Africa in Brazil: Cultural Politics and the Candomblé Religion[1]

Jim Wafer
Hédimo Rodrigues Santana

What is Africa? In this paper, we suggest that answers to this question have to be understood in terms of the cultural politics—local, national, and international—of the contexts in which "Africa" is the subject of definition (cf. Ebron 1990). We illustrate this proposition with the case of Brazil. We argue that Brazilian perceptions of Africa have been the product of the interaction between two antithetical movements, one concerned with Brazilian national unity, the other with Brazilian cultural heterogeneity. We sketch the history of these movements and attempt to show how their constructions of Africa, while often intended to combat racism, have in fact contributed to the continuing disempowerment of Black Brazilians. We conclude by suggesting that the premises of the debate about "Africa," "Brazil," and the relationship between them require reconceptualization if this debate is to make any contribution to the cause of justice for Black Brazilians.

Our approach to these issues begins with a consideration of the Candomblé religion, since Candomblé is often considered to be one of the purest repositories of African culture in the Diaspora. A curious feature of Candomblé is that the spirits of this religion include a category called *caboclos*. These caboclos are a diverse bunch, but their most characteristic representatives are Brazilian Indians, who, when they descend into human bodies during rituals, often wear feather headdresses and carry spears or bows and arrows.

In the Candomblé community where we carried out fieldwork, on the outskirts of the city of Salvador, people told us that the caboclos live in a land called Aruanda. This Aruanda, they said, is located in Africa. This is an interesting paradox. Although the belief

98

that Aruanda is located in Africa is supported by etymologists, who tell us that the name probably derives from *Luanda*, the former slaving port that is now the capital of Angola (Carneiro 1964:145; Carneiro 1981:63; Cacciatore 1977:53; Valente 1977:64), one wonders how the Indian spirits, who are considered to be indigenous to Brazil, can be regarded simultaneously as inhabitants of a continent located on the other side of the planet.

One solution to this paradox would be to say that the Africa and the Brazil of the spirit world are mythological and therefore have an epistemological status different to that of the real Africa and the real Brazil. But we want to take a different tack. What we propose to do is to treat the "real Africa" and the "real Brazil" as themselves "imagined communities"—to use Benedict Anderson's (1983) expression—communities, moreover, that have been imagined differently at various periods of Brazilian history by various actors on the stage of Brazilian cultural politics.

This approach, by treating "myth" and "reality" as comparable rather than incommensurable, makes it possible to investigate the dialectical relationship that Candomblé's conceptions of Africa and Brazil have to the "real Africa" and the "real Brazil."

It is worth noting at the outset that many of the ideas about what constitutes the "real Africa" and the "real Brazil" are widely held to be self-evident "facts." But these ideas have a history and have achieved their status as "common knowledge," rather than as "someone's ideas," by frequent repetition in both oral and written discourse without reference to their origin (cf. Latour and Woolgar 1979:175-76).

The "real Africa" and the "real Brazil" are products of two antithetical movements in Brazilian cultural politics. We shall call these movements, following Bastide (1978a:73), the "centrifugal" movement and the "centripetal" movement. According to Bastide, the centrifugal movement is "one of emerging separate cultures," while the centripetal movement is "one that tended to unite them into a single mestizo civilization." These movements have, of course, always proceeded in tandem and borrowed ideas from each other, but the ideas have been used in accordance with the different requirements of the rhetoric of the two movements. Their symbolic rallying points are also different, and they have had different degrees of influence at various periods in Brazilian history.

The centripetal movement's rhetorical foundation is Brazilian nationalism—that is, the idea of Brazil's independence from its roots in the Old World, which includes, of course, not only Portugal but also Africa. From an early date, one of the most important symbols

for this movement has been the Brazilian Indian. The rhetorical emphasis of the centrifugal movement is on Brazil's links to the outside world, links which are conceptualized in terms of historical roots and continuing cultural input. We will argue that this movement's most evocative symbol has been the "pure African"—the African who has remained both racially and culturally "uncontaminated" by the Brazilian society in which he or she lives.

We will sketch a rough historical profile of each of these two movements, beginning with the centripetal movement. Brazil gained its independence in 1822 when the Portuguese prince Dom Pedro, subsequently the first emperor of Brazil, declared the nation's independence from the rule of his father, King João VI of Portugal. There had been earlier, unsuccessful, independence movements, of which probably the best known was the *Inconfidência Mineira*. This movement had designed a flag that pictured an Indian breaking his chains. The period of independence itself was accompanied by

> the myth of the wild Indian . . . created by poets and romantic novelists. It was a literary creation, stemming from Chateaubriand and Fenimore Cooper, and in Brazil it inspired the work of José Alencar and Gonçalves Dias. . . . Brazil's shaking off of the Portuguese yoke was interpreted as the native's revenge against the invader. The schools perpetuated this myth, as did the wide dissemination of Alencar's novels in cheap popular editions, and it percolated from the literate to the illiterate population. (Bastide 1978a:316)[2]

However, it was not until 1889 that Brazil definitively severed its symbolic ties to Portugal by abolishing the monarchy and declaring itself a republic. It is significant that this happened one year after, and partially as a result of, the abolition of slavery, signed by Princess Isabel of the Brazilian imperial family (Roett 1984:27-28). One possible interpretation of these events is that slavery was seen as a national institution, not to be meddled with on the basis of abolitionist ideas coming from Europe.

The association between the nationalism of the period and the wild Indian was a factor that contributed to the continuing disempowerment of the ex-slaves after abolition. "A drop of Amerindian blood in one's veins was something to be proud of, a drop of Negro blood something to be ashamed of, on the grounds that the African accepted slavery while the Indian preferred death to submission" (Bastide 1978a:316).

The nationalism of the era was no doubt a significant motivating factor behind another event that disempowered Black Brazilians. In 1890, two years after the abolition of slavery and one year after the declaration of the Republic, Rui Barbosa, the Finance

Minister, destroyed the documents that provided the principal record of the slave trade in order to "avoid leaving any traces of the stain of slavery" (Valente 1977:1). In other words, the creation of a new national identity meant attempting to sever Brazil's ties not only to Portugal but also to Africa.

In the following forty years or so, the cause of creating a new Brazil that would be something different from its parent cultures was taken up by a number of intellectuals, of whom by far the most influential was Gilberto Freyre. His book *Casa Grande e Senzala*, published in 1933 (and translated into English as *The Masters and the Slaves*, 1966), formulated the idea of Brazil as a harmonious synthesis of Indian, European, and African cultures, coming about as a result of the widespread and unprejudiced acceptance in Brazil of interracial marriage and concubinage. Giving a patriotic twist to the Boasian distinction between race and culture, Freyre proposed that people with different positions on the Brazilian racial spectrum all participated in a common national culture.[3]

Thales de Azevedo developed Freyre's ideas in a series of books (1955, 1956, 1975) on race relations in Brazil that took into account questions of class. One of his key ideas is that the acceptance of *mestiçagem*, or *mestizization*, in Brazil makes social relations between people of different racial backgrounds less antagonistic than in countries where the races are defined as separate and discrete. This, in turn, gives "people of color" better opportunities for improving their social position.

What is interesting in the present context is Azevedo's choice of the term *mestiçagem*, which he uses to mean both racial and cultural blending. *Mestiço* is the Portuguese equivalent of the Spanish word *mestizo*, which has been borrowed into English. In all three languages, the primary meaning of the term is "a person of part white and part Indian descent." Although Azevedo's use of the word, transformed into the abstract noun *mestizization*, is based on its secondary meaning, that is, a person of mixed race, his choice of this particular word suggests at least a rhetorical continuity with the tradition of using the Indian as a symbol of Brazilian nationalism.

Azevedo was criticized for contributing to the "myth" of Brazil as a "racial democracy" and for ignoring the fact that the blurring of racial differences in Brazil by means of the complex system of racial classification promotes a form of racism that is particularly insidious because it is so well camouflaged. Although Azevedo himself modified his position in his later work, the view of "Brazil as one country in the world where people of different races live together in harmony and where opportunities are open to all irrespective of

racial background" has been so persistent and is so widespread in Brazil (Dzidzienyo 1971:5) that it is still regarded by many as an incontrovertible fact (cf. Brissonnet 1988:43-55).

This view has not gone unchallenged, however. Over a long period of time this centripetal view of the "real Brazil" has been opposed by the adherents of the centrifugal movement who have attempted their own definition of the "real Brazil." One of the persistent themes of this movement has been its rejection and devalorization of the idea of racial and cultural blending, so important to the rhetoric of the centripetal movement. The origin of this theme can be traced back to Raimundo Nina Rodriguez whose first book, *L'animisme fétichiste des nègres de Bahia*, was published in 1900. Nina Rodriguez focused his attention on the state of Bahia, but his arguments have been applied to Brazil as a whole. His view was not just that Bahia was composed of races and cultures that could be clearly distinguished and whose origins could be precisely determined, but also that these races and cultures could be organized hierarchically on the basis of their evolutionary and psychological "development."

It scarcely needs to be said that the white race and Catholic culture are at the top of this hierarchy. What is interesting about the lower levels of the hierarchy, however, is that Nina regarded Africans of the Yoruba and Ewe language groups, whose culture was based on the mythology of the *orixás*, as superior to Africans belonging to "more backward tribes" (1977:221), meaning those belonging to the Bantu language group. The latter share the lowest position on the hierarchy with "Indians" and with "creole negroes" and "mestizos" of "the same intellectual level." According to Nina, one of the principal indicators of the inferiority of these groups is that the weakness of their mythology makes their culture subject to "syncretism"—that is, to the influence of other cultures.

We see here an almost complete reversal of the values of the centripetal movement. Nina regarded mestizization and cultural synthesis not as positive symbols of national identity but as indicators of degeneracy. And instead of glorifying the Indians, he placed them at the bottom of the racial and cultural heap. Nina carried out his studies with particular attention to the disparate origins of the various African "survivals" that persisted among the Blacks of Bahia. He believed that the meaning of these survivals in the context of Brazilian culture could only be understood by reference to the meaning they had once had in Africa.

This search for historical roots outside of Brazil is, of course, one of the hallmarks of the centrifugal movement. Later adherents

of this movement, who claimed to reject the racism of Nina's theoretical orientation, continued the search for the origin of Brazilian "africanisms." They ignored, as did Nina, the fact that the meaning of "cultural traits" is not static, whether in Africa or Brazil, and used an essentially diachronic approach even in their supposedly synchronic studies of African culture in Brazil.

In fact, Nina's methods and conclusions, some of which have persisted as part of the intellectual baggage of the centrifugal movement to the present day, are difficult to separate from his theories. While, on the one hand, later writers have rejected Nina's notion of the superiority of white culture, their attempt to define what constitutes a pure African culture in Brazil actually shores up white Brazil's notions of its own superiority; it reinforces its view of itself as clearly distinct from African culture, with roots firmly in Europe, and therefore "uncontaminated" by African influences. Moreover, the valorization of pure African culture in Brazil always has as its concomitant an explicit or implicit devalorization of those aspects of Brazilian culture considered to be mestizized or syncretic.

The lasting influence of Nina on the centrifugal movement can be seen most clearly in the repetition to the present day of two ideas that derive ultimately from him: the idea that Africans who are classified as "Sudanese" (including speakers of Yoruba and Ewe, from Nigeria and Dahomey) had a more evolved culture than those classified as "Bantu" (including peoples from Angola and the Congo) because of the greater complexity of their beliefs and their greater capacity for abstraction (cf. Valente 1977: 8; Birman 1980:11); and the idea that syncretism and mestizization are signs of cultural degradation.

These ideas are often combined in two further propositions. The first of these is that Bantu culture in Brazil has always been more susceptible to syncretism than Sudanese culture because of the "inconsistency of Bantu mythological concepts" (Valente 1977:59-60; cf. 53), which in itself is a proof of Bantu inferiority. The second is that the bearers of traditional African culture in Brazil are the people who are most African in appearance, while those who are responsible for the corruption of African culture through syncretism are people of mixed race (Bastide 1978a:281; cf. Ortiz 1978).

Some or all of these ideas have been repeated and elaborated by such scholars as Artur Ramos (1934), Edison Carneiro (1967, 1981), Roger Bastide (1978a, 1978b), and Waldemar Valente (1977). What is ironic is that these ideas were so readily taken up by writers whose intention in creating the idea of the "pure African"—a

person of uncontaminated Sudanese origins who has retained his or her culture intact in Brazil—was to combat racism.

Even more ironic is that these ideas have come to play a part in the contemporary Black rights movement in Brazil. Not finding much to take heart from in the ideas of the centripetal movement, the Black rights movement has often tended to borrow from the centrifugal movement in a somewhat uncritical way, taking its ideas to be self-evident truths, and ignoring the history of these ideas from Nina Rodriguez onwards.

Let us look more closely at the later development of these ideas. Nina's first book was published, in French, during the period of intense nationalism that followed the declaration of the Republic in 1889. It is probably significant that its influence was fairly limited until it was republished in Portuguese in 1935, for it was in the period of the New Republic following the 1930 Revolution that initiated the Vargas era that the centrifugal movement came into its own.

The Vargas regime undermined the power of the oligarchy that had ruled during the Old Republic and set about industrializing Brazil and modernizing its economy and social institutions. Although this government banned all organized political activity and imposed strict censorship, the collapse of the old power structures opened up the possibility of new ways of conceptualizing the Brazilian social order. So the Vargas era indirectly provoked a ferment in Brazilian intellectual life "as a result of the lack of direction and existing norms in the country" (Quintas 1977:x).

One indication that the New Republic was not just a political but also a cultural watershed is that the themes of literature changed. We have seen that during the Empire and the Old Republic, the Indian was a popular literary subject. But in the Vargas era "the topic of the Negro swept poetry, the novel, and journalism, shouldering aside the Indian and the *caboclo* in literature and in the minds of intellectuals" (Bastide 1978a:22).[4]

If it were the nationalism of the earlier period that made the Indian such an important symbol in Brazil, we could ask what it was about the Vargas era that promoted the symbol of the "pure African." We have seen that this period was one in which traditional structures and values had weakened, and voices of dissent began to make themselves heard. We can speculate, therefore, that the "African" represented a cultural alternative, an "other," that could be used as the rhetorical foundation for criticism of the prevailing social order. In the person of the Brazilian "Negro" the critics had a ready-made other. But to be truly other, the "Negro"

had to be divested of Brazilian accretions and transformed into the "pure African," culturally "encysted" (to use Bastide's expression—cf. 1978a:161,282) in the alien land of Brazil.

It was during this era that an organized Black consciousness movement first began to emerge in Brazil. The Black Brazilian Front was launched in São Paulo in the 1930s, and the first two Afro-Brazilian Congresses took place—the first in Recife in 1934 and the second in Bahia in 1937.[5] It was also during this period that the intellectuals who continued the tradition of Nina Rodriguez became active. Artur Ramos published his *O Negro Brasileiro* in 1934; Edison Carneiro, who helped to organize the second Afro-Brazilian Congress, published *Religiões Negras* in 1936 and *Negros Bantos* in 1937; Roger Bastide arrived in Brazil from France in 1938 to begin his research into the African religions of Brazil, publishing an early work on the subject (*"État actuel des études afro-brésiliennes"*) in 1939.

Artur Ramos's particular contribution to Nina Rodriguez's project was to expand the search for the origin of "African survivals." Whereas Nina had limited his study to the state of Bahia, Ramos investigated "africanisms" from the whole of Brazil and traced more accurately than Nina their origins in Africa.

The particular interest of Edison Carneiro's work is that much of it was ethnographically based. He himself was of African descent and carried out his own observation of Candomblé religious communities. But he retained Nina's interest in the origin of African survivals, and, like Artur Ramos, believed that syncretism was a degradation of African culture and was widespread in the Brazilian religions of Bantu origin.

Of all the writers belonging to the centrifugal movement, the best-known outside of Brazil is undoubtedly Roger Bastide, because of the publication in English of his work *The African Religions of Brazil* (1978a) and of many other works in French. Bastide makes explicit his debt to Nina Rodriguez in the following words: "In spite of all [his] faults, [his] works . . . are still perhaps the best published on the subject, first because his informants belonged to the most traditional, most purely African of his epoch" (1978b:7-8). But this debt is also expressed implicitly in much of Bastide's work, for example, when he says, in his study of the Candomblé religion, "it is evident that the Nagô, Queto and Ijexá candomblés [i.e. those of Yoruba origin] are the most pure of all, and it is only these that will be studied here" (1978b:15).

Earlier writers on Candomblé had acknowledged that even the religious houses of Yoruba and Ewe origin were to some extent

syncretic since their practices combined elements of diverse provenance. But Bastide hit upon a strategy for defending his notion of the purity of the houses of Yoruba origin. He suggested that, in these houses, the religious practices that derive from Africa and those that derive from other religions—principally Catholicism—are "juxtaposed" but never confused (1978a:274).[6]

However, in the Candomblé houses of Bantu origin, where "the collective memory is less well organized," according to Bastide, "the two theoretically separate spaces [African and Catholic] tend to impinge on each other" (1978b:273). Further down the scale of purity, in the religions called Macumba and Umbanda, which are also supposed to have a partly Bantu origin (1978b:315), "the Catholic and the African areas are completely merged, and the orixás are totally identified with the statues of their Catholic counterparts." Thus "the orixá and the saint can totally fuse in the affective awareness or the imagination of the votaries" (1978a:273-4).

The purity of the houses of Yoruba origin is made possible by what Bastide calls "the principle of compartmentalization": "the black who has remained faithful to the Africa of his fathers. . . calmly lives in two cultures at once without their clashing, interfering, or mixing with each other within him in any way" (1978a:168-9). But this compartmentalization "was not, of course, total"—it was infiltrated by syncretism (1978a:169). The religious houses loyal to Africa have attempted to resist this by "excommunicating 'syncretized' sects" and purifying the religion of the "debasement" of syncretic phenomena associated with Macumba (1978a:169).

This is the prevailing view of Candomblé that has been handed down to the adherents of the centrifugal movement of the present day. While it has been increasingly questioned by scholars, it is still considered to be authoritative by many Brazilians who have an interest in Black culture, including segments of the Black rights movement, and by many members of the so-called "orthodox" houses of Candomblé (see for example Azevedo 1986).

The scholars who have questioned this view include Yvonne Velho (1975), Vivaldo da Costa Lima (1977), Patrícia Birman (1980), Peter Fry (1982), and Beatriz Góis Dantas (1982) in Brazil, and Alejandro Frigerio (1983) in the United States. Dantas provides a good summary of the general position of these writers when she says their hypothesis is that "the africanisms found in the houses of Candomblé are not really African social practices, but *representations* of the African, produced in the academic milieux of the past—representations which, through their dissemination, have

become common sense" (1982:16, our emphasis). Moreover, these scholars suggest that the creation by intellectuals of a field of knowledge about the African, and their domination of this field, has had the effect of continuing the disempowerment of Black Brazilians, who have become dependent on the intellectuals for "authoritative" knowledge of their own culture (cf. Motta 1987:79).

Another criticism of the view of African religion in Brazil as being analyzable according to degrees of purity is that these degrees are correlated with social classes. Birman points out that Nina Rodriguez presented the "narrow fetichism" of the "Africans from the most backward tribes" (i.e. the Bantus) as being practiced by the lowest strata in Brazilian society, "while those who find themselves in a superior social position are presented as having more evolved forms of religiosity," namely "the superior animism [of] the Ewe-Yoruba mythology" (1980:14).

This social differentiation between religious houses has been reinforced over time by the fact that the academic and artistic culture brokers have tended to give their support to those few houses they regarded as most pure and most traditional, which were also the most advantaged to begin with. So the elite status of these houses has increased over time, both through the material benefits that have come to them as the result of the patronage of the culture brokers and through the renown they have achieved.

While the advantages that have accrued to this very small number of "pure" houses of Candomblé might appear to be justified, on the grounds that the valorization of African culture in these houses is a weapon against racism, the net effect has been to create a widespread prejudice against the popular religion practiced by the vast majority of Afro-Brazilian religious houses, which is branded as "syncretic." Since the members of these houses generally belong to the poorest sectors of Brazilian society, the prejudice against syncretism is best understood in terms of Brazilian class politics: the denigration of syncretism is a means of legitimizing discrimination against the poor.

The greatest irony in all this is that the contemporary United Negro Movement (MNU) in Brazil, whose aim is to achieve social and economic justice for all Black Brazilians, has largely adopted the same view of what constitutes "real" African culture, as has been passed down with only superficial modifications since Nina Rodriguez. This has, of course, impeded the development of a united front within the movement because it has meant attempting to create a set of racial and cultural norms that actually *excludes* a large section of Brazil's Black population. According to one

participant in the MNU, "light-skinned Blacks were discriminated against. They were called 'fake Blacks,' 'fraudulent Blacks'" (Silva 1988:284).

This factionalism only serves the interests of the movement's opponents. And it is worth recalling that it has a historical precedent. In the days of slavery, the slave owners and public authorities encouraged rivalry between slaves of different ethnic origins in order to avoid the union that was indispensable to a revolt (Degler 1976:67).

The Brazilian public authorities of the present day may not be conscious of such a cynical purpose in their treatment of Black people, but the end result is the same. On the one hand, access to employment and political office is acknowledged to be easier for light-skinned Blacks (Santana 1990); on the other hand, the greatest government support for Black culture goes to those organizations that have the "purest" African heritage. (This may be one of the reasons for the division within the MNU between the "political" faction and the "cultural" faction.[7])

The difficulties faced by the Black rights movement in Brazil can be attributed partly to the widespread acceptance throughout the population of the notion of the "real Brazil" as a racial democracy, and the notion of the "real Africa" as a reproduction of pure and traditional Yoruba culture on Brazilian soil, unchanged by time and by its new environment.[8] These views are often held simultaneously, in spite of their different histories and their contrasting ideological foundations. They have also taken on a certain solidity through their embodiment in social practices and institutions.

So far our critical analysis of these myths has focused on their historical development. It is now time to reconsider two of the key ideas underlying these beliefs as they affect the Candomblé religion, namely, the supposedly corrupt nature of syncretism and the supposedly degenerate status of those Afro-Brazilian religions that have a Bantu origin. In her excellent defense of syncretism,[9] Judith Berling points out that

> syncretism looks perfidious when viewed against the background of the credal and exclusivistic style of religion which dominated Western
> history. . . . In the West, where religions frequently clashed over doctrinal, hermeneutical, and ritual issues, an attempt to reconcile doctrines across sectarian lines was tantamount to religious treason. . . .If one starts from the assumption that religious groups have clear doctrinal boundaries and mutually exclusive memberships, then syncretism challenges the territorial system worked out by competing religious groups. . . . The territorial model is not suitable for all cultures . . . . Where religions are not mutually exclusive, syncretism need

not be a betrayal. It is simply inappropriate to project Western value judgments
about syncretism onto all world religions. (1980:4)

She applies this argument to the case of China, but we think it is
equally valid in the case of Africa. Robert Farris Thompson points
out that one of the things that has permitted African culture to
survive and flourish in the Diaspora has been its ability to adapt the
cultural elements available in a new environment to older African
patterns. Thompson works with a notion of creolization rather than
using the word "syncretism," but the terminology is unimportant.
The point is that Africans of the Diaspora have generally not
observed territorial boundaries between what is culturally African
and non-African. "The creole thing to do is to mix them. Gone is
the notion of a single canon" (Thompson 1988:29).

    This helps us to re-evaluate the Brazilian religions whose
origins have been traced to the region of Africa where Bantu
languages are spoken. While it is true that these religions may place
statues of Christian saints and American Indians on their altars, and
may use Portuguese rather than African languages in their rituals,
these and similar syncretic features are not indicators of degeneracy,
nor of an abandonment of African culture. The altars are designed
according to an "assemblage aesthetic" that is common both in
Africa and the Diaspora (see Bettelheim 1988:40, and Thompson
1988:28); and the use of Portuguese in rituals makes possible a
stylized battle of linguistic virtuosity (Wafer 1989:136-41) of a kind
that is widespread among Africans of both the Old and the New
Worlds (cf. Gates 1988; Thompson 1988:19).

    One criticism that is often leveled against the syncretic
religions of Brazil is that their conception of the deity *Exu* has been
corrupted by various non-African influences, including an association
with Satan. Often the Exu spirits in the religious houses of Bantu
origin have the characteristics of the most disdained groups in
Brazilian society: petty criminals, con-men, pimps, and prostitutes.
But, as Lapassade and Luz point out, this ritual incorporation of
those most marginalized by the social order is a means of contesting
the ideology of the dominant classes (1972:xxii-xxiii). This is entirely
consistent with Eṣu's role among the Yoruba: for Eṣu is the
trickster who unsettles the established order of things.

    We see, then, that the religious houses of Bantu origin have
maintained their own kind of continuity with Africa—or rather, with
the representation of Africa that is the creation of scholars of the
present day. This qualification is important because we are not
trying to suggest that these scholars—or, for that matter, we

ourselves—have discovered a new "real Africa." This would be tantamount to claiming that we had magically escaped from the interplay of representations. What we have attempted to do, instead, is to change the terms of the debate about "Africa," "Brazil," and the relationship between them.

Our argument is that this debate, when it has been conducted in terms of the premises of the centripetal and centrifugal movements, has poorly served the cause of justice for Black Brazilians. So a different set of hypotheses is needed. The hypotheses we suggest are these: that all Black Brazilians have an equally valid African heritage; that this heritage is, in all cases, embedded in the social complexities of contemporary Brazil; and that these complexities include pervasive racial discrimination.

In this paper, we have focused principally on those aspects of the history of the centripetal and centrifugal movements that affect Black Brazilians. But it is worth adding, in conclusion, that the Brazilian Indians have also been affected by being symbolically opposed to the "pure African." We suggest that the goal of achieving justice for both groups may be better served by starting from the premise that they have a common cause.

Notes

[1] The original version of this paper was presented at the Smithsonian Institution, under the auspices of the Anacostia Museum, on October 26, 1990.

[2] Even today the word *tupiniquim*, which is the name of an Indian people from northeastern Brazil, is used as an adjective to mean "Brazilian."

[3] The principal flaw in this type of argument has been pointed out by Abdias do Nascimento, who says that "to call Brazil a mixed nation is not valid. We know which models, values and paragons of culture dominate, identify and personalize Brazilian society" (quoted in Jackson 1976:15).

[4] The reader interested in a more nuanced account of the relationship between "Negro" and "Indian" themes in Brazilian literature is referred to Brookshaw 1988, especially Chapter 4.

[5] These events were followed, in the 1940s, by Abdias do Nascimento's founding of the Teatro Experimental do Negro, which is considered to have been the "cultural headquarters of Negritude in Brazil" (Frederic M. Litto, quoted in Jackson 1976:14; cf. Jackson 1979:91).

[6] This argument derives from the notion, repeated over and over by adherents of the centrifugal movement, that the slaves, in order to be able to continue their religious practices without interference from the white authorities, hid the religious

objects pertaining to their gods behind images of the Christian saints; cf. Bastide 1978a:162-3.

[7]   And it may be noted in passing that the government has its own reasons for promoting Black culture and links with Africa. Afro-Brazilian culture is good for tourism, and Brazil has needed good relations with Nigeria because that country has been one of the sources of Brazil's petroleum imports (Tabor 1976:93-4).

[8]   One even hears it said that Yoruba culture has maintained a greater purity in Brazil than in Africa.

[9]   The term *syncretism* has its etymological origin in a union between Greek states on the island of Crete for the purpose of defending themselves against a common enemy. But, in the course of its use in European philosophical and theological disputes, it has come to mean something like "an artificial mixture of heterogenous ideas or doctrines," and has generally been used pejoratively.

References Cited

Anderson, Benedict R. O. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Azevedo, Stella. 1986. Sincretismo e Branqueamento. Abstract of paper presented at the Third International Congress of Orisa Tradition and Culture, New York, October 6-10, 1986.

Azevedo, Thales de. 1955. *As Elites de Cor: Um Estudo de Ascenção Social*. São Paulo: Nacional.

——. 1956. *Classes Sociais e Grupos de Prestígio*. São Paulo: Civilização Brasileira.

——. 1975. *Democracia Racial: Mito ou Realidade*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Bastide, Roger. 1939. État actuel des études afro-brésiliennes. *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* Jan.-Feb. 1939:77-89.

——. 1978a. *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*. Translated by H. Sebba. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

——. 1978b. *O Candomblé da Bahia (Rito Nagô)*. Translated by M. I. P. de Queiroz. São Paulo: Editora Nacional.

Berling, Judith A. 1980. *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-en*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bettelheim, Judith. 1988. Jonkonnu and Other Christmas Masquerades. In *Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference*, eds. J.W. Nunley and J. Bettelheim, pp 39-83. Seattle: University of Washington Press, in association with the Saint Louis Art Museum. 39-83.

Birman, Patrícia. 1980. Feitiço, Carrego e Olho Grande, os Males do Brasil São: Estudo de um Centro Umbandista numa Favela do Rio de Janeiro. Master's thesis, Postgraduate Program in Social Anthropology, the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

Brissonnet, Lydie Carmen. 1988. The Structuration of Communitas in the Carnaval of Salvador, Bahia (Northeastern Brazil). Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University.

Brookshaw, David. 1986. *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow.

Cacciatore, Olga Gudolle. 1977. *Dicionário de Cultos Afro-Brasileiros: Com a Indicação da Origem das Palavras*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense-Universitária.

Carneiro, Edison. 1964. *Ladinos e Crioulos: Estudos sobre o Negro no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

———. 1967. *Candomblés da Bahia*. Rio de Janeiro: Tecnoprint.

———. 1981. *Religiões Negras: Notas de Etnografia Religiosa* and *Negros Bantos: Notas de Etnografia Religiosa e de Folclore*. Published in one volume, continuously paginated; 2nd. ed. of both works. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Dantas, Beatriz Góis. 1982. Repensando a Pureza Nagô. *Religião e Sociedade* 8:15-20.

Degler, Carl N. 1976. *Nem Preto nem Branco: Escravidão e Relações Raciais no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos*. Translated by F. Wrobel. Rio de Janeiro: Editorial Labor do Brasil. Orginally published as *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971).

Dzidzienyo, Anani. 1971. *The Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society*. London: Minority Rights Group Report.

Ebron, Paulla A. 1990. "Where and When I Enter": Situating the Ethnographer within African Counter Discourses. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans, November 29, 1990.

Freyre, Gilberto. 1933. *Casa Grande e Senzala*. Rio de Janeiro: Schmidt. Translated by S. Putnam, under the title *The Masters and the Slaves*. (New York: Knopf, 1966.)

Frigerio, Alejandro. 1983. The Search for Africa: Proustian Nostalgia in Afro-Brazilian Studies. M.A. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles.

Fry, Peter. 1982. *Para Inglês Ver: Identidade e Política na Cultura Brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. 1988. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Jackson, Richard L. 1976. *The Black Image in Latin American Literature*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

——. 1979. *Black Writers in Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Lapassade, Georges, and Marco Aurélio Luz. 1972. *O Segredo da Macumba*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Latour, Bruno, and Steve Woolgar. 1979. *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Lima, Vivaldo da Costa. 1977. *A Família-de-Santo nos Candomblés Jeje-Nagôs da Bahia: Um Estudo de Relações Intra-Grupais*. Salvador: Postgraduate Program in the Human Sciences of the Federal University of Bahia.

Motta, Roberto. 1987. Religiões Populares do Recife como Resposta à Ecologia Tropical da Cidade. In *Anais do Seminário de Tropicologia. Conferências, Comentários e Debates do Seminário de Tropicologia da Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, no Ano de 1977*. R. Motta (org.), pp. 78-91. Recife: Massangana/Fundação Joaquim Nabuco.

Nunley, John W., and Judith Bettelheim. 1988. *Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, in association with the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Ortiz, Renato. 1978. *A Morte Branca do Feiticeiro Negro: Umbanda, Integração de uma Religião numa Sociedade de Classes*. Petrópolis: Vozes.

Quintas, Amaro. 1977. Preface. In *Sincretismo Religioso Afro-Brasileiro*, Waldemar Valente, pp. ix-xv. São Paulo: Nacional.

Ramos, Artur. 1934. *O Negro Brasileiro: Ethnographia Religiosa e Psychanalyse*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Rodrigues, Raimundo Nina. 1900. *L'animisme fétichiste des nègres de Bahia*. Salvador: Reis.

——. 1977. *Os Africanos no Brasil*. 5th ed. São Paulo: Nacional.

Roett, Riordan. 1984. *Brazil: Politics in a Patrimonial Society*. 3rd. ed. New York: Praeger.

Santana, Hédimo Rodrigues. 1990. The Black Rights Movement in Bahia, Brazil. Research paper, Anacostia Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.

Silva, Jônatas C. da. 1988. Histórias de Lutas Negras: Memórias do Surgimento do Movimento Negro na Bahia. In *Escravidão e Invenção da Liberdade*, ed. João José Reis, pp. 275-288. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Tabor, Daniel. 1976. The Savage and the Innocent: Anthropological Involvement in Spirit Possession Cults. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, VII:2, 87-98.

Thompson, Robert Farris.   1988. Recapturing Heaven's Glamour: Afro-Caribbean Festivalizing Arts. In *Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference*, eds. J.W. Nunley and J. Bettelheim, pp 17-29. Seattle: University of Washington Press, in association with the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Valente, Waldemar. 1977. *Sincretismo Religioso Afro-Brasileiro*. 3rd ed. São Paulo: Nacional. (Preface by Amaro Quintas, pp. ix-xv.)

Velho, Yvonne Maggie Alves. 1977. *Guerra de Orixá: Um Estudo de Ritual e Conflito*. 2nd ed. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.

Wafer, James. 1989. The Taste of Blood: Interaction between People and Spirits in Candomblé of Bahia. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University.