

Cegos cantadores rabequeiros of Northeast Brazil: Manifestation of the Blind Poet-Singer and Blind Fiddler Archetypes

Jorge Linenburg
Académie d'Aix-Marseille
Jorge.Linenburg@ac-aix-marseille.fr

Abstract: This article addresses the poetic, musical universe of *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* [blind singing fiddlers] in Northeast Brazil. These performers expressed themselves through a poetics in which their circumstances as men deprived of vision and their instruments became themes that inspired their artistic creations. Such a manifestation incorporated the archetypes of the blind poet-singer and the blind fiddler, widely diffused both geographically and historically, as do the poetic, musical elements of two traditional figures from the same region: the blind man who begs for alms while singing and the northeastern *cantador* [singer]. Most of these *rabequeiros* depended on handouts to survive, begging in exchange for songs accompanied by the *rabeca* [Brazilian fiddle].

Keywords: Brazilian Fiddle, Blind Poet-Singer, Blind Fiddler, *Cantoria nordestina*, Archetype

Os cegos cantadores rabequeiros do nordeste brasileiro: manifestação dos arquétipos do cego poeta-cantor e do *blind fiddler*

Resumo: O presente trabalho corresponde ao estudo do universo poético-musical dos *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* do Nordeste brasileiro. Esses personagens se expressaram através de uma poética onde sua condição de homens privados de visão e seus instrumentos se converteram em temas que inspiraram suas próprias criações artísticas. Tal manifestação incorporou os arquétipos do cego poeta-cantor e do *blind fiddler*, amplamente difusos tanto geográfica como historicamente, bem como elementos poético-musicais de duas figuras tradicionais da mesma região: o cego que pede esmolas cantando e o *cantador nordestino*. A maior parte desses *rabequeiros* dependeu de doações para sobreviver, pedindo-lhes por meio de versos cantados acompanhados pela *rabeca*.

Palavras-chave: Rabeca brasileira, Cego poeta-cantor, Cego-rabequeiro, *Cantoria nordestina*, Arquétipo

1. Introduction

In 1937, Luís da Câmara Cascudo wrote in his now classic study on Brazilian folklore, *Vaqueiros e Cantadores*: “Many of the old cantadores¹ I knew, retired, living off small farms, without a voice and without history, kept the tradition of rabecas, of sad themes, performed before and after cantoria”² (CASCUDO, 2012, 194; emphasis added, our translation). To which the author adds: “with the challenges of the backlands, the only instruments are the viola [caipira] and the rabeca” (CASCUDO, 2012, 194 our translation)³. We can see from these words that although the rabeca was one of the instruments used in cantoria nordestina at the beginning of the last century, its use by then was practically already in disuse: the “viola is the great instrument for cantoria. Violeiro [viola player] is synonymous with cantador” (CASCUDO, 2012, 193).

In this same work by Cascudo, the figure of Fabião Hermenegildo Ferreira da Rocha (1848-1928), known as Fabião das Queimadas, is portrayed as the main representative of this “tradition” of rabequeiros cantadores. Cascudo also reproduces part of an image published in the first edition of *Cantadores* (MOTA, 1921, 33), in which Cego Sinfrônio and Cego Aderaldo appear seated side by side and each wielding their instrument, and standing in the middle, the author and folklorist from the state of Ceará, Leonardo Mota (CASCUDO, 2012, 194) (see Figure 1).

Given the profusion of cantadores violeiros, many of which have been well documented in terms of biographies, performances, and repertoire, this author was faced with an intriguing search for information of any kind whatsoever regarding the already rare rabequeiros cantadores. In addition to the three rabequeiros cantadores addressed in the two publications mentioned, we were able to add another three to the list. The first, Cego Ferreirinha, was documented in 1943 in the city of Fortaleza by the musicologist Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo from Rio de Janeiro. The two others are Cego Oliveira and his son Zé Oliveira.

¹ “*Repente* or *Cantoria [nordestina]* is a genre of sung poetry common to Brazil’s Northeast region. Its poets are called *cantadores*, *repentistas* or *violeiros*” (Sautchuk, 2011); also defined as “improvised sung poetry” by Crook (2009.) (Our translation.)

² Original Portuguese: “Muitos dos velhos cantadores que conheci, já aposentados, vivendo de pequenas roças, sem voz e sem história, guardavam a tradição das rabecas, dos temas tristes, executados antes e depois da cantoria.” The word *rabeca* was used until the beginning of the twentieth century to designate the violin taught in conservatories. In colloquial language, the word *rabeca* persists, defined as a violin built with more freedom, not following the standards established by the European luthiers.

³ Original Portuguese: “nos desafios sertanejos os instrumentos únicos são a viola e a rabeca.”

Figure 1: From left to right, *cantadores* Serrador, Cego Sinfrônio, Cego Aderaldo, and Jacob Passarinho. Standing in middle between the two *rabequeiros*, the author Leonardo Mota.



Source: Reproduction of an image published in the first edition of *Cantadores* by Leonardo Mota in 1921 (between pp. 32 and 33). Public domain.

The number of *cantadores rabequeiros* is very small compared to the known number of *violeiros*. However, my research – which involved visiting various archives, conducting interviews, and bibliographical research – draws attention to a striking fact: of the six *cantadores* who accompanied themselves on the *rabeca*, five were blind. It is known that the violin, to which the *rabeca* is closely related, and other bow instruments, are historically connected to blind musicians. This paper is the result of the first research study in which the object of study is the *cego cantador rabequeiro* of the Brazilian Northeast. I illustrate the art of these poet musicians through musical examples (score transcriptions) and verses, which are presented as a fusion between the *cantoria nordestina* (Northeastern sung poetry) and the *cantigas de cego* [songs of the blind]. We also discuss the association of the *rabeca*/violin to blind musicians, revealing that the existence of these artists in northeastern Brazil is related to the manifestation of an archetype represented in the visual arts since the seventeenth century, echoing more recently in literary and cinematographic works, e.g., *The Blind Fiddler*.

2. *Cegos cantadores rabequeiros*

The five *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*, object of this study, were born and lived in the state of Ceará. Dulce M. Lamas, a musicologist from Rio de Janeiro, expressed the difficulty of notating the music of the *cantadores* in her work *A Música na Cantoria Nordestina* [Music in Northeastern *Cantoria*, our translation], stating that a written aid is not capable of providing a faithful portrait of this music, especially of the sung parts that have an oratorical character (LAMAS, 1973, 238).

However, in this work, we chose to explain some of these *toadas* [tunes] and their instrumental interludes, called *baiões*, played on the *rabeca* to provide descriptive support for the music of *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*; but also, to bring to light the work of a few of these figures, like Sinfrônio and Ferreirinha, since their documentation is only accessible through research archives⁴. As explained by Travassos (apud RAMALHO, 2000, 81), the *toadas* to the songs do not have identical re-expositions, which was corroborated in this study. In such a way, the music transcriptions presented in this chapter invariably correspond to the melody sung in the exposition in the first stanza⁵. Another difficulty encountered during transcriptions was the written representation of moments when the *rabequeiros* used a double-string resource, in which case, I always transcribed the higher, top voice.

2.1 Cego Aderaldo

Having a wide repertoire, which included ballads, narratives from *folhetos de cordel* [corded pamphlets]⁶, *quadrinhas líricas* [lyrical quatrains], Brazilian *modinhas* and other songs (ARAÚJO, 1963; QUEIRÓS, 1973, 329; MOTA, 2002, 68), Aderaldo Ferreira de Araújo (Crato, 1878-Fortaleza, 1967), aka Blind Aderaldo (see Figure 2), became widely known both inside and outside the world of *cantoria*, because of his *desafio*⁷ with Zé Pretinho do Tucum from Piauí. Versed in sestets and tenths, the plot deals with a *desafio* between the blind man and a famous *cantador*, whom the first would win by proposing a tongue twister that the second would not be able to reproduce: “*Quem a paca cara compra/Paca a cara pagará*” (ARAÚJO, 1963, 65-67). The verses became extremely widespread in the world of *cantoria*,

⁴ I did not have access to the recordings made at Rádio MEC in 1949 of Cego Aderaldo. Currently, this radio station is part of the group Rádios EBC. I contacted the station's research center in an attempt to obtain information as to the documents on the *cantador* but received no response.

⁵ Due to the freer recitative character, I chose not to use a time signature in the transcriptions for the *toadas* of Cego Sinfrônio (Fig. 3.1) and Zé Oliveira (Fig. 3.5).

⁶ A regional literary genre, especially from the Northeast of Brazil, usually made up of verse incorporating popular language and themes.

⁷ Improvised sung poetry duels.

as exemplified in 1921 by *cantador* Jacó Passarinho from Mutuamba, Ceará, who included them to his repertoire (MOTA, 2002, 33-36).

Figure 2: Cego Aderaldo wielding a *rabeca*.



Source: Image fragment reproduced in Mota (1921, between pp. 72 and 73). Public Domain.

Apparently, there are few recordings of Aderaldo “in action”. Lamas (1973, 250-263) made some transcriptions on sheet music of recordings made at Rádio MEC while Aderaldo was visiting Rio de Janeiro in 1949. They are examples of *desafio de cantoria* performed with his partner and *violeiro* Domingos Fonseca. However, the *rabeca* is played by Cego's son, Mário Aderaldo. Consequently, there are no audio records of Aderaldo playing *rabeca*.

Aderaldo also added to his repertoire some quatrains in which blindness was the theme: “Who was born blind of sight / And from it did not profit / Not so sorry to be blind / As someone who saw and got blind” and “God gives you lots of money / God gives you lots of joy / May the coins be so many / Like dust in a sawmill” (Araújo, 1963, 137)⁸ and a song, *Porque sou cego* [Because I'm Blind] (ARAÚJO, 1963, 170). But it's in the sestets of *Ah, se o passado voltasse!* [Ah, If the Past Came Back!] that the *cantador* reconfigures his state of being deprived of sight, endowing it with highly poetic content, as exemplified by the following three stanzas taken from the poem (ARAÚJO, 1963, 158-163):

⁸ Original Portuguese: “Quem nasceu cego da vista/E dela não se lucrou/Não sente tanto ser cego/Como quem viu e cegou” e “Deus lhe dê muito dinheiro/Deus lhe dê muita alegria/Que as moedas sejam tantas/Que nem pó em serraria” (ARAÚJO, 1963, 137).

| | |
|--|---|
| “(...) <i>Ah! Se o passado voltasse! Como uma renovação De passado inesquecível Que gravo no coração Ainda teria o gosto De sair da escuridão (...)</i> | (...) Ah! If the past came back! Like a renovation From unforgettable past That I engrave in my heart Would still have the will To come out of the darkness (...) |
| <i>Ah! Se o passado voltasse! Me tirando dos abrolhos Deste mar tempestuoso De tenebrosos escolhos Eu encontrava a riqueza Que perdi com a luz dos olhos (...)</i> | Ah! If the past came back! Taking me out of the hardships. Of this stormy sea Of tenebrous cliffs I found the wealth That I lost with the light of my eyes (...) |
| <i>Ah! Se o passado voltasse! Me devolvendo o clarão Vendo as crianças amigas Ao meu lado no sertão, Dois olhos eram o meu guia E nunca um pobre bastão (...)” (ARAÚJO, 1963, 158; 161).</i> | Ah! If the past came back! Returning the gleam Seeing the befriended children At my side in the backlands, Two eyes were my guide And never a poor cane (...) (ARAÚJO, 1963, 158; 161). |

2.2 Cego Sinfrônio

Sinfrônio Pedro Martins (Itaitinga c.1880 – died Fortaleza, 1943), aka the Blind Sinfrônio (Figure 3), was a *cantador* by profession, having traveled extensively across the Northeast backlands and enjoying an enormous repertoire, which included ballads, *cantigas* [sung poems], and *desafios* (MOTA, 2002, 9). For some time, he partnered with the *cantador* João Faustino, codename Serrador [sawyer], with whom he performed on the streets and in the City Market of Fortaleza (MOTA, 2002, 9-26).

Azevedo recorded four instrumental pieces, two “*cantorias*” (improvised verses) and *Cantiga do Vilela* played by Cego Sinfrônio. Different from instrumental pieces, being tonal with a strong rhythm, the improvised *cantoria* songs are modal, with a recitative character and freer rhythm, making it difficult to put down in a score within a specific time signature. Lamas illustrates *Cantiga do Vilela*, in mixolydian, transcribed from the sound document obtained by Azevedo (LAMAS, 1973, 242).

Figure 3: Cego Sinfrônio with his *rabeça*, Fortaleza, Ceará, 1943.



Source: Photo by Luiz H. C. de Azevedo, archive of the Centro de Pesquisas Folclóricas, Ethnomusicology Laboratory, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

From the examples found for this study, it appears that Sinfrônio used the sestet in most cases. However, Leonardo Mota recorded two stanzas in quatrain of his *desafio* with Jacó Passarinho. Also noteworthy is the *Desafio de Jerônimo do Junqueiro com Zefinha do Cabochão* [*Desafio* of Jerônimo de Junqueiro with Zefinha do Cabochão], where Sinfrônio uses, in addition to traditional sestets and quatrains, stanzas with eight, ten, twelve and fourteen lines, in which the end of the even lines rhyme from the beginning to the end of the stanzas, and the odd lines are free (MOTA, 2002, 9-26). Both the two *cantoria* songs and *Cantiga do Vilela* that were recorded by Azevedo, Sinfrônio played the instrument in unison with the lines of the verses, playing the instrumental interludes with a stronger rhythm. Below is a transcription of a *Cantoria* recorded by Azevedo.

Music Example 1: *Toada* and instrumental *baião* melodies for the *rabeça* and a fragment of the text (third stanza) of the cantoria performed by Cego Sinfrônio, transcribed from the recording made by Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo in Fortaleza, February 5, 1943.

BAIANO DE RABECA

5 TOADA

9

13

17 BAIANO DE RABECA

“Aqui o povo aprecia
 Eu puxo pela rabeça
 Puxo por minha garganta
 Embora eu canse a munheca
 Do quê se põe em cantigas
 A garganta nunca seca”

Here the people appreciate
 I show [them] by the fiddle
 Show by my throat
 Although I tire the wrist
 Of what is put in songs
 Throat never dry
 (Literal, own translation)

2.3 Cego Ferreirinha

Another *cego cantador rabequeiro* recorded by Azevedo, also in Fortaleza, was Cego Ferreirinha (Crato, lived 1900 - ?) (AZEVEDO, 1953, 27) (cf. Figure 4). The recordings obtained by Azevedo demonstrate that Ferreirinha was a musician who expressed himself through the classical *cantoria* repertoire, but also through popular urban genres, particularly *modinhas*. As examples of the first case, Azevedo recorded lines of ten feet: *As florestas do sertão*, *Galope à beira mar* and *Parcela em desafio*, in addition to an ABC.

Figure 4: Cego Ferreirinha with his *rabeça*, Fortaleza, Ceará, 1943.



Source: Photo by Luiz H. C. de Azevedo, archives of the Centro de Pesquisas Folclóricas, Ethnomusicological Laboratory of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ).

Within the repertoire of urban popular music, Ferreirinha and his group provided Azevedo with several examples of *modinhas*: *Como criança*, *Cai a noite*, *Serena a madrugada*, *Adeus, Maria!*, *Por ti abandonei*, *Andorinha*, and *Vou embora pelo mundo, ó mulher!* Unlike Sinfrônio, but in keeping with the style of most *cantadores violeiros*, Ferreirinha did not usually accompany himself while he sang, but delegated this function to be played by the group's *viola* players. In *cantoria* songs, he plays instrumental interludes between verses, as illustrated by Music Example 29. The melody is modal, in C# doric.

⁹ In this example, the *rabequeiro* sings the verses alternating with his partner and *viola* player Vicente Feitosa. Only Ferreirinha's melody was transcribed to compare it with the other *rabequeiros* in this study.

Music Example 2: *Toada* and *baião de rabeça* and a fragment of a text (first stanza) of a *cantoria* song played by Cego Ferreirinha and his ensemble, transcribed from a recording made by Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo in Fortaleza, February 5, 1943. The symbol "?" indicate excerpts that this author was unable to understand from the text.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff is labeled 'Baião de rabeça' and ends with the lyrics 'Eu vou can-tar'. The second staff is labeled 'Baião Toada' and contains the lyrics 'mi-nha ter-ra Qu'eu a-in - da não can-tei Des-se ? ? de sau - da-de Des-s'a- mor qu'eu lá dei-xei'. The third staff is labeled 'Baião Toada' and contains the lyrics 'A mi-nha ter - r'a-do-ra - da No mei do jar - dim de fa - da De gran-de re - cor - da-ção A - que-la tar -'. The fourth staff is labeled 'Baião de rabeça' and contains the lyrics 'de de pro - sa Da ter - ra de - li - ci - o - sa Das flo - res - tas do Ser - tãõ'. The fifth staff is a continuation of the melody without lyrics.

“Eu vou cantar minha terra
 Qu’eu ainda não cantei
 Desse ?? de saudade
 Desse amor qu’eu lá deixei
 A minha terr’adorada
 No meio do jardim de fada
 De grande recordação
 Aquela tarde de prosa
 Da terra deliciosa
 Das florestas do Sertão”

I will sing my land
 That I still haven't sung
 Of that ?? of longing
 This love that I there left
 My beloved land
 In the middle of a fairy garden
 Of great reminiscence
 That afternoon of [pleasant] conversation
 From the delicious land
 From the forests of the Sertão [Backlands]
 (Own literal translation)

2.4 Cego Oliveira

Pedro Pereira da Silva (Crato, 1912-Juazeiro do Norte, 1997), better known as Cego Oliveira (see Figure 5), acquired his first *rabeca* in 1928, which he learned to play on his own between sixteen and eighteen years of age. He stated: “The life of a *cantador* was the best thing I've ever found”¹⁰ (LEANDRO, 2002, 23), expressing his inability to perform most of the manual labor in the context in which he found himself. Through verses, he poetizes the profession and his relationship with the instrument:

“Mas esta minha rabequinha
É meus pés, é minhas mão
É minha roça de mandioca
É minha farinha, é meu feijão
É minha lavra de cana
É minha safra de algodão

"But this is my little fiddle
It's my feet, it's my hand[s]
It's my manioc field
It's my flour, it's my beans
It's my cane plantation
It's my cotton crop

Quando eu entôo o baião
Eu canto, tenho desenho,
Brinco em qualquer salão
E chamando a lira vem
O que digo em minha boca
Rabequinha diz também”
(CARIRY, 1982, 148).

When I intone the “baião”
I sing, I have design,
I have fun in any salon
And calling the inspiration comes
What I say in my mouth
Little fiddle says too” (CARIRY, 1982, 148).
(Own literal translation)

According to Cego Oliveira himself, he had memorized more than 75 “rumances” [balads] (OLIVEIRA, 1992), such as *Preguiçoso*, *Pavão misterioso*, *Princesa Rosa* and *André Cascadura* (CARIRY, 1982, 147; Oliveira, 1992). However, Cego Oliveira’s repertoire covered various other genres as well. He sang several songs of benediction, such as *Nossa Senhora das Dores*, *Nossa Senhora das Candeias* and *Nossa Senhora do Socorro* (OLIVEIRA, 1992). He also played for a variety of rites of passage e.g., weddings, baptisms, birthdays, and funerals (OLIVEIRA, 1992), and traveled considerably, particularly in his state of Ceará, performing cantorias wherever he went.

Cego Oliveira had two albums released by Cariri Discos: the double vinyl *Cego Oliveira: rabeca e cantoria* (1992) and *Cego Oliveira: memória viva do povo cearense*, Vol. 2 (1999). Two tracks from the soundtrack *Nordeste - Cordel, Repente, Canção* (1975), from the homonymous film directed by Tânia Quaresma are played by Cego Oliveira: *O verdadeiro romance de João de Calais* and *Nas portas dos cabarés*, the verses of the latter were composed by Antônio Faustino. These pieces are among the most important for the dissemination of the Oliveira’s work (LEANDRO, 2002, 52-53), who was also the subject of

¹⁰ Original Portuguese: “A vida de cantador foi a melhor coisa que eu já achei.”

two short films released in the late 1990s: *Cego Oliveira no sertão do seu olhar* (MEIRELLES, 1998) and *Pedro Oliveira: o cego que viu o mar* (CARIRY, 1999).

Figure 5: Cego Oliveira with his *rabeca*, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, after 1987.



Source: Photo by Nirton Venâncio, Cariri Filmes Archives.

Below is a transcription of *Alguém disse que um amor vem de um aperto de mão*, performed by the master Cego Oliveira (Musical Example 3). The piece is in hypodorian mode, and the poetry portrays the substitution of the sense of touch for sight as a trigger for passion.

Music Example 3: *Toada* and *baião de rabeca* and lyrics of a *cantoria* played by Cego Oliveira from the album *Cego Oliveira* (1999). The original is a half tone lower.

Toada

Al-guém dis - se quô a - mor Vem de'um a - per - to de mão Eu as - se - ve - ro que sim Por qu'eu ru - ma'o-ca - si - ão

9

Baião de rabeca

A - per - tei a mão de'al guém Fi - quei lou - co de pai - xã - ão

17

*“Alguém disse que um amor
Vem de um aperto de mão
Eu assevero que sim
Porque eu numa ocasião
Apertei a mão de alguém
Fiquei louco de paixão*

*A paixão que me feriu
Feriu a ela também
O amor que eu tinha a ela
Ela a mim também tem
Quando eu, aqui, tenho saudade
Ela, lá, saudade tem*

*Nosso amor é um segredo
Só quem sabe é eu e ela
Mas como sou proibido
Em viver ao lado dela
Da saudade eu fiz correio
Pra levar carta pra ela*

*A saudade é mensageira
Quando um vai o outro vem
Quando eu aqui tenho saudade
Ela, lá, saudade tem
Quando ela, lá, tem saudade
Eu, aqui, saudade tem*

*Sinto nós não morar juntos
Para trocarmos boquinha
As nossas correspondências
São através das cartinhas
É a saudade trazendo
A lembrança dela e as minhas*

*Quando eu não suporto mais
A dor do meu coração
Corro e vou na casa dela
Dou-lhe um aperto de mão
Sinto amenizar um pouco
A dor do meu coração*

*Muitas noites eu perco o sono
Achando a cama ruim
Acordo, de vez em quando
Num pesadelo sem fim
É a saudade trazendo
A lembrança dela pra mim*

*Saudade, velha saudade
É melhor que você vá
Diz à minha queridinha
Que eu fiquei triste cá
Se Deus quiser, qualquer dia
Aparecerei por lá*

*Oh, saudade, diz a ela
Que não chore assim, demais*

*"Someone said that a love
Comes from a squeeze of a handshake?
I assure that it is
Because I on an occasion
Squeezed the hand of someone
Became crazy with passion*

*The passion that hurt me
Hurt her too
The love I had for her
She for me has too
When I, here, pine
She, there, pines*

*Our love is a secret
The only ones who know are she and I
But as I'm forbidden
To live beside her
From the pining I had a courier
To take a letter to her*

*Pining is a messenger
When one goes the other comes
When I am here, I pine
She, there, pines
When she, there, pines
I, here, pine.*

*I'm sorry we don't live together
To exchange kisses
Our correspondence
Are through letters
It's the pining bringing
Her memory and mine*

*When I can't stand anymore
The pain of my heart
I run and go to her house
Give her a squeeze of the hand
I feel [it] eases a little
The pain of my heart*

*Many nights I lose sleep
Finding the bed awful
I awaken, from time to time
In a nightmare with no end
It's the pining bringing
The memory of her to me*

*Pining, old pining
It's better that you go
Tell my little dear
That I became sad here
God willing, any day
I will appear there*

*Oh, pining, tell her
Don't cry like that, too much*

*Porque ela chorando tanto
Dá desconfiança aos pais
Nosso amor é descoberto
E não pode ficar em paz*

*Ela me pergunta: quando
O seu coração descansa?
Eu disse para ela:
Tem paciência, criança
Enquanto rentre a vida
Não morre a nossa esperança*

*Não há quem saiba o segredo
Da nossa grande amizade
Ninguém notou, ninguém viu
Eu temo uma falsidade
Só ficou para nós três:
Eu e ela e a saudade
(Só ficou para nós três:
Eu e ela e a saudade)"*

Because her crying so
Makes her parents suspicious
Our love is discovered
And you can't be at peace

She asks me: when
Does her heart rest?
I told her:
Be patient, child
While life lasts
Our hope does not die

No one knows the secret
Of our great friendship
No one noticed, no one saw
I fear a falsehood
Only the three of us remain:
Me and her and the pining
(Only the three of us remain:
Me and her and the pining)"
[Own literal translation]

2.5 Zé Oliveira

José Oliveira (Juazeiro do Norte, 1943 - Juazeiro do Norte, 2009), Zé Oliveira or Mestre Zé [Master Zé] (See Figure 7), was the son of Cego Oliveira. He learned to play the rabeca by listening to his father, and around the age of twelve he began to perform on the streets. Favored by the religiosity that marks his hometown, he participated in renewals and pilgrimages (LEANDRO, 2002, 33; CARVALHO, 2009, 314). Teaming up with the patriarch (see Figure 7), they played regularly on Saturdays in Juazeiro do Norte on Rua São Pedro and on Mondays at the Crato Street Market. After his partner's death, José continued to perform alone, but avoiding the streets.

Unlike Pedro, José knew fewer ballads: *Mariquinha e José de Sousa Leão*, *O capitão do navio*, *A Princesa Rosa* and *A menina perdida* (CARVALHO, 2009, 315). As far as anyone knows, he was the last cego cantador rabequeiro.

There are a few audio and video recordings where Zé sings along with the rabeca. Compact Disc 1 that accompanies the book *Rabecas do Ceará* (2009) by professor Gilmar de Carvalho includes the *Bendito de Nossa Senhora das Dores* (track 19), while Compact Disc 2, complete, but not published with the first edition of the book, includes two tracks played by the cego rabequeiro: *Abre a porta ou a janela* (track 1) and *Bendito de Nossa Senhora das Candeias* (track 33). In all pieces, Zé Oliveira plays the rabeca while singing while also performing instrumental interludes.

Figure 6: Zé Oliveira playing the *rabeça*, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, 2005.



Source: Photo by Renata Amaral.

Figure 7: Zé Oliveira playing along side of his father, Cego Oliveira, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, after 1987.



Source: Photo by Nirton Venancio, Cariri Filmes Archives.

The master of mamulengo [Brazil Northeast puppet theater], Carlos Gomide, known as Carlos Babau, lived in the same circles as José and made some recordings of him in 1987. Among them, a version of *Abre a porta ou a janela* and *Cantando nessa rabeça*¹¹ (Music Example 4).

¹¹ Carlos kindly provided me with a copy of these records.

Music example 4: Melody and lyrics performed by Zé Oliveira, recorded by Carlos Gomide in Juazeiro do Norte, 1987. “(1)” and “(2)” correspond to the two musical phrases of the melody.

1. *Can - tan - do nes - sa ra-be - ca Pa - r'o po vo'a-pre - ci-á _____ á A ca - sa tá chei - a de gen - te Pa -*

7 *ro po - v'a - pre - ci - á*

*“Tocando nessa rabeca
 Para o povo apreciá (1)
 A casa tá cheia de gente
 Para o povo apreciá (2)
 Esse é o artista do povo
 Já nasceu para rimá (2)*

Playing this fiddle
 For the people to enjoy (1)
 The house is full of people
 For the people to enjoy (2)
 This is the people's artist
 Born to rhyme (2)

*Já nasci para rimar
 Nas ondas do Cariri (1)
 Turistas do Ceará
 Eu já estou por aqui (2)
 Turistas do Ceará
 Eu já estou por aqui (2)*

I was born to rhyme
 On the waves of Cariri (1)
 Tourists of Ceará
 I'm already here (2)
 Tourists of Ceará
 I'm already here (2)

*As ondas do Cariri
 É terra da brincadeira (1)
 As ondas do Cariri
 É terra da brincadeira (1)
 Tem o artista do povo
 Que é o mestre Zé de Oliveira (2)
 Tem o artista do povo
 Que é o mestre Zé de Oliveira (2)*

The waves of Cariri
 Is a playland (1)
 The waves of Cariri
 Is a playland (1)
 There's the people's artist
 Who is master Zé de Oliveira (2)
 There's the people's artist
 Who is master Zé de Oliveira (2)

*O mestre Zé de Oliveira
 Deu vivas ao cidadão (1)
 O mestre Zé de Oliveira
 Deu vivas ao cidadão (1)
 Ele tanto toca rabeca
 Como toca violão (2)
 E também toca de pandeiro
 Chegando a ocasião (2)*

Master Zé de Oliveira
 Gave cheers for the citizen/people/guy (1)
 Master Zé de Oliveira
 Gave cheers for the citizen/people/guy (1)
 He so plays the fiddle
 Like he plays the guitar (2)
 And also plays the pandeiro
 When the time comes (2)

*Nasci pra fazer gravação
 Para o povo apreciar (1)
 Nasci pra fazer gravação
 Para o povo apreciar (1)
 Isso é o artista do povo
 Que gostará de penar (2)
 Isso é o artista do povo
 Sempre gosta de treinar” (2)*

I was born to make recording
 For the people to enjoy (1)
 I was born to make recording
 For the people to enjoy (1)
 This is the artist of the people
 Who will like to suffer (2)
 This is the artist of the people
 [Who] Always likes to practice (2)
 [Own literal translation]

In Music Example 4, the cantador varies the repetition of musical phrases: in the first two stanzas, phrase “2” is repeated, but not “1”, while in the third and fourth stanzas he repeats both. However, the verses can be repeated the same way, or slightly modified. The melody is in D major.

3. “Mixture” of *Cantoria nordestina* with *Cantigas de cego*

The *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* addressed in this study are all from the Northeast, Ceará, and their art is naturally expressed through the specific poetic, musical languages of this region. As will be discussed below, its manifestation features elements of *cantoria nordestina* and *toadas* or *cantigas de cego*.

3.1 *Cegos rabequeiros* and “*Cantoria nordestina*”

Cantoria nordestina has been studied and conceived by several authors as an artistical genre of “poetic music” (RAMALHO, 2000, 61). Originating in the Northeast region of Brazil, its main form of expression is the alternate singing of verses, improvised by two cantadores who accompany each other on the viola (MOTA, 2002, 6; TRAVASSOS apud RAMALHO, 2000, 54). Among the *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*, Cego Aderaldo represents the one with the greatest reputation as an improviser and is still remembered today as one of the greatest repentista artists in the history of *cantoria*¹².

On the other hand, solo presentations of ballads and narratives - from gestures of indomitable bulls, *cangaceiros* [Northeastern bandits of the sertão], and other bandits - also characterize the *cantoria* repertoire (CASCUDO, 2002, 173)¹³. This mode of presentation was strongly cultivated by Cego Sinfrônio (MOTA, 2002, 9; 19-26), Cego Oliveira (1992), and Cego Aderaldo (QUEIRÓS, 1973, 329; Mota, 2002, 70-76; 78-81).

With regard to poetry, the various genres are classified according to the number of feet (verses) in the stanza and the poetic syllables of these feet. Table 1, reproduced from Linemburg (2017, 118) summarizes the genres employed by *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*. The seven-syllable heptameter is quite common, among them, the ABCB quatrain formula is considered the oldest form of *cantoria*, being widespread as early as the late eighteenth century (CASCUDO, 2002, xv). Leonardo Mota transcribes several “lyrical quatrains”, recited

¹² The writer Raquel de Queirós, who lived in the same circles as Cego Aderaldo, expresses a contrary opinion (Queirós, 1973, 318).

¹³ Dulce M. Lamas speaks of “*cantoria repente*” and “narrative”, expressions that allow us to distinguish duo and solo performances, respectively (Lamas, 1973, 235).

or sung by Cego Aderaldo. The rhymes of these quatrains reflect the classical disposition cited but can also be structured as another: ABBA14 (MOTA, 2002, 68-70). Among the songs sung by Cego Oliveira, there are also some whose verses are also in quatrain such as *Leva eu, Corina* (OLIVEIRA, 1999, track 4) and *Serenou* (OLIVEIRA, 1999, track 5).

Table 1: Poetic genres of cantoria nordestina, used by cegos cantadores rabequeiros

| GENRE | NO. OF POETIC SYLLABLES | NO. OF FEET (VERSES) | RHYME FORMULA | CANTADOR |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Quadra</i> [quatrain] | 7 | 4 | ABCB | Aderaldo, Sinfrônio, Cego Oliveira |
| <i>Sextilha</i> [sestet] | 7 | 6 | ABCBDB | Aderaldo, Sinfrônio, Cego Oliveira, Zé Oliveira |
| <i>Quadrão</i> | 7 | 8 | AAABBCCB | Aderaldo |
| <i>Mourão</i> or <i>moirão</i> | 7 | 5 or 7 | AABBA, ABABCCA | Aderaldo |
| Versos-de-sete-pés [verses of seven feet] | 7 | 7 | ABCBDDB | Aderaldo, Cego Oliveira |
| <i>Décima</i> [dizain] | 7 | 10 | ABBAACCCDDC | Aderaldo |
| <i>Parcela</i> or <i>carretilha</i> | 5 | 8 or 10 | ABBCCDDC, ABBAACCCDDC | Aderaldo, Ferreirinha |
| <i>Martelo</i> | 10 | 6, 7 or 10 | ABCBDB, ABABCCB, ABBAACCCDDC | Aderaldo, Ferreirinha |

Source: LINEMBURG, 2017, p. 118

The genres with stanzas of six, seven and ten feet, which became the most common in the repertoire of *cantadores* throughout the twentieth century, all seem to have emerged after 1870, among them, the ABCBDB sestet is predominant (RAMALHO, 2000, 64; MOTA, 2002, 6; CASCUDO, 2002, xv; 2009, 20). The *cegos rabequeiros* did not avoid the standard and often employed this form¹⁵:

*“Era um home lavrador
 No lugar em que havia
 E fez a rocinha dele
 Entre um mato e uma ilha
 O legume que ele teve
 Num (sic) deu pra macacaria”*

He was a farmer man
 In the place that there was
 And made his little farm
 Between brush and an island
 The vegetable he had
 Wasn't (sic) enough for the monkeys
 [Own literal translation]

¹⁴ This formula, apparently uncommon among *cantadores*, is present in examples of verses sung in *desafios* by Portuguese shepherds from the sixteenth and 17th centuries (CASCUDO, 2009, 190-191).

¹⁵ For more examples of sestets played among *cegos rabequeiros*: Cego Aderaldo (Mota, 2002, 70; 71-76; 78-81), Cego Sinfrônio (MOTA, 2002, 9-10; 10; 11), Cego Ferreirinha (“ABC”, at ALE-UFRJ), Cego Oliveira (1999, track 3).

Many other poetic variants are found in *cantoria*¹⁶, but with regard to *cegos rabequeiros*, the *mourão* and the *quadrão* are worth mentioning here. In the first case, having a pair of *cantadores* is essential, as the formula for the stanza is linked to alternate singing. The *mourões* can be of five or seven feet. In the first type, *cantador* one sings the first verse, *cantador* two the second, to which *cantador* one completes the stanza with three more verses. In the second form, both the first and second *cantadores* sings two lines, whereupon, again, the first *cantador* closes the stanza with three lines. The rhyme formulas are AABBC and ABABCCB, respectively (CASCUDO, 2009, 182-183). A *desafio* employing the seven-foot *mourão* was held between Cego Aderaldo and Domingos Fonseca (PORTELLA, 2013, 105-109). An example of a *quadrão* is also registered in a *desafio* of these two cantadores having a AAABCCB formula (PORTELLA, 2013, 109-111).

The poetry of *cantoria*, although of an improvisational character, is also inspired by literary sources, as Cascudo has already called attention (2009, 14). Cego Aderaldo is the musician who serves as an example among *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*. He included in the version of the *desafio* with Zé Pretinho do Tucum, published in his memoirs of 1963, verses written by the poet Leandro Gomes de Barros, present in the cordel *O casamento do sapo* (PORTELLA, 2013, 39).

As for the themes addressed in the traditional manner of *cantoria*, Cascudo states that they can mostly be found in cattle cycles (*gesta de bois*) [epic deeds of oxen] and heroic *cangaceiros* (CASCUDO, 2002, 15). The first theme, *gesta de bois*, does not appear to be common among *cegos rabequeiros*, however, it is the version of *Romance do boi da mão de pau* performed by the *cantador rabequeiro* Fabião das Queimadas that the folklorist Cascudo includes in his *Vaqueiros e cantadores* (CASCUDO, 2009, 122-126). In relation to *cangaceiros*, we cite *Ai, Lampião, cadê tua muié?* by Cego Oliveira (1992, side B, track 2) in which Cego Aderaldo says he wrote the verses based on his supposed encounter with that same *cangaceiro* (ARAÚJO, 1963, 39-44).

In 1937, the year of publication of the first version of *Vaqueiros e cantadores*, Cascudo stated that the concept of love did not represent a common theme in the verses of these *cantadores*: “no *cantador* or *viola* player sings *modinha*. And *modinha* is love”¹⁷ (our translation) (CASCUDO, 2002, 17). However, both Cego Aderaldo and Cego Ferreirinha are important exceptions, as they include this song genre in their repertoire (AZEVEDO, 1953, 11; MOTA, 2002, 68). Cego Oliveira also sang love themes, as evidenced by the tracks *Sereno de amor* and *Dizem que o amor vem de um aperto de mão* (OLIVEIRA, 1999, tracks

¹⁶ For a more complete list of genera and variants, see Ramalho (2000, 64) and Cascudo (2009, 23).

¹⁷ Original Portuguese: “nenhum cantador e violeiro canta modinha. E a modinha é o amor.”

2 and 3). Cascudo refers to nature as an unusual subject among *cantadores*: “It will be said that the mention of the landscape denounces the cantador’s modernity”¹⁸ (our translation) (CASCUDO, 2002, 16-17). However, among the recordings made by Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo is *As Florestas do Sertão* by Cego Ferreirinha (AZEVEDO, 1953, 12; see Music Example 2). Another object of inspiration for the creation of verses peculiar to *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* is their own sight deprivation.

One of the first scholars to study the musical aspects of *cantadores* was musicologist Dulce Martins Lamas. In her work, Lamas discusses these elements and brings suggestions of transcriptions for some of the recordings obtained by Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo in Ceará in 1943 (LAMAS, 1973). As the researcher herself recognizes, it is obvious the great difficulty of faithfully fixing this music to the score where the sound recording provides the most faithful representation (LAMAS, 1973, 238).

Lamas states that music has a secondary role in *cantoria*, serving as a support for the poetic rhythm since it is most important to keep the meter of the text (LAMAS, 1973, 235-236), corroborating what has already been said by Cascudo (2009[1937], 132). According to this author, rhythm is everything; while *cantadores* will not notice being out-of-tune, they will notice singing out of rhythm (CASCUDO, 2009, 132-133). To Lamas, it is “useless to indicate the duration of time by a certain rhythm”, whose duration is derived from linguistic accents. Rhythm has an oratorical character, not reproducing the division imposed by a time signature (LAMAS, 1973, 264), which is particularly true for Cego Sinfrônio and Zé Oliveira, as illustrated in Music Examples 1 and 4.

As for the melodic aspects, there is a certain fundamental base melody, which is never repeated exactly in different stanzas. It varies according to unpredictable phenomena during the act of performance, such as the inspiration and emotion of the moment. The note pitches also do not comply with universal tuning standards, all of which contribute to making it more difficult to fix them in the score (LAMAS, 1973, 264). The melodies used in *cantoria* are traditionally modal. Cascudo expresses that the old ballads – such as *Boi Espaço*, *Boi Barroso*, *Boi Surubim*, *Vaca do Borel* –, at the time when they were still presented in quatrain, were “sung in a minor mode” (our translation) (CASCUDO, 2009, 118), which can be seen in the examples of Ferreirinha (Music Example 2) and Cego Oliveira (Music Example 3). On the other hand, Lamas provides three examples of ballads, all in a major mode (Mixolidian), including the transcription of *Cantiga do Vilela*, sung by Sinfrônio (LAMAS, 1973, 241-245). More recently, however, tonal urban popular music has influenced some *cantadores*, as the researcher Elba B. Ramalho has called attention, with examples

¹⁸ Original Portuguese: “Dir-se-á que a menção da paisagem denuncia a modernidade do cantador.”

from the Cariri region. According to Ramalho, in the 1990s, a mixture of modalism and tonalism was observed (RAMALHO, 2000, 77-81).

As for formal aspects, *cantoria* presents two clear sections that are interspersed: the *toada* (tune) and the *baião*, also called *rojão*, which is an instrumental interlude (RAMALHO, 2000, 76; CASCUDO, 2009, 202). The first corresponds to the melody used to sing the verses, while the second represents an instrumental rhythmic interlude (RAMALHO, 2009, 76). According to Cascudo, the *toada*¹⁹ has no musical accompaniment (CASCUDO, 2009, 200). This finding seems to correspond to the pattern used by most *cantadores violeiros*. However, Cego Sinfrônio played the *rabeca* in all the *cantoria* examples recorded by Luiz Heitor, as did Zé Oliveira.

Undoubtedly, the *viola* represents the musical instrument most associated to the figure of the *cantador* (AZEVEDO, 1953, 52; COUTINHO FILHO, 1953, 25; RAMALHO, 2000; CASCUDO, 2009, 195). As for the *rabeca*, Cascudo had already treated it, in 1937, as an instrument belonging to an ancient tradition (CASCUDO, 2009, 194), which corroborated Luiz Heitor on his trip to Ceará in 1943 describing it as “the second instrument of *cantoria*” (AZEVEDO, 1953, 54).

There is not much information about the *rabecas* used by the *cantadores*. Luiz H. C. de Azevedo says that Sinfrônio's *rabeca* was a “common instrument”, which can be interpreted as a violin made according to the standards of European luthiers. All three examples²⁰ observed by Azevedo had four strings tuned at intervals of fifths, like the violin, except for the fourth string of Sinfrônio's *rabeca*, tuned one step higher in A²¹. However, the pitches varied, like José Amâncio's, containing *viola* strings (two white and two *bordões* [heavy gauge]), tuned in E2, B2, F#3, C#4. Ferreirinha also used the tuning of the violin but altered it according to the tune he would sing, “up or down all the strings”²² (Our translation). (AZEVEDO, 1953, 54-55); however, Azevedo did not need the absolute pitches of Ferreirinha's instrument. This tuning pattern is also predominant in the region Zona da Mata [Atlantic Rain Forest Zone] of the state of Pernambuco, as pointed out by Murphy (1997, 157).

In the early decades of the last century, authors and folklorists such as Leonardo Mota and Luís da Câmara Cascudo called attention to the effects of modernity on popular traditions in

¹⁹ Cascudo refers to the *toada* as “*solfa*” or *solfège* in English (CASCUDO, 2009, 200).

²⁰ One of the three copies belonged to José Amâncio, who was not a *cantador*, only an instrumentalist (AZEVEDO, 1953, 52-53).

²¹ I highlight: “Na realidade, quando examinei essa rabeca [de Sinfrônio], ela se achava com afinação baixa; dava essas notas bemolizadas” [In reality, when I examined this fiddle (of Sinfrônio), it was tuned low; it produced these flattened notes” (AZEVEDO, 1953, 55).

²² Original Portuguese “subindo ou descendo todas as cordas”

the Northeast. They established a vast list of elements as being threats, or, at least, restricting *cantoria*: civilization, roads connecting isolated regions, electricity, automobiles, cinema, and newspapers, et al. (MOTA, 2002, 7; CASCUDO, 2009, 12). On the one hand, apparently and according to the prediction of these folklorists, there are no longer any *cegos cantadores rabequeiros*. On the other hand, *cantoria*, through *viola* players, continues to be expressive, undergoing transformations, incorporating musical and poetic elements (RAMALHO, 2000) and establishing itself in regions far from its origins (AYALA, 1988). *Cantadores* continue to occupy their usual venues – street fairs and markets, wineries, family festivities in the country – but also theaters in large cities (RAMALHO, 2000, 18) and even abroad, as illustrated by the *repentista* artist Geraldo Amâncio, who was invited to teach his art at the University of Coimbra, Portugal²³.

3.2 *Cantigas de cego*

Another poetic music genre that is reflected in the art of *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* is that of the *cantiga de cego* [blind sung poetry], characteristic in the Brazilian Northeast region, documented in several states, such as Paraíba, Ceará, Pernambuco, and Rio Grande do Norte (See Table 2, reproduced from Linemburg, 2017, 127-129). In *Música popular brasileira* [Brazilian popular music], Oneyda Alvarenga (1982) includes them among *cantos de trabalho* [work songs] (ALVARENGA, 1982, 266-268). Alvarenga also refers to these songs as *cantos de pedintes* [beggar songs], synonymous to their Portuguese origins, where begging musicians apparently represented, in the early twentieth century, a category composed primarily of the visually impaired (ALVARENGA, 1982, 267-268). She quotes Alberto Pimentel, who explains that, in Portugal, begging accompanied by music was a custom traditionally linked to the blind, as street musicians who could see were considered vagabonds (PIMENTEL, 1905, 10).

Among the *cegos rabequeiros*, Cego Ferreirinha is the only one for whom there is no evidence as to his status as beggar or street musician. Aderaldo Araújo reports in his memoirs that at the beginning of his *cantador* career he used to offer his singing house to house while obtaining provisions in the form of payment such as grain, flour, and meat (ARAÚJO, 1963, 14). When he moved to the city of Fortaleza in 1906, he says that, in the beginning, he sang “on the street corners”²⁴ [our translation]. (ARAÚJO, 1963, 23). Sinfrônio is described as a “*cego mendigo*” [blind beggar] by Azevedo (1953, 30). For the two Oliveiras, Pedro and José, the streets were also the main venue to perform and earn their livelihood.

²³ <http://www.vermelho.org.br/noticia/149725-1>, accessed on 04/07/2023.

²⁴ Original Portuguese: “pelas pontas de ruas”

Table 2: list of cantigas de cego

| TITLE | INFORMER OR COLLECTOR / PLACE (DATE) | RANGE | POETIC FORM | MODE/ SCALE | MUSICAL DEGREES AT THE END OF THE VERSE | OBSERVATION | SOURCE |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--------------|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº1</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca -CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 7 th , F# ₃ -E ₄ | sestet (?) | A hypodorian (M) | I, III, I, I, I, I | No text, but with six musical phrases | Mario de Andrade Archives, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº2</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca -CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 7 th , F# ₃ -E ₄ | sestet | A hypodorian (M) | I, III, VI I, VI, I | III is mobile; variant of no. 1 | Mario de Andrade Archives, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº 3</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca -CE (between 1928 and 1934) | 9 th , E ₃ -F ₄ | sestet | G hypomyxolidydian (M) | I, IV, I III, IV, IV | | Mario de Andrade Archives, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº 4</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca -CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 6 th , E ₃ -C ₄ | sestet (?) | G hypomyxolidydian (?) (M) | I, III, VI I, VI, I | III is mobile and the 7 th is missing; six musical phrases, but with no text | Mario de Andrade Archives, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>Meu irmão me dê uma ismola*</i> | | Minor 7 th , Eb ₃ -Db ₄ | sestet | D-flat (T) | VI, V, III II, II, III | | Braunwieser (2000, 475); Ribeiro (1992, 13) |
| <i>Tenha dó de um pobre cego</i> | Pedro de Maria Preta (blind)/Souza-PB (1920s) | Minor 7 th , D ₃ -C ₄ | sestet | C (T) | VI, V, III II, II, III | This one looks like a version of the previous one, with only slight rhythmic variations and a half step lower. | Ribeiro (1992, 56) |
| <i>Cantiga de cego</i> | Cego Pinheiro/Natal-RN (1964) | 11 th , G ₂ -C ₄ | sestet | A minor (T) | V, V, I (III), I, I I | | Melo (1977, 30-31; 73) |
| <i>O cego</i> | Leonel Silva/?Ceará (before 1928) | Minor 7 th , A ₃ -G ₄ | sestet (?) | C hypolydian (M) | V, I, I V, I | Told to Mario de Andrade by the musician from Ceará Leonel Silva; six musical phrases, but no text | Andrade (1972, 149) |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº 5</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca -CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 6 th , E ₃ -C ₄ | quatrain (?) | G hypomyxolidydian (M) | II, I | III is mobile; no text | Arquivo Mário de Andrade, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA- |

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | | | | | 110-3 |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº 6</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca-CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 7th, E ₃ -D ₄ | quatrain (?) | G hypolydian (M) | I, III, II, I | III is mobile; no text | Arquivo Mário de Andrade, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>Cantiga de cego nº 7</i> | Mozart de Araújo/Itapipoca-CE (between 1928 and 1934) | Minor 6th, A ₃ -F ₄ | quatrain (?) | C hypomyxolidian | IV, iii, VI, I | III is mobile with no text | Arquivo Mário de Andrade, IEB-USP, fólio MA-MMA-110-3 |
| <i>São Pedro me abra a porta*</i> | Mané Mulato (blind)/Pilar-PB (1938) | 8th, F ₃ -F ₄ | quatrain | D hypoaeolian (M) | V, V, V, III | | Braunwieser (2000, 474); Ribeiro (1992, 11; 52) |
| <i>Meu irmão que vai passando*</i> | Francisco Canindé (blind)/Catolé do Rocha-PB (1938) | 9th, D ₂ -E ₃ | quatrain | G hypolydian (M) | I, II, III, I | Alvarenga (1982, 268) provides a diverse transcription, in the rhythm, in some relative note pitches and in F# Lydian mode | Braunwieser (2000, 475); Alvarenga (1982, 268); Ribeiro (1992, 12; 49) |
| <i>Bendito de Cego</i> | Mário Mello/Ponte de Boa Vista-PE (1928-29) | 4th, C ₄ -F ₄ | quatrain | Few notes (C ₄ -D ₄ -E ₄ -F ₄), C as the <i>finalis</i> | I, III, I, I | Told to Mário de Andrade by the Pernambucan historian Mário Mello | Andrade (1987, 35-36; 193; 330) |
| <i>Riacho do Pade</i> | Cego Joca Cafundé/Pirpirituba-PB (1930s) | 8th, A ₂ -A ₃ | quatrain | C (T) | II, I, VII I, VII, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 14) |
| <i>O meu caminho é o céu</i> | Cega Belizária/Espirito Santo-PB (1920s) | 8th, C ₃ -C ₄ | quatrain | F (T) | II, I, II, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 16) |
| <i>Santo não bebe não fuma</i> | Ferro Velho (blind)/Areia-PB (1920s) | Minor 7th, A ₂ -G ₃ | quatrain | C (with no 7th) | IV, III, II, VI | Accompanied by the guitar | Ribeiro (1992, 20-21) |
| <i>Deus nos sarve, cidadão</i> | Chico Patativa (blind)/Piancó-PB (1920s) | Minor 7, E ₃ -C ₄ | quatrain | F (with no 7th) | | | Ribeiro (1992, 44) |
| <i>Oh, moço me dê uma esmola</i> | Cego Anônimo/Rio Tinto-PB (1940s) | 8th, C ₃ -C ₄ | quatrain | C (T) | V, V, V, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 26-27) |
| <i>Peço aqui, peço acolá</i> | João de Carminha (blind)/Esperança-PB (19??) | 9th, G ₂ -A ₃ | quatrain | C (T) | V, IV, V, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 33) |
| <i>Peço uma esmola</i> | Maria da Conceição (blind)/Barra de Santa Rosa-PB (1940s) | 8th, D ₃ -D ₄ | quatrain (pentasyllabic) | G (T) | II, I, II I, II, V V, I ⁺⁺ | | Ribeiro (1992, 39-40) |

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| <i>Quem trabaia Deus ajuda</i> | Anonymous Blindman /Conceição-PB (1930s) | Minor 9th, D ₃ -Eb ₄ | quatrain | F mixolydian (M) | III, III, I, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 55) |
| <i>Irmãos de caridade</i> | Severina Maria da Silva/Gurinhém-PB (1920s) | Minor 7th, G ₃ -F ₄ | quatrain | G aeolian (M) | III, V, I III, I, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 57) |
| <i>Venha cá, meus irmão</i> | Justo Serafim (blind)/Guarabira -PB (1920s) | 8th, D ₃ -D ₄ | quatrain | G (T) | IV, III, VI, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 58) |
| <i>Sinhô Deus</i> | Mané de Vitorina (blind)/Santa Rita-PB (1930s) | 4th, E ₃ -A ₃ | hymn (three phrases) | Few notes (E ₃ , F ₃ , G ₃ and A ₃), E as <i>finalis</i> | E ₃ , E ₃ , G ₃ | | Ribeiro (1992, 47) |
| <i>Miriri</i> | Joca Uburana (blind)/Sapé-PB (1930s) | 9th, D ₃ -E ₄ | song** (refrain and two phrases) | G (no 7°) | I, V, I, V | Accompanied by the bass drum and by his daughter who played reco-reco | Ribeiro (1992, 24-25) |
| <i>Renascer</i> | Paezinho Sanfoneiro (blind)/João Pessoa-PB (1990) | 9th, C ₃ -D ₄ | song** (six phrases and refrain) | F (T) | IV, V, III VI, I, III III, III, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 35-36) |
| <i>O pobre peregrino</i> | Joca Santana (blind)/Brejo dos Santos-PB (1930s) | 8th, D ₃ -D ₄ | song ** | G (T) | I, I, I I, V, V I, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 50) |
| <i>Amor de cego</i> | Antônio Lisboa (blind)/Mamanguape-PB (1920s) | Minor 10th, B ₂ -Eb ₃ | <i>modinha</i> ** | C minor (T) | VII, III, VI, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 28-29) |
| <i>Quisera ver-te</i> | João Azulão (blind)/Guarabira -PB (1930s) | Minor 9th, E ₃ -F ₄ | <i>modinha</i> ** | C (T) | III, III, V, III | Accompanied by the guitar | Ribeiro (1992, 41-42) |
| <i>Tu és o lírio</i> | Severino Formiga (blind)/Pomal-PB (19??) | 12th, B ₂ -F ₃ | <i>modinha</i> ** | E (T) | II, I, VI, I | | Ribeiro (1992, 45-46) |

Source: LINEMBURG, 2017, p. 127-129.

The conductor Martin Braunwieser (1901-1991) was part of the *Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas* [Folklore Research Mission], sent in 1938 to Northeast Brazil by Mário de Andrade, then Head of the Department of Culture in the city of São Paulo. The main objective was to document, through audio and video recordings, the popular manifestations of that region with a particular focus on music (SANDRONI, 2014, 55). One of the directions Mário gave to the group²⁵ was in respect to collecting songs from beggars, especially *benditos* [songs of benediction] sung by the blind (CARLINI, 2000, 165), to which Braunwieser revealed that he had dedicated special attention (BRAUNWIESER, 2000,

²⁵ In addition to Braunwieser, Luís Saia (architect), Benedito Pacheco (sound technician) and Antônio Ladeira (assistant) also were part of the team (SANDRONI, 2014, 56).

474)²⁶; Cego Oliveira and Zé Oliveira also had a few *benditos* in their repertoire: *Nossa Senhora das Dores*, *Nossa Senhora das Candeias* and *Nossa Senhora da Penha*²⁷.

From the material obtained during the mission, Braunwieser published what appears to be the first systematic study on *cantigas de cego*, in which he presented three examples transcribed on a score (BRAUNWIESER, 2000). Braunwieser claims to have encountered several blind people during his trip, including instrumentalists who neither sang nor spoke. And according to him, the most common instruments used by the visually impaired were: “accordion, violin, flute, *viola*, guitar, *cavaquinho* and several small percussion instruments” (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 474).

On the other hand, among those who sang, most did so without instrumental accompaniment (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 477). According to Braunwieser, those begging for alms by singing were also the minority among the blind beggars, perhaps less than a fifth of the total of those he observed. Consulting this group about why they beg when singing, they gave two reasons: the first was that singing is more expressive than speaking, and the second, singing attracted more attention, increasing the chances of earning money. However, they also did not always beg by singing verses (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 474-475).

Two other important works of reference in respect to the poetic, musical expression of blind beggars are the works of Domingos Ribeiro (1992) and the collection put together by the musicologist José Mozart de Araújo (1934). The first, entitled *Cantigas de cego*, brings a collection of a little more than twenty examples presented in score transcriptions and accompanied by the text. They were obtained in the state of Paraíba and collected mostly between 1920 and 1940. He usually provides information in respect to the names of these blind musicians and the municipality and precise location where they sang. Finally, Ribeiro also presents a few texts without the music, and also includes pictures of the blind music beggar.

Mozart de Araújo's collection is composed of seven melodies, which are located in the Archive of Mário de Andrade at the Institute of Brazilian Studies of the University of São Paulo, IEB-USP, and are deposited in a box named *Toadas de Cego* (MA-MMA -110, Box 183). In this box, there is a letter addressed to Mário de Andrade sent by the musicologist Mozart de Araújo dated November 28, 1934, from the city of Rio de Janeiro (folio MA-MMA-110-02). In this manuscript, the sender explains that he is sending melodies that he collected himself in Itapipoca, CE, during *novenas de São Sebastião*. He claims to have heard some

²⁶ These data refer to the work originally published in *Boletín Latino Americano de Música*, Montevideo, 323-329, 1946. This article uses the version published as an annex to Álvaro Carlini's doctoral thesis (2000, 474-479).

²⁷ In *Cego Oliveira* (1992), Disc 1, Side B, Track 4; Disc 2, Side A, Tracks 3 and 4.

of them accompanied by *viola* and others the *rabeca*. He adds that they can be sung “a seco” [literally dry, meaning a *cappella*?] by two or more voices in unison. In the text of the letter, Mozart de Araújo says that the timbres of the voices and choir and the hypolydian were two things that caught his attention (MA-C-CPMMA, 183)²⁸. Mozart de Araújo does not specify whether any of the people who sang and/or were part of the choir were visually impaired. This opens the possibility that *Cantigas de cego* may have been constituted into a genre that is not only cultivated by the blind, as it occurs in Galicia, Spain.

In his work, conductor Braunwieser says that expressiveness was what most impressed him in the singing of the blind. According to him, uniformity is evident: “almost everyone sings in the same way and with almost identical expression: it even seems that they use a single lyrics and melody” (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 475). However, acknowledging it himself, closer listening demonstrates that blind people tend to vary both the melodic lines and the verses. Braunwieser stated that the dominant poetic form used in the songs he had heard was the quatrain, rhyming in various ways with verses of between seven and nine syllables (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 475).

The songs gathered in Table 2 corroborate the seven-syllabic quatrain as the predominant poetic form. However, sestets are also well represented. The rhymes occur in the even lines, ABCB and ABCBDB, respectively, with a few exceptions that do not have rhymes in every stanza, as in *Deus nos sarve, cidadão* where the first quatrain applies the pattern and the other two are not rhymed (RIBEIRO, 1992, 44). As for the number of syllables, there is the example *Peço uma esmola*, which is penta-syllabic (RIBEIRO, 1992, 39-40).

According to conductor Braunwieser, the melodies usually remain within the range of an octave, with few exceptions (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 475). In general, this characteristic is also manifested in the examples of quatrains and sestets gathered in Table 2. On the other hand, among the songs and *modinhas* listed, only one has a range of an octave, *O Pobre peregrino* (RIBEIRO, 1992, 50), with all others exceeding this range. The examples of Cego Aderaldo in Lamas (1973, 250-263), demonstrate that this *cantador* always stays within an octave. All other *rabequeiros* considered in this research exceed this range.

Among the examples listed in Table 2, the thematic elements that beggars employed in the verses are often their own blindness, references to religious figures, and charity. The blind person's condition may be implied at the time of performance, but in the vast majority of cases it is explicitly manifested. This also applies to *rabequeiros*, particularly Cego Aderaldo, but also Ferreirinha and Cego Oliveira. Regarding religiosity, the names of saints, Jesus, Our

²⁸ All of this material was analyzed in Linemburg (2015, 69-73; 111-112).

Lady and God are constantly evoked, either to ask for alms or in thanks. The already mentioned *benditos* sung by the Oliveiras also demonstrate how religious elements are present in the repertoire of *cegos rabequeiros*.

The *pedido de esmola* [request for alms], or *de favorecimento* [of favor], is based on the moral, spiritual, and Christian quality of charity. Braunwieser divides the quatrains into two categories in terms of meaning: to ask and to thank (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 475-476). Older blind beggars found by this researcher had known several songs of the first type and a few of the second: “*sempre se precisa mais para pedir*” [you always need more to ask, own translation], revealed one of the blind men to Braunwieser. When they hear the noise of coins falling into their pan, they immediately stop the begging verses to sing verses of thanks (BRAUNWIESER, 2000, 476). As for this performative element among the *cegos rabequeiros*, the only known verses for asking and in thanks for the alms are those of Cego Oliveira. The first case is exemplified by the two stanzas with seven feet per line that introduce *O verdadeiro romance de João de Calais*, cited above. For the other, Cego Oliveira recited the following verses of gratitude, interrupting what he was singing:

“*Deus lhe pague esta esmola
Que me deu com alegria
Ganhe o reino da gulora
Com toda sua famia*”
(CARIRY, 1982, 150).

“[May] God pay you this alm
Which [you] gave me with joy
Win the kingdom of glory
With all your family”
(CARIRY, 1982, 150). [Own literal translation.]

Braunwieser (2000, 474) says that some of the blind beggars he found used to travel from city to city, remembering the dates of important festivals and fairs. Undoubtedly, these environments where crowds accumulate, gathered either for religious or commercial reasons, are extremely favorable to acquire some type of provisions.

4. *Rabeca* as an Instrument for the Blind: A Manifestation of the Blind Fiddler Archetype in Northeastern Brazil

Although the poetic music manifestation of *cegos cantadores rabequeiros* in Northeast Brazil reflects elements of the local culture, they can be understood in a more comprehensive way if interpreted as a manifestation of the blind fiddler archetype. The phenomenon of the blindness of poet singers represents a constant in the history of oral poetry. Spread throughout the world, it manifests itself archaically in the collective imagination (ZUMTHOR, 1983, 218), taking the form of an archetype (LINEMBURG, 2022). This term is used in

various fields of knowledge and has origins in the Greek *arkhétupon*, meaning “primitive model” (NASCENTES, 1955). In philosophy, it is used as a paraphrase to explain the notion of *idea* in Plato (JUNG, 2002, 16). In the realm of psychology, Jung applies it as a concept to describe specific forms that are ubiquitous and common to all epochs, the result of a collectively experienced hereditary process. He also states that this notion is intrinsically linked to that of the *collective unconscious* (JUNG, 2002, 53-54), with *archetypes* corresponding to the contents of the *collective unconscious* (Jung, 2002, 16).

One of the definitions of “*arquétipo*” [archetype] found in the *Dicionário brasileiro da Língua Portuguesa Michaelis* [Brazilian Dictionary of the Portuguese Language Michaelis] presents the term as a “*symbol or motif that recurs periodically in literature, music, and the arts in general*”²⁹ (MICHAELIS, 2015; emphasis added). Considering artistic phenomena as inextricably social creations, this description of the word emphasizes the recurrent relationship of the character of the blind fiddler (whether in the form of an artist or in the theme of a work of art) with its archetypal character and with several examples in the fine arts, literature, theater, and cinema.

Although *rabecas* make up a significant part of artistic expression in Brazil, it is in *cantoria nordestina* that they appear closely linked to blindness. Assuming the intricate relationship of these instruments with violins (LINEMBURG, 2015) and considering them both, it appears that blind violinists/*rabequeiros* have represented an extremely important cultural class in some European countries. In Portugal, this instrument was related to blind beggars (OLIVEIRA, 1982, 224; SARDINHA, 2000, 404-405); and in Spain, particularly in Galicia, until today, in addition to the hurdy-gurdy, it is an instrument that alludes directly to the blind³⁰. In France, there was a brotherhood of blind violinists in the city of Sarrant in Gers at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century (GILARD-FITO, 2002).

More evidence of the intensity with which this association of blindness and the violin manifested itself across the Old Continent can be found in countless examples provided by other artistic domains, in addition to music. In the history of the visual arts, the blind violinist emerges as a theme that has been portrayed since at least the sixteenth century. José Alberto Sardinha states that there are countless engravings created by Portuguese artists portraying blind singers who are accompanied by the fiddle dating from the nineteenth century (Sardinha, 2000, 404-405). In the survey of representations of blind violinists, carried out by Linemburg (2017, 60-68), more than fifty examples are presented spanning across a period of greater than three and a half centuries from the seventeenth century to the twenty-

²⁹ <http://michaelis.uol.com.br/busca?r=0&f=0&t=0&palavra=arqu%C3%A9tipo>, accessed on 04/07/2023.

³⁰ <http://www.consellodacultura.gal/asg/instrumentos/conxuntos-instrumentais/os-cegos-cantores/>, accessed on 04/07/2023.

first. The oldest image is the engraving *De blinde violist* (1631) by the Dutch artist Rembrandt H. van Rijn (Fig. 8), presented, in most cases, under the English name, *The Blind Fiddler*.

The titles of the vast majority of works are homonymous with that of Rembrandt, in English, or include the expression as an integral part of the title. Its free translation into Portuguese can be given in the form of “O cego violinista”, “O cego rabequeiro”, or even, “O cego rabequista”, as in the painting by the Portuguese José Rodrigues (Fig. 9). There are also versions in Spanish (*El violinista ciego*), Italian (*Violinista cieco*), French (*Violoniste aveugle*) and German (*Der blinde Geiger*).

According to Lucia Reily, some elements in the figurative representation of blindness can be identified by their recurrence in works of art throughout history (REILY, 2008, 252-253). Often, the title makes it clear that the musician being shown is blind. However, how the eyes are portrayed is of great importance. They may be blindfolded (as in the case of the aforementioned work by Rembrandt) behind dark glasses (*Blind man with a violin*, by Yehuda Pen, *Le violoniste et la petite fille*, by Boris B. Frenkel, and *Le violoniste aveugle*, by Frans Masereel), closed (*The Blind Homer*, by Mattia Preti, *O cego rabequista*, by José Rodrigues, and most of the others), whitish (*Violinista cieco*, by Pier Leone Ghezzi); or even the absent and empty gaze (*The Blind Fiddler*, by Willem van Herp).

Figure 8: *De blinde violist* by Rembrandt H. van Rijn, 1631, etching, printed on paper, 78 x 53 mm.



Source: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Public domain.

Reily also cites other characteristic elements in the composition of the images, such as the presence of a cane and an assistant, which can be a person or a dog. Of the works listed in Table 3, those by Adrien Jorel and John Robertson Reid (Fig. 10) include all three. A cane or a stick are present in some of the examples, whether beside the musician or being used for mobility. In the painting by David W. Haddon, it hangs from the left forearm, over which the leash that secures the animal is tied.

The dog is present in many of the works, such as those by Rembrandt, Jan Victors, Walter Geikie, William Meade Prince and many others. The dog is also present in the works of David Wilkie and George John Pinwell, but they are not close enough to the blind violinist to affirm whether it represents his guide.

As for the accompanying persons, in most cases, there is a young girl, as in the paintings of Claude Bonnefond, François-Alfred Delobbe, José Rodrigues, John Robertson Reid, Frans Alvar Alfred Cawén and Yehuda Pen. In the first two, the titles of the works specify the kinship between the one leading (daughter), and the one being led (father). But there are also examples, such as Johann Gottlieb Hantzsch, Hans Gasser, Issachar Ber Ryback and Manolo Linares, in which the role of guide is performed by a boy. In George John Pinwell's watercolor, there is a grown woman and a young girl, suggesting a reference to the blind man's family. In others - Adrien Jorel, Gustav Reubke and Frans Masereel - the guide is also an adult female, who may represent the wife of the sightless fiddler.

Figure 9: *O cego rabequista*, by José Rodrigues, 1855, oil on canvas, 170 x 118 cm.



Source: Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado, Lisboa. © PD-ARTE.

A final important component for the appreciation of the works gathered in this study is the presence of an object, or gesture, which demonstrates that the blind musician depends on handouts to survive. Reily (2008, 253) cites the bowl (present in *The Blind Fiddler* by Issachar Ber Ryback, for example) and the hat (occurring in the illustrations *The Blind Fiddler*, Peter Johann Nip dated 1828 by an unknown author and *The Newsboy and the Blind Fiddler*, by the American William Meade Prince). Gustave van de Woestyne represents this character with the instrument case open on the floor. In relation to gestures, some guides are portrayed with one hand outstretched waiting for the offering, as in the examples of José Rodrigues, Boris Borvine Frenkel and Manolo Linares.

In literature, the theme of the blind violinist also appears, for example, in the novel *The Blind Fiddler*, by Ian MacMillan (2015), while in theater, a play of a homonymous title written in 2004 by Marie Jones, and another, *Rough for Theater I* (1979), signed by Samuel Beckett (1906-1989). The latter was reproduced in a short film in 2000 directed by Kieron Walsh, in which the role of the blind violinist is played by David Kelly (1929-2012). There is an earlier film in the same format, *The Blind Fiddler* (1914), by the American Richard Ridgely (1869-1949), whose role of the visually impaired musician was performed by Bigelow Cooper (1878-1953).

Figure 10: *The Blind Fiddler*, John Robertson Reid, 19th-20th century, oil on canvas, 123 x 185 cm.



Source: Dudley Museum and Art Gallery, Dudley. © The Atheneum.

In addition to the *rabeca*/violin, other bow instruments are associated with blind musicians, such as the *gusle* in some Balkan countries, and the bowed lyre in Greece; in both cases, these visually impaired musicians tell stories. According to Samson (2013, 105), the figure of

the poet-singer of epics, using some bowed instrument to accompany him, was quite widespread in the Middle East and in some parts of West Africa.

It is possible that this association between blind musicians, bow instruments and storytelling, widespread in the European continent, particularly in Portugal, may have persisted and manifested itself in northeastern Brazil as the figure of *cegos rabequeiros cantadores*, many of whom having had the ballad as the poetic music genre most representative in their repertoire.

5. Conclusion

The *cego cantador rabequeiro* shares a series of characteristics that are present in poet musicians who play or played a role analogous to their own in various cultures and traditions. Expressions involving poetry, storytelling, and singing with the accompaniment of a musical instrument performed by the same individual represent a widespread practice, dating back, as seen above, more than two thousand five hundred years all across the globe. At times incorporating religious and mystical responsibilities, at others wandering from town to town begging, or even simply participating in the entertainment of employers, the poet singer experienced the contempt of some and the admiration of others. Within many cultures, the blind were the individuals responsible, almost exclusively, for maintaining and carrying out these practices (KONONENKO, 1998; CICCONE, 2001; LUBET, 2006, 1121-1123).

In the Iberian Peninsula and, consequently, in Latin America, the figure of the blind poet singer experienced a series of developments. Since the fourteenth century, the word *ciego* [blind] has been synonymous with every type of popular singer in Spain. Until the end of the eighteenth century, these wandering artists were the main authors and diffusers of the poetic genre *romances de ciego* (ZUMTHOR, 1983, 220). In Portugal, *folhetos de cordel* were also designated as *literatura de cego* [blindman's literature], in reference to the exclusive rights granted by King Dom João V to the Brotherhood of the Child Jesus of Blind Men of Lisbon, in the year 1749 for the sale of this printed genre³¹ (CASCUDO, 2012, 398-399).

Zumthor says that, both in Spain and in Portugal, this practice lasted until about the 1930s (ZUMTHOR, 1983, 220). However, in the region of Galicia, *cegos violinistas copleros* [blind quatrain-poet violinists] could be found even in the 1980s, an example is Florêncio dos Vilares (1914-1986), also known as Cego dos Vilares (Díez, 2016). It is also in this region

³¹ As for blind musicians' having exclusive rights to a specific repertoire, Lubet (2011, 72) refers to the Ukrainian *kobzari* and Japanese *biwa hōshi*.

that *cantos*, *coplas* and *romances de cego*³² [songs, quatrains, and ballads by the blind] can still be found today, alive in the memories of those who witnessed performances by these artists or who learned them through oral transmission.

In the Iberian Peninsula, brotherhoods of the blind flourish, particularly in Spain³³. Abel Iglesias demonstrates that these fraternities spread throughout the country, many times withholding or monopolizing the commercialization of leaflets (IGLESIAS, 2016). This fact apparently contributed to support blind poet singers in the streets, who sold the little booklets, singing or reciting them.

In the Brazilian Northeast, there are many records of blind people who used singing and poetry as a means of survival, depending on alms, as shown by the researcher Domingos de Azevedo Ribeiro in his booklet *Cantigas de cego* [*Cantigas of the blind*], with several examples from Paraíba recorded between the 1920-1940. These men and women deprived of vision documented by Azevedo Ribeiro sang their petitions, praises, and thanks accompanied by some instrument (*viola*, guitar, *reco-reco*, accordion) or solo (RIBEIRO, 1992). On the other hand, some blind people, such as the *rabequeiros* that make up the theme of this research, had a broader repertoire, not limited to the songs of blind beggars, integrating the complex poetic genres of the universe of *cantoria nordestina*, memorizing ballads of dozens of stanzas and improvising in *desafios*.

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³² <http://ocantodopobo.ophiusa.com/clasificacion-tematica/14?page=2>, accessed on 04/07/2023.

³³ The brotherhoods existed, at least, in Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, Toledo, Murcia, Zaragoza, Seville, Granada, Cordoba and Cádiz (IGLESIAS, 2016, 80).

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