the *bolsa família* of his baby. Every day he eats in the house of Eduardo and Viviane. He lives with a *jurin*.

Wealth also visibly changes along this continuum.¹¹⁰ The central tents have a table, a fridge and a TV with DVD player, those around them lacked tables while Índio’s and Maluco’s tents lacked both fridges and tables. Those who do not have a fridge or a table are the poorest ones and have least cash in circulation. Such people have a smaller network of supporters, *colegas* outside the camp to make business with, and not many other places to go. Both Índio and Maluco can be said to have failed to demonstrate their capabilities through establishing households with fridges and furniture. Nobody comes randomly to their tent to deal or to chat with them and they never have an opportunity to share their food – a sign of recognition.

¹¹⁰ See the description of Índio’s tent above.

An old widow who lives on the outskirts of a camp is the trace of a dead man; a man who cannot build relationships and behave as a Calon anymore. His name is not uttered and he is slowly subsumed alongside other anonymous dead. Widows mark natural ends of households which compose settlements, households from which men's engagement with the world started. If being a Calon man with *força* means being steadily able to "make the future" for your household, to make money flow and to create a space for Caloninity through imprinting your own presence on the *gaje* world, then a Calon widow is the antithesis of this. She is a woman; she burnt the possession that served as the basis of her household; she depends on the relatives. An opposite to Djalma and in Santaluz also a visible physical limit of the camp, she also reminded everybody why settlements disintegrate – nobody stays where a man dies and a new space of the living has to be created elsewhere through actions of other men.

In other ways this distribution reflects uncertainties, which permeate Calon life: Maluco does not have any close family, and his household was never established through prolonged negotiations and did not profit from a dowry; three of Índio's four brothers were killed and he fled the *sertão*; the widow's husband died. Thus any position of strength, no matter how carefully crafted, is frail and tentative and a year later, the settlement "down there" concentrated around Djalma was gone.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to lay out orientations that motivated the behaviour of the Calon men I knew – their struggle to avoid any suggestion that a lack of money is

anything but a temporary drawback, their desire to build up a presence in the world through their own actions, to be seen as capable of seizing opportunities and to be respected for valour. These orientations and the conceptual apparatus related to them do not provide a blue-print for behaviour, but open a space for questioning of acts of individuals. Unstable hierarchisations (cf. Gay y Blasco 1999) constantly emerged, most visibly in the way heterogeneous Calon space was organised.

Young boys have some liberty in what they do, but over time they are expected to behave as men - *homens*. Expectations are gradual and come with increasing knowledge about what constitutes proper behaviour; the real turning point in evaluation is the establishment of one's household. A man must be able to negotiate and to know how to use his language. He must keep his promise to another Calon, while he is expected to profit from any deal he makes. He should stand up to anybody who insults him, protect his family and use violence when necessary. He should provide for his guests. He is in competition with other men, while depending on the support of his patriline. A man should be individualistic, and never show his dependence on other men, while being closely connected to others through cohabitation, debts, feasting, kinship links, violence, and so on. His success is demonstrated in various ways, including things he owns, marriages he is able to negotiate for his children, or amount of money he loses in cards.

Such stress on masculine assertiveness and autonomy has implications for the way they make a living. Money lending is risky and its risks lie in passing time: every loan a Calon makes brings a possibility of non-repayment when the due date comes. Usury is also illegal. Sometimes their clients asked for extension on loans or refused to pay, which jeopardised their own agreements. Nevertheless, as I will argue in the next

two chapters, it is precisely through the constant manipulation of money and time that they make their living and in the process create an event-full way of living where people are expected to know how to behave.

VII. LIVING FOR THE PRESENT: HOW EXCHANGES AMONG CALON MULTIPLY EVENTS

Introduction

Until recently, dowries among the Calon consisted of animals rather than money. These were not valued as animals per se but as carriers of wealth, potential money. In the interior of Brazil, beasts of burden were used as the prime form of thesaurisation and trade with animals served to convert money into animals and back (-M-C-M'-). After receiving them as dowry, animals had to be resold by the newly married husband which allowed for the intensification of his engagement with the world. These animals, and in the nineteenth century also slaves, brought gain by being moved across distances, where they could be resold for profit. From this point of view, institutions such as marriages and violence, by the way they for each man created alliances or marked regions inhabited by unknown or enemy *Ciganos*, mediated and divided the space into heterogeneous space of Calon. In other words, following Gregory's analysis of mercantile kinship of Marwari merchants in India, for *Ciganos* as itinerant traders, *territoriality* could be understood as value (Gregory 1997: 163ff). Gregory suggests that this territoriality-as-value can be imagined as the shade of a big tree that can bring advantages to those under it and disadvantages for those who live outside it (165). In a sense, one can think of masculine *força*, the capacity to lend a name to various transactions within a region, as such a shadow.

Since the mid 1980s, due to the general decrease in use of animals, increased accessibility of money and especially the novel monetary flows created by *financialisation*, Calon in Bahia started making money primarily through lending money to *brasileiros*. This change in occupation coincided with changes in other Calon exchanges: dowries, for instance, are given today directly in money for a husband to “make the future”, while a young man from a “rich” or “strong” family will be more likely to marry a woman with a high dowry. In addition, money is recognised for its “magical” potential to bring more through interest-bearing loans to *brasileiros* and this potential has become integrated into exchanges among Calon. Today, small subsistence and emergency loans among the Calon are also interest bearing.

Before turning to moneylending to *brasileiros* in the final chapter, here I want to explore the character of monetary exchanges among Calon in detail. I will argue that the dense net of monetary deferred payments among the Bahian Calon helps individual households survive and provides the men with liquidity for dealing “on the street”, with the *brasileiros*. Individual households depend on credit in a form of reputation of the Calon *homem*, which situates each household in a unique way in relation to other households. Reflecting the performative character based on notions of personal autonomy and complete presence in one’s environment, deals between Calon men focus on *acts of negotiations* and *acts of repayment* of debts rather than *promises to repay*. In other words, in deferred payments among Calon, the Calon guard against the tendencies for “hierarchy” which according to Graeber (2010; 2011) lie behind every debt. I will show how Calon constantly recast loans and deferred payments as singularised “exchanges” between equals.

Through constantly reasserting his lack of obligation to lend to anybody, the existence of various “dates-as-events” (Guyer 2006: 409-421) – of payment, receipt of money, renegotiation – and his capability to obtain further loans become signs of a Calon’s autonomy and recognition by others (cf. Durham 1995: 111-128). In a process of constant entrustment, Calon lend money and buy and sell on credit, believing that others will act as the Calon in the future. Proliferations of monetary deferred exchanges punctuate time and create new moments for such behaviour, bringing about the feeling of event-full present where Calon continue behaving as Calon and where something is always bound to happen to “men of action”.

To illustrate this process I start by describing individual transactions. I argue that every exchange is considered unique where scales have to be matched anew. I then describe various types of debt-incurring-exchanges and describe how Calon space and time is punctuated by exchanges as well as by the awareness of those transactions that emerges from them. I conclude by pointing out some limits of these transactions and how people talk about when limits of proper moral behaviour are trespassed.

7.1 Creating Dates-As-Events

Making Money With Money

Money gained through loans to *brasileiros* and things obtained from them are often exchanged among Calon. There are many things a man can do with them: money that one gains “on the street” can be lent out to other Calon or back to *brasileiros*. Retirement benefits from the state can be sold to another for a certain period, or “for life”. An object can be sold to another Calon for a smaller amount in cash immediately and the rest of the

payment in the future, or it can be sold for a larger sum to be paid at a later date. A man can run a *rifa*, a raffle, on it among Calon, or he can sell it “on the street” back to *brasileiros*.

The following story describes an exchange between Pancho and Babaloo, his nephew. I was sitting with a few men under the shade of a tree in the “central area” in front of the camp “down there” in Santaluz when Pancho swapped his watch for Babaloo’s, complemented with money.

Babaloo walked out of his uncle’s tent looking at the watch he was holding. “It’s light,” his uncle Pancho pointed out and told Babaloo that it was a good watch and he should buy it. When Babaloo did not respond for a moment, Pancho offered to swap their watches. But Babaloo would have to add some money on top.

Babaloo asked if it were not *paraguaio*, counterfeit, but Pancho insisted that it was *original*. “You can go into a shop and see that it costs 300. Yesterday I bought it from Faustão for 150, isn’t it?” he asked rhetorically turning to Faustão who was sitting next to him. Faustão did not say anything and Pancho continued: “You give me R\$70 until 20 March [i.e. in three months. Plus Babaloo’s watch now.]”

The blind Paulo, married to Pancho’s wife’s sister, and Babaloo’s fraternal aunt, was now feeling the watch and declared that it was *Oriente Automático* (a brand). He commented that it still had the original wrist band, and that he would buy it if he had money.

Otherwise, other men did not become involved.

“I cannot give you 70 in March. I will give it to you in April,” said Babaloo.

“Then, give me 80,” responded Pancho.

They swapped the watches. Immediately, Babaloo doubted his deal: “I screwed up (*me lascei*), no?”

“No it’s a good watch. In a shop it costs 300,” answered Pancho.

“I will sell it to a *jurin* for 70 tomorrow”, declared Babaloo who looked unconvinced. “You blocked me,” he added using an expression from volleyball.

Pancho was beaming. He started telling Faustão and Paulo that since the previous day he had made five deals: “two good ones and three so-so...”.

After Babaloo left and Pancho started walking to his tent, Paulo told Pancho that he should not deal with his own nephew like this. Pancho waved his hands and grumbled: “But tell me, who knows about our suffering. Who does?,” And continued walking.

This snippet shows how money can be used to reconfigure manhood: it is divisible which makes it an ideal vehicle for individualistic men to make deals. It can be earmarked, divided up, postponed, hidden, added up or given in advance. It can also be confused. The condition for any of these possibilities to happen is opening of a time gap. In the above example, Babaloo agrees to pay Pancho R\$80 in three months. Immediately after the transaction Babaloo realises that it probably is not a good deal and declares that he will sell it the next day. Although the sum he plans to ask for it from a non-Gypsy

woman would be lower than the one owed to Pancho, if he manages it well, within three months, by the time his money to Pancho is due, he can come out ahead on the deal. And Pancho will receive R\$80 in four months and can still do something with Babaloo's watch in the meantime.

As Keith Hart notes, time is intrinsic to transactions that result in debt, with the most interesting things happening in between (2000). Or as Roitman put it, debt "induces deferred exchange through the multiplication of possibilities" (2005: 75). For Calon, every creation of deferred exchange multiplies possibilities and creates a window of opportunity to make margin through passing time. In essence, this is the reason why the Calon like moneylending: money is divisible and time can be punctuated which creates various combinations and foregrounds the skills of individual men. Even men who had a lot of cash on them – when they came to play cards, for instance – bought things like mobile phones and watches for deferred payments or for split payments where one part was deferred. Moreover, if they won at cards, after they had borrowed money, they only repaid the loan on the agreed date, never on the spot. The resulting punctuation of time by dates – in the case above, through money to be paid or received, yesterday, tomorrow, three months, four months – opens spaces for speculation since "embedded in a matrix of such dates-as-events, people's actions and imaginations pivot around compliance and delay, synchrony and avoidance, and the multiple possibilities for forward looking and backdating" (Guyer 2006: 416).

Actually, as I found out a few days later, this is what happened to the watches:

When I walked into the camp “down there” in Santaluz, I met Laécio from Bomfim. For R\$70 until the 15 February, i.e. in two and a half months, he had just bought the watch that Pancho had obtained from Babaloo. He immediately tried to sell it to me. Meanwhile, Valdeli was wearing the watch that Babaloo gained from Pancho. When I asked him about it, he started taking the watch off his wrist and offering it to me. I never learned how much he paid for it, but I am certain it was not for cash.

In addition, while Pancho had been swapping watches with Babaloo two days ago, Paulo had remarked that the watch on his wrist had been so good that he would not give it up. But today Pancho was wearing it.

Seen from Pancho’s point of view, the swap with Babaloo will still bring R\$70 in two months from Laécio and R\$80 in four from Babaloo. Of course, the R\$70 can be recombined until he receives R\$80.

Matching Scales

Every deal is singular and a lack of official guarantees in transactions, non-existence of any transcendent social structure, and the performative nature of Gypsiness turn deals into events. On the one hand, every exchange is an event because it has its own ritualised aspects – timings, utterances and embodiments. One cannot be seen as too eager. One should pretend it is good for both parties. The deal takes place in front of others. Even if a man comes to borrow money he urgently needs, he never asks for it right away, but only asks if a person had money to lend or waits for an offer, often stimulating it by talking

about his other obligations and when and what sum owed towards him is due. At the end of transaction, thanks were never forthcoming as if to stress that it was mutually beneficial and did not create a debt. As if the “logic of a swap” (Stewart 1987: 224), which as I will show is opposed to predatory and trickery deals with *brasileiros*, allowed people to treat “exchange” as “communism” (Graeber 2011: 122-124) or a form of sharing.

There are various ways to start a transaction. Many deals I watched started with a casual remark about an object. Just like Laécio and Valdeli above, the other party responded almost invariably with “do you want to buy it?” already handing the thing over. Or one asked if another wanted to borrow money. One of the favoured ways to do this was to ask: “Do you have money to lend?” If the response was in negative, the second question was: “And do you want to [have]?” The beauty of this one was that it confirmed mutual benefit of deal-making and giving an impression of transactions being about the joy of dealing rather than results. While negotiating, men exclaimed dramatically that that particular payment at that particular future date would “kill” them; they downplayed the value of a thing by saying that it was not *original*; they claimed that they could get a particular thing for much cheaper and so on.

As argued in the previous chapter in connection with the concept of “making the future”, anything can turn out to be an opportunity to be seized upon. Therefore, the best strategy is not to show any interest or to offer a price that is obviously ridiculous. Often exchanges ended just as quickly as they started:

Nelson was chatting with two men who visited him in his camp in São Gabriel.

“And your phone can do this?” he asked throwing his phone into the air; it opened in flight while rotating.

Everyone laughed.

“Let’s do *barganha* [barter] with the mobile?”

“OK. Talk, talk...” prompted one man.

“For two months for 75...”

“No way (*assim não*),” the man responded and they never returned to the topic again.

But every transaction is also an event because various heterogeneous things, and scales of valuation (Guyer 2004), such as interests and types of relations between people, the monetary scale, temporal scales, and evaluations of persons involved, have to be brought together and stabilised anew. Some things are better than others, and things of same kind are distinguished through their characteristics. In the example above, the watch is characterised by the brand (*Oriente*); its weight suggested that it was *original* as opposed to *paraguaio* (smuggled counterfeit from Paraguay); it had the original wrist band. All these allow Pancho to establish in his exchange with Babaloo, that Babaloo must supplement his own watch with add R\$80 in four months.

Some scales of valuation used by Calon -- such as time and price -- reflected their general use and valuation in Santaluz. Unless due dates were set on specific dates for whatever reason, they reflected logarithmic *oito dias* (eight days, i.e. one week), *quinze dias* (fifteen days) or *trinta dias* (one calendar month) or its multiplication; bigger deals

could be set in “one year”, “two years” and so on. Alternatively, due dates were set on important dates – “until *São João*”, “until Christmas”, “until *Semana Santa* (Easter)”. In monetary loans, the repayment sum was relatively fixed for loans under R\$1000: to 50 on 100, 100 on 300 and then usually to “20 percent” per month, dependent on the type of loan. For instance, the interest is higher for gambling loans. In addition, 20 percent could also mean “20 percent of 1000 added to the principal”, usually in loans above 500. Despite some of these standards, the relevance of scales has to be established for each transaction anew. In fact, men tried to prove their worth and mutual benefit through constant renegotiations of slight margins – a week extra to one month.

The interest is not really a “rate” and does not increase when a person failed to pay on time. Otherwise, it would suggest either that two people are unequal or that a person might not be trusted when he renegotiates a deal – an independent rate is essentially a tool of mistrust, a calculation backed up by violence. In some sense, then, in deals between Calon money serves as a means of pricing, through which the negotiated aspect of the transaction is highlighted and which allows further gain, and not as means of exchange.

There is not a complete separation from the price on the street, however. In the example above, Pancho claimed that the watch cost R\$300 and Babaloo assumed that he could sell it for R\$70. After all, complete separation would not allow successful arbitrage between the two domains. “The logic of a swap” (Stewart 1987: 224) among Calon can only be maintained because money could also enter (or flee) other regimes of value; money thus serves as a standard of value to compare gain from potential predatory loans to *brasileiros*. In other words, monetary valuation “on the street” comprises

calculation and argumentation of a price, through which the difference between two domains – deals with *brasileiros* and among Calon – could be highlighted.

Take the following example:

Sirley tried to persuade Kiko to buy a watch off him for R\$120 for one month. He claimed that he had bought it for R\$140. Kiko retorted that Doido could steal the same one for him for R\$100. Sirley insisted that Kiko buy the watch for R\$120. “Okay. I will buy it. But only to help you,” agreed Kiko seeing that his cousin needed that deal. “And I am only buying it, because I know that next week I will get 2000 from a *jurón*.”

The three prices – 100, 120, and 140 - are “objectively” false. They are relative and depend on performance deemed as “truthful”. As I have already argued in the previous chapter, Calon morality is not categorical but an ethical practice, a chain of questioning about truth and meaning of people’s actions. Thus Ferrari writes how in every version of a story a Gypsy tells, small alterations which could be seen as lies appear. However, the immediate question in any talk is its purpose and not its details: “when a story is being told, what is at stake is not “a performance of truth” but rather “a truthful performance”. An emotional charge in the present is what connects persons and the “reality” of a story (Ferrari 2010: 182). Similarly, within deals-as-events, what matters is involvement of persons, pragmatic effects of statements and not absolute price: in other words, what works at that particular moment. Price or the “interest” is not inherent in a thing sold or an amount lent and is not determined by a price somewhere

else, although this can be used in argumentation. References to the price on the street are devices, not matters of fact, and dealing men expect exaggerations. Claiming a higher price is advantageous when a thing was bought from a shop in bigger towns, where negotiation is limited, because it increases one's value in eyes of others to whom he might sell it later. On the other hand, a man can claim that he bought it more cheaply if negotiation was involved, which shows his skills.

Each deal is thus framed as a single event between two autonomous men where equivalences have to be negotiated anew bringing together various scales of valuation. For the same reason, during the swapping of watches above, nobody expects Faustão to say anything when Pancho asks for confirmation that he sold Pancho the watch for R\$150 the previous day and Faustão remains silent. Similarly, Paulo criticises Pancho only after the swap. The trick is to remain alert to the world, to have an overview of others' transactions (or at least give an impression of having one) and to be able to compare instantly. As Okely remarks "[I]f a Gypsy makes a poor deal with another, he cannot cry shame; it is a shame on him" (1983: 197).

All sales are either credit sales, i.e. deferred exchanges with (part of) money to be paid at a future date, or direct monetary loans. As the reframing of each exchange as the singular event without connection to other transactions already suggests, the final purpose is not acquiring material objects, but opening space for further recombination through movement in time and space. Men see their future unfold in transaction-events while they are imagining new possibilities opening: they imagine reselling the thing later elsewhere, to a different person or at least in a different deal; they imagine the money that they will obtain on a stipulated date and how they will lend it somebody else. The creation of time

(space) lag is the mechanism, but at the same time possibilities can shrink during the negotiation if one is not careful. Babaloo learns this too late. But even for Pancho, there is a possibility that Babaloo will not pay him in four months and that Laécio will not pay him in two. In other words, trust in people's future behaviour is involved.

Evaluating People

Scaling people depends on people's acts and how through these they relate to others. In the previous chapter I described four different dimensions used for evaluating men – “making the future”, valour, wealth and strength. Crucially, when Calon men were talking about loans to *brasileiros* they usually talked about ‘the *jurón* over there on the street’ to refer to a person who had borrowed something. In contrast, whenever they were discussing transactions among other Calon, they were very specific and mentioned names, utterances, dates and sums. Awareness of these two sets constitute the knowledge about money that men “have on the street” and I argued in Chapter 5 that this money allows the evaluation of relationships between people by creating a way to register displacement: a man with much money on the street can afford to help others, to finance large dowry and generally to provide for his family.

Consider Beiju (55). He has an air of Clint Eastwood in older Westerns – tall, thin and taciturn, with chiselled features. The funniest thing he ever said was teasing my partner Adriana by saying that there were piranhas in the São Francisco river in the backlands, where we were going to go swimming. One evening, shortly after he was released after being arrested for illegal possession of fire arms, he

was telling several men that he used to have R\$15.000 on the street prior to the arrest, but he spent R\$10.000 on bail. From the rest, Beiju explained, “2.000 is not mine, it is Hugo’s”.

Consequently, everybody present could visualise the sum on the street shrinking and therefore see Beiju’s options becoming limited. Everybody had an idea of what they would do with the money and also realised that Beiju was “dead”. Moreover, although I was not sure whether this was a “true” sum, I am certain that shortly after this conversation, Calon across the region would have heard about this sum or some version of it.

But nobody doubted Beiju’s *vergonha*, honour and reputation, or that he would actually pay Hugo. Among the Calon, this kind of reputation is sometimes referred to as *crédito*, credit, or *nome*, name; as in the expressions “he does not have a *crédito* even for 10 cents here anymore” or “your *nome* is dirty here”. Men are also recognised as honest (*direto*) or complicated (*atrapalhado*). An honest man pays on time and does not try to manoeuvre out of paying. There is no transfer of collateral among Calon. Although a *direto* man does not have an unlimited tap, transactions are not be stabilised by any other means than his word, the strength of which depends on reputation.

On the other hand, people refused to lend to somebody who they considered *atrapalhado*, pretending they did not have any money or they used promissory notes (*notas promissórias*) with such individuals. These were also used for sums to known *Ciganos (conhecidos)* who did not live in one’s settlement, and were neither a *parentes* (relatives), nor *colegas* (one’s peers from the region). In other words, as trust decreases,

notas are used. This is a description an excerpt from my field notes describing how Eduardo used a *nota promissória* when he lent R\$500 to Dirceu:

Although he used the same pre-printed yellow slip, unlike shopkeepers Eduardo did not write down official information such as Dirceu's name on the ID card, his address or CPF number. Neither did Dirceu sign the slip. They usually don't. The *nota* fixes the date, the sum and the name but it does not serve as an official judicial proof. Money was on "20 percent", which meant that Dirceu was to return 700 in one month. He did not negotiate, although it was quite high. It was due on 15 March but Dirceu asked to pay on the twentieth, because this is when he was to receive money from somewhere else. Eduardo rewrote the date.

Although he lives in neighbouring Bomfim, his father often plays cards with Eduardo and his brother is considered *direto* by Eduardo and his family, Dirceu cannot be trusted. They agree on "20 percent in thirty days", the interest that is technically 40 percent – Dirceu is about to go gambling. Notice also the margin of five days – men were never satisfied with deals if there was not something extra added, the fact that highlighted the negotiation involved.

Every man is responsible for "making the future" and there is not an obligation to lend to anybody in particular; although avoiding lending to relatives might prove difficult. In such cases, most often people claim that they are *puro*, without money. Sometimes at least some people know that it is not the case, but they do not push the topic. Knowledge whether a person is *atrapalhado* or *direto*, or even *sem futuro* (without

future) or *morto* (dead) is established through constant discussion about the deals and behaviour of others. Men ask each other about other men, especially once they move to a new settlement. It helps people orient themselves in changing circumstances, since “culture of credit is about circulation of information” (Muldrew 1998: 2). Calons see evaluation as recursive: they speculate, that a man’s debt in cards acquired last week, can mean that he will probably not be able to pay them in future and they should therefore refuse to lend him money. A man will only reluctantly lend money or strike a deal with a man who avoided paying properly and will make others aware of the fact. Being owed money by a rich man increases one’s liquidity; although a general principle of enchainment through proliferation of credit among Calons, such promise of a future payment by a man with wealth or good reputation is more effective in serving as a sort of long-term bond against which smaller transactions can be made. In sum, existing and past financial relations are used to evaluate current deals (other relations). In this way people avoid missing their payment by a huge margin or being seen as doing it intentionally. This could complicate their possibility of borrowing in future since like in all regimes of rating and ranking such continuous recursive evaluation means that any failure takes ever increasing effort to overcome (Guyer 2010: 4).

Deals between Calons serve not only as a tool for making a profit, but also as a way to configure manhood. Sales, swaps and loans always result in deferred payments, which allow men to imagine and create new opportunities to make their “future”. Each deal is imagined as a singularised event where although following a fairly stabilised repertoire, diverse scales of valuation have to be brought together. Yet one of the most difficult tasks is to assess another man’s worth and to face one’s own evaluation by

others; both depend on knowledge gathered over time with the possibility to project accomplishments for the future. Thus, successful deals create moments within which one's attuning to his environment can be highlighted while simultaneously tying one's future performance to that of another.



Picture 7.1

A young couple with their children

7.2 A Dense World of Monetary Loans

Fridges

Each exchange between men is portrayed in as a singularised agonistic masculine contest.

But while they are treated as events, deals are not disconnected; I showed, for instance,

how a watch swap made other deals possible. But although households, *brasileiros* and other Calon are pushed into the background to highlight the skills of individual men, they are nonetheless present: Babaloo decides to sell the watch to a *jurin*; Paulo blames Pancho for being manipulative with his own nephew; Pancho declares that nobody knows about one another's suffering, i.e. how difficult it is to feed one's household. Any deal is therefore set within the context of other sorts of transactions.

To illustrate the various issues involved I will now turn to a series of transactions with fridges that occurred in Santaluz during my fieldwork. From a more macro perspective, fridges are a sign of the spread of consumer goods and accessibility of consumer credit in shops. This, as I have argued, is a part of the broader process of financialisation within which *Ciganos* emerged as one of several local credit institutions. Fridges are also a good example of household interests and gender relations. The first fridge is normally brought as a part of the dowry a wife brings to the union and its subsequent replacement is a visible sign of the man's capability to provide for the household. As I have shown in the context of masculine strength, the most successful men are from better-connected households, which have the best material equipment, including fridges. Among the Calon in Santaluz the fridge was the single most expensive item found in any tent, and there were still households that did not have one, or had to sell it because they needed money. Its quality demonstrated the wealth and capacities of the owner. In a limited manner the transactions around fridges also point to the power of imitation and how one deal can lead to another: selling and swapping fridges surfaced as a legitimate option to make a margin in the specific moment in Santaluz. It was replicated laterally, very intensively, until this trajectory for diverting and creating wealth was

exhausted. Lastly, fridges are bought on “on the street”, either in shops or from individual *brasileiros*, to whom they can be resold later.

This is therefore an example of what happens to money and goods taken from the *brasileiros* once they cross the divide. In the following episode the fridge is first bought by Paula’s mother and was a part of Paula’s dowry. Kiko sells it to Pinto who in an extraordinary feat manages to sell it to a *jurón* and to buy it the same day for less. A few days later, the fridge becomes the prize in a *rifa* among Calon and is won by a man in Bomfim.

2 February. Early in the morning I saw Pinto and three *juróns* carrying a fridge down the stairs from Kiko’s house on *Rua dos Ciganos* taking it to Pinto’s tent in camp “down there”. The fridge was 1,5 years old and had originally been part of Paula’s dowry.

3 February. Kiko, Paula and Viviane went to the Guaibim furniture store to buy a new fridge. They bought one for R\$1800; 24 monthly instalments will add up to R\$2100.

28 March. A group of men was sitting in the camp “down there” chatting. Adelino just sold his fridge to his cousin Pinto, who said it was better and newer than the one he had brought from Kiko. Later that day, Kiko walked into the camp and upon hearing that Pinto bought another fridge in less than two months, he asked Pinto until when Pinto owed him the money for his fridge.

“Until August,” answered Pinto.

Kiko became angry and claimed that it was due *São João* in late June:
“You should be a honest man (*homem direto*).”

Nobody said anything although Maluco suggested that they try to figure out when the payment was due. Meanwhile blind Paulo returned and he had barely sat down when Pinto asked him if he remembered when his money to Kiko was due. Paulo answered that until August.

“In my head it was until *São João*,” Kiko answered. “But it is my father’s debt now anyway and so I don’t care”.

29 March. A group of men were sitting in Kiko’s house when a *jurón* appeared. He was hysterical and sweaty, yelling something about a receipt (*nota fiscal*). When he calmed down, he explained that he had just bought a fridge from the *Cigano* standing next to him (Pinto), but that it did not freeze properly and since it was the fridge Pinto had bought from Kiko he had come to Kiko for the receipt. The *jurón* also mentioned that he was well connected and that he would have not done something so stupid, had Jacira, Pinto’s mother, not put a spell on him.

After chastising him for being *ignorante* and for coming in shouting, Kiko gave him the receipt for the fridge.

When the man left, we all laughed. “I never saw a *jurón* like this,” said one man, “he bought a bad fridge and blamed it on a spell (*feitiço*).”

The very same day Pinto bought the fridge back from the man for R\$200 cheaper; he now had two fridges in his tent and extra R\$200.

1 April. To replace his fridge, Adelino bought (on credit) a fridge from Valdeli, his fraternal uncle and Pinto's father. As a result, Valdeli and Jacira went without a fridge and were hoping to use one of Pinto's, but Pinto and his wife Sandra refused to sell one of their fridges more cheaply to his parents. Neither did Daiane, their older son's wife, want them to put food into her fridge.

"My daughters-in-law are good for nothing," yelled Jacira and reminded Pinto that it was her who arranged that deal with the *jurón* two days ago.

The shouting among the women continued, while Pinto kept repeating that the fridge was a *prejuízo* (a financial loss) and he could not give it to them.

"When Muda's retirement benefit comes, it will be all mine," shouted Jacira from her tent towards her daughters-in-law.

People observing the exchange slowly picked up their chairs and went back to their tents. Tiago came and sat down next to me. "I thought that he was a man (*homem*), but he is just a slut (*puta*)," he shouted so Pinto would hear him. Pinto was the slut, he explained, because he did not want to sell his fridge to his own mother.

A few days later Tiago had the idea to organize a *rifa*, a raffle, for Pinto-Kiko's fridge. It ran on Saturday three weeks later. Meanwhile, one hundred two-digit numbers were sold between the Calons in the area. The person who got the last two digits drawn that day in the Federal Lottery won.

In other words, 15 months after Paula's mother had bought the fridge on instalments in a shop in Palotina to marry her daughter to Kiko in Santaluz, it ended up

with a Calon in Bomfim who had won the *rifa*. We can see the opening of various sorts of transactions as a result: Since Pinto's debt to Kiko was in half a year it opened a space for gain for him. By selling and re-buying it from the *jurón*, he made R\$200 and later made R\$700 on the *rifa*. But he also ended up with a debt to Eduardo in August and to Adelino during *São João*, so the final profit depended on what he did in the meantime. Of course, there is no "final" profit since meanwhile Pinto entered into more exchanges. We can also see that one's acts are a foundation for evaluation of people and have recursive impact on their future possibilities. In addition, although it is the responsibility of each man to remember the dates of his transactions, memory also works collectively – deals and dates are discussed by others, who, like Paulo above, can be called on as witnesses.

Types Of Exchanges

The last transaction in this "fridge" series involved Faustão, Pinto's brother, who sold his fridge to Índio, who was married to Faustão's mother's sister:

20 April. After ten days of playing cards, Faustão owed R\$14.000 to several Calon in neighbouring settlements. His only option was to renegotiate his other agreements.

Índio had been looking for a fridge for some time. The poorest man in the camp, his tent was the only one still lacking a fridge. A fridge he had found "on the street" was not good, however: "A *jurón* in São Gabriel wanted to sell me a painted one [i.e. old and repainted] for 500." Faustão offered a better one. They

reached the deal, Índio told me, because “I have a different deal with him. He owes me 5000 for four years.”

What he meant, was that Faustão had owed him R\$3000 until *São João* of the current year, but had asked Índio to give him four more years for extra R\$2000. The deal also involved Faustão giving Índio the fridge and a watch, while in two months, on the 20th of June 2009, Índio would give Faustão R\$400. Índio would be able to give it to him, because Djalma would pay him on *São João* in June.

Only Romão, Índio’s son, was not excited about the whole deal. The R\$3000 that Faustão had owed was in reality his money. It was a part of the dowry of his mother, Iracema, which his father was reinvesting. Índio, for his part, reasoned that in four years Romão was going to be 18 and “he is going to have his own money.”

These were not the only deals that took place that day. Just before noon a group of men from neighbouring settlements came to play cards. They were hoping to play in the house of Eduardo and waited for about 30 minutes in the camp in Santaluz talking in front of Djalma’s tent. They were busy discussing debts, and, visibly geared up to see what “the future” would bring, they were already busy negotiating:

Índio sold the watch that he had just bought from Faustão to a man from Volta Redonda for R\$70 – R\$50 today and R\$20 next week. “I need to eat something, we are without money (*a gente tá pura*),” Índio explained.

Giovanni who lived in Boa Vista was trying to sell or swap his mobile phone. There was a general agreement that the phone was not good.

Sim from Bomfim bought a mobile phone from Maurício from Volta Redonda for R\$290 for two months.

Adelino was looking at yet another watch in his hand, which he then bought.

“Bought it, didn’t you?” somebody asked.

Adelino confirmed.

“Off whose hand (*na mão de quem*)?”

Adelino murmured a name.

“*Fiado* [open ended credit purchase]?”

“No. Until the 30th; for two months for 40”.

Fourteen-year old Romão corrected him that he actually had bought it for R\$80, but somebody retorted that Adelino could say any sum he wanted to.

Because Eduardo continued sleeping, eventually the men left to play elsewhere. I left the camp with Wanderlei and Romero, who was complaining that Tiago, his cousin, had been waiting in front of his house since the early morning: “He always comes to borrow money to play. Once from me and once from my father.”

The examples above are restricted to the exchanges that I witnessed at that time in Santaluz. Somebody surely had to borrow money during the game in Bomfim later. However, the transactions bring out a variety of reasons that exist for buying and selling

on a deferred payment or for borrowing money. Let's look at the main protagonists: Índio extends the loan to Faustão of the money he is lending in the name of his son; he buys a fridge to improve his family's situation. Because he has no money to buy food for his family He also sells a watch that he just got from Faustão on part deferred payment to Maurício from the neighbouring settlement with whom he has no kin ties; this same transaction, when viewed from the point of view of Maurício, was a great deal, a *rolo*, an opportunity seized.

Faustão who acquired a large gambling debt within a very short period, has to sell a part of his wife's dowry, the fridge. In fact, it was my impression that Faustão was poor and R\$14,000 he owed in cards was not something he could earn easily. But when later I asked one man why others agreed to lend him the money to gamble, I was told that Faustão was a *ganhador* (one who knows how to bring money) and could pay off his debts. A few days later, though, the same man commented in front of others that Faustão, who went partying with some men from a neighbouring town, "does not bring bread to his table and left his wife, Daiane at home".

In other words, there is a variety of reasons why people agree to pay each other in future. Schematically deferred payments can be divided according to their main motivation into: subsistence loans/deferred exchanges of objects, gambling loans, deals, support, and event loans¹¹¹. These five categories differ in reasons given, sums involved, typical due dates, and justifications.

¹¹¹ Medieval thinkers divided usury according to similar criteria. For example Bernandine of Sienna (1380-1444) who argued that usury was unnecessary and it hurts the whole community divided borrowers into five categories: 1) needy poor 2) gamblers 3) tradesmen and merchants 4) usurers 5) people in emergency (Noonen 1957).

Subsistence Loans. Often Calon in Santaluz lacked money for daily expenses. Even for Djalma, the strong-man, days with available cash alternated with days without, when he was *puro* (cf. Seabra Lopes 2008: 262). Men lost money at cards, were unsuccessful in collecting from their debtors “on the street” or lent out all their money. Not all could buy on *fiado* from local shopkeepers. In poorer households, wives actually put food on the table by reading palms as their men tried to tie their money in constant loans “on the street”, but fortunetelling was done mostly on Saturdays, on market days. The subsistence debts were created among people in one settlement. Men would normally either try to sell something to another or borrow small cash for “bread and butter” or “coffee and bread”, a basic meal eaten for dinner. Deferred payments were for one month and normally ranged from “5 for 10” to “100 for 150”.

Rolos. Most financial obligations result from exchanges of objects against deferred payments or monetary loans. These were known as *rolos*, but also *barganhas* or *negócios*; I translate them as deals. “Deals” were done with men from an individual’s home range, some of whom met on daily basis but some only rarely. They served to prove one’s skills, capacities to find opportunities, to orient oneself and to make a margin, but also as a promise to have a relationship in the future. These were the most public of all deals and allowed both parties to present themselves as equals and to establish their reputation. But the ideal of equality was not the result of a discursive presentation of being “brothers” or “orphans” (Stewart 1999: 27-44), but of recognising each others’ autonomy linked with a strong sense of honour.

There was a sense of excitement in *rolos* and as I have already mentioned above, some happened literally just as if to see what would happen through creating a

movement. To some extent, *rolos* follow the “logic of a swap” (Stewart 1987: 224) and they occurred when everything else seemed stop – two men would decide to swap (*trocar, berganhar*) objects – watches, phones, DVD players – with a deferred sum added by one party, or to swap money now for a higher sum in a few months. The deferred payments that resulted from *rolos* varied significantly, which was part of their appeal – from R\$80 in two months for a watch, loans of R\$1000 for R\$1300 in one month, to R\$100.000 for a SUV in five years.

Gambling Loans. Usually during a game somebody ran out of money and borrowed more in order to continue. Some men often sat around players, hoping that players would borrow from them. These gambling loans had the highest interest rates – 100 percent in a few months or, as in case of Dirceu in the example above standard “20 percent” turned out to be 20 percent out of 1000 on the principal of 500 (i.e. 700 in total).

Support. Calon told me that in the past monetary loans were not interest bearing and they were given to help (*ajudar*) a relative. Whether this is factually true or not, it reflects the presentation of before (*antes*) as a difficult life (*vida sofrida*) but when people followed the ideal morality. Likewise, today there are deferred exchanges marked out as *ajuda* and which carry with them specific moral weight. This translates as “help”, but it is better to think of them as support; the amounts of money involved in them varied.

Generally, there are two types of *ajuda*. The first is a gift from parents to children and is continuous with efforts to stabilise new households¹¹². For instance, Beijú gave his retirement benefit card to “help” his son; Eduardo gave a card he had bought from another Calon to Kiko and on other occasions Eduardo gave a new telephone to his son-in-law or a motorcycle to his son. The second type of support loan is a deferred exchange,

¹¹² See Chapter 5

either a loan or buying/selling of an object for deferred payment. In the example mentioned earlier, Kiko tells his cousin that although his buying a watch might be presented as a *rolo*, he is only doing it to help his cousin in need. Importantly, these transactions might seem similar to *rolos* but conceptually they were distinguished.

Event loans, or emergency loans. These were generally the largest loans and for longer periods of time, normally of several years. They had the smallest monthly interest. They were related to re-establishing oneself, for instance after a disarray brought about by violence such as when Eduardo borrowed to put together enough money for costs of re-establishing himself after leaving Santaluz and having spent much money on getting Kiko out of prison. Men also borrowed in order to put together dowries for their daughters, since even richer men might have much money in circulation, but not enough cash readily available. Most of the time such event loans or sales came from relatives or *colegas* – peers of similar age, who grew up together and often socialised together, but were not siblings, and had crossing-cutting financial obligations. These loans could also come from people outside one's home-range; Eduardo borrowed from a man in the *sertão* 400 kilometres away. These loans are much riskier: As a consequence, only men with a reputation for being able to make large money had access to such loans; they also came from Calons who were strong enough to enforce their repayment.

Of course, these types of exchanges are simplified and reality is much messier. Going back to the exchange between Índio and Faustão, for instance, does Índio agree on a deal with Faustão because he wants a new fridge? Or because he sees that Faustão, who lives in the same settlement and whose mother is his wife's sister, is in trouble through gambling? Or because he also gains a watch which he plans to turn into food? Or does a

nice opportunity to make more money for his son's future present itself? Probably all of the above – seizing a chance, after all, is polyvalent.

Through establishing closeness and distance, through reconfiguring all parties involved and through aiding social reproduction, exchanges create a “gap” or “disturbance” (cf. Williams 2003) for Calonicity in the midst of *gaje* – moments where proper behaviour can be expressed either in acts of negotiation or acts of repayment or renegotiation. Through these exchanges people constantly define what it means to be Calon, while they also create spaces for Calonicity. In other words, through manipulation of time and enchainning people, deferred payments open tense moments in the present and future when individuals have to decide how to act towards another. This “gap” is both temporal and spatial and in my concluding section I discuss both aspects.

7.3 Morally Informed Gaps of Interaction

Everything is an Exchange

The uniqueness of Calon sociality lies in treating all debt-incurring transactions, including “help” and subsistence loans, as exchanges between equals – as events where scales of valuation have to be aligned anew and where male reputation is put on display. The Calon define loans, repayments, renegotiations as singularised *acts*, and guard against any implication that such an act could be a *promise* which would put people into different status positions (Graeber 2010) or against any suggestion that one cannot take care of himself and depends on the charity of others. It is as if they have taken a general indebtedness that has been the basis of Bahian social life – patronage, *fiado*, an

extroverted economy based on debt to financial centres, where friends used to lend to each other money without interest, but nevertheless included the rate of inflation – and made it explicitly the basis of their relations. At the same time, they insist that these are not debts at all.



Picture 7.2

Men talking during a wedding

Nevertheless, people differentiate between events that lead to deferred payments, even if transactions share the same formal characteristics – a watch for the same sum deferred can be bought in a *rolo*, but can also be a way to help (*ajudar*) a cousin. This distinction between exchanges, and therefore certain forms of relationship, is constitutive of “morally informed spaces of interaction” (McCallum 2003: 71). For instance, what I

called subsistence loans characterise one's settlement. Most of the people in the settlement were close relatives who got along with each other around a strong-man who was usually the father of several men in the settlement. These small loans could almost be seen as pooling among those who live together, where people would not let another to go hungry or to lose face. At the same time they had to be careful not to suggest dependence or abuse. *Rolos*, deals, on the other hand, are done with men from the same region, known *Ciganos* and relatives (*parente*). It is the prime site for building one's name for being able to "make the future", while highlighting equality between men. Sheer intensity of *rolos* serves to display (or perform) masculinity through which men create themselves as daring autonomous individuals, and also establish their "name" since all deals are immediately discussed by others.

Support loans, *ajuda*, are given with an explicit aim to help another to establish their household and unlike other deals, they also foster longer-term reciprocities. People who "help" each other are also the people who will stand up, or stood up, for one-another in violent events. The prime model here is the relationship between parents and children. Through "help" affines also show commitment to their relationship; and any refusal is fraught with tensions which do not exist in other type of exchanges. Framing transactions as *ajuda* serves to confirm relations established through marriages. Possibly because of such close watch over each other's behaviour these relations are volatile and sometimes turn into enmity: Manuel was killed by his sister's husband Mauro; Beijú and Camarão killed a man who came to marry their sister but a night before the wedding killed their father instead; Viviane's father was killed by her maternal uncle, and so on; in fact, most enemies, *inimigos*, are (former) in-laws. Next, there are no exchanges with enemies or

unknown *Ciganos*. Lastly, they also avoid borrowing from *juróns*, who are the ‘outside’ (Zatta and Piasere 1990: 163-172). As I will describe in the following chapter, economic transactions to them are presented as predatory and a question of one’s adroitness, where money should flow only one way.

However, different links created by various types of loans do not create separate spheres of circulation. They are individualized and follow one’s reputation, his kinship position and age, whereby, for instance, fathers and sons have different *colegas* with whom they play cards and they “help” different people, usually their own in-laws and children. Debts result from individual circumstances and objectify a man’s singularity – his inter-subjective relations with others and his success or failure as a Calon. After death, their debts are forgotten, places where they died abandoned and their individuality slowly subsumed into the anonymous *Ciganos* of “before”.

Between One’s *Rancho* And The Street

So far I have argued that individual exchanges serve as a place to configure manhood and that they define social space. At the heart of the system of exchanges lies gender difference, more specifically the relationship between a husband and wife (Chapter 5) and a forging of autonomous and bold masculinity capable of engaging with others (Chapter 6). This dynamics is given coherence through the idiom of food.

As could be expected from the performative nature of Caloninity, this dynamic becomes visible when a certain threshold is reached. The following example describes difficulties that arise when something goes wrong and people do not act as they are

expected to. In it, Sirley is complaining about Adair who has failed to pay on an agreed date:

Sirley was talking to a man who visited their camp in São Gabriel. He complained that Adair had bought a car from him on a deferred payment but has still not paid the money, which was due two months ago. This was creating all sorts of problems, since he had his own debts.

Sirley's wife, who was standing not far from where the men were seated and listening to the conversation, declared loudly as if to nobody in particular, but so that everybody could hear her, that Adair always paid everybody else, "except you" – meaning her husband. Adair "wants to steal" from them, she added, and wondered: "How can he do something like that since he has the means (*condições*)?" But then she slapped her own cheek and exclaimed: "But it is not for woman to chat with the men (*bater papo com os homens*)!" and walked away.

But Sirley was too proud to call or visit Adair and to discuss the money. In fact, a few weeks previously, Sirley's father had gone to Alto de Bela Vista where Adair lived to collect some money from *juróns*, but he did not stop and ask about his son's money, because he was ashamed, *com vergonha*.

After listening to their complaints, the visitor told Sirley that personally he would definitely call Adair. If it were a *jurón*, he continued, he might even forget about the money. But not with a *Cigano*. "Otherwise how could I eat at his house?" he asked rhetorically.

This conversation brings out several motifs of exchanges between Calon that I have discussed already in different ways: the deal is discussed publicly in front of others, which will have impact of Adair's reputation. It is Adair's responsibility to bring the money and because he is a rich man, his evasion can only be an intentional affront. Sirley and his father refuse to go asking about the money, as this might be a sign of distrust, declaration of dependence, or both. It would also be difficult to avoid a conflict if it arose; in fact, Sirley's wife is insinuating that he is not as respected by Adair as other men. It also shows that demands of masculinity "on the street" can be contrary to immediate household interests. But generally, women are expected to keep out of men's deals, although her intervention makes it clear that it is also her private concern. The visitor also points out to the distinction between exchanges to *juróns* and to *Ciganos* and as I will show in the next chapter, despite their best efforts men often have to give up on their loans to *juróns*.

But what struck me the most, is the man's reaction: that he would not be able to eat at Adair's place. Sometimes, I met *Ciganos* eating in restaurants and kiosks owned by *juróns* who owed them money after its due date, sometimes for free. Clearly, they were exploiting the logic of debts, which reordered relations into modality of hierarchy (Graeber 2010). However, for the Calon, random eating at another's place should follow a different morality – the man would not be able to eat at a place of somebody who had not behaved properly. Hidden within this is the ideology of Calon food, which establishes amicable relations, but is premised on the recognition of male autonomy.

In Chapter 5 I argued that after a marriage, when a new household is created, dowry creates a framework within which men are expected to "make the future" and to

intensify their exchanges with the world. The capacity to do this successfully – to risk his reputation among others and to provide for the household at the same time – is often described as “bringing food”; Zezinho, for instance, was described as a man who “always came from the street with a bag of meat”. Related to this, the idiom of eating is also used to describe predatory relationship, when somebody gains something at another’s expense. For instance, when Djalma and Eduardo were discussing prospective brides for their sons, they agreed that around here there weren’t any good ones around here and all of those that want to marry their sons only because they want to eat (*só querem comer*).

Lastly, just as among Gypsies described in other ethnographies there is an idiom of common eating, which serves as an ideological expression of correct sociability (see Stewart 1997; Sutherland 1986; Tauber 2006). Calon visiting or just passing through a different settlement are offered food to eat. Sometimes, travelling with them, I ate four times before noon. Each time, however, people serving the food stressed that “it is simple food”, that “the food is not good” or that “it is whatever we have at home”. All, including visitors, ate fast from whatever pot they could find as if in hurry. The messages sent were clear: sharing food does not denote an event of hosting by men more capable of providing for their family, but is a basic thing that the Calon as Calon do.

Once, for instance, Adriana and I were eating with Kiko and Paula in front of their tent in Muritiba when Paula noted that Renato must be hungry, because he was walking in and out of his tent. We all knew that he was without money and there was nothing to eat in his tent. Kiko called his uncle, who ate quickly and abruptly pushed his plate away making it appear that he only ate because they invited him to. For the same reasons men avoid household feasts given by other men. They do not allow another man

to host them, to show his power, money and make them feel inferior, or obliged to reciprocate. When Eduardo organised a Christmas day lunch, or a birthday party for his daughter, no older men from the camp “down there” came. Their wives, young men and children did, but older men did not. Similarly, his three sisters, a sister-in-law and their children came, but Beijú, Zezinho, Pancho, his brother-in-laws, and Renato, his brother, did not.

In other words, sharing food and eating at someone else’s place is premised on equality. The capacity to offer food is predicated on the existence of independent households that nevertheless depends on other households, and men capable of providing for their households. Accepting food from another constitutes recognition of commonality as Calon, but people avoid eating their neighbour’s food as it could suggest dependency and abuse. However, to be able to treat food this way requires that people fulfil their obligations, respect another and do not intentionally hurt each other’s claim to integrity. The ideology of sharing food is an acknowledgement of equality and amicable relations, but also of the capacity of another man to engage with the world; clearly one cannot eat at the house or tent of somebody who, through not paying back the loan, refuses to recognise his claim to masculinity.

More than three months after the agreed date Adair had still not paid the money for the car he had bought from Sirley. I happened to be in Alto de Bela Vista when his brother Nelson visited him. Since Nelson lives in the same settlement as Sirley and is married to Sirley’s cousin he felt obliged to tell his brother to finally pay the money.

Nelson told his brother that as he had been leaving, Sirley asked him to talk to his brother and to tell him: “Don’t put me together with them. I want to create my own future (*criar o meu futuro*).”

Adair countered that he would only pay Sirley once Sirley’s father Beijú and Sirley’s uncle Pancho returned money they owed to him; Sirley’s deceased uncle Zezinho also owed him. All of them used to live in Zezinho’s camp.

“But he has nothing to do with it. You cannot discount his debt from a debt of Pancho,” argued Nelson.

“What do you mean he doesn’t? He was there when I told him that I would pay him when others returned my money,” responded Adair adding that he could not pay if nobody paid him. On top of that, the car that Sirley sold to him was actually *pocado* (obtained through a financing fraud), so he had to sell it cheaper than he expected to.

“Do not put them together,” Nelson insisted, “*Fulano* [Zezinho] died. His father [Beiju] is close to dying. Pancho is dead. Pay the *ciganinho*. He has nothing to do with them.”

Behind any still life, including the incapability of a man to make further deals and make the future, lurks death: only Zezinho, was dead and Nelson’s use of a word *fulano*, meaning an indeterminate individual, has a double effect of showing respect towards the dead by not uttering his name and of pointing out that his debts were therefore non-existent. Pancho is not dead and Beijú is not close to dying, but they are unsuccessful in deals, have a negative balance and low credit. Pancho, in his late 30s, lost a lot of money

to bad deals and has two young daughters to marry for which he will have to borrow. Beijú, in his late 50s, has cared more for his violent reputation and respect, than money. At the same time, Adair's refusal to return the money, for which he did not have any good reason, threatened young Sirley's capability to make the money.

Living For The Present

Calon do not fall into debts simply because they have to borrow in situations of distress, because of kinship obligations or to impress others. Deferred payments include visions of what money (and things exchanged for money) can do, since, when used correctly, lent to a person who will behave as expected, they can result in more money. In addition, many transactions are not only simple deferrals of payment. Rather, a single act can multiply and recombine obligations.

Recall the fridge transaction between Índio and Faustão: to be able to meet his gambling obligations set at various dates, Faustão ignored his household claims; he gave the fridge and the watch to Índio right away who sold it immediately for a part deferred payment; he delayed his payment to Índio, which is actually Romão's future money; and in two months will receive R\$400 from Índio, who in turn is counting on Djalma paying him on São João. In other words debt-relations are criss-crossed with other deals accompanied by intensive discussions and rumour about them, while their existence serves as liquidity for making further deals. Even men, who could live from more profitable loans to *brasileiros* alone, continue engaging in such deals and avoid interrupting the flow or being seen as dead. The Calon create sociality through constant

making of loans and selling things on debt, which co-ordinately punctuates time with proliferating obligations.

This proliferation of such dates changes the quality of time. Constantly looking for possibilities for arbitrage and negotiation, a man recreates himself as a risk taking man of action and demonstrates the ease with which he can make money without *gaje* arduous work (cf. Stewart 1987;1997). Here taking risks successfully means being aware of one's present options – from prices on the street to the knowledge of deals that other people have – and demonstrating one's complete presence. By placing stress on the temporary nature of a lack of money, an experience of the changing fortunes of individuals, and the punctuating of temporality through heterogeneous deals-as-events, the narrative link between past and present exchanges is broken, bringing to the fore people's "acute alertness in the present moment" (Zaloom 2006: 130).

The punctuation of time through due dates opens space for further transgression and deals-as-events become active interventions in unfolding of future. Just as with changing the place of a settlement, transactions provide a change of position and possibilities. Additionally, deferred payments tie up the performances of others in time; through rapid debt-creating deals people re-tie, or enchain, each other's behaviour. Wealth is constantly entangled in future dated obligations and each *act of* – of negotiation and of repayment – is interpreted as behaving as a *Cigano*. Knowledge of such behaviour is extended through discussions, constantly reinterpreted by others and becomes recursive. At the same time, the existence of debts becomes a way of reinforcing and marking people's continued performance as Calon moral persons. Borrowing, lending

and paying creates one's reputation/credit as an objectification of such enchainment – of relations to other Calon – and of successful performance of Gypsiness.

Men constantly think of what they would do with money received from others; they plan to lend large lumps to rich Calon; they complain when somebody brings money before an agreed date and tries to renegotiate the sum. But beyond individual plans, these exchanges also secure people's behaviour in an unstable environment. It is not that deferred payments can prevent violent breakdowns, for instance: there is no direct continuity between exchange and violence, except in cases of unreturned dowry. Rather, it creates constant expectations from others and changing imagination of opportunities. By transposing performances onto future dates they extend Gypsiness in time and space – it serves as a way to demonstrate commitment to a shared framework for evaluating behaviour. Violence, among affinal relatives, for instance, can occur when people are seen as failing to act properly, failing to “help”.

Calon preserve their sense of a separate ethical framework guarding their economic transactions without feeling that asynchrony and rupture caused by dates-as-events, by precisely defined dates of repayment, is a failure or a problem. In fact it is precisely this proliferation of dates-as-events, which refocuses on individual exchanges, that is important. Here, “living-for-the moment” is not an ideological abstraction separate from the transcendent durational time (e.g. Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1998), and in this way automatically opposed to implications of debt which rely on such temporality. Rather, I have tried to show that deferred payments, whether resulting from loans or

exchanges of material objects, by their focus on performance and negotiation – on *acts of* -- serve as “the technology of tempogany”¹¹³, a way to extend a present moment.

In this manner, the asynchrony brought about by awareness of the sheer multiplicity of deals between specific named individuals which are impossible to follow but which are constantly talked about, which do not add up, where the interest is not a rate and does not depend on the passage of time, where the living “make the future” separated from the dead whose debts are forgotten and names silenced, creates the feeling of living in a constant event-full present with the others who try to live as Calon. Because there are more deferred payments than actual money and debts are cancelled after death, a balance is never reached and it does not make up a totality; there is no equivalence. Deferred payments are directionless, criss-crossing any settlements of people recognizing each other as sharing Calon morality, in this way extending Gypsiness in time and space through retracing “gaps” within which fragile Gypsiness can constantly recreated.

Conclusion

Analysing the temporality of the present late-capitalist era Jane Guyer sees the evacuation of the middle run as related to the filling of the near-future with the dated time. This is especially evident in dynamics of debt management (Guyer 2006: 409-421). According to this narrative punctuated temporality threatens any middle-term processes through constant rupture while breaking down coherent (social) wholes. In this chapter I have argued that the Calon preserve their sense of their separateness and a separate economic

¹¹³ The term suggested to me by Martin Holbraad.

morality without feeling that asynchrony and rupture that result from these dates-as-events (Guyer 2006: 416) and associated with work of indebtedness (Han 2004: 169-187) represents a failure or a problem.

They do this by denying that deferred payments create debts. Their focus is on trying to behave as Calon which allows the management of deferred payments to be embraced as arenas where Gypsiness is foregrounded. They are Calon because they try to behave as such and are recognised by others for it: each debt-managing event becomes a sign of a man's acute alertness to his surrounding, and a space to show capability to "make the future". Men are evaluated according to their actions and while they create their own personal value, they also make money.

In the following chapter I will look into how these dynamics connects to arbitrages with *brasileiros*, but it is already possible to indicate a few differences: Unlike in deals with *brasileiros*, even while lending large sums, there is no transfer of collateral among Calon. Calon are expected to return money without much ceremony, although they let everybody know that they came back to pay their debt. In contrast, when it comes to debts to *brasileiros* where one goes immediately in the morning to collect money, before a debtor could leave for work, seen as being too eager is almost a loss of face, sign of mistrust and possibly dependence. When a *jurón* does not pay on time, a Calon asks him to pay a monthly interest and the following month the debtor is expected pay off the principal plus another monthly interest. Among the Calon interest does not normally add up and debtors pay back the same sum later. Creditors are also expected to be more lenient and there is the option of renegotiating a debt, setting a new event; after all, Calon maintain the impression that *rolos* among them are fun and advantageous for both parties.

Calon try to turn *juróns* into long-term clients, by convincing them to keep the money borrowed and to pay only the interest. This option is not viable with other Calon – this would be living on their money. In summary, while with the Calon, the expectation of behaving as a Calon is manifested in *acts of* repayment, renegotiation and enchainment, with the *brasileiros* it is primarily a contract, *a promise to repay*.

VIII. LENDING TO A *JURÓN*: HOW CALON MANAGE LOANS TO NON-GYPSIES

Introduction

“The *Ciganos* do not work, but strike deals”¹¹⁴, Renato retorted. It was only my second week in Santaluz, and I had just asked Renato whether he had a lot of “work” (*trabalho*) that day. He was at least partly boasting in front of a *gringo*; in fact, during that period, people often answered my questions objectifying their practices, telling me about their “tradition” (*tradição*). But even later, I heard both the Gypsies and non-Gypsies make this distinction between work, *trabalho*, and deals from which *Ciganos* live -- *negócios*, *berganhas*, or *rolos*.

There were slight differences, however, between what *brasileiros* and Calon meant when they said that “Gypsies do not work”: the non-Gypsies normally went on to explain *Cigano* lack of scruples when trading on the marketplace. On the other hand, when the Calon talked about their deals, they presented themselves as living, or rather “eating”, easily thanks to the money made “on the street” (*na rua*). In doing so they put forward the image of Calon men attuned to their surrounding. Men constantly discussed and commented on each other’s deals, and knowledge, rumours and assessment of the amounts of money people had “on the street” and what they did with it, also created a context to evaluate each other’s behaviour. So there are three levels to Renato’s response, all of which fit with observations made by other ethnographies of Gypsies (e.g. Okely

¹¹⁴ “*Os Ciganos não trabalham, mas fazem negócios.*”

1983;Piasere 1985;Stewart 1997). It establishes the distinction between *Ciganos* and *brasileiros* and describes the ideal way of making money. But implicit within it is a commentary on the way this type of transaction relates to the exchanges which build Calon sociality.

Reversals and subversions of the dominant ideology of work and labour, and preference for autonomy to wage employment, is one way Gypsies remain distinct and independent from non-Gypsies (see also Zatta and Piasere 1990: 163-172). Writing about English Travellers, Okely argued that “the Gypsies’ history is also the history of their refusal to be proletarianised”, i.e. to rely on wage-labour for stable income (1983: 43). The preference for self-employment becomes a crucial boundary between *gorgios* (the non-Gypsies) and the Travellers, although individual economic activities may differ at the level of exoticising or concealment of ethnic identity (Okely 1979: 17-34).

In the case of the Hungarian Rom described by Stewart, their ideas about “work” were shaped by their interaction with peasants. Although at the time of his research they were fully employed in the factories of socialist Hungary, in their social philosophy they highlighted *romani butji*, Gypsy work. The concept, which covered a range of practices from scavenging to horse-trading, celebrated Gypsy cunning, intelligence and a capability of gaining wealth for nothing (Stewart 1997: 17-26). Although the discourse concealed the Rom economic marginalisation, the importance of women’s work and of the factory work itself, it allowed them to create an image of an abundant world where the relation with *gaže* (the non-Gypsies) was redefined as exploitative, in which the Rom gained something for nothing. Stewart also suggests that money which is not gained in this way,

but in factories, has to be ‘ritually cleansed’, especially through gambling (Stewart 1994: 45-62).

Writing about the Slovensko Roma in Italy, Piasere agrees that becoming employed would threaten them with absorption into *gaĝe* (the non-Gypsies), but suggests that we look at the conjunction of exchange practices rather than ideology only (Piasere 1985).¹¹⁵ He argues that the cultural survival of the Roma in Italy is premised on endogamy and endo-cuisine, i.e. exchange of women and food among the Roma, and on what he calls “exo-ergie”, exchange of services with the *gaĝe*. Put simply, food and money can only be obtained from exchanges from *gaĝe*. Because the Roma live in the midst of the *gaĝe* and depend on them, they have to enter into exchange relationships with them. These range from predatory ones, where Roma give nothing for *gaĝe* goods, to those viewed positively by *gaĝe*, i.e. exchanging goods, services or labour for other goods. The latter comes to constitute what Piasere calls “*capital gaĝicǎno*”, i.e. good relations with influential *gaĝe*, which are essential for the Roma to live in *gaĝe* territory (Piasere 1985: 143-146). This “capital” can be inherited, passed on, and also strengthened through institutions such as god-parenthood. In this way *gaĝes* become a part of the Roma world. They are the source of income while through exchange relationships with them space for the Roma reproduction is created.

Renato’s comment above also makes a distinction with *brasileiros* and foregrounds the ideal relationship, where through one’s skills money flows one way. Moneylending to *brasileiros* is potentially the most ideal form of interacting economically with them, because nothing is really given by the Gypsies and money grows directly, even without intermediary objects such as animals (Stewart 1987: 284).

¹¹⁵ I would like to thank Catalina Tesar for her help with French.

But beyond ideology, moneylending, the most common content of *negócios*, should be seen in terms of its pragmatic effects. Here the productive capacities of credit and debt organise people in time and space (Peebles 2010: 225-240).

In previous chapters, I showed how ways of making money “on the street” served to forge Calon men, how household relations related to the money “on the street” and how through credit and debt among the Calon, people created morally informed spaces of interaction. This is what I had in mind when I talked about money as a double medium – as a medium of exchange as well as an environment for other actions. I do not wish to downplay the ideological contrast between *trabalho* and *negócio*: money “on the street” can serve as a medium-as-environment only because it is portrayed as distinct from money from the *gaje* arduous work or formal employment. But I want to stress that moneylending is not only an exploitation of opportunities, but also serves as a medium-as-means through which the Calon create their world, a niche in which they can remain Calon. Moneylending is not only a way to make a living, but also a way of life.

Turning outwards as it were, in this chapter I describe this niche from the point of view of credit providers; what Calon do and what they mean when they “make the future” (*fazer futuro*) “on the street” (*na rua*). To put it simply, rather than exploring *Ciganos* as moneylenders, as one credit institution among many, this chapter looks at how the Calon view their clients; how they decide who to lend to; how money lending is organised in terms of collateral, enforcement and dates of repayment; what is the conceptual apparatus behind it; and how all of this relates to Calon sociality. The chapter thus builds on observations made in the preceding chapters. The first section explores who the *Ciganos*’ clients are and how they view them. In the second section I turn to

analysing loans themselves and in the third I relate these to questions of Calon spatiality, households and kinship.

8.1 “*Ciganos Have Many People In Hand*”

Calon Clientele

It was Tuesday afternoon, and Viviane, Romero, Paula holding her baby, Adriana and I were sitting in front of Eduardo’s house observing the street, chatting and drinking coffee. Since the morning, Eduardo had been playing cards in Bomfim about 15 kilometres away; Viviane was becoming nervous and called him several times to tell him not to come home late. Kiko, Paula’s husband, had gone at around noon to the neighbouring town of Parnamirim, to collect money. A few people stopped by or called asking about Eduardo.

At about 4pm, Diego, a non-Gypsy middleman of this family, and Kiko arrived in a white Chevrolet with a non-Gypsy man in the back seat. The car had originally belonged to the vice-mayor of Muritiba who had given it to Eduardo the previous year as collateral for a loan. The car had changed hands several times -- mostly as temporary collateral (*garantia*) since it was still being paid off; every now and then it appeared in Eduardo’s garage. This was the second time that Diego had this car.

As they got out of the car, Kiko handed a small piece of yellow paper to Diego: “Here you are, 3,5 litres of gasoline. It is from a man who owes me. You can fill the tank anywhere.”

Diego became upset that it was not enough for his driving Kiko around Parnamirim and, besides, the car ran on ethanol.

“You exchange it for alcohol,” said Kiko. “It is three litres... how much is the gasoline... 3, 24 ... it is almost 15,” he said, clearly exaggerating.

Diego told him to stop fooling around. “Romero gave me 40 last month.”

“And I paid 50,” countered Kiko.

“But I am a family man,” pleaded Diego.

“Me too,” answered Kiko.

“But you only have one small son,” said Diego but Kiko only turned around, handed the yellow slip to Paula and went to a bar to play dominos.

Meanwhile, Viviane had entered the house. The man, around 45 years old, who had not been greeted by anybody and was still standing behind the car, started telling Diego that he owed Viviane R\$150 until the 4th, the day after tomorrow.

When Viviane came out again Diego asked her: “How much will you give him for three monthly salaries? ... It is 420.”

“443” corrected the man.

While Viviane was considering it, Diego asked her where Eduardo was.

“He went out,” answered Viviane.

Diego murmured that he would wait for him, because he needed to talk to him.

“He will not come any time soon. You know how he is when he gets the money,” said Viviane and turning to the man she added, “I will give you 900 for three months. But the cheque [with his salary] is mine, understood?”

Without a word Viviane, Diego and Romero entered the house. Standing there, the man started explaining to Paula, Adriana and me: “I would not borrow money, but the women took me to court.” He had three daughters with three women with whom he did not live anymore. The oldest daughter was already an adult, but because he was late in paying child support for the other two, the court had ordered him to pay R\$250 and R\$ 350.

Viviane came out again, followed by Diego and Romero : “But you still owe me 50 on 100.”

“That’s right. I was telling Diego that I owed you money,” said the man, “but my business is an honest one.”

Viviane made the man reiterate that the R\$150, which was due the day after tomorrow was unrelated to the current loan. “I will give you 600 for two months. And tomorrow you will come to pick 300 more for three months”.

It took a while for the man to absorb what she was saying. Clearly, Viviane did not have all the money in the house and Eduardo was out playing cards. Diego asked the man if he wanted to wait for Eduardo. Viviane countered that she did not know when Eduardo would return, but that tomorrow Diego could come and pick up the remaining R\$300 for three months.

“This 600 is for two months,” she reiterated. There was a moment of silence.

“Mom, don’t you want to give him the money right away?” Romero offered to lend her his money.

“Keep your money to yourself,” answered Viviane.

The man decided to leave with Diego without borrowing, saying that Diego would come back tomorrow.

The excerpt covers most of the topics that I will discuss in this chapter: organisation of moneylending within a family, management of debts and ways of calculating interest. But what interests me in this section is what it reveals about the kinds of clients to whom Calons lend money and how these clients view *Ciganos*.

Seen from the Calon point of view, the client who Diego brings from Parnamirim is a good client— their middleman knows the man as they live in the same town; the man already has debt with the family; he has a stable income. He is forced to borrow, because he has to pay child support. If he does not pay, he runs the risk that the company he works for will be ordered by the court to deduct the money from his salary directly and he would not be able to do anything until his daughters grow up – at least that is what the man thought. And like most working-class Bahians living in the interior, who puzzle each week over how to make ends meet, and even to make a profit, the man felt it was better for him to be in control of his money.¹¹⁶ Because Viviane is aware of this preference, she stresses several times, that the man’s monthly cheque “is hers”; she does not want him to

¹¹⁶ “It is better to have money in the pocket” many commented. One small-scale non-Gypsy *agiota*, hung around each Saturday by the gates of one company since workers who had just finished their work and received their weekly cheques with their salaries, were often eager to exchange those for cash directly for a 10 percent commission, rather than wait until Monday and go to the bank.

bring the cash, which would always create the possibility for him to try to renegotiate and rearrange the deal.

The man represents one type of client, whom Kiko once described as “*apressados*” (literally, “in a hurry”). Some of the urban poor who cannot rely on farm produce – like Joana mentioned in Chapter 3 – are sometimes forced to exchange their *bolsa família* cards for cash with moneylenders, *agiotas*. Other people borrow to pay for emergencies: health-care costs, funerals and so on. These are good clients, because they do not have many options and generally accept the conditions, but the Calon I knew did not like these deals very much. These clients borrowed relatively small sums and the Calon pitied them – despite their pronouncements, if clients could not meet their obligations, Calon often reluctantly agreed to renegotiate the debt or even lower the interest.

Besides such existential pressures, there were other reasons for borrowing from *Ciganos*. A decision could result from investment planning and navigating between financial institutions. There were entrepreneurs, peasants or caretakers of *fazendeiros*, who had cheques, animals or goods to use as collateral. Calon often called such transactions *rolos*, deals, rather than *empréstimos*, loans. They generally involved larger sums, longer periods of time and even the transfer of animals or land. Nonetheless, most clients in Santaluz came from the aspiring middle-classes, mostly teachers and other state employees, and retired people living on a contributory pension.¹¹⁷

The makeup of the clients shows some continuity with their traditional trading partners (peasants, farmers) but also illustrates that the rise of the *Cigano* moneylending niche has to be understood within the context of the financialisation of daily life in the

¹¹⁷ See the Introduction, Chapters 2 and 3.

Bahian interior. Here the expansion of official financial services combines with other developments such as currency stabilisation, increased minimum wage, welfare transfers, demand for consumer goods, and the increased demand for cash. Seen from this point of view, *Ciganos* are one of many credit institutions and fit alongside a range of institutions -- some of them traditional, others novel or directly encouraged by the state. Depending on their position, their interests and their needs, individuals navigate and manipulate various institutions.

Another consequence of this monetisation is the changing nature of social relations, especially of political patronage. Recall that in the story above, Diego arrives in a car that Eduardo received two years before from the vice-mayor of the town of Muritiba as a payment on a loan he took out to finance his campaign. Kiko, who returns with Diego spends several days going to Parnamirim because his biggest debtor there, who owes him R\$2000 in interest alone, avoids paying him. The problem was resolved only after the mayor of the town personally intervened and guaranteed that the debtor would repay the debt; otherwise Kiko would take his mules. Many of Kiko's and Eduardo's clients in Parnamirim were given jobs in the town hall after the election, which in turn made them more trustworthy as borrowers. On another occasion, a bank manager living in Santaluz explained to me that in Volta Redonda, "*Ciganos* were in the town hall every day". Although an exaggeration, it was true that the local Calon strongman, Barão, had a good position there, because the mayor had borrowed from him to pay the salaries.

Most rich Calon lend money to local politicians. This tendency has intensified, because due to the impact of monetisation, the candidates have to resort to short-term "clientelism" – buying votes with cash just before elections – and unlike in the past

cannot rely on a long-term relationship of patronage presented in the language of kinship (Ansell 2010: 283-294). And just like everybody else, politicians often resolved their varied financial obligations and responsibilities – the salaries of their clients, development work, their personal debts and instalment plans – through manoeuvring various sources of income – e.g. federal transfers (*verba*) and loans from *agiotas*.

What Clients Think About *Ciganos*

In the elections during my fieldwork, there were three serious contenders for the mayoral office in Santaluz. Two of them came from established families that had alternated in the mayoral office for decades. For the first time, however, there was a serious candidate nominated by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Worker's Party, PT) benefiting from the popularity of President Lula. One day during the campaign, I was sitting with Kiko in a bar near *Rua dos Ciganos* playing dominoes, when a man from the neighbourhood came to our table. A PT activist himself, he accused *Ciganos* of wanting the candidates from the two families to win, because it was better for their moneylending business. But he, the man asserted, would vote for the PT candidate because he wanted “progress”.

The biggest tensions were between the factions of the two main contenders; many people were hoping to find or keep their jobs at the town hall. One evening, after the rallies finished and people converged into the town centre, a large fight broke out between the two factions. Watching the commotion with me and Maluco, our common non-Gypsy friend said accusingly to Maluco that the “confusion was entirely *your* fault”. When Maluco asked him what he meant, the friend – a closeted supporter of PT –

explained that it was the fault of *Ciganos*, because “the candidates need to win in order to pay off their debt (*dívidas*) [to *Ciganos*].”

As far as I know, the Calon in Santaluz had not lent any money to mayoral candidates that year. In fact, they had divergent opinions on whom to vote for, which they often discussed. At one point there was a flag of the PT hanging from a pole in the middle of the camp “down there” while the banner of another candidate hung from Eduardo’s house. Similarly, in a small town nearby Salvador, Calon complained of their alienation from politics. Politicians did not even come to ask for votes because they were afraid to be seen as “eating from the hand of *Ciganos*.”

I would say that the influence of *Ciganos* on local politics is exaggerated. In the area, *Ciganos* were not the dominant *agiotas* and recall, that the Bradesco bank manager in Santaluz was fired for a loan to a brother of one of political candidates. But as the comment of the PT activist shows, there was a feeling that *Ciganos* were somehow profiting from the confusion; this builds on an established image of *Ciganos* as trickster-figures. Similarly to mythical tricksters who subvert predatory relationships in a way that brings them gain without becoming a prey or a predator (Hyde 2008), *Ciganos* are seen as manipulating hierarchical relationships while seemingly escaping them.

Consider the excerpt again. The man is pressured by the demands of the State (alimony) and he turns to *Ciganos*. Viviane offers to give the man R\$900, which he would repay by giving her three monthly salary cheques, each worth R\$443. But because Viviane does not have enough cash she suggests that she gives him R\$600 today in exchange for two monthly cheques. Tomorrow, when Eduardo is at home, the man can come and pick up another R\$300 and the loan will extend for another month. Her

reasoning is clear to all of us, but the man is utterly confused. He worries that there is a trick involved in the deal Viviane is proposing, but cannot figure out what it is. And when Viviane refuses to consider her son's money – for reasons that have to do with how money is managed within a Calon family and thus external to this transaction – his suspicion is augmented and he decides not to borrow the money. Most Bahians consider *Ciganos* cold, single-mindedly money-loving, masters of artifice and potentially dangerous. This is not a mere image, but rather a Simmelian “social form”, with interactions marked by a level of historical continuity, despite the fact, that the “content” of interactions shifted from animal dealers to moneylenders (Simmel 1972).

Facing this ambiguity, in some places in the interior people visit *Ciganos* after dark so nobody sees them¹¹⁸ and most people in Santaluz claimed that for them *Ciganos* were a credit source of the last resort. But, as these things go, it is true only to a point and many people actually use *Ciganos* as just another source of money that could lead to profit. Money is not only borrowed from *Ciganos* when all else fails. I know of several cases when people went to banks to take a loan to pay *Ciganos* and the director of one *financeira* told me that they had people come along with the *Ciganos* they were to pay. Many know that as long as they have some property or a stable income, *Ciganos* do not ask for any collateral or paperwork.

Thanks to the reputation *Ciganos* have, shopkeepers also hired them as debt collectors (*cobrador*). It was preferable to recover at least a portion of their money from those who bought *fiado* or on a promisory note, but failed to pay, than to pass their names to SPC or Serrasa – credit history agencies – and to lose the money anyway. In Santaluz

¹¹⁸ Marcelo Billi, “No sertão da Bahia, cigano é “banqueiro,” *Folha de São Paulo*, Caderno Dinheiro, 12 June 2005.

Ciganos as *cobradores* were marginal to non-Gypsy ones, collecting sums between R\$30 and R\$600.¹¹⁹ These were mostly poorer Calons who collected for smaller shopkeepers and received around 20 percent commission. This way, José made about R\$10 to R\$15 a day. Since he had plenty of time, he sat around in front of people's houses, waiting until they paid in full or in part, or arranged a payment plan. Most of the time people felt intimidated and shamed, although some threatened him with *justiça* (court) – in vain, as *cobradores* had lists of names or even *notas promissórias* tied to shops' *crediários*.

It is clear then, that people of varied social background borrowed money from *Ciganos*. Just like those of the non-Gypsy *agiotas*, *Cigano* loans were considered exploitative. *Ciganos* were seen as calculating and distant, not a part of “familial” relations of patronage, god-parenthood or affinity. This put *Ciganos* in an ambiguous position at the thresholds between “regimes of value”, between the “traditional” one and another where the State was the ultimate guarantee as well as the main origin of value (cf. Keane 2002: 65-90); of course, as I have argued in the introductory chapters the confusion is caused by the new distribution regime which redefined the sources and flow of wealth making the state more central. In any case, *Ciganos* are seen as profiting from the confusion between various regimes. José felt, for instance, that the debtors could not complain to the police about him collecting the money in an informal arrangement with shopkeepers, because the state guaranteed the value of the promissory notes in transactions between the clients and shopkeepers.¹²⁰ But hiring *Ciganos* as *cobradores* is

¹¹⁹ Besides the *Ciganos*, another group of *cobradores* are policemen and debts can be as high as tens of thousand. *Agiotas contratam cobradores de aluguel e pressionam devedores, que podem pagar até com a própria vida*, *Jornal da Facom - Jornal Laboratório da Universidade Federal da Bahia*, 2007 <<http://www.jornaldafacom.ufba.br/>>, last accessed 26 November 2011.

¹²⁰ Again, recent developments should be seen as varying from the past in a matter of degree. *Notas promissórias* were standardized and defined by law in 1908. Paid harassers and debt collectors existed in the past as well.

also one way shopkeepers can sell *fiado* (on credit) to their “neighbours” (*vizinhos*) and “friends” (*amigos*), and to get their money, which they often need to meet other obligations – to their suppliers, for instance. Recall that Fernando, who could not borrow officially because his name was “dirty” with SPC, put up a poster announcing that he would sell the debts in his bar to *Ciganos*; he never planned to do this, although Kiko offered to do it for him.¹²¹

But Calon are not immune from the slippage between “the regimes of value”. The separation from *brasileiros* has to be constantly recreated since the warmth, friendship and consideration that clients demand threaten to redefine the meaning of a loan, and therefore the capability of Calon to make money through the niche threshold.

8.2 How Calon Manage Loans

A *Cigano* vs. a *Jurón*

Calon are aware of their image as *Ciganos*. It brings its advantages, for instance when collecting money. But it has to be carefully managed, as the following story shows. In it Eduardo reminds a young Calon, that he should be aware of how actions by *Ciganos* are seen.

One day Eduardo and I were talking to old Augusto and his youngest son in his camp in Alto de Bela Vista, when a boy came looking for Augusto’ oldest son.

The boy explained that his father, who was a director (*gerente*) of a farm, sent

¹²¹ Chapter 4

him to tell Augusto's oldest son to come and collect some animals, since the owner of the farm was away.

Augusto told the boy to tell his father that tomorrow they would "send somebody" to pick up the animals.

Probably because he felt he had to say something too, Augusto's youngest son added: "Good. Tell your father that I will come for the animals tomorrow."

"No. Don't go. Send somebody," Eduardo, who had been quiet until then intervened and in part *chibi* explained to the young Calon that it was not good when non-Gypsies saw *Ciganos* as they went about collecting animals.

"We will send somebody tomorrow," Augusto dismissed the boy.

Eduardo is concerned about how the non-Gypsies would interpret seeing *Ciganos* with animals taken from the farm; a picture the consequences of which Augusto's youngest son, does not seem to grasp fully. Similarly to what happened during the aggressive mayoral campaign, they could be blamed for profiting from any adverse situation. Most people also saw *Ciganos* as only interested in money, and not to be trusted even when they were "friends". But although such a distancing image certainly exists, to be successful as moneylenders, an image of "impersonal business" had to be constantly constructed by Calon (cf. Hart 2005) for the reason that in Bahia – as elsewhere to lesser or larger degree – loans have a tendency to turn to other types of reciprocities when they are only weakly supported by the state.¹²²

¹²² Graeber (2010: 119) describes patronage as a "slapdash of all three principles" – what he calls exchange, hierarchy and communism – that has to continuously be recast in the language of exchange (and debt).

To illustrate the effort put into keeping the business “impersonal”, consider the story of a man who comes to borrow money from Eduardo to pay for health costs. Because Eduardo is not interested in lending a small sum to a relative stranger, Viviane offers to lend. But despite the man’s attempts, she is not interested in hearing his pleas, while Eduardo later blames her later for not squeezing the man more.

Eduardo, Kiko, Romero and me were sitting in Eduardo’s house eating breakfast and planning the day ahead, when Viviane walked in from the garage and leaned on the table: “That sick man (*aquele homem doente*), who wants to borrow is here”.

“Tell him I don’t have any money,” replied Eduardo, smoking slowly and content with the game yesterday in which he won R\$5000.

Viviane was leaving when she turned around and said, “He wants 200, doesn’t he? I’ll lend him that”. She put her hand into her purse, taking it out very slowly, eyeing Eduardo.

“We don’t even know where he lives”, Eduardo objected not too forcefully. After all, as Viviane’s hesitation revealed, he could have just commanded.

“He is a pal of João, from the shop Preço Bom. And he says he lives on *Rua da Lama*,” answered Viviane, pointing towards the borders of the neighbourhood.

“Call him in.”

Soon Viviane returned saying that the man was scared of their pit-bull running around the garage. The man would not enter for anything.

“Give it to him for 30 percent” Eduardo told Viviane as she was leaving again; Kiko had already joined the man. A moment later Eduardo came too, and with a friendly air offered the man a chair to sit on.

Viviane, who didn’t know how to write, handed a yellow promissory note to Kiko to fill in: “It will be for 300 for 30 days.”

“Cut off 20 Reais” pleaded the man.

“Today is the 5th...”

“Cut off 20” the man repeated.

“What shall I put on the note?” asked Kiko.

The man said his name.

“And where will I find you?” enquired Eduardo.

“Ask around for Rogério, the car mechanic. Everybody knows me there [on *Rua da Lama*],” and he asked Viviane to cut down R\$20 again. He also repeated several times, that if he did not have to, he would not be borrowing the money, but he needed to go to a doctor with his son.

Viviane responded that she would not give him money for free and added tersely: “I would not give you the money, even if you told me that you had a pain in your head.”

But she discounted R\$20 anyway. Later, Eduardo commented bitterly to Kiko so that Viviane, making lunch, would hear him, “Your mother does not want

to earn more when she can. Whenever I earn a bit, I buy bread, when a bit more, I also buy butter, and when even more, I buy cheese.”

The story highlights that the interaction between Calon and *juróns* is fraught with tensions of how to relate properly both to *juróns* and to other Calon. On the one hand, there is a constant danger of this exchange slipping into other reciprocities. When the man pleads with Viviane, she answers that she would not lend him money even if he told her that he had “pain in his head”. Although a stupid comment in hindsight, the message is quite clear – she is not his friend and has no responsibility for his well-being; nothing personal, just business (Hart 2005). Consider also the impression that man had walking into Eduardo’s and Viviane’s house: the huge house of the most renowned *Cigano* with a pit-bull running around. The ferocious-looking dog that Eduardo raised for dog-fights scared most people, Calon and *brasileiros* alike. Eduardo, like most Calon, cultivated his violent image and whenever he negotiated, he would switch between terseness of questioning and a friendly manner. In the case above he offers the man a chair, questions him, but otherwise just sits silently and smokes slowly as if supervising the transaction.

There were other techniques of managing distance in interactions especially with new clients: whenever present, Calon supported one another in convincing a *jurón* that the deal was good. They also often switched to *chibi* among themselves thus shutting *brasileiros* off. At times, they called a client *gajão/gajin*, a term which *brasileiros* recognise as the one which *Ciganos* call the non-Gypsies. But even here Bahians would

try to invert the terms and in an effort for a joking familiarity and friendliness addressed individual Calon/Calin they recognised but did not know the name of as *gajão/gajona*.¹²³

Through creating the distance and managing their image, Calon try to create a proper clientele and their place in the world. This is not unrelated to a man's life-cycle that as I described it in Chapter 5. As young men Calon often go out with their *jurón* friends and have *jurin* lovers. As they mature others encourage them to socialise with Calon more as a way to think about "the future". This culminates in marriage and the founding of a new household, and intensification of exchanges with other Calon. To manage to establish oneself means finding a balance between personalism and impersonalism, by becoming a trusted but respected *Cigano*, through which one should gradually be able to make an easy living, in which money flows in one direction only and the Calon live without work.

So the tension that the exchange between the man and Viviane highlighted is not only a question of making less money. There is always a danger that proper Calon sociality will be endangered. Although the money nominally belongs to Viviane – money that Eduardo gives her – she cannot go directly against his wishes. In fact, the man came the day before, but because Eduardo was playing cards, Viviane told the client to come back later. But her giving the man a discount threatened their capability to demonstrate their success "on the street" and especially their capacity to provide for their family and to host others. This is why Viviane's failure to grab an opportunity to build more pressure on the client upset Eduardo, and why he talked about it in the idiom of food.

¹²³ See the Introduction.

Creating Clients

Although clients often resorted to the language of trust, Calon knew that it was important to reinforce its character, and therefore its repayment, by other means.¹²⁴ Going back to the example above, Eduardo and Viviane know almost nothing about “that sick man”. In this transaction, the Calon rely on the promissory note, on knowing roughly who the client is, where to find him and on intimidation connected with their *Cigano* image. Without any previous relationship with the client Viviane feels justified in stressing their non-relation and defining the deal as “impersonal”. But for the same reason, Eduardo thinks that they could have squeezed the client more; such loans to relatively unknown people are usually small, on high interest and for one month, and the client might never borrow again.

It always surprised me how little Calon knew about their clients and how little they cared to find out. They trusted their senses, and that sooner or later they would bump into a debtor on the square or in the marketplace. Of course, they did not always lend the money, and on a few occasions, when in doubt, they would ask other Calon about potential clients. Most of the time, however, they did not even know clients’ family status. Trust was enforced by other means: in most cases they took CCT or retirement cards as collateral; sometimes people pawned small objects.

From the Calon point of view, the most reliable clients were those who were employed by the state or by a few large companies or who were receiving a contributory retirement; these were also their most common clients. These people had the option to borrow also through new credit institutions (*financeiras*, banks etc.), confirming James’

¹²⁴ For a discussion of trust in “cracks of mass societies organised by states and markets” see (Hart 2000, Chapter 3).

observation that both official and illegal credit institutions rely equally on clients' bank accounts and state guaranteed income (James 2012: 20-40). Calon would either have these clients fill in cheques beforehand or hand over their whole chequebooks or bankcards. In his bedroom, which stayed locked during the day, Eduardo had a plastic jar with a lid, in which he had cards with PIN numbers and chequebooks together with the promissory notes.¹²⁵

All this notwithstanding, it was other kind of deals, which I would like to call “spectacular loans”, which excited them the most. Although money coming from the withheld cards of state employees brought more stable and secure income, it was in the “spectacular” loans that men showed their skills and created their reputations. Here, politicians, employers, self-employed, *fazendeiros* and so on, borrowed larger sums, usually against some kind of collateral (*garantia*). But although Eduardo sometimes ended up with a key to a small house, a new motorcycle in his garage, or a gun -- given either as a payment or a guarantee -- *garantias* served mostly to demonstrate solvency beforehand. These clients were also turned down most often, when they were unknown, the *garantia* too low, or a person did not have a reputation for being *direto* (honest). Thanks to the large sums these deals brought, the dates of their repayment influenced timing of social events, such as weddings or relocations, and generally led to periods of

¹²⁵ A press release reporting an imprisonment of a *Cigano* in Bahian *sertão* gives an idea of a type of collateral and objects pawned by his clients. I should note that the amounts are far from representative. According to the article the police evaluated his wealth at R\$8 million, while an average Calon I knew, who lived above 500 kilometers away, had somewhere between R\$20 and 75 thousand “on the street”.

“In the house of a *Cigano* couple “Rogê” and “Zeza”, police found 43 watches – the majority of them Rolex –, necklaces, pendants, earrings, bracelets and other jewellery. Police also found ammunition in huge quantities, including of the restricted use, magazines for 9 mm pistols, a telescopic sight, holsters and dozens of cold steel weapons. In the building were also seized 331 cheques from various banks, 97 promissory notes, 26 cheque halves and 21 chequebooks. In the *quintal* of the house there was a ring for cockfights and twenty cages with cockerels. According to Commissar Antônio Carlos Santana, the volume of objects seized strongly suggests usury.”

Preso cigano autor de quatro homicídios no interior da Bahia, Journal Classe A, 20.10.2010 <<http://www.classealem.com.br/index.php?opcao=1a&id=4619>>, last accessed 13 February 2012.

intensive card playing. Nevertheless, it was precisely these types of clients that, in a similarly spectacular fashion, threatened to bring financial and social ruin to individual Calons.

This ruin was in part caused by another tendency. In order to “establish” oneself one needs long-term clients; akin to Piasere’s “*capital gažicǎno*” (1985: 143-146). These are not long-term clients, in a patronage sense, but reliable (*direto*) people who would come often to borrow larger sums of money.¹²⁶ In reality they are often richer and more powerful than Calons lend themselves; recall the betrayal Eduardo’s family expressed, when the judge “for whom Eduardo had done so much” refused to release Kiko.¹²⁷ To such long-term clients, Calons would offer lower interest rates, for longer periods of time and even end up lending more than clients were willing or capable to return.

One of the most common ways to create long-term clients was to collect only the interest and to dissuade them from borrowing from other *Ciganos*. When Kiko moved from Alto de Bela Vista to Muritiba, Eduardo advised him to hang onto a good client, who had borrowed R\$1000 for R\$1700 in two months and to collect only the interest. In

¹²⁶ For *Ciganos*, one-off small loans against monthly CCTs were not worth it, although as I have showed non-Gypsy *agiotas* made a living out of it. Note that the imprisoned *Cigano* in the previous footnote does not seem to have any such cards. On the other hand, Galeguinho, a non-Gypsy *agiota* in Amargosa, was said to have said 3000 cards (*bolsa familia* and bank cards) when imprisoned.

There were two types of loans with CCT cards: Calons in Amargosa would sometimes “buy” a card. Say one receives R\$128 per month. A *Cigano* would buy it for one year for 1000. Every month for 12 months he would receive the full cash benefit before giving the card back. Here the risk was that at times, people blocked their cards.

Galeguinho organised it differently. He would lend you only 100 per month with R\$28 or more being the interest. Usually a person would fall short, and come to borrow money again. Once a month Galeguinho’s assistant together with a client would go to the bank and take out the whole sum. The assistant would collect the interest and keep the card, giving the client the rest (see Joana’s case Chapter IV).

It is possible that visibility while withdrawing money from the state *Caixa Economica* or *Banco do Brasil*, in combination with meagerness of sums and a preference for “deals” (*rolos*), where one could lose more easily, rather than “pawning” (*penhora*) of a card, made this a less desirable option for *Ciganos*. Some Calons told me that they felt pity for their poor clients and that is why they preferred not lending to them. Most would agree that lending below R\$1000 was not worth it.

¹²⁷ See Chapter 5.

this manner, during their lives men built a network of clients dispersed throughout their home ranges. Thanks to mobile phones, cars and cheques, retaining customers dispersed across their home ranges is even easier than in the past.

Once he moved to Muritiba, Kiko also explained to me how he was going to build up his clientele. Those days he often walked down the street, sat around the square or at a local bar and everywhere he greeted people enthusiastically, making himself visible. “Next week, I am going to tell him [the bar owner], that ‘I am a *Cigano* and I have money to lend.” Apparently they always refused at first. “But they always come and borrow the next day. You will see, when you come next, this guy,” and he pointed at the bar-owner, “is going to owe me money.” Not all men succeed, and as I showed in Chapter 4, leaving a place because “there is no future”, is an acceptable reason for changing one’s settlement.

In fact, the bar owner turned Kiko down, but within three weeks, he already had three clients in Muritiba worth R\$4500 in total. Although he would receive individual payments at different times, Kiko explained that his “*giro*”¹²⁸, as he sometimes called his money “on the street”, was R\$21,200. The sum included the interest on loans, the *bolsa família* his wife received for their son and two other benefit cards totalling around R\$600/month. These two cards he owned “for life” – he bought the *bolsa família* card a few years ago from his uncle and it will expire next year; the retirement benefit card Kiko received from his father who had bought from another Calon.

Table 8.1

Kiko’s Debtors in August 2010

¹²⁸ Money in circulation or total commercial activity.

| A Person | Amount Lent | Place |
|--|--------------------|--|
| <i>Jurón</i> (managed by Diego, the middleman) | R\$1350 | Parnamirim. Live in nearby Santaluz until August 2009. |
| <i>Cigano</i> (<i>Brother-in-Law</i>) | R\$1450 | Alto de Bela Vista. Lived there between March-July 2010. |
| <i>Cigano</i> | R\$1300 | Alto de Bela Vista |
| <i>Jurón</i> | R\$1700 | Alto de Bela Vista |
| <i>Jurón</i> | R\$1400 | Muritiba. Moved there in July 2010 |
| <i>Jurón</i> | R\$2500 | Muritiba |
| <i>Cigano</i> | R\$3900 | Boa Vista. Between Muritiba and Santaluz. |
| <i>Cigano</i> (<i>Father</i>) | R\$4000 | Muritiba |
| <i>At home</i> | R\$3000 | |
| TOTAL | R\$20,600 | 4 localities |

When I had gotten to know him two years previously, most of Kiko's deals were in Parnamirim, but because he had killed a man nearby, after he got out of prison he stopped going there. When he got out of prison he stayed for two years in Alto de Bela Vista with his wife's affines and the overview above does not include about R\$2500 in debts that Kiko has to various Calon there. "When you are smart, you can double you money in one year," another man told me. In reality, however, the Calon sociality and contingencies that come with it, deflect them from any easy trajectory.

"Running After The Money"

Note that in the table above the two largest sums – both around R\$4000 – were owed by other Calon. Although it is not readily apparent, young or poorer men, i.e. those with less

“strength” and who generally have only a few deals, prefer to lend larger sums or for a longer period of time to other Calons. They have good reasons for doing so: although loans to *juróns* bring larger profits, they also require more effort. The following story illustrates both aspects well.

One day in November 2010, I drove with Eduardo to meet Diego, his middleman. We met at a gas station in Santaluz.

Diego walked towards Eduardo’s window and rather hastily handed him a wad of money. Apparently there was R\$600 for Eduardo, Romero and Kiko, who was still in prison. Eduardo did not like that, so Diego took the money and passed R\$100 to Romero on the back seat and explained the rest.

As he was leaving, Eduardo told Diego to stop by at the house of a high-school teacher, Kiko’s client. Incidentally, I remember visiting that teacher with Kiko before, in February 2009. She had borrowed R\$500 at a monthly interest of R\$150. That time she had already paid R\$450 for accumulated interest once, and arranged with Kiko to pay another R\$450 in April 2009, but without planning to pay off the principal.

I had lost track of what happened in the meantime, so I decided to go with Diego. We stopped at the teacher’s house. When she came out and Diego told her that he had come to collect money she looked like she did not know what he was talking about. Diego told her that he was going to call Eduardo to confirm it. While he was trying to call Eduardo, he continued explaining to the teacher that Eduardo told him to stop by and collect Kiko’s money. The teacher finally said

that before Kiko was imprisoned she had agreed with him that she would pay everything in December. It was obvious to Diego and even to me, that she was lying, but we left.

In the previous chapter I described how Calon men thought it a point of honour to pay the money to their Calon creditors without probing. With the *jurón* this was not automatically assumed and men had to “run after the money” (*correr atrás do dinheiro*). Men preferred to set due dates just after paydays and to come early in the morning of the due date before debtors could leave their houses; at ten they were often ready to play cards. Sometimes they had to return several times. Wanderlei once went four times by bus to a town about 50 kilometres away to collect a few hundred, without any success. At other times, it was almost comical to see, how poorer Calon couples searched for their clients up and down the town.

Men, therefore, had to remember their dates and I was surprised when even in prison Kiko reminded his wife or his brother what debts were due. In addition, the deals with Calon always assumed a third party, other Calon. But unless deals with *juróns* were especially “spectacular”, the details were not generally known although people kept guessing and trying to find out. The only exception was the families. Wives, sons and fathers generally knew about each other’s deals and reminded each other’s clients of their dues when they met them. Sometimes, fathers and sons collected debts for each other. This was considered “help” and they did not share the profit or pay each other a commission.

Despite this, men often failed. Many clients, who were supposed to bring large profits, turned out to be *atrapalhados* or *enrolados*, avoiding paying for years or paying only in part. Blind Paulo had to concede to one R\$300 loan being paid in instalments of R\$20 – R\$40 sums whenever the client had money. It took more than two years and the client never paid any interest. Making money was not as simple as Calon made it sound, and all Calon lost money to bad loans (*tomar callote*). I see one reason in their nonchalant attitude to information and a desire to create long-term clients, a technique which relied heavily on both trust and their violent image, especially when taking a bank-card was not an option. In the example above, for a loan of R\$500 the teacher had paid Kiko at least R\$900 in interest in the 6 months I witnessed, and in 1,5 years she must have paid him much more. As soon as Kiko's situation changed, however, she decided, although not very assertively, to deny her debt. For this same reason in the first vignette Viviane reiterated several times that the money the client was borrowing against his cheques, had nothing to do with the previous loan. Resisting payments, clients often decided to stop paying the interest, renegotiated the payment terms or outright refused to pay. Despite their notoriety, there was very little men could do about it. Relatively frequent burning of Calon settlements by mobs reminded them of their weak position.

Consider Adair with whom I spent a few days in Alto de Bela Vista. He was extremely satisfied and confident. He had just killed a bull to celebrate his return from Bom Jesus da Lapa, a pilgrimage site in the Bahian interior. He had taken an oath (*promessa*) to go there every year and was convinced that this was the reason his economic situation was improving steadily every year. But a week later when I meet him

at a house of his brother, he was anxious about what to do about an invalid cheque from his client.

Adair was quiet and left the food his sister-in-law put in front of him almost untouched. A man who owed him money had given him a cheque for R\$8500 that had turned out to be worthless. Today he came to see the debtor, who, however, had gone to Feira de Santana to buy cattle.

“It is missing one signature,” Adair explained when his brother suggested that maybe it was not valid. “I was in the bank and the manager told me that the man had money on his account, but one signature was missing. He [the manager] wrote a code 22 on the cheque, which means that it is missing the signature.” Because it was a company cheque, it apparently needed two signatures.

Adair passed me the cheque. He also handed another one to me, worth R\$ 1000. It was dated for the 18th – ten days ago. “11” written on it meant that the cheque was “*sem fundo*”, without enough money on the account.

“If I had to kill for every unpaid debt, I would have more than fifty crimes on my back (*nas costas*).” I looked at him puzzled. “Seriously”, he reiterated.

“We should be more violent,” said his nephew who came with him, “so people fear us.” Nobody said anything.

The whole afternoon, most of which we spent at the marketplace, Adair was distraught. “What will I do with it? How can I solve this?” he repeated over and over. “Every day I spend 50 just to come here to São Gabriel. I spend a lot of money.”

“If you don’t spend you won’t gain,” his brother tried to calm him down.

“Yes,” agreed Adair, “but the due date (*prazo*) was Monday. I also came on Tuesday. Then I had to come back on Wednesday. Today is Thursday. And tomorrow Friday.” He tried to call the client, but his phone was out of range – he was still somewhere in the interior buying cattle. “What will I do now?” he continued in his lament.

These were not trifling sums. In addition, as good deals increase one’s efficacy as Calon, bad ones can hamper one’s capability to meet their agreements towards other Calon. Often, men had to renegotiate their deals with each other because their *jurón* debtors did not pay. Large, spectacular deals sometimes threatened to totally ruin one’s efficacy as a Calon. Recall, that in the previous chapter I mention a situation when Nelson comments that Pancho was “dead” (*morto*). I explained that although Pancho used to have a lot of money he wasted it all in cards and bad deals. Sometimes he complained to me that people stole from him: one man owed him R\$5000 and paid only R\$1000. Another owed him R\$18.000 for which he gave him an old VW van that Pancho sold for R\$3000. He said he accepted that because it was better than losing everything. One of the clients also threatened to take Pancho to court since usury is illegal, although I never heard about it happening. In any case, through such deals Pancho became “dead”, a person untrustworthy to lend to in the eyes of others. More distressingly for him and his wife, his older daughter reached a marriageable age, but without money to pay for the dowry and wedding costs, she had little prospect of finding a rich groom.

To summarise, although *Ciganos* built on their image as ruthless tricksters they had to constantly work hard to keep their business “impersonal” and to prevent loans turning into other forms of relationships. There were two types of customers: on the one hand, there were those with a guaranteed income, either in the form of CCT, retirement pensions or stable employment, who borrowed small sums on 30 percent interest, usually for consumption. But what I called “spectacular deals” were more desirable from the point of view of the Calon – they brought large single sums and reputation (cf. Stewart 1994: 45-62; Pine 2002: 75-97). But because they depended on trust and a violent image, they could also bring ruin. Throughout their lives and changing of settlements, men built a network of customers across the home-range region, where their relatives and known Calon lived. Before concluding, I will look at how Calon sociality fits this dynamic.



8.3 Loans to *juróns* and Calon sociality

Husbands and Wives

Just like most of the thesis, the majority of stories in this chapter concern the family of Eduardo and Viviane, and take place in their house. On the one hand, as I described in the Introduction I know them the best. On the other, I believe that these stories illustrate a larger point I that make in this chapter. They show that in exchanges with *juróns*, cooperation within the household and between Calon plays an important role. Although in deals between two Calon men, households were pushed into the background and third parties were criticised for interfering, loans to *juróns* followed a different logic.

Consider another morning in the house of Eduardo and Viviane. A man comes to borrow money and Eduardo refuses to lend it to him. If he were a Calon this would be the end of it, although Eduardo would offer him food to eat. But after some discussion, in which Viviane and Kiko unsuccessfully try to change Eduardo's mind, Kiko decides to lend to man himself.

We were sitting in the *quintal* of Eduardo's house, attending to fighting cockerels when a man, who I knew as a town councillor, walked in. Eduardo called him into the kitchen. When they came out a few minutes later, Eduardo was visibly angry: "I will go and ask him if he still wants to cheat me (*enrolar*)," he commented and stormed out of the house. We followed him to the gate trying to see better what would happen, but without a word he left in his car followed by the councillor.

While he was gone an unknown man appeared. He was about 65, bald, thin and well dressed. He explained that a clerk at Bradesco bank recommended that he borrow money from Eduardo. Viviane told him to wait and that her husband would come back soon; Kiko offered some coffee. For about fifteen minutes he sat quietly behind us by the wall, while we ate by the table in the middle.

When Eduardo finally returned he was not pleased to see somebody in his house. Viviane explained that the man had come to borrow money, only R\$200. Eduardo turned to the man asking him whether he came to borrow money – he had to speak up as the man was slightly deaf.

The man started to explain that he lived in Retiro, a small town about 15 kilometres away, on such and such street, that he owned a house; that he was retired, used to live in Salvador, but because he came from Retiro he had moved back. He started dropping names of the people that they could both know and said that he came only because Elena in Bradesco told him, that “I should go to Eduardo Cigano, that he will lend me money”.

Eduardo did not seem interested and he was still angry because of the deal that councillor had arranged. He was cold, but not rude: “I will be straight with you. I don’t know you at all, I have never seen your house.... Do you have cheques?”

The man clearly wanted to borrow and it seemed to be his first experience with a moneylender. Stressed out and intimidated he started to show not only a

Bradesco chequebook, but also his various cards explaining that he was retired and every month he received a retirement benefit.

Eduardo cut him short: “But *o senhor* knows that it will be 200 for 400.” The man stared in incomprehension, stammered that he did not know, that it was too much. He turned to leave.

Loudly enough so that Eduardo – but not the man – would hear him, Kiko remarked critically to Viviane that it had been clear from the beginning that Eduardo did not want to lend to the man. Viviane turned to her husband: “Lend him the money; you can see he is *direto*.”

“But it is *cadem* (money in Romani)” snapped Eduardo and started putting *farinha* into the bowl of beans which Viviane had handed to him. For a while both Kiko and Viviane tried to convince him to lend to the man, but Eduardo was adamant.

The man was already in the garage, leaving the house, when Kiko stopped him that he would lend the money to him: “200 for 300, can be?” The man agreed.

“If he does not pay I am going to cut his ear off,” murmured Eduardo eating.

Kiko was telling the man what to put down on a cheque to be cashed in one month’s time while Viviane got R\$200 from the inside of the house.

In this episode both a wife and a son try to convince a Calon to change his mind. They challenge his opinion. It is obvious that the client is honest, and is willing to

exchange pre-dated cheques for urgent cash. The rate is standard for small loans: what the Calon call “thirty percent” – 100 for 150, 200 for 300, etc. – for “thirty days”. At the end in a rather direct challenge to his father’s opinion, Kiko decides to lend the money.

The first thing to notice is that Viviane gets involved in the transaction – in talking to the man, in trying to convince her husband. Admittedly, Viviane was more involved in Eduardo’s deals than other women in the region; his relatives complained that he did only what she wanted. This is more a matter of degree, however. Everybody in town knew Eduardo and where to find him. As a consequence most of his deals were conducted at home in Viviane’s presence. In Santaluz, apart from Djalma, the strongman, who would be visited in the camp, most men hung around the market place, making themselves visible or looked for clients while their wives remained at home. Nevertheless, when collecting their debts, especially from *atrapalhado* (difficult) clients, they turned to their wives for help. I often met Calon couples and even women alone looking for their non-Gypsy debtors. Admittedly, most rich men or those negotiating more “spectacular” deals drive with their sons or brothers, but, although they would not easily admit it, whenever their wives were present, which would happen when deals were concluded at home, they would get involved.

One day, teaching me what it means for a Calon to be *esperto*, Maluco told me the following story which illustrates the point:

‘A *Cigano* once went swimming into the sea apparently without realising that in his shorts’ pocket he still had a *nota promissória* worth R\$25.000 due the next day. When he got out the *nota* totally fell appart in his hands. Fearing that without

it he might never get his money, he came up with a plan. When the client called, the *Cigano* told him that although he was not at home, the client was to come and to give R\$20.000 to his wife. He promised that later that week the client could give him the remaining R\$5000 in exchange for the the *nota*. While the *Cigano* was hiding, the client did exactly as told. When the *Cigano* later showed him the scraps, he accepted that it was his *nota* and handed over the remaining sum.’

The moral of the story is clear: a loans to a *jurón* has to be carefully managed, since the two parties are adversaries. Underlying the resolution of this specific dilemma lies a household unit which acts with one single interest. This supports what I described before, namely, that although a man is the one who is responsible for finding the deals “on the street” among *brasileiros*, he always does so with the household in mind. Therefore, wives can support their husbands in deals with *brasileiros*.

Some women are known for their magical skills and are hired by other Calon for their services especially in relation to marriages – to split a boy from his *jurin* or to bless a girl so she marries well. Recall the case of the fridge transaction described in the previous chapter. After Kiko had sold it to Pinto, Pinto sold it to a *jurón*. The *jurón* came the same afternoon to demand that Kiko gave him the shop’s receipt (*nota fiscal*), because the fridge was not working properly and he wanted to return it to the shop. He claimed that he made such a bad deal because Pinto’s mother, who helped arrange the deal, had put a spell on him (“*a Cigana me rezou*”). Several young Calon men who listened to the story were amused by what the man was saying. To me it seemed a perfect example of a female staging of Gypsiness, manipulating the *gaje* image of herself. I

knew these things myself – the way Iracema stared intensely into my eyes, when she was confirming with me that I indeed planned to sell a phone to her husband. But this is only a part of the story. When a few weeks later, I mentioned to Pinto how funny it was that the *jurón* had thought his mother had put a spell on him, he turned to me with a serious air, “But she did put a spell on him.” This might also explain why the women should not talk during and comment openly upon negotiations between the Calon. On the one hand, abstention from talking with an unrelated Calon shows her shame (*vergonha*). On the other, men are also ambiguous about women’s efficacy.

A Moneylender Among Other *Ciganos*

Normally men struck deals alone, outside their households, “on the street”, or during their travels with their sons or brothers. In some cases, however, their wives’ seduction, powers of persuasion or even magic could also be mobilised. Men also guarded hid the identity of their clients, and the nature of deals from other Calon. Others would learn about them only if present by chance or from other people. When asked directly, which they seldom were, they always exaggerated or downplayed the amount. When questioned about their clients’ identity they always responded that it was a “a *jurón* on the street” (“*o jurón la na rua*”), in town X., and so on. Clearly, this adds to the mystique of a man of action making easy living “on the street”.

I was also sometimes told that a man cannot take another’s client, but there were *juróns* who borrowed from several Calon. Men living in the same settlement also asked each other about specific *juróns*, and whenever one was dealing with a client, other

Ciganos supported him. But people also complained about localities where there were too many *Ciganos*.

One exception to this secretiveness and individualism are the man's sons. From an early age they accompany the man on his business rounds –most cars would have a father with one or two sons. Consider again the example above. Viviane recognises a good client, but she cannot convince her obstinate husband. As it became clear that Eduardo does not want to lend to the man, she supports her stepson in making the deal. Importantly, however, Eduardo also murmurs his willingness to back Kiko up if the man turns out to be dishonest. On other occasions, Eduardo accompanied Kiko when a client turned out to be *atrapalhado*; they sometimes lent money together or collected money for each other. Eduardo even passed some clients to Kiko. One always had to remember whose client a person was, though – Kiko could not just take over Eduardo's clients and they could only advise, never force each other. And as I already discussed, after a Calon man dies his sons inherit his debtors (cf. Piasere 1985).

It is important to take into consideration relations to other Calon. In chapter 4 I described how after fleeing Santaluz, Eduardo and Viviane changed places several times, until they ended up in a house in Muritiba. Once there, they started constructing a house on the house's large plot for Romero, who was about to marry Luiza.¹²⁹ Kiko was not living with them, since after being released from prison, he moved to Alto de Bela Vista with Paula's family. They lived there until he got into conflict with his in-laws, when they also moved to Muritiba. But, the father and the son had different ideas about inviting their relatives to join them.

¹²⁹ See Chapter 5

Eduardo was excited about Muritiba – in the town of about 14.000 there weren't any *Ciganos*. When I asked him, whether he was planning to invite his relatives, who used to live on his plot in São Gabriel because he had invited them, he winked at me, “Am I going to bring my competition here?”

A few weeks later Kiko got into a conflict with his in-laws and Eduardo came to pick him and Paula up. Driving them to Muritiba, Eduardo was explaining to his son, that it would surely be better than Alto de Bela Vista. There were no *Ciganos*, and the biggest non-Gypsy moneylender had been imprisoned (not for usury). Also, only a month after they had moved in, people already learned about the *Ciganos* and came to borrow money and a local *corretor* (intermediary) offered 10 percent interest on a loan. As if to prove his point, the next day, he gave a retirement benefit card to Kiko with the steady monthly income.

After a few days, Kiko agreed that Muritiba could be a good place to live. However, because of continuing tensions with his father and stepmother, he tried to improve his position by having at least some of his cousins live alongside them. Whenever he met them, he tried to convince them to move to Muritiba, using the same arguments as his father had used with him before. When I asked him whether he was not worried about their competition, he exclaimed that they were “afraid to lend to *brasileiros*” and only lent to *Ciganos*.

Although there was no fixed rule, if a town was as small as Muritiba and dominated by another *Calon*, unrelated *Calon* were hesitant to move into it; especially when the latter

had several supporters around him. Even when a man came and stayed in his relative's settlement for a short period of time, he would settle in the camp only when invited by others. Afterwards, through proliferation of deals among the people living in close to each other new "morally informed spaced of interaction" emerged.¹³⁰ Hence Kiko and Paula argued that the conflict between them, on one side, and her relatives, on the other, was a culmination of her family's "turning their backs" on the couple although they needed them: her family did not "help" them or invite Kiko to join them in deals. Eduardo, on the other hand, clearly praised the opportunities in Muritiba and, as if to prove how this also connected to him being there, on the first day he gave Kiko the retirement benefit card he had bought from another Calon.

Like most men, Eduardo is trying to dominate a small town and to be recognised as *the Cigano* by its *brasileiros*. Santaluz where he used to be *the Cigano* until he fled, and where he still has most customers, is only 25 minutes by car. Parnamirim is only about 30 minutes. He feels that he has a good reputation there too; his deals are managed mostly by his middleman, Diego, and there are no *Ciganos* there either. I also learned over the years, that Eduardo was not like most men. Most men in his position tried to become strong-men, surrounding themselves with a few supporters. Eduardo was too sly for this, did not want to live too close to other Calon (apart from his sons) and was extremely secretive about his deals.

In other words, although Eduardo has built a good reputation among *brasileiros*, he was unwilling to transform it to *força* among Calon. But he could not totally escape his obligations if he wanted to remain Calon. Last time I saw him, he lived in Bomfim

¹³⁰ See Chapter 7.

surrounded by his relatives, who had moved to a plot that he had bought, although they complained that he was tight-fisted.

Conclusion

Calon like to image themselves as able to “eat” through their wits and complete presence materialised in *negócios* with *brasileiros*. Ideally, it should be an asymmetrical type of exchange where question of commensurability with *brasileiros* does not arise – the only consideration is for their prestige among Calon. But to be able to do this successfully they need to establish themselves not only within the heterogeneous Calon social space, but also to gain a reputation among *brasileiros*. Money-lending thus not only brings a monetary gain, but reorders the social space whereby loans to *brasileiros* are incorporated into Calon sociality. As I have argued in Chapter 6, capability to “make the future” “on the street” and prestige brought by the visibility of wealth are tools to claim Calon masculinity. In addition, one’s name among *brasileiros* – how well one is connected to important people in the locality, how useful one’s name is for backing up claims with *brasileiros* – is the distinguishing marks of one’s strength, *força*. For instance, Eduardo once worried, that an unrelated Calon who was thinking about moving to Parnamirim, a small town in that Eduardo almost had a monopoly as a *Cigano*, would claim to be Eduardo’s cousin and ruin his good name.

To be recognised as *the Cigano* in a small town thus requires a careful balance of closeness and distance. A Calon man constantly strives to keep his business impersonal and to thwart any attempt of *juróns* to divert loans from their paths and to convert them

into other types of reciprocities. Simultaneously, he competes with other Calon in building up a stable clientele that prefers him to others. This brings men not only to conflict with demands of their relatives, but also threatens with too much dependence on *juróns* – if a client refuses to pay there is very little one can do about it apart from threatening with physical violence, which is most often an option only in theory. In reality, during their lives even the most successful Calon are often forced to give up on loans they make.

CONCLUSIONS

The Neo-liberal Moment

“The Time of the Gypsies”, in the title of Stewart’s ethnography of the Rom in Hungary (1997), refers to the capability of these Rom to create temporal and geographical “gaps” (Williams 2003) of Gypsiness in the midst of non-Gypsies, through, for instance, spending (sharing) money made on the market-place on communal merry-making. But viewed from another angle, the expression also denotes the last period of the socialist regime in Hungary, when many people became convinced that nothing could be attained through adhering to official procedures, and that their social reproduction increasingly depended on who they knew and even on income gained outside their formal employment; on behaving, as they saw it, like Gypsies. Reflecting somewhat similar concerns about the nature of the system, in the early 1980s activists of the Solidarity movement attacked Gypsies in Poland (Kaminski 1987: 324ft.2). These activists were the unionised urban skilled workers who in the 1980s saw their economic situation deteriorating, especially in relative terms – in status – when compared with auxiliary workers and those not in heavy-industries – peasants coming from villages, market traders from border areas or Gypsies – all of whom were able to supplement their income and even gain alternative strong currencies through migrant work, smuggling or selling farm produce on the market place (e.g. Pine 2002: 75-97).

These two examples illustrate how Gypsies became the target of popular resentment during the historical moment when the state project based on impersonal

bureaucracy and the promise of stable and sufficient formal employment on which social reproduction was based, was coming to an end in Central Europe (cf. Hart 2000). Thus, idioms of “Gypsiness” not only reflect inter-ethnic relations, but are also commentaries on the character of the state, its promises and its insertion into people’s lives. Even today, following the structural adjustment of the 1990s, it is impossible to talk about Gypsies in Central Europe without evoking to the nation-state (e.g. accusations of abusing welfare without contributing to its costs or the demographic take-over of states).

Seen from this point of view, the Brazilian situation presents a contrasting case but one that points to a similar general logic. Here novel modes of insertion of the state into the economic lives of its citizens have also led to a new role for *Ciganos* and novel popular views of them. Traditionally, during most of the twentieth century, apart from the “aristocracy of labour” and the middle classes, the majority of people in Bahia survived within the informal sector. In addition, again perhaps with the exception of the urban middle classes, most people saw the world as dominated by personalised ties, networks and non-transferable trust. In any interaction, people were expected to promote the interests of their *familia*, which included one’s patronage clients (DaMatta 1987: 115-136). Related to this, the famous “Brazilian dilemma” has been identified as the demand for the impersonal state in general, but the expectation of personalised treatment in one’s own specific case (DaMatta 1997b).

Certainly, it could also be argued that the “Brazilian dilemma” is nothing but a transformation of Brazilian cultural ideas about paradise and future promise, and about the seductive, but opaque, world of appearances (Pina Cabral 2007: 477-525). In the economic sphere, the idiom also attests to the subaltern incorporation of Brazil in the

world system, where until recently the state was unable to control the flow and the value of money and secure formality (Sansi-Roca, forthcoming in 2013). On the other hand, the fact that the “dilemma” was often retold in relation to the modern state and its failings (e.g. DaMatta 1982: 11-44) and that Brazilians increasingly experience corruption as a problem, is a corollary to the expanding role of the state in everyday life; put bluntly, there is more space for bribes. Counter-intuitively, this can be seen as the testimony to the success and even internalisation of the idea of the impersonal state (cf. Parry 2000: 27-55). Today, for instance, the growing number of “the middle class C” and the poor, who have profited from the new “distributional regime” which has recognisably neo-liberal characteristics (e.g. Ferguson 2007: 71-86; James 2011), petition the state for improved services directly. Although in the post-structural adjustment era, the new controlling state has given up some of its previous tasks, such as promoting formal employment, it also increasingly directs the flow of wealth, through provision and regulation of credit and welfare, and serves as the ultimate arbiter of value – particularly in the form of stabilised currency. In other words, new material links between the state and the people are redefining the nature of citizenship, and this is also changing the position of *Ciganos* in Bahia.

As I argued in the first chapter, traditionally, because of the way social order in Brazil was conceptualised, *Ciganos* fit only as marginal figures in established “patriarchal relations” (Freyre 1951: 790). The non-Gypsy Bahians saw *Ciganos* as somewhat sly traders, petty thieves and fortune-tellers, but essentially localised trickster-figures, fitting alongside other trickster characters such as *malandros* (Candido 1993; see also Pina Cabral 2007: 477-525). *Ciganos* relied on powerful people for places to camp,

and although at times authorities included them alongside other segments of the people – *o povo* -- deemed problematic, *Ciganos* remained peripheral to most discussions about the character of the state.¹³¹ In fact, the lack of academic interest in *Ciganos* between the late 1930s and the early 1980s coincided with their general invisibility when, in comparison with earlier and later periods, only a small number of newspaper articles appeared and when there were no policies or policy plans regarding *Ciganos* either at the Federal or state levels.

Broader developments, following the structural adjustment of the 1980s, have been paralleled with a change in *Cigano* ways of making a living. In the era after structural adjustment the state became more directly involved in the financial life of citizens in small town Bahia, as both the main arbiter of value and the origin of wealth. Stable currency, increased minimum wage, micro-credit to farmers, conditional cash transfers to families, the extension of credit for consumption through state banks and the stimulation of non-state credit providers, increased the role of state-money in daily life in Bahia and led to the proliferation of official financial institutions, the process I called financialisation. Thanks to the flow of state-money through these institutions, the state became the ultimate source of value and challenged the traditional older regimes of value (cf. Keane 2002: 65-90). In fact, part of the reasoning behind programmes such as *Fome Zero*, a showcase for Lula's government's new social policies, was to undermine patronage and to reorder the vertical intimacy that went along with it into a horizontal association of free persons (Ansell 2007). The project aimed to replace

¹³¹ I know of only one counter-example. In 1874 the first and probably the only issue of a republican satirical magazine *A Cigana* ("A Gypsy woman") came out in Recife. Here the *Cigana* symbolised freedom (Teixeira 2007: 106).

regimes of value and social hierarchies associated with debt through which familial and social links used to be reproduced over time (e.g. Roitman 2005: 95), with a neoliberal relatedness whereby the state became the initiator of value-generative welfare through creating “market peasants”. Similarly, while local clientelism was the main problem in the earliest stages of *bolsa família*, a conditional family benefit, through increased formalisation the state established a direct link between itself and the beneficiaries; critics also point out that *bolsa família* is a retreat from traditional welfare and the commitment to fight inequality and that through a system of direct hand-outs it dilutes the mobilising potential among the poor (Hall 2006: 689-709; but see also Gledhill and Hita 2009). Legitimised as a source of “financial democracy”, loans from a burgeoning number of official sources – *financeiras*, banks, shops – are backed up by state regulation and agencies evaluating personal credit.

Individuals belonging to the lower middle classes, who have felt especially mobile in the past ten years and who have profited from increased public employment, from the creation *crédito consignado* primarily from state banks and from availability of consumption credit from department stores, often cannot meet their financial obligations. Since the money is discounted directly from their accounts, debts cannot be redefined as *fiado* or turned into other forms of (personalised) reciprocities, such as patronage or friendship. Faced with their obligations, people have no option but to turn to informal moneylenders, *agiotas*, using their salaries as collateral. In the same vein, poorer people often sell their *bolsa família* to *agiotas* for a certain period, to gain access to larger lump sums of money. And in the monetised environment, politicians need to borrow money to

“buy votes” as they cannot rely on long-term reciprocities any longer. As I showed, however, people do not use moneylenders only under pressure.

In other words, the insertion of the state unsettled established forms of economic redistribution and integration and traditional regimes of value. This unsettling opened a space for monetary gain through the diversion of flows of wealth, in a way that raises questions about the legitimacy of wealth. In the case of *Ciganos* these doubts can be seen as novel elaborations of Bahian ideas about the artifice and capacities to challenge established hierarchies that are traditionally associated with *Ciganos*. The statement made by the activist (*militante*) of the Workers Party (PT) that I mentioned in the last chapter illustrates both shifts.

One evening during the election campaign, after *comícios*, rallies of the three candidates for the mayor, the PT activist told a Calon friend of mine, that unlike the *Ciganos*, he wanted the PT candidate to win, because he wanted progress. There are several things going on in this statement: The PT candidate was, due to her party membership, associated with the popular president Lula, who was increasingly being seen as the guarantor and the personalisation of economic growth and of progress. For the activist, the success of Lula’s presidency at the national level was to trickle down to the local level if the PT candidate won. As for many people in Santaluz, for him the other two mayoral candidates, who came from two families that had alternated in the mayoral office for decades, were associated with backwardness and traditional patronage. But this was not a transparent contest, and people felt unclear about who would actually profit from the victory of any of the two traditional candidates. Like many people in Santaluz, the activist suspected that the money that these spent on their campaigns was borrowed

from *Ciganos*. Echoing popular visions of how flows from the state can be diverted and of an increasingly problematic source of strength behind the traditional candidates, namely *Ciganos*, the activist implied that *Ciganos* were the ultimate winners in, and cheerleaders for, the continued lack of progress. Paradoxically, pointing to the emerging hegemony, the only entity which now seems to be able to resolve these tensions is the state itself, a change described by the activist as “progress”. For instance, in a story by a leftist politician-writer Euclides Neto *Os Ciganos* (2006: 65-78), *Ciganos* gain influence in the town hall through lending money to politicians, until their take-over is annulled by the Supreme Court.

All this makes evident, that although there is some continuity building on the perception of *Ciganos* as tricksters, the new distributional regime has also resulted in new fault lines. We can also see glimpses of possible future developments. The inclusion of the state in the definition of proper forms of economic behaviour and forms of relatedness, the new material links between citizens and the state, could in the long-run engender the redefinition of *Ciganos* whereby rather than customary tricksters *Ciganos* will be increasingly perceived as strangers (cf. Bauman 1990: 143-169). Ironically, the logic of the current incarnation of Brazilian multiculturalism, by creating a discursive gap between “traditional” and “present-day” practices, will feed into this development. In this state-led project, *Cigano* culture is being objectified as “traditional” heritage, seen as rituals and symbols to be represented, owned and protected from the impact of the inevitable progress. At the same time, since the “traditional” past as a whole is gone, by definition, individuals can represent this heritage in the present only in fragments. The

recognitions thus marks the “loss” and simultaneously opens space to question individuals’ authenticity (Povinelli 2002).

An Economic Niche

Here lies the source of ambiguity behind current popular views of *Cigano* moneylenders: While navigating their “dense financial lives” (Abramovay 2004: 21-67), people rely on *Ciganos* or other informal sources of credit that have recently proliferated alongside the formal institutions and have accompanied the process of financialisation of daily life. Moneylenders are a part of the current distributional regime. Both official and unofficial credit institutions tap into people’s bank accounts (the existence and functioning of which was stimulated by the state in the first place) or into the flows of money that are at least partially formalised (James 2012: 20-40). What is seen as *Cigano* trickery then, is not located at the threshold between “order” and “disorder”, as a classical reading of Brazilian tricksters would have it (Candido 1993), but is produced out of the system itself, which, characterised by an ever-increasing field of state intervention, regulation and formalisation, is redefining wealth flows and forms, while unsettling traditional regimes of value (e.g. a family name) and distribution (e.g. *fiado*) (cf. Roitman 2005). And when faced with nonnegotiable and non-optative obligations backed up by the state (in the form of court-ordered alimonies, *crédito consignado* and so on), and when in return for a loan, people give *Ciganos* cheques pre-dated for dates when their salaries come, they see *Ciganos* as benefiting from their own liability.

Just like in Keynesian England (Okely 1983) or socialist Hungary (Stewart 1997), then, *Cigano* economic activities emerge from within local economic circumstances. Similarly to Gypsies described by other anthropologists (see Gmelch 1986: 307-330), Calon in Bahia value autonomous ways of making money, *o negócio*. Although the term includes all sorts of buying and selling, at the time of my fieldwork, it referred primarily to lending money on interest “on the street” (*na rua*). As a young Calon in a small town near Salvador once told me, since Lula’s presidency it is difficult for *Ciganos* to do *negócios*, through selling and buying, and their only possibility is to lend money on interest. And concomitantly, *Cigano* has become a synonym for *agiota*, a moneylender.

As with Gypsies elsewhere, the Calon ideology of *negócio* is embedded in local history and culture. Judith Okely, for instance, argued that the preference for making “chops”, deals, and self-employment among the English Travellers, can only be understood in the context of industrialisation and the creation of the English working-class. Viewed from this angle, the Travellers represent those who refused to become proletarianised. Michael Stewart showed that the market ideology of the Hungarian Rom, even their way of dressing, can be understood in relation to, and as an inversion of, an ideology of a self-sufficient Hungarian peasant. Calon *negócio*, described in this thesis, is also contiguous to dominant ideology. The idiom of “the street”, or of the movement and stillness, reflect the use of these expressions in Brazil in general (e.g. DaMatta 1997a). It is characteristic of the ethics associated with “the street”, for instance, in that it ignores both productive labour and hierarchical appropriation. For instance, as Candido (1993) pointed out, Almeida’s nineteenth-century novel *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* that depicted the first street trickster (*malandro*) in Brazilian literature, leaves out slaves

or slave-owners. In other words, despite being based in Rio de Janeiro of the period, a *malandro* sidesteps and ignores the predatory and hierarchical social relations of the slavery that formed the basis of the extroverted economic and social system of the period, the system in which he was largely impotent (cf. Marino 1982: 211-234).

In the introduction, I used the term niche to describe this *Cigano* moneylending specialisation. On the one hand, I was referring to those studies of economic specialisation that tried to explain the specificity of Gypsy mode of making a living through exploiting temporary opportunities (e.g. Okely 1979: 17-34; Gmelch and Gmelch 1987: 133-153; Rao 1987: 1-32). On the other hand, I drew inspiration from Guyer's re-theorisation of the concept of the niche, which she sees as a named specialist production, with specific standards, expertise and definitions, fully embedded in the commercial economy (Guyer 1997; 2004: 173-191). Although normally the concept is associated with the images of natural adaptation or of dispersed customers waiting to be serviced, "the demand side", I focused mainly on "the supply side", that is, on ways Calons organise moneylending, how these activities fit Calon sociality and what conceptual apparatus related to this. In this way I wanted to avoid suggesting that there is any single cause for the rise of this specialisation but rather retain a sense of the niche's historicity and cultural specificity.

The increasing association between *Ciganos* and *agiotas*, builds, on the one hand, on the capacity of money to transgress and to negotiate distance and closeness through objectifying the external activities of the subject (Simmel 1990). Related to this move, through linking it to desires of others, money also stabilises personal identity in time and space and serves as a "memory bank" (Hart 2000). It is a way to extend towards "the

outside” and a way to produce “the inside”. Transactions between *Ciganos* and *gaje*, allow Calon to make money across the niche threshold, while the almost magical way of creating such unilateral flows serves for Calon to confirm the moral distinctiveness of their way of life.

The exchanges depend on established features *Ciganos* have in Bahia. When lending money Calon constantly try to redefine transactions as impersonal, manipulating the image of *Ciganos* as being outside of established social relations, especially those of social debt, which lie at the heart of the small town sociality. Guyer’s analysis also has the advantage of focusing on the importance of standardisations that this niche involves. Interest on loans to *juróns* on the street usually follows an established temporal algorithm, where smaller loans involve withholding of predated cheques or bank-cards and low monthly interest, while more spectacular loans usually are over longer periods of time and involve the transfer of collateral and higher interest. As long as the *Cigano* knows who one is (one’s familial, employment or home ownership status), loans are easy to get. All of them are backed up by promissory notes, by more or less explicit threat of physical violence and by the impossibility of borrowing later. This is what gives the niche its temporary stability, or “objectivity” (Simmel 1990), in the monetary world with its myriad credit institutions, credit forms and money flows.

My understanding of the term niche thus compares to the concept of “interstice”, which Pignarre and Stengers (2011) use to describe viable alternative modes of living within the present-day capitalism. According to them “[A]n interstice is defined neither against nor in relation to the bloc to which it nevertheless belongs. It creates its own dimensions starting from concrete processes that confer on it its consistency and scope,

what it concerns and who it concerns” (2011: 110). They draw inspiration from the science of materials, that “has learned to address them [materials] as the milieu for interstices, for faults, or fissures” (111). I see, for instance, Guyer’s (1997) description of competitive proliferation of interconnected niches in Yoruba economic life, or Roitman’s (2005) linking of pluralisation of economic activity to creation of ever novel unsanctioned forms of wealth generation at Cameroon’s moving frontier of wealth creation, as such milieus for interstices. As Pignarre and Stengers observe, interstices define what materials can do (e.g. what tension can be applied and when they breaks), but no single interstice has in itself power to cause do anything (2011: 111).

Creating The Inside

The niche or interstice presupposes creation of its own dimensions, and Calon use varied forms of monetary exchange – various types of loans that come with different names and standards and that specify relationships between parties involved – to constantly (re-)create “morally informed spaces of interaction” (McCallum 2003: 71). In other words, throughout the thesis I have shown how money – primarily through *rolos*, a term that figuratively stands for “deals” or “swaps”, but connotes a rotation or a disturbance of order – serves to create what Patrick Williams (2003) called (heterogeneous Calon) “gaps” or “disturbances” – *décalage*, in French – in the otherwise homogeneous world of the non-Gypsies. Thus predatory but risky loans to dangerous *brasileiros*, contrast with the conceptual impossibility of loans to one’s enemies (who are always Calon) and to unknown *Ciganos*. Deals, or *rolos*, as agonistic exchanges between men who jealously guard their autonomy, dominate one’s home range, within which one moves throughout

most of one's life and whence one's wife comes. "Help" accompanies emotionally charged relations with one's affinal relatives as well as gifts to one's children, while small subsistence loans that help households survive on a day-to-day basis characterise one's settlement. At the core of this linking of the social and physical space lies the dowry, which establishes households that form settlements and the existence of which also creates an imperative for Calon men to go onto "the street" and to multiply transactions especially with *brasileiros*. Calon assimilate the exchanges "on the street" that is dominated by *brasileiros*, and through linking this capacity to "bring meat" to other exchanges, they continuously produce the Calon inside.

The production of the distinction between what can be heuristically termed as the "inside" and "outside" seems characteristic to trader and middlemen communities, whose members, primarily by means of money, transgress localities and make a living through extending outwards. Polish Górale described by Frances Pine (1999: 45-60), for instance, like Bahian Calon, embrace money-making and do not consider money as anti-social. Nevertheless, while they stress individualism, trickery and even predation in their dealing with the outsiders (as traders, smugglers or bandits), they see house and village collectivity as the "a correct moral social order" and through disguise, subterfuge, rituals and so on, fend off any intrusion of the more powerful outside. Unlike the Górale, the Hungarian Rom who ideologically also foreground their capabilities on the market, do not preserve their inside through anchoring it in the past, through, for instance, farming familial lands in the region historically associated with them. For the Rom, who live dispersed among unfriendly *gadze*, this inside is more radically embodied. It focuses, for instance, on guarding proper gender and sexual relations between a trader and his wife,

which in turn are seen as determining one's relation to the *gadze* on the marketplace (see also Stewart 1997; Day, Papataxiarchis, and Stewart 1999: 1-24).

For Calon too, the management of moneylending to *brasileiros* is related to the character of households, settlements, or the impact of violence. After a man marries, he becomes responsible for providing for his household through making money “on the street” (*na rua*), primarily through loans to other Calon and especially to *brasileiros*. This capacity to seize and create such opportunities is sometimes glossed over as “making the future” (*fazer futuro*), the ultimate aim of which is to establish oneself (*estabelecer*) and to be respected. This is seen as one's strength, *força*, which is a level of potency as well as a capacity to impose on all demonstrations of manhood a sign of this potency – as a sort of generic value. One's *força* is made visible in egalitarian agonistic deals or card games with other Calon, in his reputation among *brasileiros* and in living surrounded by his closest family who are willing to stand up for him – after all the successful weddings of his children are the main proof of his efficacy. Money inscribes the space of this potency: small loans criss-cross settlements, deferred agonistic payments among equals constantly create moments through which Calon manhood can be forged, while loans to *juróns* are presented as a source of easy living reflecting one's skill.

“Money on the street” (*dinheiro na rua*), which is seen as a whole made out various loans repayable at different dates, creates the environment against which one's acts and relationships with others become visible, since this whole, characterised by the quantity of quality, registers any displacement of sums (Holbraad 2005: 231-254). This environment is individual and people constantly assess how a man behaves, whether he is willing to lend to his relatives or to pay for a huge wedding, in relation to the knowledge

they have of the money he has “on the street”. As Piasere argued, although one’s clientele, one’s “capital *gãgikãno*”, is important, the key concern are relationships between the Gypsies that are reproduced with reference to this “capital” (Piasere 1985: 143-146; see also 1986: 1-4).

Hence, if the neoliberal moment is characterised by decoupling production from social reproduction, whereby the latter is threatened, Calons, whose social reproduction was never based on fixed local relations and sources of authority, have used these new alignments to recreate themselves anew as Calons. The punctuation of temporality through events, especially times of repayment and renegotiation, which is seen as characteristic of the present-day era (Guyer 2006: 409-421; Piot 2010), is used as a tool to create an eventful present in which Gypsiness is constantly created. Bahia today, too, represents “the time of the Gypsies”.

Beyond Identity

Like Gypsies elsewhere, the Calons in Bahia thus creatively “react” to the situation “offered” (Stewart 1987: 364), a process which I described as a creation of niches or interstices. Here, the non-Gypsies can be seen as “nature” (Piasere 1985) or a “given” (Ferrari 2010) from which proper culture needs to be created and differentiated. In addition, because social relations in Bahia thwart any easy attempt at applying concepts of “ethnic identity” and “ethnic groups” (at least until recent state-led multiculturalism), the case of the Bahian Calons makes even more visible what other anthropologists have pointed out before: that the logic of the dynamics by which Gypsiness is created out of relation with non-Gypsies is internal to Gypsy sociality. Co-ordinately, the point of the

anthropology of Gypsies should be to describe how such transformations take place. For instance, Ferrari (2010) interprets Calon *vergonha*, as the structural transformation of a cosmology of pollution that lies at the core of claim of distinctiveness of various populations of the Roma (e.g. Silverman 1981: 55-70). This is not to say that there is something as the bounded Gypsy “culture” or self-identical reproduction. As Williams (2011: 43-56) points out, there are diverse tools of “amalgamation” and “separation” through which Gypsy “own culture” is created out of transformation of *gadze* elements. Here, even elements of the Indian “culture” should not be seen as “heritage” or “remnants” of the lost “wholeness”, but as witnesses to Gypsiness as it was created at the moment of interacting with the non-Gypsies on the Indian subcontinent (2011: 53). Such processes through which Gypsy “culture” is produced through assimilating *gadze* elements are not equivalent and some transformations can give rise to novel societal forms.

In some sense then the main question is not of Gypsy identity, which in any case seems a non-question from the Bahian point of view, but the *gadze* alterity, where *gadze* refers generally to the non-Gypsy “outside”. But not only are there different populations of Gypsies – in Brazil, for instance, known as Kalderash and Calon *caatingueiros* –, but viewed from the point of view of Gypsies, *gaje*, *juróns*, *payos*, *gorgios* and so on, with whom they interact and from which Gypsiness is created in each moment by a specific population at a given location, are also not the same. Piasere suggested as much when he showed that three groups of Gypsies can variously react to the same surrounding situation (Piasere 1992: 289; see also Zatta and Piasere 1990: 163-172; Grill 2011: 79-102). In Brazil, for instance, at the beginning of the twentieth century while Calon avoided state

authorities, the recently arrived Roma readily used them in their internal conflicts between in-laws (*xanamika*), and most interestingly in the same way as the Rom who migrated to the United States during the same period (Salo 1988: 25-41).

But if taken seriously, anthropologists cannot assume that processes such as industrialisation, loss of capability to make money through trading, or events such as wars will have for Gypsies -- who are focused on situational Gypsiness -- the same meaning as they have for the non-Gypsies, or that they will be assimilated in the same manner. To paraphrase Peter Gow (2001: 7-8), if Calon can take the punctuation of time through events and novel financial flows by which neoliberalism has inserted itself into people's lives as the very stuff from which they generate moments for Gypsiness and Calon sociality, "then clearly this history was no longer, in any meaningful sense, our common history".

For instance, the Calon I knew were not bothered about the end of "nomadism" and the itinerant trade with animals despite the proclamations of some journalists or activists. Of course, when asked directly, they would say that lives of "before" (*antes*) differed from today. But, unlike the activists and the journalist who see history as transcendental and somewhat external to the everyday (cf. McCallum 2000: 375-401), the split between "before" and "after" does not describe a movement of a group from A to B over time considered as transcendent; while the non-Gypsies tend to see *Ciganos* as one group among many, Calon do not imagine themselves as a group in the first place. Nor does it signify a loss (of "tradition") through acculturation, marking *Ciganos* in the present as somehow forever incomplete. For the Calon I knew, the discursive split between "before" and "today" served as a way to show respect to one's dead; ultimately

it was also the recognition of the necessity of change. The split thus called the attention to creating proper Gypsiness through individual behaviours in the present and: by associating the anonymous dead of the “before” with travel (*viagem*), Calon men engendered a chain of questions about dangers of “still life” for their Gypsiness. The threat of the fixed domicile, for instance, was countered with constant physical movement and circulating the money “on the street”.

To use Sahlins’ expressions (1985: viii), while the end of the demand for animals in the interior of Bahia or financialisation of the past two decades, might have been events “externally induced”, the emergence of the moneylending niche was “orchestrated” by Calon themselves. This “orchestration” is difficult to see, because unlike Captain Cook, *gadze* do not come in boats from outside. There is no “initial event” which created “the situation of contact” (Turner 1988), but, from the point of view of Gypsiness, *gadze* have *always* served as its “outside” (e.g. Zatta and Piasere 1990: 163-172). Today, Calon lives are fully embedded in the monetary economy, while their way of making a living is produced from the system itself through “symbolic refraction” (Viveiros de Castro 2011: 13) following a logic of transformation internal to Calon (Ferrari 2010). Here moneylending to *brasileiros*, deferred payments to Calon and technologies of monetary management, such as bank accounts and promissory notes, although continuous with non-Gypsy practices serve as tools for (re-)creating Gypsiness. And in this process, through attaining certain stability over time, a recognisable social form – a *Cigano* moneylending niche – emerges.

GLOSSARY

Throughout the thesis Portuguese and Romani (Rom.) words are defined the first time they appear. Below I provide brief definitions of the most important words and expressions, or those that appeared several times; I focus on usage most relevant within the context of my ethnography.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| acampamento Cigano | gypsy camp |
| agiota | moneylender; usurer |
| ajuda | help (verb: <i>ajudar</i>) |
| antes | in the past |
| aposentadoria | retirement benefit |
| atrapalhado | confused; misleading; disturbed; complicated (verb: <i>atrapalhar</i>) |
| barganha | exchange involving small things |
| bandido | criminal; an outlaw |
| besta | beast of burden; fig. a fool |
| bolsa família | conditional family cash benefit |
| cadem/radens (Rom.) | money |
| calote | unpaid debt or one acquired without any intention of repaying it (<i>tomar calote</i> – to accept a loss through an unpaid debt) |
| Candomblé | Afro-Brazilian religion |
| chibe (Rom.) | name for a form of Romani spoken by Calon |
| Cigano desconhecido | unfamiliar and potentially dangerous <i>Cigano</i> |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| cobrador | person who collects (e.g. debt payments) |
| colega | peer; comrade |
| Comunidade Tradicional | A community or a people defined by the state as “traditional” |
| corretor | middleman |
| CPF | <i>Cadastro de Pessoa Física</i> , personal identification number |
| crediário | system of sale on installments by commercial establishments; an account opened in such establishment |
| crédito consignado | loan from an official financial institution whereby a payment is directly deducted from one’s bank account |
| degreto | decree; in the past also sentencing people to galleys or exile |
| degredado | person exiled on the basis of a royal <i>degreto</i> |
| dinheiro | money; cash |
| direto | frank; open; honest |
| esperto | quick-witted and efficient person |
| empréstimo | loan |
| enrolado | complicated; bluffing (verb: <i>enrolar</i>) |
| estabelecer | to fix one’s residence, to install, to make oneself |
| família | one’s immediate family |
| farinha | starchy manioc flour, a local staple |
| fazendeiro | a proprietor of agricultural land; a farmer |
| fazer futuro | to open up and seize opportunities; to be active |
| fiado | bought or sold on credit |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| financeira | non-bank financial institution |
| feiticeira | sorceress |
| feitiço | spell; a charm |
| festa | party, festival or a celebration |
| força | strength |
| futuro | future; what is to come; destiny; luck |
| garantia | collateral |
| homem | man; masculine self |
| inimigo | enemy |
| juro | interest |
| laje (Rom.) | shame |
| letra | promissory note or a contract |
| liso | smooth; fig. without any money (see <i>puro</i>) |
| malandro | astute and conniving individual living by his wits |
| mascate | itinerant trader |
| moleque | black young man or a boy; a punk (an insult) |
| morto | dead; fig. incapable of achieving things (see <i>mulon</i>) |
| mulon (Rom.) | dead (see <i>morto</i>) |
| negócio | transaction; commerce |
| nota promissória | a promissory note |
| o povo | the people |
| original | original (e.g. product) |
| parado | without movement; inexpressive; without vivacity |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| paraguaio | counterfeit; smuggled from Paraguay; of low quality |
| parente | a relative |
| Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) | Worker's Party |
| perigoso | dangerous |
| pistoleiro | (hired) gunman |
| praça | public square; plaza |
| prazo | due date |
| prejuízo | (financial) loss |
| puro | clear; fig. without any money (see <i>liso</i>) |
| quilombo | maroon community |
| quintal | courtyard of a house |
| Real (R\$) | Brazilian currency |
| Recôncavo | the area around the Bay of All Saints, Bahia |
| respeito | respect; consideration; fear |
| rico | rich |
| rifa | raffle |
| rolo | confusion; rotation; disturbance; fig. a swap or a deal (see <i>negócio, troca, barganha</i>) |
| rua | street |
| São João | Saint John; the June festival |
| sem futuro | without future (see <i>futuro, fazer futuro</i>) |
| sertão | semi arid hinterland, backlands |
| sofrido | somebody or something that went through hardship |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| traficante | drug dealer |
| trato | agreement; agreement between two families to conclude a marriage |
| troca | swap; exchange of small things |
| turma | cohort; group of <i>Ciganos</i> used to camping together over a period |
| vagabundo | vagrant; person who leads disreputable life |
| valente | valiant, brave |
| vergonha | shame; fig. worth, honour (see <i>laje</i>) |
| vingança | revenge, feud |
| violência | violence |

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