

Brazil's Padre Cícero: *Views from the Ralph della Cava Gift to the UF Libraries*



The Ralph della Cava Gift on Padre Cícero and Popular Religion in Brazilian Northeast

Background

The gift of Ralph della Cava to the University of Florida Libraries (henceforth designated as the RDC Collection) consists of varied holdings on the social, religious and political history of the Brazilian Northeast.

Among its more prized components and dimensions are hundreds of late 19th-century and early 20th-century archival and printed sources, many rare and unique, that deal with the life and times of Padre Cícero Romão Batista (1844-1934) and the popular religious movement he inspired.

A Roman Catholic priest, “defrocked” by church authorities, a sometime political office holder, and most oft-described as a “miracle-worker” by rich and poor alike, this controversial cleric has bequeathed a hotly contested life and legacy. For better than a century now, both partisans and scholars have studied, interpreted and debated them. Backland bards and artisans enshrine them in poetry, music and folk art. And each year, some two million pilgrims converge from all points of the compass on the one-time crossroad of Juazeiro do Norte, now the second largest and richest city in the State of Ceará. There the tomb and the church of this erstwhile nonagenarian, deceased for more than seven decades, hold out for many the hope of miracles.

At the heart of the controversy was an alleged miracle. It took place for the first time in 1889: the consecrated host administered by Padre Cícero to a pious woman, Maria de Araújo, turned into blood. Declared to be the blood of Christ, shed once again to redeem the world; it recurred periodically for a decade.

Church authorities protractedly condemned the phenomenon and its interpretation as blasphemous and heretical; some branded it a hoax. Eventually, the Vatican itself intervened, suspending Padre Cícero

from orders, rescinding his power to administer the sacraments and eventually threatening him outright with excommunication, conditions he struggled for the remainder of his life to reverse.

But, the poor and dispossessed of the Brazilian Northeast, subject (even today) to social and political exclusion and exploitation, condemned to eeking out a meager livelihood, and left abandoned to the destructiveness of recurrent drought, descended on Juazeiro in the tens of thousands in search of work, dignity and a better life, here and in the hereafter.

Who better than Padre Cícero to redeem their hopes? During previous climatic crises, which claimed thousands of lives, he remained in place, succoring nature’s victims, while government leaders and foreign-born clergy fled to the safety of coastal cities. His reputation for selflessness preceded the notoriety of the miracles and so endowed them and its chief protagonist with credibility beyond any and all condemnation. It earned him, moreover, enduring admiration and the unswerving loyalty and affection of generations of admirers.

Within a decade, the influx of drought victims, economic migrants and pilgrims transformed the small hamlet into a thriving agricultural, artisan and commercial center. It also acquired the dubious reputation of a “New Jerusalem,” a holy city where work and prayer indeed predominated, but one in which holy men (beatos) also roamed the streets, dispensing “blessings” and cures, while other believers, in expectation of the last days, gathered in flagellant societies and “celestial courts.” During ensuing decades, real and alleged deviation from orthodoxy would compel two bishops and a string of parish priests assigned to Juazeiro to denounce the city as a den of fanatics and Padre Cícero their recalcitrant patron.

COVER PHOTOS:

“Visita dos romeiros ao Juazeiro” (author unknown; probably from 1960s). Traces humble peasant as he seeks Padre Cícero for blessings.

“Padre Cícero” (portrait) – inscription on verso indicates he then was about 80 years old – thus dating picture from 1924.

“A beata que viu meu Padrinho Cícero sexta-feira da Paixão” (author, José Pacheco; undated). Local woman has vision of Padre Cícero ; invokes image of Maria de Araújo, the communicant from 1890s miracles and claims.

And yet within twenty years of the miracle, thanks to Juazeiro's growing wealth and region-wide economic influence, the hamlet would achieve autonomy as a county (município), become embroiled in the vicissitudes of state and national politics, and see its celebrated cleric projected into secular controversies just as bitter, contentious and unresolved as any ecclesiastical.

For example, was not Padre Cícero – as political enemies contended – the author of the seizure at gunpoint of the area's coveted copper deposits in 1908, the mastermind of the overthrow of Ceará's state government in 1914, the protector of Lampião, the greatest of the Northeastern bandits that roamed and ravaged the backlands during the nineteen-twenties, and until his death in 1934 the "kingmaker" of Ceará's governors?

Detractors knew no limits: they further suggested that Padre Cícero may have illicitly dispersed the generous offerings of his impoverished followers, personally profited from the construction of great dams and new railroad lines to which he, as the undisputed "labor czar" of a vast region, dispatched countless brigades of grateful workers, and had misused the extensive land holdings which he acquired through donation or purchase.

Of course, apologists were not wanting: they insisted Padre Cícero had become surrounded – indeed, exploited – by a coterie of self-seekers. There were, for example, Dr. Floro Bartholomeu da Costa, the adventurer-physician from Bahia in search of political power and who, in effect, became the cleric's "alter-ego" and rose to the high office of federal deputy; the itinerant Franco-Belgian engineer and aristocrat, Conde Adolpho Van den Brule who crossed the Atlantic in search of riches; and last but not least, the beata "Mocinha" (Joana Tertuliano de Jesus), the protective major-domo of the cleric's household who, especially during his last decades as his health faltered and sight failed, controlled the comings and goings of job seekers, politicians, foreigners and pilgrims.

Today, more than seventy years since Padre Cícero's death, his devotees continue to honor him. The annual pilgrimages that until recently were vehemently attacked by church leaders grow in numbers and frequency, while a new bishop has seized the day to declare them a pastoral mission of capital importance. In contrast to his predecessors, the prelate even petitioned Rome in 2005 to "rehabilitate" Padre Cícero and submitted as proofs of his fidelity to the See of Peter the life-long service he rendered the poor and his long and arduous pursuit to have his priestly orders restored.

Nor have scholars recoiled from reexamining past issues as well as taking on the larger questions of social transformation, which often transcend personalities. Since the late nineteen-seventies, they have gathered to do so most notably at three international conferences. Meanwhile

they, myriads of graduate students and innumerable writers and journalists, have contributed to an annually expanding bibliography as they return again and again to the persistently controversial historical question that is "the Juazeiro of Padre Cícero."

Overview

Ralph della Cava's gift to our Libraries at UF include books, journals, newspaper issues, as well as critical archival materials such as Padre Cícero's personal correspondence and that of diverse ecclesiastical authorities. There are also rare photographs, broadsides, taped interviews, and artifacts (such as medals, statues, and similar religious images).

The collection was assembled over the course of more than forty years, but especially from 1962 until 1975 when Dr. della Cava undertook his own major work on the life and legacy of Padre Cícero and of the religious and social movement that is inseparable from him. These resources also speak to the systematic effort and dedication of one historian to uncover the realities behind legend, error and partisanship and replace them with a new and truer account of a complex and controversial past.

Presented here is a sampling of some of the rare or unique materials of the RDC Collection.

Note: during the course of the last century the original name of the hamlet, Joaseiro, underwent several orthographic changes. Among the most recurrent are Juázeiro do Norte (to distinguish it from the eponymous city in the State of Bahia), and today's official designation, Juazeiro do Norte. In the listing which follows, citations correspond to the spelling found in the original source.

I. Monographs (published and unpublished)

"Album de Juazeiro do Norte" – 1951. 68 p. Provides biographical background on individuals involved in the ecclesiastical controversy.

"Album histórico do Seminário Episcopal do Crato" – Rio de Janeiro; 1925. 243 p. Similar to the item above, but applicable to the city of Crato, Juazeiro do Norte's historic political and economic rival.



"A biografia e morte de meu Padrinho" (author, José Ayres Fliho; 1934). Written just after death of Padre Cícero; very rare & very fragile.

Alencar Peixoto, Joaquim, Padre. “Joazeiro do Cariry”

– Fortaleza; 1913. 227 p.

The author, a political ally at the outset of Juazeiro do Norte’s quest for political autonomy from Crato, subsequently turned despondent over his failed bid to become Juazeiro’s first mayor (prefeito); perhaps out of revenge he claimed that the blood on the host received by the communicant was due to a mouth infection, and that the alleged miracles were a hoax. He branded pilgrims as criminals, bandits, and low class troublemakers and refers to Padre Cícero as a ‘califa’ – a mere worldly powerbroker. Alencar Peixoto’s work is the first in a long line of calumnious attacks on the alleged miracles and its protagonists.

Araújo, Antonio Gomes de, Padre. “Apostolado do embuste” – Crato; 1956. 62 p.

Purports the miracles were the result of chemical alterations perpetrated in a premeditated hoax by close associates of Padre Cícero. This work led the Archbishop of Fortaleza to ban all public discussion by detractors and defenders of Padre Cícero among the clergy.

Barros, José Goes de Campos. “A ordem dos penitentes” – Fortaleza; 1937. 12 leaves.

A transcription of an out-of-print memoir by the military officer charged with the routing of an allegedly unorthodox religious settlement at Caldeirão, led by José Lourenço, a beato and devotee of Padre Cícero’s. The text was personally typed and offered to Ralph Della Cava by Alba Frota, a childhood friend of the renowned writer, Raquel de Queiroz, and one of the “three Marias” in the latter’s eponymous novel.

Costa, Floro Bartolomeu da. “Joazeiro e o Padre Cícero” – Rio de Janeiro; 1923. 182 p.



Portrait of Floro Bartolomeu Costa

The UF copy is signed by the author, then a federal deputy from Ceará, who delivered this defense of Padre Cícero at a session of the Brazilian National Congress.

Dinis, Manuel. “Misterios do Joazeiro”

– Joazeiro; 1935.

Former teacher calls Pe. Alencar Peixoto’s charges against Pe. Cícero ‘gross exaggerations;’ he also accuses Dr. Floro of misuse of public funds.

“Execução do testamento do Padre Cícero Romão Batista e Inventário do Dr. Floro Bartolomeu da Costa: documentos em fac-símile” Fortaleza; 1997. 164 p. (1st printing; Fortaleza, 1977)

This facsimile edition of Padre Cícero’s last will and testament and an accompanying inventory of the personal property of his “alter-ego,” Dr. Floro Bartolomeu da Costa, is considered the only authentic version currently in print.

Lourenço Filho, Manoel Bergström. “Joazeiro do Padre Cícero” – São Paulo; 1926. 221 p.

A pioneer of free public education, the Paulista author deprecated the paucity of primary schools in Juazeiro, put in doubt Padre Cícero’s mental faculties, deprecated the miserable conditions of the city and in so doing helped perpetuate the impression of Juazeiro’s backwardness and of Pe. Cícero’s culpability for it.

Macedo, Manuel, Padre. “Joazeiro em foco” – Fortaleza; 1925.

This native son, appointed pastor of Juazeiro do Norte’s church of Our Lady of Sorrows, spoke for many other native sons who politically opposed Dr. Floro, an outsider, charging him with corruption and having made Padre Cícero his virtual captive.

Morel, Edmar. “Padre Cícero, o santo do Juazeiro” – Rio de Janeiro; 1946. 247 p.

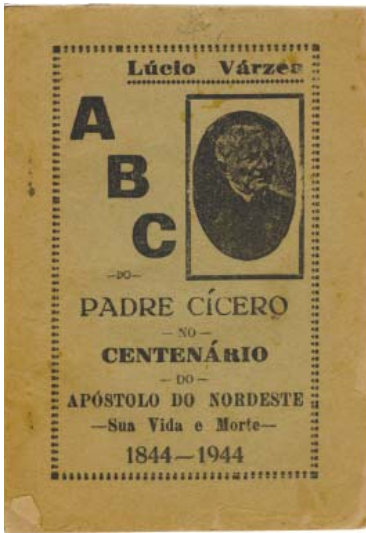
One of Brazil’s best-known correspondents of, among the first, now defunct, nation-wide newspaper chains, the *Diários Associados*, Morel drew an ambiguous portrait of Padre Cícero. Praise for the cleric’s devotion to the infirm and destitute was offset by the insinuation that his adeptness in managing finances and his acuity for business may have been less than selfless. In the end, the volume rekindled on a national scale more than a decade after the nonagenarian’s death some of the controversies that were on their way to extinction.

Oliveira, Antonio Xavier de. “Beatos e cangaceiros” – Rio de Janeiro; 1920. 248 p.

Xavier de Oliveira, a native son of Juazeiro, lost the election for federal deputy to Dr. Floro. Resentful of the outsider’s hold over Padre Cícero, he blamed Dr. Floro for the alleged vacuum in public authority in Juazeiro and also, in no small way, for the widespread criminality and religious heterodoxy within the region. So enduringly injurious was this work to Juazeiro’s image, it is said the author never again set foot in his birthplace.

Theophilo, Rodolpho. “A sedição do Joazeiro” – São Paulo; 1922. 275 p.

Scientist, novelist and standard-bearer of the urban middle classes of Fortaleza, Ceará’s capital, Theophilo vehemently denounced Juazeiro’s role in the armed deposition of Franco Rabelo, the first, but short-lived, elected executive of the state. He polemicized whether Padre Cícero’s entry into



“ABC do Padre Cícero no centenário do Apóstolo do Nordeste: sua vida e morte” (author, Lúcio Várzea ; 1944)

for July 26, 1934 to mark the death of Padre Cícero; it urges the public to conduct itself in silence and with dignity.

“Uma saudoza lembrança do velho amigo e antigo secretario do Revdmo. Padre Cícero Romão Batista” – (1 flyer ; 25 x 17 cm.; 1934?) – Eulogy is offered by José Ferreira de Menezes to Padre Cícero.

“Aos amigos e correligionarios do inesquecível Padre Cícero Romão Batista” – (1 flyer; 24 x 18 cm.; 1934) – Reaffirms the political works of Pe. Cicero, recently deceased, and urges all his supporters to close ranks behind Dr. Juvencio de Santanna; the names of Antonio Pita, José Ferreira de Menezes and others who endorsed this call are affixed at bottom.

b. Church Matters

“Correio do Cariry: o orgam do Partido Republicano” – (51 x 37 cm.: 11 de junho de 1905) – A two page issue of the weekly newspaper published in Crato, containing an editorial calling on families to practice civil marriages prior to formal Church marriages. In many ways the Church saw Brazil’s move from imperial government to republicanism as a foreign and Protestant-inspired movement. At head of front page in ink: D. Joaquim José Vieira, Bispo do Ceará.

“Jornal do Cariri” – (65 x 44 cm.; 25 nov. 1905) – Published in Barbalha, this front page newspaper issue transcribes texts of telegrams of best wishes to Pe. Cícero as reports announce that he can once again say mass throughout the diocese.

politics was not for the citizens of Juazeiro a worse scourge than drought and dismissed him as the inspiration for many political and common crimes.

II. Special format items (Broadside, separate newspaper issues, & flyers)

a. Padre Cícero’s death

“Pe. Cícero Romão Batista: missa do 7o. dia” – (1 flyer ; 24 x 17 cm.; 1934) – Announcement that a special mass was planned

c. Political life

“Boletim: os nossos covardes inimigos, igualmente ao despuadorado Padre Macedo, ja vão esmorecendo” – (1 flyer; 24 x 14 cm.; mid 1920s ?) – Defends Floro Bartolomeu from verbal attacks by Pe. Macedo; this promises that Dr. Floro will unmask the campaign of lies being put forward.

“Telegrammas da Gazeta do Joazeiro ...” (1 broadside; 40 x 15 cm.; mid 1920s ?) – Reports on Pe. Macedo, and possible misuse by him of Church money: ‘cade o dinheiro do commercio do Crato?’

“Telegrammas da Gazeta do Joazeiro” (1 broadside; 18 x 14 cm.; mid 1920s?) – Uses derogatory term “Padre Bexiga Preta” for Padre Macedo.

“Titulo de eleitor” – (23 x 17 cm.; 1924?) – Voter registration card registering João Vieira Ramos, in Juazeiro; dates penciled on verso mark use in 1924, 1926 and 1928 votes.

“Boletim” – (1 broadside ; 40 x 14 cm ; mid 1920s?) – 3 telegrams reproduced: 1 of which is addressed to Coronel Vicente Linhares that contest statements from Padre Macedo accusing Dr. Floro as author of numerous murders.

“Protesto” – (1 broadside ; 38 x 22 cm.; 1925) – Hermelinda Correia de Macedo defends herself and family member Padre Macedo in land squabble with Pe. Cícero.

“Boletim: a miseria do malvado Padre Macedo e de seu vil comparsa José Geraldo” – (1 broadside; 41 x 27 cm.; 1925) – Delineates several reports of worsening relations between Pe. Cícero, Floro Bartolomeu and José Geraldo da Cruz, with accusations of death threats from both sides.

“Boletim : a traição no seu mais alto grão” – (1 broadside; 42 x 17 cm.; mid 1920s?) – Labels José Geraldo da Cruz a traitor for calling Pe. Cícero a liar.

“Boletim: José Geraldo desmente o Padre Cícero” – (1 flyer; 19 x 15 cm.; 1925) – Relates Padre Cicero’s request for a written public apology from José Geraldo da Cruz; José Geraldo insists he did not send telegram with Pe. Macedo insulting Pe. Cícero.

“Uma recomendação do Rvmo. Padre Cícero Romão Baptista aos romeiros” – (1 flyer; 20 x 15 cm.; 1930?) – Promotional flyer from José Ferreira de Menezes offering services to pilgrims, and stating that he alone is authorized by Pe. Cícero to acknowledge their letters and offerings.

“Boletim: discurso proferido pelo Pe. Cícero por ocasião de receber uma grande manifestação do povo como protesto ás diatribes publicadas no O Nordeste pelo Pe. Manuel Macedo ...” – (1 broadside ; 32 x 18 cm.; mid-1920?) – Defends Dr. Floro as a physician, not merely an adventurer.

“O Padre Cícero concede uma entrevista ...” – (50 x 33 cm.; 20 sept. de 1925) – Issue of the newspaper, O Ceará ; interview addresses clash with Pe. Macedo over gambling (jogos), and other matters.

“Boletim: telegrammas recebidos e enviados pelo Dr. Floro Bartholomeu ...” – (1 broadside; 36 x 15 cm.; 1925?) – Messages regarding political attacks in regional press and steps for response.

d. Continuing Legacy

“Terceira denúncia: Monsenhor Juviniiano Barreto, o maior inimigo de Padre Cícero, do Juazeiro, dos romeiros e dos Padres Salesianos” – (1 broadside; 38 x 22 cm.; 1948?) – Describes how in 1917, on orders from the Bishop of Crato, Monsignor Juviniiano obliged Pe. Cícero to recant in the church square the alleged miracles.

“Outras façanhas: Monsenhor, o maior inimigo do Padre Cícero, do Juazeiro e dos Padres Salesianos” – (1 flyer; 29 x 18 cm.; 1948?) – Reports that Monsignor Juviniiano drew his greatest satisfaction from order banning Pe. Cícero from performing priestly duties; calls on pilgrims to stay away from Monsignor Juviniiano.

“Monsenhor Juviniiano Barreto, o maior inimigo do Padre Cícero ...” – (1 broadside; 30 x 22 cm.; 1959?) – States that Monsignor Juviniiano wanted to destroy statue of Pe. Cícero erected in the main square, ordered priests sympathetic to Padre Cícero to leave the Cariri, and is the number one enemy of pilgrims and of progress for Juazeiro.

“José Marrocos” (1 broadside ; 33 x 19 cm.; 1956) – Reprint of eulogy & profile of the life and work of José Marrocos written by Padre Alencar Peixoto at time of Marrocos’s death in 1910; print statement reads: divulgação do gremio literario ‘José Marrocos’ do Instituto 24 de marco, da Sociedade Padre Cícero, Juazeiro de Norte, Ceará; rumors over the years have tied Dr. Floro to the sudden death of Marrocos (poison).

“A voz do Santuário: órgão do Santuário do Sagrado Coração de Jesus” (32 x 22 cm.; 1 de outubro de 1964) – 2 page issue of newsletter under direction of Pe. Gino Moratelli; calls for all to turn to God, as Pe. Cícero had “dreamt”.

“Programa das festividades que serão realizadas por ocasião da benção e lançamento da pedra fundamental do Santuário de Nossa Senhora das Dores de Fátima em Juazeiro ...” – (33 x 22 cm; 1955) – 4 p. event program highlights formal links to Portuguese shrine of Fátima, with intent of construction project to create a similar holy place. Message from Pe. Demoutiez reads: “Juazeiro está verdadeiramente ‘Fatimizado’.

“Aviso do Padre Cícero Romão Batista a propósito dos acontecimentos que breve virão sobre a terra”

(1 broadside; 34 x 24 cm; abril, 1964). Text dated 1920, but with 1964 distribution date added in pencil. Pe. Cícero speaks of military, the anti-Christ and a worldwide civil war initiated in Russia.

Posters

“Campaign corruption poster – with no title” (26 x 31 cm.; 1960s?) – Cartoon lampoons typical rural land boss, shown dragging poor, muzzled peasants to voting box.

“Mario Rosal para deputado federal” – (24 x 33 cm.; 1960s?) – Campaign poster, with portrait, pointing out candidate’s ties to the long-deceased Padre Cícero.

“Nordeste” (104 x 75 cm. ; 1963) – Print by Lina Bardi; Bahia.

“Stop the repression and tortures in Brazil” – (58 x 41 cm.; 1970) – Color poster from International Union of Students; calls for April 12 as a day of solidarity with people and students of Brazil struggling against military dictatorship; date from signature of artist.



“Floro Bartolomeu” – shown 4th from left is Dr. Floro, an associate of Padre Cícero who many felt was corrupt and scheming. Photo probably from 1914 during rebellion of Juazeiro against state authorities, an insurrection that drew criticism to Padre Cícero and Dr. Floro for hiring bandits to do political killings.

Archival material

Over the course of five months in 1964, Dr. della Cava microfilmed, using a number of hand-held 35mm cameras, a variety of materials contained in several institutional and personal archives in Juazeiro and Crato that had previously been closed to the public. In all, the resulting documentation filled 17 one hundred foot reels relevant to the life of Padre Cícero, the history of Juazeiro and the course of the social and religious movement that arose and flourished in the Cariry region between 1889 and 1934.

In 2005 the University of Florida had the original negatives regenerated and three positive sets copied in order to preserve and insure the usability of their contents for future generations.

In 2006, one of the positive sets was presented to the Universidade Regional do Cariry of Crato and Juazeiro, while service copies were retained at UF, assuring access to them to U.S. researchers. The entire regenerated master copy is being stored under proper preservation conditions by UF Libraries.

The principal archives are:

Arquivo do Bispado do Crato (Crato, Ceará) – contains key ecclesiastical documentation.

Arquivo do Colegio Salesiano (Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará) – contains the extant personal correspondence of Pe. Cícero.

“O Rebate” – newspaper issues covering 1909-1911; from personal collection of Pe. Cícero Coutinho, Juazeiro do Norte.

Objects, chapbooks, pictures, miscelanea

The RDC collection holds excellent examples of medals, popular religious icons and statuary, and other images of Padre Cícero (and Maria de Araújo, the communicant). There is also a variety of souvenir items with Padre Cícero’s likeness eagerly acquired by pilgrims and tourists, such as key chains, tokens, artisanal ceramics, postcards, and a special 1944 commemorative postal envelope marking the centennial of Padre Cícero’s birth (1844).

Another notable item in the RDC collection is a nearly full, 1920s vial, in its original packaging, of “Balsamo da Vida” (the elixir of life), a popular and widely sought after cure-all produced by the one-time political opponent of Dr. Floro, José Geraldo da Cruz, and sold exclusively at his Farmácia dos Pobres in Juazeiro do Norte.

There are dozens of chapbooks – a kind of pulp, pamphlet-like, book of poetry – which recount in verse both traditional tales and the latest headlines. Hawked by troubadours at fairs and markets throughout the Brazilian Northeast, several in the collection deal with Padre Cícero and events of his life; others the story of Lampião, the so-called bandit king of Brazil’s rugged sertão; still others the time-honored tales of romance and heroism.

Until the wide-spread use of photographs, the covers of chapbooks were illustrated with exceptional woodcuts, rendered by renowned engravers, whose original designs and engraving blocks are coveted treasures.

The RDC Collection also holds a number of pictures and portraits of Padre Cícero and associates, some originals and some limited copies. It is important to point out here that many of the rare books in the RDC Collection also contain pictures and portraits.

Other items of note

A handwritten note from Padre Cícero dated 1922 on his personal stationery.

Several binders of typed copies of telegrams to and from Padre Cícero (the bulk from the years 1912-1916; from originals in the possession of Dr. Francisco do Nascimento, Fortaleza)

Interview with José Ferreira de Menezes (unpublished; 1964; 70 leaves) – Transcript of RDC’s conversation with self-taught lawyer (rábulo) who, raised in Pe. Cícero’s household, became Dr. Floro’s personal secretary.

Taped interview with José Geraldo da Cruz, a contemporary of Padre Cícero (ca. 90 minutes; recorded in 1974), offering firsthand accounts & insights into personalities of Padre Cícero, Floro Bartolomeu, Beato José Lourenço, and other central figures.



Photo of the celebrated *beata*, Maria de Araújo, taken at the height of the “religious question” of Joaseiro, ca. 1891-1898. (Courtesy of D. Amália Xavier de Oliveira of Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará).

Compiled by Ralph della Cava, Richard Phillips and Paul Losch. – 2007.



Medallion with image of Padre Cícero, commonly worn by devotees.

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