

Assemblage, Occlusion, and the Art of Survival in the Black Atlantic

Matthew Francis Rarey

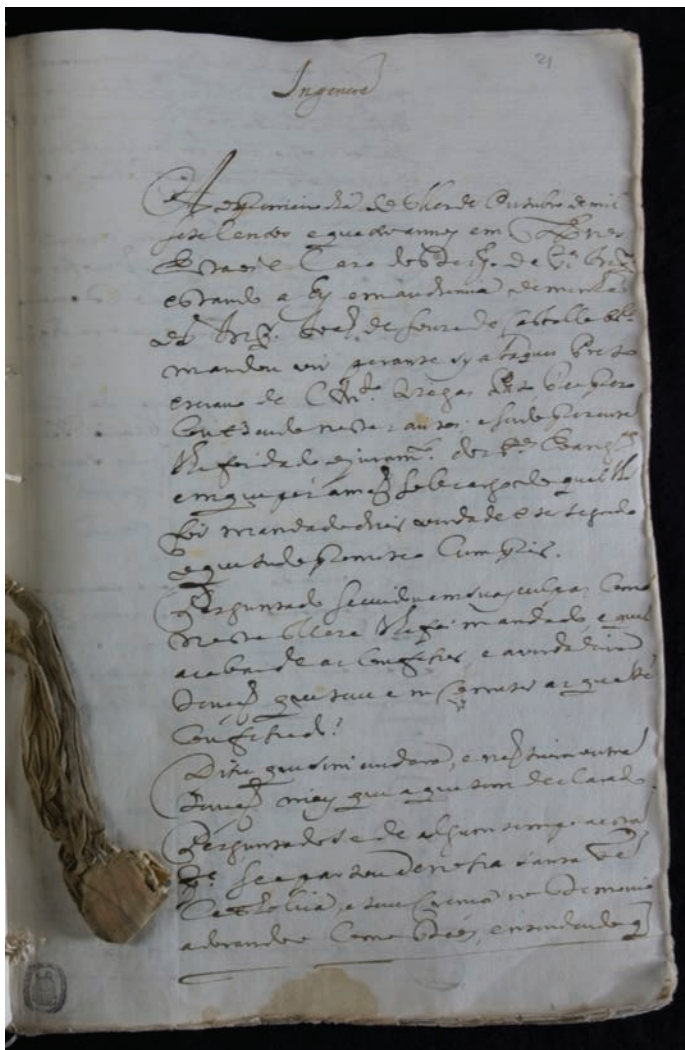
An archival abscess subtly warps the pages of a manuscript held at the Torre do Tombo National Archive in Lisbon, Portugal (Fig. 1). In 1704, agents of the Portuguese Inquisition sewed this object into the binding of the trial papers of Jacques Viegas, an enslaved “natural of Ouidah” about twenty years old.¹ Jacques had entered the Holy Office in June of that year, desperate to confess the sins that burdened him. Reaching into the cuff of his pant leg, he removed this small green fabric pouch and held it up for inquisitors to see.² It was because of this object, he stated, that demons attacked him, grabbing his limbs as he slept. Over the next four months, inquisitors interrogated Jacques about the object’s origins, construction, and use. Jacques explained that he acquired it from Manoel, another black man in Lisbon, who manufactured pouches that could protect their wearers from knife wounds, gunshots, and malevolent forces. Through an opened seam in the side, one can still glimpse the pouch’s contents: black hairs, seeds, cotton, and a folded piece of paper (Fig. 2). Manoel always filled his pouches with such empowered substances, later activating their potential through ritual incantations. The secrecy of their manufacture, however, contrasted to the spectacular public performances that confirmed their efficacy. In one case, Manoel put on one of his pouches and plunged a sword into his chest “with great force; but it did not hurt him, only bending the sword.”³ This proved to Jacques that it was no ordinary object: It was *mandinga*. To inquisitors, this term confirmed Jacques’s pact with the Devil. And so they sentenced him to an *auto-da-fé*, a public flogging, and three years of exile to southern Portugal.⁴ But while Jacques would never return to Lisbon, this object remains there, preserved inside the decaying pages used to imprison it and its owner.

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Between the mid-seventeenth and late eighteenth centuries, apotropaic objects called *mandingas* circulated in places like Madeira, Cape Verde, Brazil, Angola, and Portugal. These diverse regions were bound together by the governance of the Portuguese Empire and the movements of African ideas generated through the transatlantic slave trade, a system of transcultural destructions, flows, and reinventions scholars have come to call the black Atlantic world (Gilroy 1993; Matory 2005). Almost all information about these objects, including the only extant *mandingas* from this period, survives in the trial records of the Portuguese Inquisition.⁵ While these documents emerge from Inquisitorial efforts to both suppress and demonize the practice, Inquisitorial records also position *mandingas* as rich, and heretofore largely unexamined, archives of Africans’ experiences in the early modern black Atlantic.

For art historians, *mandingas*’ forms and uses present a series of definitional problems. Strictly speaking, *mandinga* described not an object’s form, but its function. While *mandingas* commonly protected their owners from violence, some could intervene in sexual and romantic relationships, or even allow enslaved persons to escape the oversight of their masters.⁶ And while their forms could vary widely, a *mandinga* was most often a fabric pouch (*bolsa*) into which empowering substances were placed. Used across all racial and social classes, these *bolsas de mandinga* were primarily produced and disseminated by enslaved Africans whose biographies crossed central and western Africa, Brazil, and often Portugal; Africans who—like the objects they made and disseminated along the way—spent their lives navigating, fighting, and reinterpreting a range of conflicting, even contradictory, visual and ritual practices.

To date, *mandinga* pouches have largely eluded scholarly scrutiny. Historians, who have often considered *mandingas* as symptomatic of colonial power relations (Sansi 2011; Souza 2003; Sweet 2003) or African resistance to slavery (Harding 2003), tend to characterize their contents as difficult-to-interpret transculturations or as efforts to mask or dialogue indigenous African beliefs with foreign influences (Lahon 2004; Calainho 2008; Santos 2008). Meanwhile, Amy J. Buono notes that art historians



1 Photograph of the *bolsa de mandinga* attached to the Inquisition trial record of Jacques Viegas (Lisbon, Portugal, 1704)
PT/TT/TSO-IL/028/02355, Direção Geral dos Arquivos Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, folio 21
Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

Bolsas de mandinga (“Mandinga pouches”) were apotropaic talismans used in Angola, Madeira, Brazil, and Portugal between the late 17th and early 19th centuries. Almost all information about these objects comes from the records of the Portuguese Inquisition, which actively suppressed their use after 1700. Pictured here is a *mandinga* pouch used by an enslaved Dahomean named Jacques Viegas in Lisbon in 1704. It is one of the few surviving examples.

2 *Bolsa de mandinga* attached to the Inquisition trial record of Jacques Viegas (Lisbon, Portugal, 1704)
Cloth, string; pouch measures 3.5 cm x 2.5 cm x 0.6 cm
PT/TT/TSO-IL/028/02355, Direção Geral dos Arquivos Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, between folios 20 and 21
Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

Mandinga pouches contained a variety of activating contents, which were often recorded during Inquisition trials. Visible through a small tear in the side of this pouch are folded papers, small stones, and black hairs.

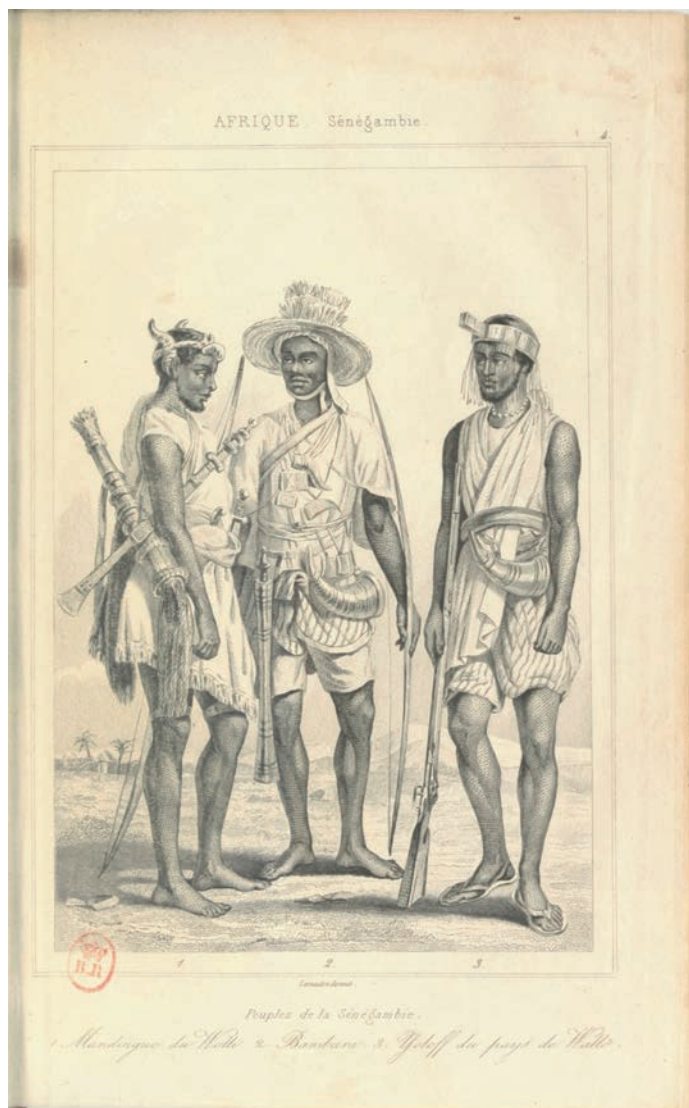
“have largely ignored the *mandinga* pouches, in which the more ‘artistic’ elements are hidden from view inside the pouch itself” (2015: 25–26). Both of these perspectives parallel *mandingas*’ reception in Portuguese Inquisition records, where declarations of insignificance, indecipherability, and diabolism accompany descriptions of the pouches’ contents. That parallel makes dedicated art historical studies of *mandinga* pouches all the more pressing.

In this essay, I argue that *mandingas*’ seeming indecipherability and visual banality are not just matters of current scholarly debate, but were their core aesthetic strategies. Principles of visual indeterminacy, occlusion, and assemblage governed the *mandinga* pouches’ production as a strategic innovation in response to systemic violence and ever-shifting cultural boundaries. By hiding their internal contents, *mandinga*-makers (*mandingueiros*) experimented with an ever-changing assemblage of carefully chosen activating substances. Paralleling their makers’ experience of dislocation and recontextualization, *bolsas de mandinga* contained an array of contents that interrogate cultural boundaries, religious orthodoxies, and artistic hierarchies. Their form, too, was strategic: small pouches blended in with preexisting amulets across central and western Africa as well as Christian Europe. Their small size and light weight also facilitated transfer from person to person. In this way, *mandinga* pouches embody a mobile version of what Cécile Fromont has termed a “space

of correlation,” where their makers explored cultural transformation and sociopolitical efficacy away from the oversight of masters, inquisitors, and other elites (Fromont 2014: 70). In what follows, I analyze the classification, construction, and use of select *mandinga* pouches in order to investigate the contributions they make to the study of African diasporic visual cultures. In so doing, I take as a conceptual thread the term “survival.” While this term alludes to Melville Herskovits’s (1958) foundational and often-critiqued searches for essentialized African cultural “survivals” in the Americas, here I intend the term to trace *mandingas*’ multiple, even contradictory, lines of cultural influence as representative of their makers’ search for safety and protection in a violent world.

MANDINGA BETWEEN ETHNONYM AND SORCERY

By the mid-eighteenth century, people across the African-Portuguese world used *mandinga*—the Portuguese rendering of Mandinka or Mande—to characterize any object that could help protect its wearer from knife wounds, bullets, and malevolent



3 Plate 4, “Peuples de la Sénégambie: 1. Mandingue du Wolli, 2. Bambara, 3. Yolloff du pays de Wallo,” in Amédée Tardieu, *Sénégalie et Guinée* (Paris: Fermin Didot Frères, 1847). Engraving
Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Tardieu’s engraving depicts Mandinga, Bambara, and Wolof men in early 19th century Senegambia wearing leather pouches, horns, and other amulets. Portuguese-language accounts describe similar practices in the region dating back to the early 17th century. For this reason, the Portuguese term *mandinga* eventually came to refer to other pouch-form amulets associated with Africans in Brazil and Portugal.

transformed it in new locales, here incorporating ram’s horns from established local spiritual practice in the process.

This integration of previously foreign practices baffled Portuguese authors, particularly when what they defined as Christian symbols were brought into the mixture. Donelha reported that he was “distressed” to see his acquaintance, the Mandinka youth Gaspar Vaz, “dressed in a *Mandinga* smock, with amulets of his fetishes (*nóminas dos seus feitiços*) around his neck.” But Gaspar explained that his Islamic dress was simply a strategy to win favor with his Muslim uncle, whose goods Gaspar was set to inherit. Lifting his smock, Donelha saw Gaspar wearing “a doublet and shirt in our fashion (*ao nosso modo*) and from around his neck drew out a rosary of Our Lady” (Mota and Hair 1977: 149). While Gaspar’s explanation satisfied Donelha, his sartorial practice can also be understood as an adept manipulation of religious symbols in order to appeal to different religious sensibilities. Responding to this problem around 1615, Manual Álvares decried the selective appropriation of Christianity in Senegambia, saying “All of them practiced, and had always practiced, a form of Christianity which concealed pagan ceremonies, for they only showed themselves Christian when in the sight of the padre, while in the Lord’s sight they were worse than heathen” (Hair 1990: 1). In this realm, pouch-form amulets, filled with Arabic writings and displayed on the body alongside local and Catholic symbols, were already agents of cross-cultural (mis)translation and conversion.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, Inquisition records indicate that *mandinga* was gradually being decoupled from its ethnic referent and morphing into a synonym for *feitiço*, from which derives the English term “fetish.” *Feitiço*, also spelled *fetisso*, referred to a range of invisible malevolent forces, as well as the material objects that controlled, manipulated, or counteracted them. This term, as William Pietz traced in a foundational series of articles (1985, 1987, 1988), emerged in the conflict between radically distinct, yet newly intertwined, social and cultural systems on the West African coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this context, certain material objects came to embody the impossibilities of cross-cultural translation. While Pietz does not explicitly mention *mandinga* pouches, they were nevertheless an early and exemplary “fetish,” so termed as it embodied the “problematic of the social value of material objects as revealed in situations formed by the encounter of radically heterogeneous social systems” (Pietz 1985: 7). In defining these objects as *feitiços*, Inquisitors and users alike spoke to their power as originating

forces. It is not clear exactly how or why this African ethnonym came to refer to apotropaic objects not sanctioned by the Catholic Church. However, a series of early seventeenth century Portuguese-language descriptions of the Upper Guinea Coast associated Mandinka Muslims with the use of leather amulets filled with orations written in Arabic (Monod, Mauny, and de Mota 1951: 9). While often chalked up to superstition and idolatry (Guerreiro 1930: 403), particularly concerning for the chroniclers was the pouches’ role in religious conversion between Islam and local practices. A 1606 account by Jesuit priest Balthazar Barreira describes how Mandinka Muslims in present-day Guinea-Bissau placed Qur’anic papers into leather pouches, then disseminated the amulets to spread Islam.⁷ And in 1625, the Cape Verdean traveler André Donelha reported how Mandinka Muslim priests (*bixirins*) spread “the cursed sect of Mohammed” in Guinean seaports by selling “fetishes in the form of ram’s horns and amulets and sheets of paper with writing on them” (Mota and Hair 1977: 161). Although, two centuries after Donelha, a similar confluence of these pouch-amulets, horns, and local talismans plays out the bodies of subjects depicted in Amédée Tardieu’s 1847 *Peoples of Senegambia* (Fig. 3). Here, the pouches’ capacity for cross-cultural translation cuts both ways, spreading Islam in ways that



4 Africa: divided according to the extent of its principall parts in which are distinguished one from the other the empires, monarchies, kingdoms, states and peoples, which at this time inhabite Africa William Berry (London, 1680)
Engraving with hand coloring; 57 cm x 88 cm
Photo: Courtesy of Northwestern University Libraries

This map's form and title explicitly divide and classify the continent's peoples, reflecting an early interest in delineating African cultural practices and identities. Note also the map's wide framing in order to depict the Brazilian coastline. Cartographers used this strategy to reinforce the geographic (and by extension cultural) proximity of Brazil to Africa.

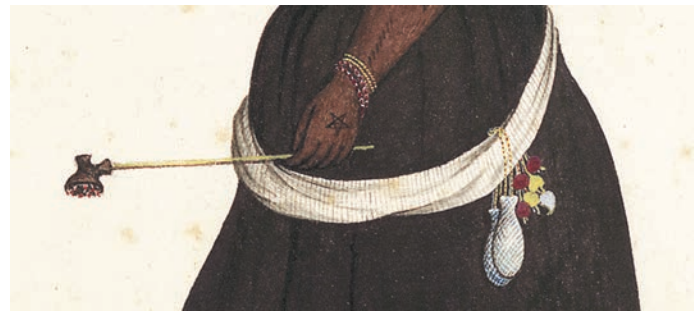
5 Detail of Figure 4, depicting Senegambia, Guinea, and the "Kingdome of Mandinga"
Photo: Courtesy of Northwestern University Libraries

from "the fixation or inscription of a unique originating event that has brought together previously heterogeneous elements into a novel identity" (1985: 7). Pietz thus raises a series of points relevant to consideration of *mandinga* pouches moving forward: First, that the constituent material elements of *feitiços*, and by proxy *mandinga* pouches, derive from (and implicitly accentuate) their heterogeneous, foreign origins. Second, that fetishes materialize debates about the constructedness of social values, i.e., that particular aesthetic and material forms are valorized or ignored by different people for different reasons. And third, that fetishes were not simply a European mischaracterization of African religiosities, but rather a theory of material relations that evolved and expanded as the Atlantic world matured.



Mid-seventeenth century Inquisition records increasingly mention enslaved Africans in Brazil and Portugal making and selling apotropaic pouches meant to protect from knife wounds. The first recorded case of an enslaved African using such objects in Portugal is from 1672, when a man named Manuel was accused of using a pouch tied around his wrist to protect himself from knife slashes, a theory he proved by daring a local cleric to stab him with a sword in a public square in Portugal.⁸ In his trial, Manuel's pouches are referred to not as "*mandinga*," but as "leather" (*coura*) and "pouch" (*bolsa*). Inquisitorial denunciations of *mandinga*-users increase in the decades after 1700, which likely reflects their increasing usage across the Atlantic world, as well as Inquisitorial suspicion over their use.

Such inquisitorial efforts to define and suppress *mandingas* and their users coalesce in the term *feitiçaria*, the accusation most often leveled against *mandingueiros*. *Feitiçaria* broadly defined the invocation and manipulation of *feitiços* (both material and



6 Untitled (“Black street vendors”), detail
From Carlos Julião, *Figurinhos de Brancos e Negros dos Uzos do Rio de Janeiro e Serro do Frio*. Brazil, last quarter of the eighteenth century
Watercolor on paper; 45,5 cm x 35 cm
Acervo Fundação Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Iconografia C.1.2.8, folio 33
Photo: Courtesy of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional

7 Detail of Figure 6
Photo: Courtesy of the Fundação Biblioteca Nacional

Archaeological and historical evidence suggests that enslaved Africans in Brazil, especially those in urban areas, utilized a wide range of amulets. In this watercolor, Julião depicts a variety of talismanic objects and symbols used by an African-born street vendor in Brazil, including a scapular, some medallions, and the five-pointed star drawn on the back of her hand. Since *mandingas* were defined by function rather than form, however, even the most explicitly Catholic symbols, like those shown here, could be *mandingas*.

immaterial), as well as other saintly and demonic forces, for particular ends. While often translated into English as “sorcery,” in Inquisition records the term is often analogized to, or even substituted for, *bruxaria* (witchcraft), *sacrilégio* (sacrilege), or *magia* (magic). Yet to many, *feitiçaria* often carried particular connotations of a special knowledge of unseen or hidden things, a kind of esoteric expertise which remained both elusive and feared.⁹ As such, *feitiçaria* was ambiguously defined as that which it was not, and throughout the first half of the eighteenth century it was usually deployed as an accusation as opposed to a self-description. As new practices came under the Portuguese Inquisition’s purview in the decades after 1700, then, the Portuguese Inquisition’s equation of *mandinga* with *feitiçaria* reflected an intellectual investment not only in the idea of a definable, and distinct, African religiosity, but also its inherent opposition to sanctioned Catholic practice. The first Portuguese-language dictionary, published by Raphael Bluteau, makes clear the initially dual definition of *mandinga* as both ethnic group and *feitiçaria*:

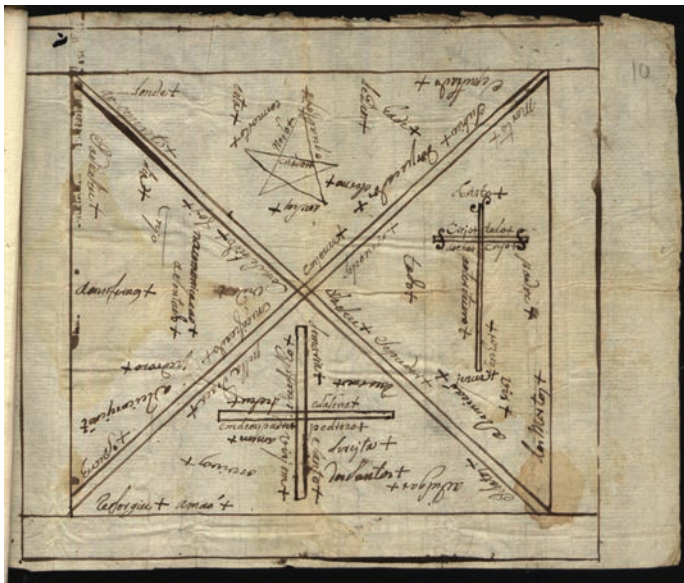
Mandinga: Kingdom and people of Africa, in the lands of the Blacks of Guinea, along the Gambia River ... the blacks of Mandinga are great *feiticeiros* [practitioners of *feitiçaria*] ... It appears that some pouches have taken [this] name ... with which [their users] make themselves impenetrable to knives, and with which they have experimented in this court and Kingdom of Portugal on various occasions (Bluteau 1716: 286).

While here Bluteau laments the influx of *mandingas* into the imperial metropole, he also seems to confirm their efficacy. In his writing, *mandingas* really do work to protect their wearer from

harm, an opinion that speaks to their broad popularity across African-Portuguese societies.

Ironically, the Portuguese themselves facilitated *mandinga* pouches’ spread across the Atlantic. Between 1694 and 1698, the annual arrivals of enslaved Africans into Brazil nearly quadrupled (Voyages Database 2017); and while *mandingueiros* during this period came from all racial backgrounds, *mandinga* clients seemed to prefer pouches from enslaved Africans who had spent at least some time in Brazil. However, no extant Inquisition record that discusses *mandingas* lists a defendant of Mandinka ethnicity.¹⁰ In other words, by 1720, “*mandinga*” was not only decoupled from an identifiable ethnic origin, but was applied to objects and people whose biographies crossed Africa, Brazil, and Europe (Sansi 2011: 23; Souza 2003: 134). The 1789 edition of Bluteau’s dictionary makes this explicit: The definition reads simply “*Mandinga*: African. *Feitiçaria*” (Bluteau 1789: 51).

The early 1600s debates over Mandinkas’ religious affiliations and the term’s gradual redefinition as a fetish object of unclassifiable or syncretic confusion, however, stands in contrast to the efforts to define Mandinga as an ethnonym on contemporary maps. William Berry’s 1680 map, *Africa: divided according to the extent of its principall parts*, labels both the lower-case ethnonym and upper-case “Kingdom” of Mandinga (Figs. 4–5). A small castle visually reinforces the “kingdom” designation, while a dotted line delimits its geographic boundaries. In this way, the map makes visible distinct African ethnonyms that can be classified by viewers. Even its title actively “divide[s] [Africa] into parts” “distinguished from one another,” while that classifying action is underscored by the colored dotted lines that delimit an



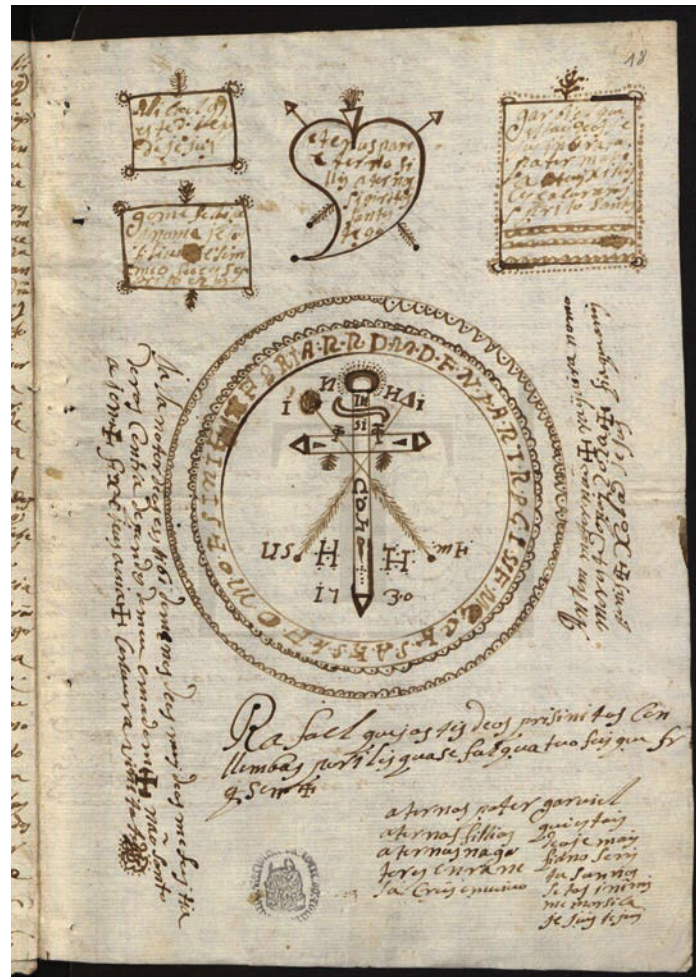
8 Paper attached to the inquisition trial record of Silvestre de Pinho (Santa Rosa, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, likely 1765)
Ink on paper; 14 cm x 17 cm
PT/TT/TSO-IL/028/00224, Direção Geral dos Arquivos Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, folio 10
Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

Written papers were common, and occasionally singular, inclusions inside *mandinga* pouches. This apotropaic paper, used by a sixteen-year-old free black man in 1765, depicts written scripts alongside common talismanic symbols of crosses and five-pointed stars. The paper's powers likely derived not only from the presence of these symbols, but also in their material transformation into ink designs.

9 Paper included inside a *bolsa de mandinga* made by José Francisco Pereira (Lisbon, Portugal, 1730)
Ink on paper; 33 cm x 30 cm
PT/TT/TSO-IL/028/11774, Direção Geral dos Arquivos Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, folio 18
Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

José Francisco Pereira, born in or near Dahomey around 1704, was arrested by the Inquisition in Lisbon in 1730. The records associated with his trial contain a series of papers once placed inside *mandinga* pouches he made. Here, visual allusions to devotional medals, coins, pendants, and scapulars empower this paper. Ink and writing continue to play a key role as well: Crosses potent punctuate orations, while two spears in the central design perhaps allude to the feathered quills used to make the designs themselves.

array of “empires, monarchies, kingdoms, states, and peoples.” The map’s wide framing, though, also makes visible the eastern coast of Brazil. A view that was meant to appeal to merchants and slave traders by showing the geographic proximity between the two regions, it also incorporates areas that, as *mandinga*-makers would acknowledge and inquisitors knew, were instrumental to the construction of *mandingas*’ seeming Africanness: Portugal and its Brazilian colony.



CONVERSIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE LIMINAL AND THE FOREIGN

By 1700, *mandinga* pouches had emerged as one of the most sought-after and effective talismans in the Atlantic world. But *mandingas* often functioned in conversation with a wide range of other protective amulets. Africans in Brazil utilized a mélange of tattoos, scarifications, jewelry, beads, amulets, and medals that Tania Andrade Lima, Marcos André Torres de Souza, and Gláucia Malerba Sene refer to as a protective and aesthetic “second skin” (2014: 104) in order to “seal the body” (*fechar o corpo*). A late-eighteenth century watercolor by Italian-born Portuguese colonel and artist Carlos Julião visualizes *mandinga* pouches’ role in this practice (Fig. 6).¹¹ The untitled image depicts a black street vendor in northeastern Brazil.¹² Framed against a sparse landscape, she balances a tray of fruit on her head while carrying a child on her back. In his rendering, Julião turns both her left hip and chest out from the image, which calls attention to the assorted amulets and talismans displayed on her body. Around her neck hangs a devotional scapular, rendered as a black square on a red string, which in practice would have been marked with images or prayers to a Catholic saint. Other objects hanging from her waist also speak to Catholic affiliations (Fig. 7). The yellow and red circles represent common brass and bronze medallions with images of saints and Christ. One is identifiable: A silver heart-shaped medal, at the far right, reproduces the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which by the early eighteenth century was well established as a popular Catholic devotional symbol (Kilroy-Ewbank

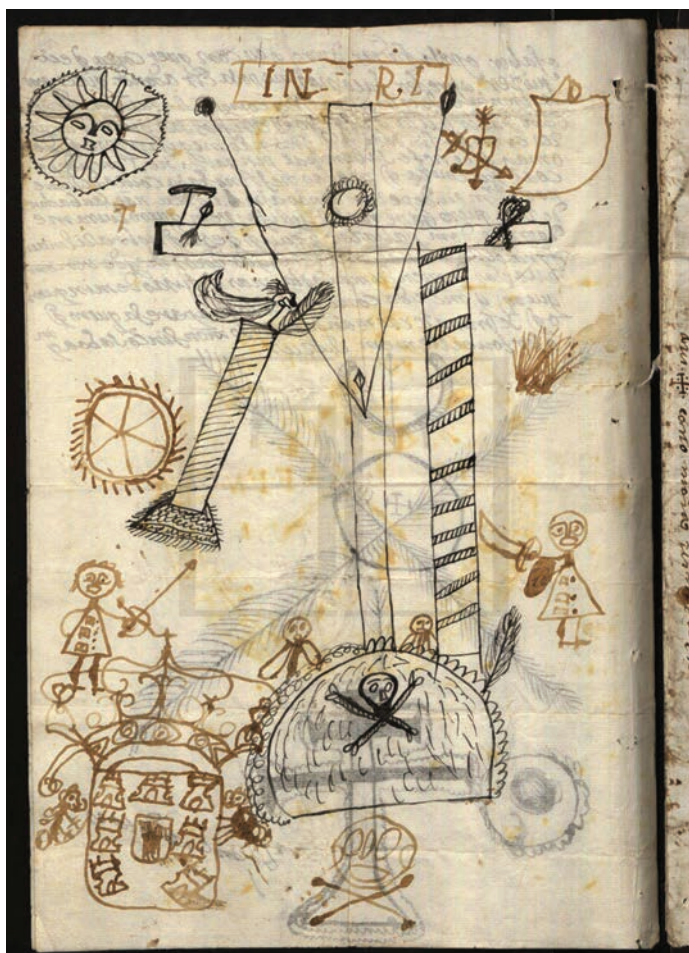
2014). In slavery-era Brazil, both scapulars and medals like these were popular among “new Christians” (*crístãos novos*), principally Jews and Africans who had recently been baptized by choice or force. “New Christians” were those most often denounced to the Inquisition on charges of sorcery. Such denunciations were occasionally the result of what Julião displays here: the close intermingling of orthodox objects like scapulars and medals along with other, sacrilegious amulets and apotropaic symbols on their bodies. A tattoo or drawing of a pentagram—a common occult and talismanic symbol—marks the back of the woman’s left hand, while two pouches hang from strings attached to the white cloth encircling her waist.

The pouches stand out in this diverse range of talismanic media for their seeming visual banality and ambiguity, key factors to *mandingas*’ subtle power. As the term *mandinga* described the function of an amulet, not its form, the display of amulets and apotropaic symbols on one’s body immediately posed questions about their potential powers. Teeth and cotton cords, for example, are among the objects described as *mandinga* in inquisition records, while pouches could serve other talismanic or even practical functions distinct from *mandingas*.¹³ As such, and perhaps most nefariously for inquisitors, the scapular rendered by Julião could also be *mandinga* and may only be distinguished from the pouches around his subject’s waist by an unseen ritual efficacy manifested through contents that remain invisible even as these objects are proudly displayed. In this way, *mandinga* pouches both hid and flaunted the esoteric knowledge of their makers, while also inviting speculation on the existence and form

of its contents. This strategic occlusion parallels Mary Nooter’s argument about certain African arts, as *mandinga* pouches’ powers partly derived from “the deliberate obstruction, obscuring, or withholding” of their contents (Nooter 1993: 56). Strikingly, this point parallels the performative discourse of *feitiçaria*, or sorcery, posing questions about the relationship between the esoteric aesthetics of certain African societies and the emergent discourse of sorcery in the early modern black Atlantic. Roger Sansi, for example, notes how sorcery more or less depends on a strategic withholding of a fully revealed truth, which “can be revealed only in part, precisely because it is occultation which makes sorcery powerful” (Sansi 2011: 21). The pouch plays a game with the viewer, constantly flaunting a potential hidden truth, but never fully granting its revelation.

Inquisition records seem to also play this game, revealing quick glimpses or descriptions of *mandinga* pouches’ contents, but almost never the logics behind them. Yet it seems that as *mandinga* pouches gained an increasingly diverse clientele in the decades after 1700, their makers also began to incorporate new kinds of contents into *mandingas*’ aesthetic arsenal, ones radically distinct from the Qur’anic papers on the Guinea coast. Three records from the first decades of the eighteenth century give a sense of the types of inclusions. In Pernambuco in 1719, Luis de Lima purchased a *mandinga* pouch containing three Catholic prayers, a piece of altar stone (*pedra d’ara*), and the bone of a deceased person.¹⁴ In Portugal in 1729 Pedro José owned a red cloth *mandinga* containing a “bone and some hairs,”¹⁵ while three years later Antônio de Sousa received a *mandinga* filled with horn, white paper, and some “red feathers from a Brazilian bird.”¹⁶ And in Angola in 1715, Vicente de Moraes received a *mandinga* pouch that contained “some Latin orations” and “a green thing that he did not recognize.”¹⁷

As they faced inquisitors’ questions, Luis, Pedro José, Antônio, and Vicente gave little information as to what they thought about the contents of their *bolsas*. But the collective contents they described provide a tantalizing cross-section of the logics behind *mandingas*’ production: a material assemblage which privileged unassuming, transformative, liminal, and foreign inclusions. Elements related to processes of conversion, whether religious or



10 Paper included inside a *bolsa de mandinga* made by José Francisco Pereira (Lisbon, Portugal, 1730) Ink and dried blood on paper; 33 cm x 30 cm PT/TT/TSO-IL/028/11774, Direção Geral dos Arquivos Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, folio 14v Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

In this paper—drawn in ink and blood—José Francisco reinterprets the *Arma Christi*, the collection of implements and visual references associated with Christ’s crucifixion. This symbolic grouping circulated on apotropaic medals and processional crosses during José Francisco’s time in Brazil and Portugal. José Francisco also incorporated his own adaptations, adding a Portuguese imperial crest at bottom left.

11 195: Pasión de Cristo

Image printed and distributed by Cromos y Novedades de Mexico, Sa de Cv, Mexico City, Mexico. Purchased at Original Products Botánica, The Bronx, New York, May 2015

Inkjet print; 21.5 cm x 28 cm

Collection of the author

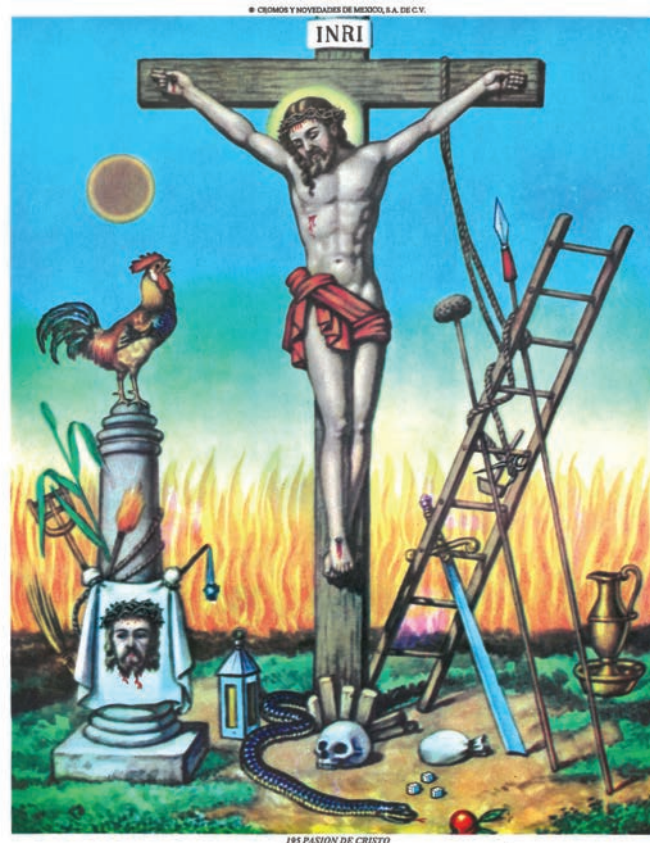
Photo: Matthew Francis Rarey

In the African-inspired religion of Regla Ocha or Santería, practiced throughout the United States and Cuba, the creator-being Olofi is commonly represented by this depiction of the *Arma Christi*. José Francisco's use of similar iconography (see Figure 10) is part of a longer history of identifying seemingly Catholic iconography with African-inspired religiosities. *Mandinga* pouches and their associated Inquisition records can both be understood material responses to an early modern black Atlantic world where such distinctions remained fluid, yet increasingly policed.

material, abound inside the pouches. Only through interaction with pieces of altar stone, for example, could the unconsecrated Catholic host transform into the physical body and blood of Jesus. Altar stones' ability to transform sterile wafers into divine flesh and blood exemplified *mandingas*' ability to sanctify seemingly quotidian objects, and thus would have been invaluable inside a pouch with similar goals. Meanwhile bones, another common inclusion, similarly cross the lines between life and death—just as *mandingas* must do in their effective work—while also mirroring the empowering inclusions in Catholic reliquaries. That such bones were often collected from cemeteries at midnight reinforces that their power derives from these liminal times.

Inside *mandinga* pouches, writing often played a key role. Papers covered in designs, orations, and prayers served, perhaps, to ensnare language's ephemerality by transforming it into ink and paper. For example, an apotropaic paper used by Silvestre de Pinho, a sixteen-year-old free *preto* (black man) in far southern Brazil in 1765, transforms medals, crosses, and tattoos into ink (Fig. 8).¹⁸ Creased from being folded, here it has been opened to reveal the symbols that transformed the paper into an empowered object. A pentagram like that on the hand of the woman in Julião's image appears once more, inked into paper just as it had been inked into skin—here again paired with a series of crosses. Each symbol intermingles with short orations and signatures, while small crosses, placed at seeming feverish random across the paper, seem as a kind of apotropaic punctuation mark.

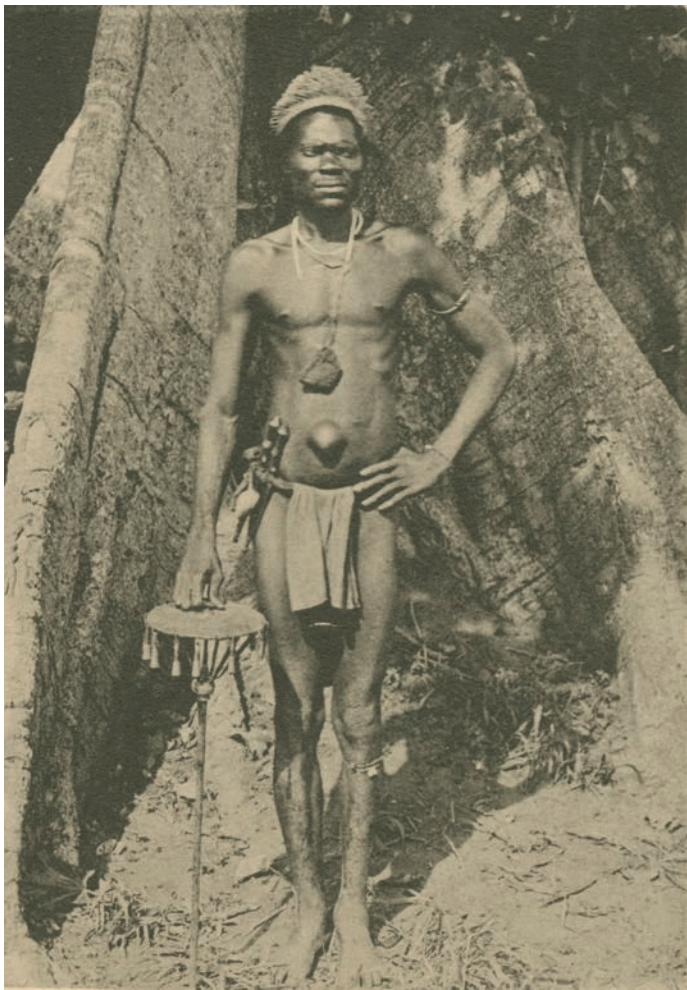
As receptacles for the foreign and the unknown, I also read *mandingas* as one way their makers tried to map, or archive, their personal experiences in a black Atlantic world predicated on cultural transformation and the destruction wrought by enslavement. The unassuming, liminal, and/or seemingly unclassifiable contents of some *mandingas* seem to be their makers' extended meditations on Michael Taussig's definition of witchcraft as a "gathering point for Otherness" (1991: 465). Coins, writing systems, religious symbols, and exotica from across the Atlantic world abound inside *mandinga* pouches. In this light, Brazilian bird feathers take on new potential meanings. Allowing freedom of movement through the sky and marking an origin point across the ocean, they



counter-reference the forced migrations of enslaved Africans' lives in the Portuguese Empire. This underscores how demonstrations of foreign origins emerged as constitutive elements of sorcerous power: Indeed, even the term *mandinga* alluded to a generalized foreign Africanity, and thus the particularly effective powers derived from foreign objects and places.

Building from an emphasis on the liminal, transformative, and the foreign, it seems *mandinga* makers often sought out objects that defied classification. Hairs, bones, and horns, all common inclusions in *mandingas*, resist clear definitions of use and aesthetic interest.¹⁹ By including these substances, *mandinga* makers continued to emphasize the secrecy of the knowledge they possessed: knowledge to carefully identify and harness the powers of quotidian objects and symbols through dynamic recontextualization. This point coalesces in Vicente de Morais's quick description of the "green thing he did not recognize," an object that was likely chosen not in spite of its visual illegibility, but because of it and the supernatural effects it visually conveyed. Illegibility thus worked as both a strategy of secrecy and of efficacy, an embodiment of sorcery discourse and perhaps, for the enslaved, a moment of escape from organized supervision and control.

As instruments of material and religious conversion, methods of capturing a fleeting and precarious life, and examinations of the power of the unknown, *mandinga* pouches both intervened in and encapsulated an increasingly diverse and interconnected Atlantic world premised on ebbs, flows, and instabilities. The *mandinga*, too, circulated through these realms, incorporating materials it picked up along the way. In this sense, *mandingas* map both personal experience of their makers and the entirety of the Atlantic world as experienced by the enslaved. But for the Portuguese Inquisition, the polymorphic spiritual practices



12 Dahomean Hunter
Plate 6 in Auguste Le Herissé, *L'Ancien Royaume du Dahomey: Moeurs, Religion, Histoire*, 1911
Image: courtesy of the American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

The pouches made by *mandingueiros* like José Francisco had visual and functional corollaries to empowered *bo* objects used in and around Dahomey since the 17th century. This hunter, photographed in the early 20th century, wears one such object around his neck.

displayed inside *mandinga* pouches exemplified a nefarious religious intermixture that undermined the stability of Catholic doctrine. Such confusion often resulted in the arrest and trial of *mandinga* makers, during which inquisitors dramatically opened *mandingas* in order to define and classify the internal contents that gave them such sorcerous power. Faced with this litany of transformative and liminal materials, however, Portuguese inquisitors often voiced either confusion or disinterest over the meaning of these substances. The conflict between visual occlusion, the ambiguities of heterodox Catholicisms, and the potential efficacy of the pouches' contents plays out most clearly in the practice of José Francisco Pereira.

JOSÉ FRANCISCO PEREIRA: A CASE STUDY

José Francisco Pereira, a *natural* of Ouidah, was arrested in Lisbon on charges of *feitiçaria* in 1730.²⁰ Born in Africa, enslaved in Brazil, and finally taken to Portugal, Pereira emerged as one of the most sought-after *mandingueiros* in Lisbon. His trial record contains the most extensive and detailed record of *mandinga* production in eighteenth century Lisbon. The trial record of his accomplice, José Francisco Pedroso, contains a series of seven drawings that Pereira had placed inside the *mandinga* pouches that emerged as evidence at his trial.²¹ From these, as well as the pair's descriptions, we can trace how Pereira's practice not only confounded an emergent distinction between *feitiços*-as-African and Catholic iconography, but also served as a space to forge the dynamic reinvention of his own ritual and religious experiences as potential challenges to the daily realities of enslavement.

At first glance, José Francisco's designs collectively display what inquisitors could identify as permissible Catholic iconography. In one of the three nearly identical images he produced (Fig. 9), José Francisco renders at center a cross, accented with the spear and staff topped with a sponge. At top, a heart symbol is pierced by two arrows, an image likely derived from the Sacred Heart of Jesus symbols discussed earlier. Meanwhile, the circular symbol at center derives from the wide range of devotional medals and coins-turned-amulets that circulated on the bodies of people across the African-Portuguese world.²² The two lines crossing on top of it represent the spear and sponge used during Christ's crucifixion, but here they are converted to feathered lines that evoke the feathered quill pens José Francisco would have used to create the designs: a moment of self-reflexivity, where *mandingas'* contents reflect on their own production.

In another image, drawn in black ink and red blood, he depicts the *Arma Christi*, a collection of objects and references to events related to Christ's crucifixion (Fig. 10). This grouping of symbols was used across Iberia and southern Europe as early as the ninth century (Berliner 1955; Gayk 2014). A cross, topped with the letters INRI, is flanked, at left, with Christ's flagellation pillar topped with the rooster that crowed upon Peter's third denial of Jesus. A ladder, at right, was used for the deposition of Christ's body from the cross, while the presence of a skull and crossbones below the cross was usually interpreted as the grave of Adam. Today, a chromolithograph of the *Arma Christi* is commonly used to represent the creator-being Olofi on candles honoring a group of seven *orichas* in the Afro-Cuban-identified religion Regla Ocha, or Santería (Fig. 11). While I am not arguing for a direct lineage between José Francisco's Lisbon image and the *Arma Christi's* use in contemporary African-identified religious practice in Cuba and the United States, the longstanding identification of seemingly Catholic iconography with African religiosities does ask us to trace the *genesis* of that distinction, particularly as it plays out inside *mandinga* pouches and in the pages of Inquisition records.²³ Indeed, Vanicléia Silva Santos has suggested that José Francisco's work acts at the intersection of "manifestations of Kongo and Catholic religiosities" (2008: 200), learned from central Africans in Brazil, who would have been familiar with, or practitioners of, particularly African understandings of Catholicism prior to their enslavement (Fromont 2014; Thornton 1984, 2016). This point would seem to be bolstered when one considers the strong establishment of central African ritual communities in early eighteenth century Pernambuco and

Rio de Janeiro (Sweet 2011: 61), two regions where José Francisco was enslaved while in Brazil.

José Francisco's trial record contains detailed descriptions of his life trajectory, allowing us to retrace or infer key aspects of his experience that may have influenced his personal practice. This helps to contextualize how he may have understood symbols like the *Arma Christi*, while also providing frameworks

13 Pendant in the form of a heart depicting the *Arma Christi*
Carving and setting of Italian crystal done in Iberia, 17th century
Rock crystal and gilt silver; 7.7 cm x 5 cm x 1.4 cm
Private collection
Photo: Reproduced with kind permission of Pedro Aguiar Branco,
Lisbon, Portugal

While this pendant's materials indicate it was owned by a person of means, its form and iconography were common to amulets used across all social and racial classes. José Francisco translated its shape and symbols into ink and paper designs inside of his *bolsas de mandinga* (see Figures 9–10).

14 Cruz de la Guia (Guild Cross) of the Hermandad del Gran Poder de Sevilla in procession
Photo: Miguel Ángel Osuna, 2015. Image owned and reproduced with kind permission of the Archivo de la Hermandad del Gran Poder de Sevilla; Seville, Spain

This processional cross, carved by Francisco António Gijón in Seville around 1716, was contemporary to José Francisco. José Francisco's *Arma Christi*-inspired *mandinga* drawings may partially derive not just from the symbols attached to this cross, but the experiences of controlled revelation and spectacular display under which he would have viewed them in the streets of Rio de Janeiro and/or Lisbon.

for interpreting the other material aspects of his *mandinga* pouches. José Francisco Pereira was born around 1704, likely in or near the Kingdom of Dahomey, during that kingdom's military expansion. Prisoners of war and others fleeing the violence made up many of those who found themselves captured and enslaved in coastal ports and eventually placed on ships bound for the Americas. Caught up in these changes around 1718, José Francisco was enslaved and sold out of Ouidah. Despite the political and regional diversity among those in the slave ship's hold, there were likely some broad commonalities uniting them, including language and a religious background based on the worship of *voduns*.

Dana Rush (2010) has cogently outlined the aesthetic principles of *vodun* worship as a dialectic between the “ephemeral” and the “unfinished.” Rather than binding its practitioners to a kind of ritual orthodoxy, *vodun* must necessarily and continually remain open to new ideas and influences. This is reinforced by the physical engagement practitioners have with *vodun* objects summarized as “assemblage” (Blier 2004): Altars must constantly be attended to with new offerings to replace the old; ephemeral assemblages must be destroyed in order to explode their activating potential; and each privileges the inclusion of previously foreign objects—new additions to *vodun*'s aesthetic that keep the religion vibrant, alive, and powerful. This aesthetic can be understood as a response to, and symptom of, the period and region in which José Francisco was enslaved. The Aja-Fon region in the early 1700s was characterized by political instability, famine, and disease, all of which contributed to the migration, and formation, of new ritual communities and their associated spirits. Though only a teenager at the time, one can assume that José Francisco left Africa with a broad understanding of a group of





15 Detail of Figure 10
Photo: Courtesy of the Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo

Using blood from a chicken or his own arm, here José Francisco drew the crest of the Portuguese Empire on a paper he once placed inside a *mandinga* pouch. This symbol was one of the most pervasive in his life: It decorated the fort in which he was imprisoned in Ouidah, the church where he was baptized in Brazil, and the Inquisition Hall where his fate was sealed.

ever-changing and demanding intercessory spirits; an emphasis on the role of ritual seclusion and secrecy in manifesting deities' power; a belief in the mutability and transformation of particular deities; and knowledge of the power of accumulative aesthetics to manifest the dialectical power of divine forces. José Francisco would use these as general frameworks for the broad spectrum of cultural experiences he developed in his practice.²⁴

One type of *vodun* object may play a key role here: “empowered” assemblages called *bo*, which held a range of protective and interventionist abilities in the Aja-Fon region. Intriguingly, *bo* come in a variety of forms with corollaries to later *mandinga* pouches, such as substances from the natural world tied in bundles and hung from the body (Fig. 12).²⁵ *Bocio*, the “empowered cadavers” that serve as sculptural corollaries to typically non-figural *bo*, provide another lens on José Francisco’s *mandingas*. In the opening analysis of her definitive work on *bocio* in Benin and Togo, Suzanne Blier describes the effect of one *bocio* where “a range of emotions seem to explode from within, the sculpture almost outgrowing itself and transgressing its own limits” (1995: 1). Such an aesthetic, Blier notes, serves as a material and performative manifestation of psychological ills, whereby creators literally dump the debris and weight of their lives onto a sculptural intermediary. Burdened by weights, shackles, and assembled matter, sutured together from the detritus of cultural trauma, *bocio* mirror the formlessness contained inside José

Francisco’s *mandinga* pouches. Blier convincingly relates the use of *bocio* figures around Dahomey as a way of working through the sociopolitical instabilities wrought by the internal and transoceanic slave trades. Understanding José Francisco’s *mandinga* pouches as a kind of *bo* or *bocio* provides a necessary perspective on the aesthetics of his own enslavement by attempting to work through a central problem he faced: José Francisco could not cast off his burdens onto a sculptural intermediary—he had to carry them with him, inside the objects he made, across the Atlantic. In one sense, José Francisco’s pouches worked to protect him from further violence and trauma, yet doing so necessarily incorporated that which he likely yearned to cast off.

We can only speculate as to what this mentality may have meant as José Francisco arrived in Brazil, where he was baptized a Christian and exposed to the symbols and orations of this new spiritual system. There, he entered into another religiously fluid world, where Catholic ritual and iconography could be incorporated into, and reimagined as, *vodun* worship. James Sweet notes a 1740 case, for example, where a group of enslaved and freed blacks in Pernambuco were found to be committing “abominable rites” before an image of Christ, laid on the ground and decorated with flowers—a ritual strongly suggestive of Aja-Fon temples from the early eighteenth century (Sweet 2011: 63). In turn, José Francisco would have likely recognized this fluidity of *vodun* worship across the other new images and ideas he encountered in Brazil, ranging from allusions to central African ritual, indigenous forms, and adapted Catholic imagery. Indeed, José Francisco had first learned of *mandingas* from another African named Zamita in Brazil. When he arrived in Portugal, José Francisco found that his African birth and time in Brazil already prepared him as a *mandingueiro*: “many Negroes beleaguered him,” he said at his Inquisition trial, “so that he would give them *mandingas*, for he must have brought some from [Brazil].” Using his background and knowledge as the basis of a new enterprise making and selling *mandingas*, he established himself as the head of a productive market for Africans in Lisbon. But this success came with a price, and José Francisco was arrested by the Inquisition in the summer of 1730.

While officially the Inquisition defined *mandingas* as equivalent to sorcery, the aesthetics of assemblage and transmedia that governed José Francisco’s *mandinga* production contrasted sharply with inquisitors’ investment in delineating orthodoxy and sacrilege.



16 Portuguese 3 vinténs coin
Struck in Lisbon during the reign of João V (1706-1750).
Silver
Collection of the author
Photo: Matthew Francis Rarey

José Francisco included silver coins inside his *bolsas de mandinga*, perhaps alluding to their frequent use as talismans or amulets. The small hole in this example indicates it was once used in this manner. In turn, the crest of the Portuguese empire on the coin's obverse resonates with the José Francisco's own representation of this design (see Figure 15).

This dialogue plays out in José Francisco's *Arma Christi*. In both Brazil and Portugal, José Francisco would have encountered the *Arma Christi* in a wide range of guises. Among other forms, it was manifest as a figural assemblage carried during Holy Week celebrations, as a small image on devotional manuscripts, or as a pendant worn on the body (Figs. 13–14). Oscillating among emblem, talisman, and relic, each of these forms emphasized ephemeral visions and controlled revelation over the institutionalized forms of religious experience that were treated with increased suspicion after the Reformation (Gayk 2014: 275). The *Arma Christi's* promiscuity across a range of media accentuated its transformative power, as it recast the instruments of Christ's torture into symbols of personal protection and redemption. As José Francisco saw similar pendants circulating through Brazil and Portugal, carried on the bodies of “new Christians” in conversations with other *mandingas* and scapulars, he adopted this symbol into his talismanic toolkit, especially given its apotropaic function.

José Francisco's trial record states that his *mandingas* also commonly included sulfur, gunpowder, flint, bullets, the bone of a dead man's finger, copies of St. Mark's prayer, and a *vintém*, a small silver Portuguese coin. While interpreting these substances is difficult, they collectively speak to his broad concerns and beliefs in the efficacy of transformative substances with seemingly otherworldly powers. Intriguingly, kaolin clay, sulfur,

and gunpowder are important substances both for graphic and ground writing in contemporary Kongo ritual practice in Cuba and Brazil (Martínez-Ruiz 2013: 74). While I am not arguing for a clear linkage between the two, their use potentially illustrates some of José Francisco's concerns. Quick-burning gunpowder is chosen for problems requiring immediate attention, and thus it is preferred in the physical protection of people; meanwhile, slower-burning sulfur is preferred for its effectiveness over a long period of time. The analogy, here, is instructive: Yellow sulfur, quick to offend the olfactory senses but slow to burn, imbues the *mandinga* with a long period of effectiveness; while gunpowder—itsself part sulfur and part charcoal, the burned remnants of organic matter—acts quickly and violently. Sulfur and gunpowder thus transform into fire with just a spark, a spark lit by the flint, which fires the symbolic firearm José Francisco completes inside the *mandinga* by including a bullet.

Operating as a sort of mobile *bocio*, José Francisco's *mandingas* contain metaphorical representations of the dangers they seek to protect from. Delving into this dialectic where everyday substances and symbols provide both protection and danger asks for a reconsideration of José Francisco's *Arma Christi*. While the symbols rendered in black ink seem to be general symbols of protection, such as the *Arma Christi* itself, the symbols rendered in red—specifically, blood from a chicken or José Francisco's arm—seem to be those José Francisco tries to inoculate against: soldiers holding swords, the skull and crossbones, and, strikingly, the crest of the Portuguese empire (Fig. 15). This symbol would have followed José Francisco everywhere across his black Atlantic odyssey. It welcomed him into the slave port at Ouidah. It adorned the ship that transported him to Brazil. It likely could have been found on the church in which he was baptized, on any number of public buildings in Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and Lisbon. And inside his *mandingas*, he chose to include it not once but twice: first on the *Arma Christi*, and second on the reverse of the small silver coin he also included in this *mandinga* (Fig. 16). This silver *vintém* bears dates from the

reign of João V, during whose reign José Francisco was enslaved in Africa, taken to Brazil, and finally put on trial in Lisbon. Made of silver likely mined in the Americas, sent across the ocean, and transformed into a new form that circulated among the bodies and institutions José Francisco navigated throughout his life, such an inclusion was not incidental to his accumulative aesthetics. A man enslaved and put on trial by Portuguese authorities, José Francisco may have wanted to redirect and reimagine the forces behind this symbol as he did for bullets and orations. In this way, José Francisco recast his own need for protection as the Inquisition's contradictory insistence on defining orthodoxy and sacrilege as it plays out inside the *mandinga*: an effort to make sense of, to process, the religious pluralism that the Portuguese empire had wrought.

CONCLUSION

José Francisco Pereira was not an African cultural preservationist. He incorporated new symbols and materials into a practice that worked through the powers in the objects representative of, and in response to, his enslavement; in this way, he sought to navigate the pluralistic realities of the African-Portuguese world. His pouches also adapted to new contexts and incorporated that which allowed them to survive. Their portability, dynamic incorporation of new elements, and occlusion of their own contents made *bolsas de mandinga* attractive ritual options for enslaved Africans. The sorcerous threat posed by these pouches rested, however, in their potential to incorporate challenging substances and invocations on the bodies of Africans, and to still do so even as inquisitors or prosecutors opened up and detailed their contents. By recasting the foreign as familiar, the dangerous as protective, and the seemingly Catholic as *feitiço*, pouch-makers opened the possibility that any object or symbol could be

empowered and turned against the intentions of its makers.

However, while in one sense I read the *mandinga* as a dynamic example of strategic African cultural invention and counter-hegemonic resistance in transcultural spaces, to stop there would be to overlook the *mandinga's* other central role: as a response to systemic violence faced by those who made and used them. While we will never know for certain, the bullets included by José Francisco may recall one of his own encounters with violence; in this sense, they become physical manifestations of what R. Ben Penglase calls the “in(security)” of its owner (2011: 412). Such insecurities similarly burdened Jacques Viegas when he burst into the Inquisition Hall in 1704. After surviving a knife fight in a church, he had been desperate to find something to protect himself from further harm. The *mandinga* pouch he was offered, though, turned against him. Leading demons to him, it eventually resulted in severe punishment and yet another forced exile, at least the third of his young life.

In the bowels of slave ships, in Brazilian plantations, and in Portuguese cities, enslaved Africans came into contact with new cultural practices and identity conceptions which they not only had to navigate, but often had to take up and make their own as a means of survival. The creation and adoption of new identities and religious systems, then, involved the erasure, often by violent means, of previous understandings of communal belonging, brought about by radical disruptions, interethnic conflicts, forced migrations, and population loss. In this world, a small, portable pouch offering protection from violence may have been the only tool at their disposal. Others who did not survive as long as Jacques Viegas or José Francisco Pereira have names that will never appear in inquisitorial records. They were likely never able to make the choice to form a new identity, interpret new symbolic languages, or to protect themselves with a small pouch.

Notes

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1 Portuguese slave traders referred to Africans born on the continent as “naturals” of their embarkation port. Calling Jacques a “natural of Ouidah” means he was sold to traders through that port city in the present-day Republic of Benin.

2 Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (hereafter ANTT), Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2355, f. 7r.

3 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2355, f. 7r.

4 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2355, f. 38r and 42r. An *auto-da-fé*, literally “act of faith,” was a public ritual of penance performed by those found guilty by the Portuguese Inquisition. Jacques's *auto-da-fé* was held in Rossio Square in Lisbon on October 19, 1704, prior to his flogging and exile. See ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Autos da Fé, Livro 7, f. 181r.

5 Calainho (2008) conducted an in-depth study of *mandinga* makers denounced to, and tried by, the Inquisition in Portugal. For a general history of the Portuguese Inquisition, see Marcocci and Paiva (2016).

6 See, for example, ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processos 502 and 15628.

7 ANTT, Cartório dos Jesuítas, Maço 68, Doc. 119.

8 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadernos do Promotor, No. 51, Livro 248, f. 283r-285v. Sweet (2009: 197) also discusses this trial.

9 For a nuanced overview of historical definitions of *feitiçaria* and its problematic translations, see Bethencourt (2004), who also notes that Raphael Bluteau's (1713: 63–64) Portuguese dictionary gives “primacy to the knowledge of hidden things among the motivations of *feiteceiras*” (Bethencourt 2004: 57).

10 Santos (2012) smartly corrects earlier speculations that *bolsas de mandinga* in Brazil and Portugal were produced by Mandinkas.

11 Though the originals are held at the National Library of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro, the plates are reproduced in full color in Julião and Cunha (1960). For an analysis of Julião's work, see Silva (2010).

12 It is likely that Julião intended this image to represent a West African-born woman. Julião incorporated a slightly adapted version of this image labeled *preta Mina da Bahia* [“Black [enslaved African] Mina Woman of Bahia”] in the lower register of his 1779 collage panorama, *Elevation and façade showing in naval prospect the city of Salvador, now held at the Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos e da Engenharia Militar in Lisbon*. Lara (2002: 137) argues that this designation implies the transatlantic and malleable identity of the fruit seller, who is “of Bahia” (thus underscoring her enslavement in Brazil) but remains “Mina,” an ethnonym which at this time was applied by Portuguese slave traders to Africans enslaved in and around present-day Benin.

13 In 1656, Crispina Peres Banhu, a *parda* (mixed-race) woman in Cacheu (present-day Guinea-Bissau) used cotton cords she called “*mandinga*” tied around her waist to facilitate childbirth: see ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 2079. In the 1720s, José, an enslaved African man in Porto, used a “*mandinga*” tooth: see ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processo 1630.

14 ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processo 1630.

15 ANTT, Inquisição de Coimbra, Processo 7840, f. 3r.

16 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Novos Maços, Maço 27, No. 41.

17 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 5477. For the full story of this case, see Pantoja (2004).

18 ANTT, Inquisição de Lisboa, Processo 224. Silvestre de Pinho was convicted of sacrilege for folding this oration around a *particula*, a form of consecrated host given to those receiving communion in Catholic masses.

19 Doris (2011), in his excellent study of Yorùbá aesthetics, makes a similar point in regards to the power of *ààlè* trash assemblages in southwestern Nigeria.

20 ANTT, Inquirição de Lisboa, Processo 11767. See further analysis of this trial in Mott (1988).

21 José Francisco Pedroso, also a natural of Ouidah, was enslaved to the brother of José Francisco Pereira's master. The two worked together to produce and sell *mandingas* to Africans in Lisbon.

22 On the use of coins as amulets in Portugal, see Vasconcellos (1900, 1905).

23 In his analysis of *mandinga* pouches, Sansi states that "the actual material components of these pouches ... were not necessarily African. On the contrary, they were often Catholic" (2011: 24). This framing is meant to open up interpretive frameworks for the pouches beyond slave resistance and African cultural preservation. I am indebted to Sansi's point, but note that the pouches themselves may have been one of the arenas in which this African vs. Catholic division was first contested and defined.

24 My argument here to an extent follows that of Lahon (2004) and my personal communications with Cécile Fromont, who also see José Francisco's practice as derived from *vodun* bases in Dahomey.

25 On these various types of *bo*, see Herskovits (1967, 2: 256–88). This argument parallels that of Sweet (2009: 197), who also sees *bo* as one line of influence for *mandinga* pouches made by Dahomeans.

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