

## Afro-Brazilian Studies in the 1930s: Intellectual Networks between Brazil and the USA<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*In this article, I map some of the US-Brazil networks of intellectuals who helped to develop the field of Afro-Brazilian studies in the 1930s. While discussing the emergence and institutionalization of the field, I highlight the role of figures such as Rüdiger Bilden (1893-1980), Melville Herskovits (1895-1963), Donald Pierson (1900-1995), Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), Arthur Ramos (1903-1949), Ruth Landes (1908-1991), and Edison Carneiro (1912-1972). Together, these scholars from the United States and Brazil were key to the development of Afro-Brazilian studies as an interdisciplinary field.*

### Resumo

*Neste artigo, faço um mapeamento de algumas das redes de intelectuais entre o Brasil e os EUA que ajudaram a desenvolver o campo dos estudos afro-brasileiros na década de 1930. Ao discutir o surgimento e a institucionalização do campo, destaco o papel de figuras como Rüdiger Bilden (1893-1980), Melville Herskovits (1895-1963), Donald Pierson (1900-1995), Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), Arthur Ramos (1903-1949), Ruth Landes (1908-1991) e Edison Carneiro (1912-1972). Juntos, esses acadêmicos dos Estados Unidos e do Brasil foram fundamentais para o desenvolvimento dos estudos afro-brasileiros como um campo interdisciplinar.*

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Today, so-called "Afro-Brazilian studies" constitute a very consolidated field, which has developed in an interdisciplinary way, dialoguing above all with the human and social sciences. Interest in the study of Brazil's black populations is certainly not new: the fundamental milestone for its development as a field can be found in the studies of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), with emphasis on the publication of *O Animismo Fetichista dos Negros Baianos* in 1900, and *Os Africanos no Brasil*, written between 1890 and 1905 and published in 1932. Despite the approximation of Rodrigues' studies to the field of criminology, his work constituted the first real efforts to analyze the reality of black populations in Brazil.

A significant milestone for the delimitation of Afro-Brazilian studies was the *I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro*, held in Recife in 1934. The organizer of this congress was Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), and its creators also included the poet and black activist Solano Trindade (1908-1974), who was part of the *Frente Negra Pernambucana*, the *Centro de Cultura Afro-Brasileira*, and the *Teatro Experimental do Negro*. Shifting from studies of black populations in Brazil to Afro-Brazilian studies indicates the understanding that although there are approximations between Africa and Brazil, black populations in Brazil present a distinct and new cultural synthesis. Afro-Brazilian studies, therefore, would be focused on the cultural complexities formed of black populations in Brazil, which is different to African studies.

However, it is throughout the twentieth century that Afro-Brazilian studies were truly consolidated, and several factors were involved in this processes, including the expansion of the publishing market in Brazil, and the creation of the first social science courses in the 1930s. In the same context, the Brazilian elite's political and ideological debates shifted towards national identity. Here, they began to value African contributions in the process of nation-building (Carvalho, 1977), which, at the time, presented important political and ideological implications.

The aspect that I to explore in this article is not restricted to academic matters only. Foremost, I turn to the circulation of researchers and the creation of networks between US and Brazilian scholars, which made the expansion and intersection of social circles possible (Simmel, 2009). I do not deny the relevance of other relations, such as that developed between Brazil and France through the University of São Paulo. The USP hosted the famous "French mission" which invited, among others, Roger Bastide (1898-1974), one of the most relevant authors in Afro-Brazilian studies,<sup>3</sup> who also fostered a dialogue with the group of

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3 This "mission" was further initiated in 1934, when Émile Coornaert (history), Pierre Deffontaines (geography), Robert

researchers analyzed here. However, my work aims to highlight a particular line of personal and intellectual exchanges. In this sense, I agree with the following statement by Sansone:

Right from its first steps in the thirties, the field of Afro-Brazilian studies, especially regarding anthropology, was a transnational, tense and dense field, intertwined with cultural, racial and political agendas oftentimes originated in the United States and France. This international and even transnational dimension of Afro-Brazilian studies, right from their inception in the academic establishment in the mid-1930s to today show that a critical assessment on power and the positioning of knowledge in the United States-Brazil academic exchange is required (2011: 562).

It is recognized, therefore, that a large number of agents was involved in the process, but that they did not necessarily act in a concomitant and convergent way since their interests were in an incipient Brazilian academic field which researched black populations in Brazil. My intention in this article is to highlight how the field of Afro-Brazilian studies was being formed based on the academic and friendship relations between Brazilian and American researchers, highlighting Brazilians such as Gilberto Freyre, Arthur Ramos (1903-1949), and Edison Carneiro (1912-1972), and the Americans Rüdiger Bilden (1893-1980),<sup>4</sup> Melville Herskovits (1895-1963), Donald Pierson (1900-1995), and Ruth Landes (1908-1991). Ultimately, this article shows how these networks were built up over time creating friendships but also rivalries.

### **The friends from Columbia University**

I begin with Gilberto Freyre's trip to the United States. In his memoirs, he attributes a certain "anglophilia", which was unusual amidst the cultural elites of the time, to his father, Alfredo Freyre (1875-1961). According to Freyre, and with reference to his father, it was the work of William James that introduced him to Anglophone readings and "led him to a sort of Anglo-Saxonization that developed him culturally" (Freyre, 2010, p. 88).

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Garric (French literature), Paul-Arbousse Bastide (sociology), Étienne Borne (philosophy and psychology) and Michel Berveiller (Greco-Latin literature) - only Berveiller and Arbousse-Bastide renewed their contracts with the university the following year. In 1935 came Fernand Braudel (history), Pierre Hourcade (French literature), Pierre Monbeig (geography), Claude Lévi-Strauss (second chair of sociology) and Jean Maugüé (philosophy). Monbeig and Maugüé remained in the country until 1944 and 1947, respectively. From 1938 onwards a new group of professors came up with the following names: Jean Gagé (in place of Braudel), Alfred Bonzon (French literature), Paul Hugon (economics) and Roger Bastide (substitute Lévi-Strauss)

4 Bilden was born in Germany, but settled in the United States. I will consider him in the group of American researchers because that their academic and professional ties have formed almost exclusively among American universities.

Freyre studied at the *Colégio Americano Batista* (Batista American School) in Recife, which made it easier for him to go to Baylor University in the city of Waco, Texas, which traditionally received graduates from the institution. Although, at the time, it was more common for the elite to undertake their study exchanges in Europe, it is important to point out that this took place in 1918, during the First World War, which meant a trip to the United States was more feasible. Additionally, Freyre's eldest brother, Ulyses Freyre (1898-1962), had already gone to study in the US (Pallares-Burke, 2005).<sup>5</sup>

However, it was undoubtedly during a trip to New York, where he completed a Master's in Social History at the Columbia University, that Freyre met himself academically. In the letters that he wrote to Manuel de Oliveira Lima (1867-1928), he emphasized the intellectual and cultural environment present not only in the University, but also in the city space itself.<sup>6</sup> In his "intimate diary",<sup>7</sup> *Tempo Morto e Outros Tempos* (2006), he also highlights some of the individuals that stood out to him during his time at Columbia University, such as his teachers Franz Boas (1858-1942) and Franklin Henry Giddings (1855-1931).

It is interesting to note that although his Master's degree was in Social History, supervised by Carlton Hayes (1882-1964), Freyre took courses in other departments, including two in Sociology and two in Anthropology.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, and undoubtedly as time went on, he became increasingly identified as a sociologist and anthropologist, albeit with an ambivalent definition (Freyre, 1968). Motta and Fernandes (2013) hypothesize that Freyre chose to highlight Boas' legacy over his relationship with Hayes, at least since his publication of *Casa-grande & Senzala* (1933). This intellectual affiliation enabled Freyre to locate himself in-between the emerging fields of Sociology and Anthropology, something only a handful of professors in Brazil would do.

Columbia University was not only a space for intellectual formation, but was also where Freyre built networks and friendships, some of which were long lasting. Among Freyre's friends of

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5 It is in this period that he begins to collaborate with the newspaper *Diário de Pernambuco* through a series of letters entitled "From other America".

6 The exchange of correspondence between Freyre and Oliveira Lima extended from 1917 to 1928, marking an intense intellectual dialogue between the two. Later Freyre published the book *Oliveira Lima, Don Quixote Gordo* (Oliveira Lima, a fat Don Quixote) (1970).

7 Although it was published as an "intimate journal" it is relatively consensual among the researchers that this work underwent several modifications made by Freyre later, so that not all facts are strictly reliable to the events occurred in that period.

8 He also carried out six courses in History, two in Public Law, one in English and one in Fine Arts, according to documentation consulted at the *Fundação Gilberto Freyre* (Gilberto Freyre Foundation).

the time, Rüdiger Bilden is a key figure whose significance is indicated through numerous quotations in Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933 [2005]). In one of the passages of the book, Freyre indicates that:

Ruediger Bilden also writes, with admirable critical sense, that in Brazil, private colonization, much more than official action, promoted the mixing of race, large landed agriculture, and slavery, foundations upon which it was possible to find and develop a large and stable agricultural colony in the tropics (Freyre, 2005: 80).

To a large extent these ideas, outlined in Bilden's *Brazil, Laboratory of Civilization* (1929), describe some of the foundations of Freyre's work: the concept that Brazilian society was based on the latifundio, on slavery in a mixed society. Bilden also developed research in Brazil. In late 1925, he made his first trip to South America, which would be central to the research he intended to develop on slavery. Bilden was closer to Boas than Freyre. When he went to Brazil, he had letters of recommendation from the renowned anthropologist from Columbia University, as well as from Oliveira Lima, whom Freyre had introduced him to. Although Bilden never fully completed his project, he was perceived as a serious and talented young man, whose work would bring significant contributions to his field of study (Pallares-Burke, 2012).

The network of scholars working with topics related to Afro-Brazilian studies in Columbia University gradually expanded and mixed with others. Another prominent anthropologist who gravitated around this intellectual environment was Melville Herskovits, whose doctoral supervisor was Boas. Even though he had not been a contemporary of Freyre at Colombia Univeristy, Herskovits was eventually introduced to the Brazilian researchers through Bilden (Yelvington, 2007). When the *Primeiro Congresso Afro-Brasileiro* (First Afro-Brazilian Congress) took place in Recife in 1934 under Freyre's organization, Herskovits was invited to participate, and eventhough he could not make the trip, he sent two papers to be read. This demonstrates the relevance of the exchanges and contacts that were established between these researchers, as well as the impact that friendships had on the academic field.

### **From Nashville to Bahia**

Another essential location is Fisk University, located in Nashville, the capital of Tennessee. This institution was a recognized "black university", where several researchers had at some point or another dealt with the theme. With the invitation of Charles S. Johnson (1893-1956), Bilden – who

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in fact had difficulty finding a permanent position at any university – obtained a temporary post at Fisk University between September 1937 and June 1939, where he delivered a course on slave society and racial mixing in Brazil, comparing it with the situation in North America (Pallares-Burke, 2012).

Beyond the promising intellectual environment, a happy coincidence meant that Bilden was working in the institution at the same time that Donald Pierson had just returned from Brazil, where he had conducted a survey on black populations in Bahia. Pierson had been assistant to Robert Park (1864-1944) in 1935 at Fisk University as part of his preparation for the research in Brazil. He taught courses on Brazil that were based on his readings and research on the rural South of the United States (Pierson, 1987). It is interesting to note that Park also joined Fisk University at the invitation of Johnson, who had just founded Fisk's Department of Social Sciences and had also been mentored by Park during his doctorate (Maio, 2017).

Between 1935 and 1937 Pierson carried out research in Brazil, having been in contact with different Brazilian researchers, such as Freyre, Francisco José de Oliveira Viana (1883-1951), and Arthur Ramos. With Freyre, his contract was extended to attend the classes that Freyre taught at the *Universidade do Distrito Federal* (University of the Federal District) in the 1930s, in the newly created social sciences degree (Silva, 2012).<sup>9</sup> The proximity between the two can be explained in part by the sharing of social circles, as well as particular theoretical perspectives they had picked up from the University of Columbia mainly, such as the overlap between culture and biology as a way of explaining social rights.

The friendships between these scholars also had their own rules, and in these cases exchanges were very relevant. Shortly after the publication of Pierson's thesis, entitled *Negroes in Brazil, a Study of Race Contact at Bahia* (1939),<sup>10</sup> Freyre produced a review for the newspaper *Diários Associados*. Reciprocally, in 1947, a year after *The Masters and the Slaves'* publication in English, Pierson produced a book review in the prestigious journal *American Sociological*. In the review, Pierson predicted that this work would be a watershed in Brazilian intellectual history.<sup>11</sup> However, it is important to thoroughly understand the complexity of the relations that were established here. As pointed out by Silva:

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9 For a better analysis of Freyre's work at the University of the Federal District see Meucci (2015) and Oliveira (2017).

10 The thesis was defended in 1939, published in the United States in 1942 and Brazil in 1945 with the title *Branços e Pretos na Bahia: estudo de contato racial*. In Brazil, the book was published in the *Brasiliana* collection, considered one of the most important spaces of academic legitimation in that period (Pontes, 1995).

11 It is also interesting to note the asymmetries present between the American academic field and the Brazilian academic field, and there are specialized journals consolidated at that time. In the case of Brazil, although the first specialized



When analyzing the conditions of his field research, and the network of relations he established in Brazil during his first voyage, it is possible to affirm that, in the conceptual plane, Pierson was well in tune with Freyre, in the political plane, his more significant reference was Arthur Ramos – which as I mentioned, was probably a key figure for Park's first visit to Brazil (2012, p.120).

Therefore, fluctuating collaborations and distances between agents in this field must also be understood from the various capitals they had available at the time. In spite of all his prestige as an intellectual, Freyre had never been a full professor, unlike Arthur Ramos, who became a full professor of Anthropology and Ethnography of the *Faculdade Nacional de Filosofia* (National Faculty of Philosophy) at the *Universidade do Brasil* (University of Brazil), and who in the 1940s founded the *Sociedade Brasileira de Antropologia e Etnologia* (Brazilian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology).

Returning to Nashville, it is interesting to note that while Bilden and Pierson were at Fisk University, another researcher at the institution was preparing for her research in Brazil. This was the Jewish anthropologist Ruth Landes, who was invited by Park with the support of Boas and Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), who had been her doctoral advisor at Columbia University. This scenario clearly demonstrates the transit of intellectuals between Columbia University and Fisk University, at a crossroads between social circles that also encompassed others in Brazil. In addition to her experience as a lecturer, Landes was able to take advantage of Bilden and Pierson's previous experience in Brazil, not only in terms of academic knowledge but also in terms of social capital. In 1937, Bilden wrote a cover letter for Landes, addressed to Ramos:

You will be interested to learn that Dr. Ruth Landes, a young anthropologist who has already done much worthwhile work on the North American Negro as well as fieldwork among Indians of North America, is being sent toward the end of this year to Brazil by the Department of Anthropology of Columbia University to do concrete field work on the Brazilian Negro. Ever since my return from Brazil, I have suggested to Professor Boas and Prof. Ruth Benedict, present head of the Department, that trained investigators be sent to Brazil to study specific aspects of the vast and interesting the Brazilian Negro situation. This has borne fruit. On my advice, Dr. Landes has chosen the Negro in and around the city of Bahia as the subject of her investigations. She will come first to Rio, remain there for some weeks, and then proceed to Bahia, where she intends to remain about a year. / Dr. Landes is a competent and capable anthropologist as well as a fine and charming young

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journals appeared between the late 1930s and the early 1940s, newspapers and "culture magazines" still had significant importance in the field of dissemination and circulation of ideas.

woman. While thus far she is not yet familiar with the specific Brazilian situation, she no doubt will work into it and do very worthwhile work. (...) Toward this end I appeal particularly to you, knowing that you will be greatly interested in her scientific endeavor and will help her with advice and introductions. I would be very grateful, as would the Department of Anthropology, if during Dr. Landes' sojourn in Rio you would give her all possible aid in arranging her requirements for successful work in Bahia, in particular by introducing her to people in that city who can be of help to her. I know that this is asking much, but I also know that you will have the greatest understanding for her work and her objectives. / I should give Dr. Landes on her departure letters of introduction to a number of my Brazilian friends, especially you, Gilberto Freyre and Roquette Pinto. I believe it would be very desirable if you would introduce her to Dr. Heloisa Alberto Torres, who as a fellow anthropologist and a woman can probably be of special assistance to her<sup>12</sup>.

The cover letter says something of the importance of networks in the development of an emerging field of studies. Although Bilden was not close to Landes, he was writing this letter because she shared Bilden's same circle of friends. She was close to Boas and Benedict, two of the leading names in American anthropology in the twentieth century. His request to Ramos indicates the relevance of personal exchanges because through his friendship with the Brazilian anthropologist, he could make viable the fieldwork of Landes, a friend of his friends.

Ramos was quick to help her, and on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1938, Ramos wrote letters introducing Landes to Aydano do Couto Ferraz (1914-1985), Edgard dos Santos (1894- 1962) and Edison Carneiro. It is reinforced here again that the production of scientific knowledge does not depend only on elements of the field; there are also "extra-scientific" elements that are fundamental (Bourdieu, 2011). It is thanks to the bonds of friendship of Bilden – often forgotten when we refer to the formation of the Afro-Brazilian studies – that the coming of Landes to Brazil was feasible, therefore, we can not ignore the central role that Carneiro had in her research.<sup>13</sup>

It is also possible to observe another confluence among the researchers analyzed here, since that most of them carried out fieldwork in Bahia, which due to the strong presence of black populations was perceived as an ideal field for investigations into racial relations, understood as quite singular in Brazil, especially when compared to those in the United States. In this sense, Bahia has become a relevant "ethnographic region" or even a

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12 Letter transcribed from the original (written in English) deposited in the Arthur Ramos Archive, are available for consultation at the *Biblioteca Nacional* (National Library).

13 It is not considered here that Bilden alone enabled the arrival of Landes to Brazil, other agents are mobilized for so much, however, it is interesting to note the centrality of him in the presentation of Landes to the Brazilian researchers, in order to make feasible her trip and her fieldwork.



“laboratory” (Valladares, 2010). We should also note that the “preparatory” role that Fisk University had for researchers who wanted to carry out research in Brazil presupposed a certain continuity between the two realities (the South of the United States and Brazil), with a more general idea about the presence of the “black population in the new world”.

Despite this great movement in the 1930s, it is mainly from the following decade onwards that the field of Afro-Brazilian studies was more clearly delimited so that tensions arise more clearly too. In this scenario, it is not only friendships that are essential to the genesis of this field, but also rivalry, thus revealing the disputes that were at stake, which involved both Brazilian and American researchers.

### **Friendships and rivalries in Afro-Brazilian studies**

We can point to many convergences between the intellectuals that I have already mentioned in this article, but it is not possible to ignore the heterogeneity and differences between them, given the different interpretations and representations that they produced about Africa and Candomblé (Motta, 2016). In the case of the Brazilians, one of the moments this became very clear was in the period of the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress, this time organized by Edison Carneiro and Aydano Couto Ferraz – with the collaboration of Arthur Ramos – in Salvador in 1937. When the plans for the event in Bahia was announced in 1936, Freyre gave an interview to the *Diário de Pernambuco*, which was reproduced in the newspaper *O Estado de Bahia* on November 13th, 1936, in which he criticized the organizers of the Congress:

(...) Only two or three days ago I learned from a letter from the writer Edison Carneiro that a second Afro-Brazilian Congress would be held in Bahia. I'm afraid you're going to have all the flaws of improvised things. There should be a much more extended period for studies, for the contributions of real scholars. True scholars work slowly. Unless the organizers of the current Congress are only concerned with the most picturesque and artistic side of the subject: the "wheels" of capoeira and samba, the touches of "candomblé," etc. This side is very interesting, and in Bahia, it will have a unique color. However, the program outlined at the 1st Congress was a more extensive program, including the arid but equally fruitful part of social studies, research, and scientific work. / I also disagree with the orientation of the 2nd Afro-Brazilian Congress to be held in Bahia regarding relations with the State Governor. I am informed by the writer Edison Carneiro who is, by the way, one of our smarter African-anthropologists, that a grant from the State Government will be applied for the 2nd Afro-Brazilian Congress. I strongly disagree. I believe that these Congresses of scholars should be like the first Afro-Brazilian Congress

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meeting in Recife, entirely independent of the Governments or any political organization with partisan interests or immediate ends. This independence was one of the characteristics of the first Congress - that of Recife, and to affirm it, Jose Lins do Rego, Cícero Dias, Mário Lacerda de Melo, myself and some others had to propose energetic resistance to those who tried to deform that meeting of researchers and scholars, who was favored by the collaboration of Africanologists such as Professor Herskovits, in a demagogic and partisan gathering. / I believe that the problems of the Negro and the mulatto in Brazil should be discussed and presented with the utmost frankness, with honesty, and with disbelief, indicating the social and even political effects of the oppression of the people of color that are still observed among us. / I believe that the fact that the Afro-Brazilian Congress of Recife has regarded the black and the black mestizo, not as a problem of biological pathology, as did Nina Rodrigues himself - who was convinced of the absolute inferiority of the black and mulatto - but as a problem mainly of social maladjustment, represents a remarkable achievement for the Brazilian social studies and of profound political repercussion. But it does not seem to me that Afro-Brazilian congresses should reveal to the political or demagogic apology of people of color. It would sacrifice all their scientific interest in the research effort and harvest and honest interpretation of material that is still being gathered. / I am sure, however, that the organizers of the 2nd Congress - in Bahia - will be able to guarantee an environment of independence and scientific ownership (Freyer, 1987: 127-128).

Freyre's position seemed to indicate concerns for how Afro-Brazilian studies should be presented to the broader audience. At least since *Casa Grande & Senzala*, published a year before the First Afro-Brazilian Congress, Freyre had made efforts to champion Afro-Brazilian culture, which was accomplished through a significant scholarly effort. His criticism of the organization of the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress, therefore, would be in the direction that the scholarly dimension should overlap with others.

In an article published on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1937, in the newspaper *Gazeta de Alagoas*, Arthur Ramos responded to the criticisms received, calling the statements made by Freyre lies. Besides, the criticism that had also been addressed to Nina Rodrigues did not go unnoticed, and Ramos indicated the relevance and pioneering of the research of the anthropologist-physician It is essential to remember that Ramos considered himself the intellectual heir of Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, despite the theoretical discontinuities between them (Corrêa, 2013). However, despite the divergences that emerged in this context, it is essential to note that:

When we compare Gilberto Freyre and Artur Ramos' conceptions of what anthropology was, we see that their friction resulted less from concrete divergences than from the search for legitimacy to establish this discipline in the Brazilian academic field. Both authors understood that anthropology should be a science dedicated to the study of the "total man"

erected at the time under the theoretical perspective of American culturalism. Artur Ramos, for having centered his effort on the constitution of an ethnography of the religiosity of the Negro, differed in this sense from Gilberto Freyre, who led his subjects preferentially to broader frontiers between sociology, anthropology, and history. In any case, it was in the context of the influences exerted by these authors that the Afro-Brazilian studies had other unfoldings between the decades of 40 and 60 (Silva, 2002, pp. 92-93).

What reinforces this hypothesis is the presence of Herskovits' works in both congresses, which indicates that the theoretical divergences were not the main point of conflict between Freyre and Ramos in the structuring of these activities, as the two congresses had common contributors. There were other ongoing disputes in the field of Afro-Brazilian studies, which also involved the foreign researchers present in the country.

Between 1941 and 1943, the city of Salvador, Bahia, became the site of the battle between two different perceptions of black integration in the United States and the place of Africa in this process. Franklin Frazier, the most famous black sociologist of the time, who had already published *The Negro Family in the United States* was locked into an argument with the equally famous, white, and Jewish anthropologist Melville Herskovits on the "origins" of the so-called black family. To make things even more complex, both centered their contention on fieldwork done among the same informants: the *povo de santo* (the members) of the same *candomblé* house of worship in Salvador – the prestigious and "traditional" Gantois *terreiro*, of the Ketu/Yoruba nation. In between the two of them was linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner, who would later publish his seminal book on African influences in Gullah, the language spoken by the people of the Sea Islands on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia in the United States (Turner 2003). Turner was a friend of Frazier, but his scholarly theories were closer to Herskovits' (Sansone, 2011: 537).

It is worth noting that Herskovits maintained a network of relations different to those of Frazier and Turner. His was a more intense set of relationships with the intellectual elites, included Arthur Ramos, with whom he had been exchanging correspondences (Guimarães, 2007), José Valladares (1917- 1959),<sup>14</sup> and the director of the National Museum, Heloisa Alberto Torres (1895-1977). Herskovits' trip to Brazil, financed by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, lasted for one year, between September 1941 and August 1942. He spent half of his time in Bahia, accompanied by his wife France and his daughter Jean (Gersh-Nahorn, 2004).

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14 Valladares was one of the primary contacts of Herskovits in Brazil, and also had an American academic training, having obtained in 1943 a scholarship from the Rockefeller Foundation, which allowed him to study History of Art at the Graduate Institute of New York University and to study at the Brooklyn Museum.

It is interesting to note that in his famous presentation, *Ethnological Research in Bahia* (1943), Herskovits performs an elaborate game of visibilization and invisibilization of certain research being carried out within Afro-Brazilian studies at the time, including both Brazilian and foreign authors. It is as if through this text, an effort was made to detach academic hierarchies, and indicate the more 'legitimate' research of this field. In this sense, there was a significant silence regarding the research recently carried out by Landes, the results of which were published in periodicals, and later more fully in the book *The City of Women*, published in English in 1947 and in Portuguese in 1967.

Landes remained in Brazil between January of 1938 and June of 1939, producing work and results that went against interpretations found in the canons of the time, both American and Brazilian, by affirming the existence of a feminine principle in candomblé, evidenced by the predominance of women and homosexuals in command of *terreiros*.<sup>15</sup> Despite having the support of names like Boas and Benedict, Landes was continually boycotted by certain researchers in the field. The very same Bilden who had written her recommendation letter to Ramos, rectifies his opinion of her, writing on March 10, 1938, another correspondence to Ramos in which he expressed the following:

I wrote you at the time as I did in spite of the warnings of your and my friend Melville Herskovits, who, as well as other anthropologists, expressed an unfavorable opinion of her. I realize now that Herskovits was right. You are, of course, free to treat her as you deem best. And I do not wish to place obstacles in her way. But I cannot endorse or recommend her.

A few years later, when the results of her research began to be published, Ramos' criticism was even more robust. In *A Aculturação Negra no Brasil*, published in 1942, he devotes a chapter to "foreign research", in which he criticizes Landes' work, focusing on the fact that his own research in Bahia, as well as Herskovits' in Africa, do not indicate a predominance of women in command of cults of African derivation, which was precisely the backbone of Landes' work. When her book was finally published in English, Herskovits published a review in the *American Anthropologist* journal, in which he stated that "(...) the basic thesis is wrong" (Herskovits, 1948, 124). As a result, her work suffered attacks by those who represented the biggest names in the field in both the United States and Brazil. The

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<sup>15</sup> Religious spaces in various Afro-Brazilian religions.

friendly relationship between Ramos and Herskovits unfolds, at this time, in conjunction with the relationship of enmity with Landes.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that Landes had the support of Carneiro, with whom she also supposedly had a love affair (Rossi, 2015). This is reflected both by the fact that Landes translated Carneiro's article, entitled *The structure of African cults in Bahia* (1940), into English when it was published in the *Journal of American Folklore*, and when Carneiro carefully reviewed *The City of Women*, inserting several explanatory notes that were not included in the English version. To respond to the direct attacks on Landes, Carneiro published a vigorous defense of the work of his American friend, indicating that Ramos had made unfounded criticisms.

Although not the focus of this article, it is important to point out that the attacks on Landes' work also related to gender, as Landes encountered several obstacles to her fieldwork due to her status as a woman. She did not come to Brazil accompanied by a husband, like many other anthropologists, and she was refuting important research in the field of Afro-Brazilian studies with the idea of a "feminine principle" in Camdomblé. In this sense, we must recognize the strong relations between gender and power in the academic structure (Oliveira, 2019).

What I aim to highlight by exposing these facts, some of which are widely known by scholars of the Afro-Brazilian field, is that the relations of friendship and enmity constitute an important element of this field. It is not just the so-called "scientific" elements that shape and establish the field. At the same time, this does not mean that there is a clear demarcation between groups and people who build stable and lasting alliances. Personal relations are, as a rule, much more ambivalent in this regard.

In any case, it is crucial to consider that, in the scientific field, intellectual capital is also relevant, after all, agents with higher capital can set the rules of the field (Bourdieu, 2004). Thus, someone like Herskovits, with an intense international profile, was not in the same position as Bilden, Landes, or Donald Pierson, nor his Brazilian friends, as he had never published a book on Brazil.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Donald Pierson, even without the same prestige as Herskovits, achieved a more prolonged academic career in Brazil. He was a professor at the *Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política* (Free School of Sociology and Politics)

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16 According to Gershenhorn (2004), who interviewed Herskovits' daughter, one of the reasons this never happened was because he associated this research with the heart attack he had during the trip, not having taken another long journey to do a fieldwork after Brazil.



between 1930 and 1950, and founded postgraduates studies at the institution, thus enabling the production of a cadre of professional social scientists, and attracting names that became very relevant to the Brazilian social sciences such as Oracy Nogueira (1917-1996), Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995), and Darcy Ribeiro (1922-1997).

In the Brazilian case, asymmetries of existing power relations were also perceived. While Ramos played a prominent role in the institutionalization of Brazilian anthropology, being invited in the 1940s to head the UNESCO Department of Social Sciences, Carneiro, for example, never accomplished an academic insertion in the strict sense in Brazil. When Ramos died in 1949, and a vacancy opened at the University of Brazil, Carneiro tried to apply but was rejected, as were Heloisa Alberto Torres,<sup>17</sup> and Marina de Vasconcellos (1912-1973), who had been an assistant to Arthur Ramos. On the other hand, and despite all his prestige and recognition, Freyre developed a career outside traditional academic positions. One of his central legacies was the creation of the *Instituto de Pesquisa Social Joaquim Nabuco* (Joaquim Nabuco Social Research Institute) in 1949, which included a department of anthropology that was founded before the creation of the department of social sciences at the Federal University of Pernambuco, pointing to his relevance in the development of research in this field.

Moreover, the social sciences in Brazil and the United States were at substantially different degrees of development at the time, though this did not prevent academic exchanges. The relationship that Ramos and Herskovits established in this transit is emblematic, since besides the continuous exchange of works between them, Herskovits received the title of an honorary professor of anthropology from the Faculty of Philosophy of Bahia, while Ramos was appointed honorary member of the Anthropology Research Association of Northwestern University, both in 1941. This asymmetry between agents led them to develop different alliance strategies, which also reflects, in addition to personal affinities, the interpretive confluences to Afro-Brazilian studies, in some cases reaching substantially different interpretations with regards to race relations in Brazil (Motta, 2013), implying the production of other disputes in this field.

What I have endeavored to demonstrate in this short article is the relevance of friendship (and rivalries) in the formation of a particular field of study, in this case, Afro-Brazilian studies. Although not an exhaustive examination of the literature on the subject, it

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17 Both in the case of Carneiro and Heloisa Alberto Torres, their applications were not accepted due to the absence of university diplomas, although recognition of "notorious knowledge" was requested, which was denied (Barros, 2008).



was intended to map out how these relations were developed, as these agents expanded their social circles and intersected with others.

It is true that the relations between these academics were profoundly asymmetrical, considering both the distance between the American and Brazilian realities, in terms of university structure, as well as between the agents themselves in their national contexts. However, there were also more subtle and complex aspects. Although at first it appears that Brazil provided only ethnographic material, while the United States provided academic training for Brazilians and the departure of renowned researchers, it must be highlighted that Brazil also sent scholars to the United States. One such case was Freyre's in the 1930s, as he worked as a visiting professor in the Department of History of the University of Stanford, and another was Ramos, who in the 1940s worked in the Department of Sociology of the State University of Louisiana as a special Reader. Indeed, in Ramos' case, the invitation came from Thomas Lynn Smith (1903-1976), who had been presented to him through Pierson's letter in 1939, once again reinforcing the relevance of friendly relations in the development of scientific activities.

This flow between Brazil and the United States in the field of Afro-Brazilian studies lasted throughout the following generations. Two emblematic cases are those of René Ribeiro (1914-1990), who carried out his Master's studies at Northwestern University supervised by Herskovits, and Roberto Motta (1940-), who undertook doctoral studies at the University of Columbia supervised by Robert Murphy (1924-1990).<sup>18</sup> Both were involved in consolidating the field of Afro-Brazilian studies and founded the anthropology Master's degree at the Federal University of Pernambuco, one of the first in the country, and the first outside the center-south axis.

Other aspects that could not be explored in this study deserve attention for future studies, such as the role of funding agencies in the arrival of foreign professors to Brazil, whether to do research or to work in Brazilian institutions, as well as the the United States, both for academic training and graduate degrees, and for acting in foreign institutions as visiting professors.

In this way, the complexity of issues and tensions that are involved in the emergence of Afro-Brazilian studies is perceived, not only through the field itself, but also from social circles and their intersections. Establishing links, making exchanges, and establishing

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18 As Motta remarked in an interview (Oliveira, 2015), he would initially be advised by Charles Wagley (1913-1991), but he was already retired when Motta arrived at Columbia University.

alliances are also fundamental elements for the delimitation of a field, the ratification or questioning of academic hierarchies, and the consecration or ostracism of a researcher.

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