

## Slavery, Royalty, and Racism Representations of Africa in Brazilian Carnival

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Résumé de l'article

Cet article examine les représentations de l'Afrique dans le carnaval de Rio de Janeiro. Pendant la deuxième moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, les mouvements afro-brésiliens d'affirmation culturelle se sont inspirés du mouvement nord-américain pour les droits civils. En même temps, l'affirmation culturelle dans l'espace public fut largement basée sur la recreation des liens avec l'Afrique, très souvent perçue comme un continent idéalisé. Cette africanisation, d'abord développée dans la sphère religieuse, plus tard devint visible dans d'autres manifestations culturelles telles que la musique, la danse, la mode et le carnaval. L'examen de l'exemple des parades des *escolas de samba* tenues lors du carnaval de Rio de Janeiro depuis les années 1950 démontre comment la promotion des liens avec l'« Afrique » fait partie d'un processus de reconstruction dans lequel l'Atlantique Sud devient une zone commune de réclamation pour la reconnaissance de multiples identités, dans lequel l'héritage de l'esclavage et de la traite des esclaves se renouvelle.

## SLAVERY, ROYALTY, AND RACISM

### *Representations of Africa in Brazilian Carnival*

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The last twenty years have witnessed the rise of a debate on the memory of slavery in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> This new interest is part of a larger discussion that recently appeared not only in Europe and North America but also in Africa. In Brazil, the public memory of slavery is constructed and renewed at different levels especially among those who self-identify as Afro-Brazilians. The denunciation of the present social and racial inequalities, the fight against racism (which is still experienced by Afro-Brazilians)<sup>2</sup> as well as the emergence of Afro-Brazilian claims for civil rights, have led to the development of different forms of cultural assertion. The development of bonds with Africa through dance, music, visual arts, and religion lies at the heart of this process. These various attempts at promoting the role of Afro-Brazilian historical actors, such as Zumbi de Palmares, Queen Nzinga, and Na Agontimé, serve to reconstruct the memory of slavery and help to rewrite Brazilian official history. However, the persistent obstacles in conferring permanent public spaces to the memory of slavery indicate how difficult it is for the nation to deal with its proslavery past, as the majority of the population of African descent still occupies the lower ranks of Brazilian society.

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1. This research was made possible by the support provided by the New Faculty Start-Up Program at Howard University.
  2. According to the PNAD 2002 (Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios [National Household Survey]) of IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística), 45% of the Brazilian population self-identifies as *preta* [black] or *parda* [mixed race]. Unlike the term *negra*, the Brazil national census uses the term *preta* that refers to colour rather than race (Caldwell 2007: 47).

During Rio de Janeiro's *escolas de samba* [samba schools] parade of 2007, the first group, schools Porto da Pedra, Beija-Flor, and Salgueiro presented themes related to Africa. While this kind of homage had already taken place in the past, these parades introduced new features by simultaneously emphasizing African exoticism, African royalty, as well as the fight for freedom and against racism. In order to analyze the representations of Africa in Rio de Janeiro's carnival, I shall give a very brief overview of the connections between Brazil and Africa during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. By showing how the exchanges between Africa and Brazil continued after the end of the slave trade, I will try to situate Brazil in the dynamic cultural and geographical zone that is the South Atlantic. During the second half of the twentieth century, Afro-Brazilian self-assertion movements were inspired by the African American civil rights movement. At the same time, public cultural assertions largely relied on the recreation of connections with Africa, very often seen as an ideal and idealized as a continent. These bonds with Africa were first developed at the religious level and later became visible in other cultural manifestations like music, dance, fashion, and carnival. The example of the *escolas de samba's* parades held in Rio de Janeiro carnival since the 1950s, demonstrates how the promotion of African bonds constitutes an integral part of a reconstruction process in which the South Atlantic becomes a common zone of claims for the recognition of multiple identities, the reconstruction and renewal of the heritage of slavery and of the slave trade.

### **Brazil in the Building of the South Atlantic**

With the European expansion in the Americas and Africa, the Atlantic world was characterized by a common morphology but also by a great diversity, "embracing the people and circumstances of four continents, countless regional economies, languages, and social structures, beliefs as different as Dutch Calvinism and Inca sun worship, and ethnicities as different as those of Finland's Saamis and Africa's Igbos. Even if the slave trade was a common element in the building of the Atlantic system, it is almost impossible to establish a common chronology of the history of this vast region" (Baylin 2005: 61).

According to the latest version of the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, Brazil imported 5,532,388 enslaved Africans between the first half of the sixteenth century and the middle of the nineteenth

century, about ten times more than the total slave imports of the United States.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the enslaved Africans brought to Brazil came from West Central Africa, but also from other ports of embarkation situated at the Bight of Benin, the Gold Coast, as well as in Mozambique.

The Portuguese were not as successful in their attempts at setting up maritime companies as were other European powers (France, Netherlands, Britain, Sweden, and Denmark). The slave trade to Brazil remained mainly under the control of private merchants, many of whom were Brazilians. Moreover, the voyages undertaken by slave merchants very often did not follow the traditional triangular model: instead, they traveled between Brazil and the West and Central African coasts without the intervention of the Portuguese motherland. In this context, the region comprising the Brazilian coast and the Western and Central African coast constituted a zone marked by specific features. While the North Atlantic world relied much more on European migrations (Baylin 2005: 34), the idea of the black Atlantic was built with the Anglo-Saxon world as a reference. According to Gilroy, the black Atlantic is “the stereophonic, bilingual, or bifocal cultural forms originated by, but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structures of feeling, producing, communicating, and remembering” (3). While he argues that the black Atlantic is “transcultural in its rhizomorphic and fractal structure, transcending the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” (19), Gilroy ignores the diversity and inequalities characterizing this large geographical and conceptual zone.

Recent works have tried to fill the gaps left by Gilroy’s formulation, by paying attention to the distinct position of Latin America in the black Atlantic: “black Brazilian identities have an internal logic and forms of representation of their own rather than being simple replicas of what happens in other regions of the black Atlantic” (Sansone 2003: 166). However, this author’s definition of Brazil’s position in the black Atlantic is incomplete. While insisting both on the fight against racism and the prominent, if not imperialist, place of the United States in what he calls “black globalization”, Sansone’s analysis privileges North-South relations by overlooking the importance of Africa in the reinforcement of Brazil’s position within the black Atlantic. In this argument, studying black Atlantic cultures implies not only comparing,

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3. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*: <http://www.slavevoyages.com>

but also examining the exchanges on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean where Africa plays an important role, because African identities are also reconstructed through the dialogue with the diaspora (Matory 2005: 39).

These assumptions have led me to favour the idea of a South Atlantic rather than a black Atlantic. The uniqueness of the South Atlantic system (Curtin 1955), allows us to consider this region as an autonomous space, a mixed zone of social, economic, religious, and cultural exchanges. The South Atlantic takes better into account the specific exchanges that occurred in a region where the intensity and the volume of the slave trade were clearly much greater than in other Atlantic regions, the slave trade voyages followed a direct model rather than the traditional triangular pattern, and racial relations also took particular forms (Alencastro 2000; Alencastro 2006).

### **Afro-Brazilian Civil Rights and Cultural assertion**

The first half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the myth of the three races in Brazil (Schwarcz 1997: 253). Based largely on European travel accounts, this myth contributed to the idea that Brazilian society arose from the contribution of three groups: Indigenous, European, and African. Associated with the configuration of Brazilian paternalist slave society — the number of slaves was very high and they were present in all economic and social activities, including the domestic environment — the myth helped conceive the idea that the country was a mixed nation with persisting cordial racial relations: “Hybrid since the beginning. Of all the Americas, Brazilian society was constituted harmoniously regarding racial relations” (Freyre 2003: 160). According to this conception, racial prejudice or racial hatred did not exist in Brazil: the boundaries between classes were supposedly not rigidly defined and were not based on skin colour.

Although the Brazilian slave trade was supposed to have been permanently abolished in 1850, slavery only ended in 1888. Brazil not only imported the largest number of enslaved Africans in the Americas, it was also the last nation to abolish slavery on the continent. After the abolition, the state did not provide former slaves with land nor any kind of financial compensation. Most former slaves and their descendants remained illiterate and did not have access to the new positions available in the free labour economy. Instead, the Brazilian

republic continued to encourage European immigration,<sup>4</sup> especially in the southeastern cities of the country. The introduction of a European workforce rested on the idea of “whitening” (Oliveira 2003). Brazilian eugenicists believed that white immigrants would improve the country’s population (Telles 2004: 29) which would slowly become mixed and turn “pale”.

The publication of *Casa Grande & Senzala* [*The Masters and the Slaves*] marked a turning point in slavery studies in Brazil. Stuart Schwartz rightly pointed out that “Freyre himself represented a long tradition of fascination with, and sometimes rejection of, Brazil’s African past, but it was really after Freyre’s book that slavery and the African were given a central place in the historical formation of Brazil” (1992: 2). Although Freyre did not use this expression in any of his works, the notion of “racial democracy” was propagated under his influence and especially by the work of anthropologist Arthur Ramos. For Freyre and other Brazilian scholars, slavery had been “milder” in Brazil than in the United States. Indeed, his main goal was to demonstrate the impact that enslaved Africans and their descendants had on the formation of the Brazilian family and society. In Freyre’s view, Brazilian society was thus the result of miscegenation. Following the precept of the whitening of the Brazilian population, the “mulattos” would gradually assimilate into the dominant society while Blacks and “Africanisms” would eventually disappear. This fusion would then result in a particular Brazilian culture and physical type (Guimarães 2004a: 16).

During the dictatorship of *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) under Getúlio Vargas, the figure of the *Mestiço* gradually became the national symbol by leading to the creation of the notion of *mestiçagem* — it promoted the idea that Brazil was a mixed nation, emphasized Brazil’s singularity, and diluted its African component. During the 1940s the idea of racial mixture became closely related to that of “racial democracy” which was gradually turned into an ideology of the Brazilian state (Guimarães 1999; 2006).<sup>5</sup>

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4. The Republic was proclaimed in 1889 after a military coup d’état.

5. Usually, the term “racial democracy” is assigned to the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, who published his main work *Casa Grande & Senzala* in 1933. However, the term cannot be found in any of his main works, though it is present in the work of Arthur Ramos (1941) and Roger Bastide (1944) (see also Araujo 2007: 197; Guimarães 2006; Guimarães 1999).

During the 1960s, comparative studies began deconstructing the interpretation of Brazilian society as a racial democracy. In Brazil, slaves had a short life expectancy and their death rate was very high because of their hard work and their living conditions. The number of men being usually double that of women, masters preferred to renew the contingent of slaves by simply importing new Africans. This can be seen by comparing the number of enslaved Africans in Brazil to those in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. Even though Brazil had imported 5,099,816 Africans,<sup>6</sup> in 1872 the country had 1,500,000 slaves. The United States, which imported about 252,653 Africans,<sup>7</sup> had a population of 4,000,000 slaves in 1860 (Florentino 1995: 52 and Reis 1993: 7). Although manumitting slaves was a current practice in Brazil, only a high mortality rate can account for these numbers.

Following the abolition of slavery, different groups defending the rights of Afro-Brazilians emerged. In 1931, the Frente Negra Brasileira [Black Brazilian Front] launched a newspaper and then became a political party. However, in 1937, the dictatorship of Estado Novo [New State] led by Getúlio Vargas suppressed all democratic institutions, including the political parties opposed to the regime. This context hampered the development of Afro-Brazilian political organizations.

In the 1940s North American scholars like E. Franklin Frazier had argued that “Brazil has no race problem” (in Hellwig 1992: 128-129). But in 1950, activists like Guerreiro Ramos continued to point out that “Brazil must assume the world avant-garde of the policy of racial democracy” (in Guimarães 2005: 9). According to him, Brazil was the only country to offer a solution to the race problem. During the same period, UNESCO launched a major project in order to study racial relations in Brazil. Only a few years after the Holocaust, while racism and segregation persisted in the United States and were part of a state doctrine in South Africa, the goal of UNESCO’s project was to scientifically demonstrate how Brazil had dealt with racial issues and had managed racial harmony. Surprisingly, the results of the research developed by scholars such as Florestan Fernandes, Roger Bastide, Harry Hutchinson, and Charles Wagley showed that there was in fact no racial harmony in Brazil, but rather racial and social inequalities.

6. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*: <http://www.slavevoyages.com> (retrieved August 2009).

7. *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*: <http://www.slavevoyages.com> (retrieved August 2009).

After the Second World War, Afro-Brazilian organizations developed connections in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Africa. Afro-Brazilian leaders from São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador came into contact with the ideas of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire as well as pan-Africanism and French and North-American afrocentrism (Guimarães 2004b: 274). However not all leaders completely embraced the ideas of afrocentrism, pan-Africanism, or *négritude*. Afro-Brazilians like Abdias do Nascimento and Guerreiro Ramos rather insisted on the local specificities of “Afro-Brazilian” culture, by continuing to use the idea of “racial democracy” and erasing that of “purity” from their discourses (Guimarães 2005: 8). Culture, material interests, and racial identity were associated on the one hand with the fight against inequalities and on the other hand with claims for social integration and social mobility (2004b: 274).

In the 1960s, the Brazilian debate on racial relations intensified, but its expansion came to an end with the military coup d'état that led to a long dictatorship (1964-1985). The lack of democracy and the suppression of civil rights led Afro-Brazilian activists to begin questioning the project of “racial democracy”.

During the 1970s, the Afro-Brazilian movement was incorporated into the general democratic movement fighting against the military dictatorship. In 1979, during a period of opening in the military repression, the Movimento Negro Unificado [United Black Movement] was created in São Paulo by fostering a discussion on racism (Caldwell 2007: 45). During the 1980s, with the military dictatorship coming to an end (1985) and the country's redemocratization, Afro-Brazilians then started interiorizing a new positive image of themselves and asserting African ancestry. The new self-esteem contained in the “black is beautiful” rhetoric became the thin edge of the wedge in the combat against cultural alienation, by helping to construct a new positive collective identity (D'Adesky 1997: 168; Veran 2002: 88). Moreover, racism was considered as a crime in the new Brazilian constitution of 1988.

During the 1990s, newspapers and magazines exalting blackness, like *Raça Brasil*, emerged and became popular among the Afro-Brazilian population (Caldwell 2007: 95). However, this publication targets the Afro-Brazilian upper-class, and follows the model of African American magazines like *Ebony*. Very often, the actors and models illustrated on the magazine's cover have light skin, and inside one can find



advertisements for different products designed to “smooth” Afro-Brazilian hair. It was also during the 1990s that many cultural and political groups started highlighting and promoting their African ancestry through religion, music, dance and other forms of art. The assertion of Black identity was a way to be modern and to establish connections with the African American movement (Sansone 2002: 138). While Afro-Brazilian culture is now accepted in Brazil, its promotion also creates a “product” of export and consumption.

Since the 1990s, the development of affirmative action, the emergence of activities commemorating Afro-Brazilian history, as well as the creation of organizations inside the federal government promoting racial equality, have helped foster Afro-Brazilian civil rights claims. Affirmative action programs are being discussed and implemented at the municipal, state, and federal levels. They include admission quotas for Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian universities and in the public service, and curriculum about Afro-Brazilian history and culture at the primary and high school levels (Law number 10 639 of 9 January 2003). However, in some Brazilian states, like Rio de Janeiro, such “quotas” are being questioned. Moreover the law to establish the *Estatuto da Igualdade Racial* [Racial Equality Statute] introduced by the Afro-Brazilian Senator Paulo Paim (Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers’ Party]) to the National Congress in 1998 was still not approved as of May 2009. This statute, that aims at establishing the criteria to fight Afro-Brazilian racial discrimination, still generates important debates among activists, politicians and scholars.

Today, in spite of the numerous academic works developed by Brazilian, European, and North American scholars about racial relations in Brazil and the struggle of Afro-Brazilian organizations against racism, the myth of the three races and the idea of racial democracy are still alive in both public discourse and the Brazilian media. Some anthropologists established in Brazil still see racial democracy not as an ideology that must be deconstructed but as an ideal that must be reached (Fry 2005: 33).

### **Reconstructing “Africa” through Religion in Brazil**

At the beginning of the colonial period, Brazilian Catholic brotherhoods brought from Portugal gathered together African and Brazilian-born slaves as well as freed blacks or mulattos belonging to what was referred to as different “nations” (Mina, Jeje, Angola, etc).

These “nations,” as Maria Inês Cortês de Oliveira points out, are not “natural” categories but constructions of the slave market. These designations rarely corresponded to the African origins of enslaved people. However, by identifying with a specific nation, enslaved Africans were able to build new ethnic identities, relying on the one hand on their existing relations with Africa and on the other hand on their New World needs of physical and cultural survival (Oliveira 1997: 286). The idea of nation actually referred at the same time to peoples, ethnolinguistic groups, religions, and other forms of association: “such black Atlantic nations brought their citizens together in work crews, manumission societies, Catholic lay brotherhoods, and rebel armies. Today they are held together — often with tremendous success — by obedience to shared gods, shared ritual standards, shared language, and, in some sense, a shared leadership” (Matory 2005: 5-6; Tall 2002: 441).

Gathered in various Catholic brotherhoods, African and Afro-Brazilians organized public festivals in urban spaces. During these celebrations the brotherhood members celebrated their African past and their public Catholic identity through dance, music and costumes (Abreu 1994; Reis 1996). Since the seventeenth century, the brotherhood of the Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário in Rio de Janeiro perpetuated the tradition of choosing kings of different “nations” such as the “Congo” and “Angola.” The *folias de reis* [folly of kings] with their courts then took to the streets of Rio de Janeiro several times during the year, especially to collect alms for the organization of the Church’s festival (Soares 2000b: 154-155). These popular festivals all over Brazil became alternative public places of power for both the enslaved and freed population. Usually tolerated by the public authorities, this kind of public tradition stopped only in 1808, when the Portuguese royal court moved to Rio de Janeiro and prohibited the *folias*.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of the first houses or *terreiros* of Candomblé, an “Afro-Brazilian religion of divination, sacrifice, healing, music, dance and spirit possession” (Matory 2005:1). Since the beginning of Candomblé, the *terreiros* were organized according to the *orixás* (Yoruba “deities”) and the “nations” (Mina, Jejê, Nagô, Congo, Angola, etc.) associated with their original or imagined region of origin (Reis 1996; Soares 2000a; Tall 2002; Hall 2003; Law 2005).

After the abolition of slavery the need to reestablish bonds disrupted by the slave trade encouraged a recuperation and reinvention of African

connections among the followers of the Candomblé religion. In Bahia, the search for “purity” and African bonds emerged in the nineteenth century and continued to increase until the 1920s and 1930s (Matory 2005: 88; Sansone 2003: 63). During the twentieth century, the expansion of Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions (e.g., Umbanda) intensified. Since the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the growing popularity of Candomblé and carnival led Bahian middle and upper classes to adhere to Candomblé practices. Today, the city of Salvador has 1165 *terreiros* of Candomblé.<sup>8</sup> This phenomenon was not particular to Bahia. In other cities such as Porto Alegre, in the year 2002, there were two thousand houses of Afro-Brazilian religions. This public recognition legitimated Africanity as an identity marker (Butler 2001:140; Albuquerque 2002: 220). Candomblé became the symbol par excellence of the original link with “Africa,” especially through the Yoruba worship of orishas.<sup>9</sup> In the last twenty years, a more recent phenomenon highlighting African and Afro-Brazilian heritage in Brazil transformed the *terreiros* of Candomblé into actual heritage sites, some of them being now officially recognized as such by the IPHAN (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional).<sup>10</sup> However, more than religious temples, *terreiros* became touristic sites. Visitors from Europe and the United States, including many African Americans, travel to Brazil, especially to Bahia, with dreams of finding Africa.

### Renewing Connections with Africa during the Carnaval

Religious processions and festivals were privileged occasions to reinforce or reinvent bonds with Africa. In Brazil, the carnival is still a popular festival celebrated everywhere in the country, in the largest towns, in the smallest cities and villages, on the streets, and in private clubs. It takes places from Saturday until Tuesday, the last day before the beginning of Lent.<sup>11</sup> The origin of the Brazilian carnival is the *entrudo*, a popular festivity held three days before the beginning of Lent and introduced by the Portuguese from the islands of Madeira, Azores and

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8. See Mapeamento dos terreiros de Salvador: <http://www.terreiros.ceao.ufba.br/> (retrieved August 2009).

9. I use *orisha* to refer to the Yoruba worship of orishas, and *orixás* to designate the different Candomblé deities.

10. In Salvador (Bahia), these *terreiros* are: Gantois, Casa Branca, Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá, Bate Folha, and Alaketu.

11. Period of forty days between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday.

Cabo Verde in the seventeenth century. Unlike the *folias de reis*, the *entrudo* was not an organized and hierarchical celebration.

As James N. Green points out, “during the colonial period, Carnival remained a festival enjoyed particularly by the poor and lower classes. Slaves and freed persons, blacks and *mulatos*, celebrated the holiday by parading through the streets, imitating and satirizing the clothes, gestures, and airs of the elite” (2001: 206). During the *entrudo*, people took to the streets and participated in battles with buckets of water and *limões de cheiro*, scent-filled wax balls. In his travel account, *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil*, Jean-Baptiste Debret explained that “the only preparations for the Brazilian carnival consist of manufacturing *limões de cheiro*, an activity performed by everybody, including the family of the small capitalist, the poor widower, the free black women who gather two or three friends, and finally the black female slaves of the rich households who, two months prior to the festival, amass money to buy wax provisions” (1972: 219). According to the same author, during carnival, black men would gather early in the morning around the market and the fountains, and start throwing water and tapioca on black women. However, he also mentions that these activities created disorder. When more aggressive confrontations took place and “urine and feces were substituted for lemon-scented water” (Green 2001: 206), the authorities exerted more control over the festivities. Slowly, this spontaneous festival, originally celebrated mainly by people of African descent, became an organized carnival that would also gather people of higher classes.

Over the centuries, Brazilian carnival took several forms and incorporated various regional traditions including different kinds of music, rhythms, instruments, dances, and masquerades. After Brazilian independence from Portugal in 1822, the government and the elites of Rio de Janeiro, influenced by European traditions, engaged measures to “civilize” the festivities (Ferreira 2005) and began to organize masked balls in private ballrooms. These new forms of celebrating Brazilian carnival soon spread out all over the country, establishing a clear distinction between the popular carnival celebrated on the streets and the elite carnival held in the ballrooms of hotels and private clubs. Access to these balls was restricted to club members or to those who could afford to buy an invitation card.

During the nineteenth century, *entrudo* was slowly replaced by a regulated street carnival. Since the mid-nineteenth century, dozens of

organized groups [*blocos*], associations, or clubs, largely constituted by slaves, as well as by free or freed blacks and mulattos, paraded in the streets in costumes (Green: 206). After the abolition of slavery, Africans and Afro-Brazilians recreated and reinterpreted their past by disguising themselves as “Africans” during the Bahia’s carnival. As Wlamyra de Albuquerque points out, in the first years of the twentieth century, a large number of Bahian clubs, groups, and masquerades celebrated Africa (Albuquerque 2002: 219). Among these groups one could find the *Embaixada Africana* [African Embassy], *Pândegos da África* [Jokers from África], *Os Congos da África* [The Congos from Africa], *Nagôs em Folia* [Nagos in Folly], *Chegados da África* [Arrived from Africa], *Filhos D’África* [Sons of Africa], *Lembranças da África* [Memories of Africa], and *Guerreiros da África* [Warriors of Africa]. Affirming an African identity during the carnival was already a positive cultural assertion in the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, many of these carnival groups like the *Embaixada Africana* were closely associated with *terreiros* of Candomblé (as they still are today). During the processions, members of these clubs played instruments used in Candomblé ceremonies, danced “African” rhythms, and sang songs in “African” languages. Always referring to Africa, the main themes developed by these associations during the parades put together different places and times, questioning and subverting the proslavery past. In 1900, the *Expedição ao Transvaal* was one of the most popular clubs of Bahian carnival. That year, the main theme of the club’s parade was the Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa, thus indicating the extent to which Afro-Bahians knew about the conflicts related to the partition of the African continent (Albuquerque 2002: 228). Since the 1970s, the emergence of a new positive black identity, usually in connection with the African American movement for civil rights, could also be perceived in Bahia, where new carnival and cultural groups such as *Ilê Aiyê*, *Olodum*, *Malê Debalê*, and *Timbalada* publicly asserted their blackness through the promotion of “African” culture (Agier 2000).

By the end of the 1920s, the first *escolas de samba* were created in Rio de Janeiro. These new groups, mostly made up of Afro-Brazilians living in the city’s hillside neighbourhoods or *favelas*, organized spontaneous samba parades during carnival. However, “in the early 1930s, the government of Getúlio Vargas intervened in these spontaneous celebrations and established regulations to recognize them as official events” (Green 2001: 27). In this same period, the

Commission of Tourism started sponsoring the *escolas de samba*, allowing the groups to prepare parades all year round. A competition would be held to establish the best *escola's* parade. The contest encouraged each *escola de samba* to search for external financial support, which resulted in more expensive and extravagant parades.

In 1961, the public had to start paying to attend the parades. Afro-Brazilian communities from the *favelas* continued to constitute the basis of the *escolas de samba's* organization, but gradually the elites began attending the spectacle and participating in the pageants. The themes of each *escola de samba* became more sophisticated. Founded in 1953, the *escola Acadêmicos do Salgueiro* started highlighting the slave past and history of Afro-Brazilians. In 1957, Salgueiro's main theme was *Navio Negreiro* [Slave Ship]. However, the samba did not emphasize the middle passage, but rather celebrated Castro Alves (1847-1871), a Brazilian poet and abolitionist who wrote, among others the poem *Navio Negreiro*. This is how the samba elided the middle passage:

No navio negreiro  
 O negro veio pro cativoiro  
 Finalmente uma lei  
 O tráfico aboliu,  
 Vieram outras leis,  
 E a escravidão extinguiu,  
 A liberdade surgiu  
 Como o poeta previu.  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô-ô.  
 Acabou-se o navio negreiro,  
 Não há mais cativoiro.

[In the slave ship  
 The black became a slave  
 Finally, a law  
 Abolished the slave trade  
 Other laws came  
 And slavery was eradicated  
 Freedom came  
 As the poet had predicted  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô-ô.  
 The slave ship is ended  
 There is no captivity anymore.]<sup>12</sup>

This samba emphasizes a paternalist version of abolition. According to the lyrics, the abolition of slavery was a gift that had been made possible by a succession of laws culminating with Princess Isabel's signing of the Golden Law. This vision underwent slight modifications in the 1960s parade, when Salgueiro staged the history of Quilombo dos Palmares, Brazil's most important runaway slave community. The samba

12. Translation by the author.

composed by Noel Rosa and Anescar Rodrigues glorified Zumbi, the leader of Palmares:

Surgiu nessa história um protetor  
 Zumbi, o divino imperador  
 Resistiu com seus guerreiros em sua tróia  
 Muitos anos, ao furor dos opressores  
 Ao qual os negros refugiados  
 Rendiam respeito e louvor.

[A protector appeared in our history  
 Zumbi, the divine emperor who  
 in his Troy, he resisted with his warriors  
 Many years, the furor of the oppressors  
 The Black refugees  
 Gave their respect and praise to him.]

By exalting the trajectory of an Afro-Brazilian leader, the school subverted the official history of Brazil. According to this samba, freedom was not a given, but was a result of the runaway slaves' struggle against slavery. Zumbi is represented not only as a great leader, but also as a well-respected and praised Emperor.

In 1963, the main theme of Salgueiro was Chica da Silva, the eighteenth-century freedwoman from Minas Gerais (Furtado 2003). The samba explains how Chica transcended her social condition by becoming the lover of José Fernandes de Oliveira, a rich diamond mine owner, which transformed her life:

*Com a influência e o poder do seu amor,  
 Que superou  
 A barreira da cor,  
 Francisca da Silva  
 Do cativoiro zombou ôôôô*

[With the influence and power of her love  
 Which overcame  
 The colour barrier  
 Francisca da Silva  
 has mocked captivity, ôôôô]

Again, the former slave woman was not represented as a passive individual who accepted enslavement, but rather as someone who, within Brazilian slave society, had found the means to win her freedom

by marrying her master. For the first time that year, the Afro-Brazilian Isabel Valença, who played the role of Chica da Silva, had an important place as a *destaque*, an individual who wears a luxurious costume and occupies a visible position during the parade. The theme was a great success and Salgueiro was awarded the first place in the competition.

In 1964, the school staged the history of Chico Rei, another mythical character of Afro-Brazilian history. He is usually identified as the king of the processions performed by the brotherhood of Santa Efigênia of the Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário in Vila Rica (Minas Gerais). According to the legend and the lyrics of Salgueiro's samba, Chico was born in the kingdom of Congo. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, he was captured with his family and sold to the slave traders who brought him to Brazil. According to the myth, he was sent to Minas Gerais where he bought not only his freedom, but also that of his fellows:

*Vivia no litoral africano  
um régia tribo ordeira  
cujo rei era símbolo  
de uma terra laboriosa e hospitaleira  
Um dia, essa tranqüilidade sucumbiu quando os portugueses invadiram  
capturando homens  
para fazê-los escravos no Brasil ...  
A idéia do rei foi genial,  
esconder o pó do ouro entre os cabelos,  
assim fez seu pessoal.  
Todas as noites quando das minas regressavam  
iam à igreja e suas cabeças lavavam,  
era o ouro depositado na pia  
e guardado em outro lugar de garantia  
até completar a importância  
para comprar suas alforrias.  
Foram libertos cada um por sua vez  
e assim foi que o rei,  
sob o sol da liberdade, trabalhou  
e um pouco de terra ele comprou,  
descobrimo ouro enriqueceu.*

[He lived on the African shore  
in a regal and ordered tribe  
whose king was the symbol  
of a laborious and friendly land  
One day, this calmness was lost



When the Portuguese invaded  
 their country  
 Capturing men  
 To enslave them in Brazil ...  
 It was an amazing idea  
 to hide gold powder in his hair  
 And his fellows did the same  
 Every night, coming back from the mines  
 they went to the church and washed the gold  
 from their hair into the sink  
 and then stored it somewhere else  
 until they'd saved enough  
 to purchase their freedom  
 each one at once, they were freed  
 and then the king  
 worked under the sun of freedom  
 he bought some land  
 Having discovered gold, he then became rich.]

The samba composed by Geraldo Babão, Djalma Sabiá e Binha, reworks the myth of Chico Rei by emphasizing his alleged capture by the Portuguese in Africa. The lyrics also highlighted the themes of resiliency and agency: Chico Rei was able to hide gold in his hair, to convince his fellows to follow him, to buy his freedom and that of other slave companions, and finally to become a prosperous man. The narrative underscores how, despite the suffering of enslavement, it was possible to overcome victimization and become a king. In the following years, Salgueiro continued to favor themes related to slavery and Africa. In 1971, while Afro-Brazilian historical actors were absent from Brazilian textbooks, Salgueiro celebrated black kings in its *Samba para um rei negro* [Samba for a black king] that still remains a major hit today during the carnival, because of its chorus *O-lê-lê, ô-lá-lá, pega no ganzê, pega no ganzá*. In 1976, Salgueiro honored enslaved Africans brought to Brazil in the samba Valongo:

*Lá no seio d'África vivia  
 Em plena selva o fim de sua monarquia.  
 Terminou o guerreiro  
 No navio negreiro,  
 Lugar do seu lazer feliz.  
 Veio cativo povoar nosso país,  
 Seguiu do cais do Valongo,  
 No Rio de Janeiro,  
 Com suas tribos chegando.*

Foi o chão cultivando  
 Sob o céu brasileiro.  
 Nações Haussá, Jeje e Nagô,  
 Negra Mina e Ângela,  
 Gente escrava de Sinhô.  
 Foram muitas suas lutas  
 Para integração,  
 Inda hoje  
 Desenvolveu  
 Desenvolvendo esta Nação,  
 Sua cultura, suas músicas e danças  
 Reúnem aqui suas lembranças.  
 O negro assim alcançou  
 A sua libertação  
 E seus costumes, abraçou  
 Nossa civilização.  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô, quando o tumbeiro chegou,  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô, o negro se libertou.

[From the heart of Africa  
 In the jungle, at the end of his monarchy  
 The warrior ended up  
 In the slave ship  
 From the place of his happy leisure  
 The captive came to live in our country  
 He left the docks of Valongo  
 In Rio de Janeiro  
 With his tribes arriving  
 He cultivated the soil  
 Under the Brazilian sky  
 Hausa, Jeje, and Nagô Nations  
 Black Mina and Ângela  
 Slaves of the master  
 They struggled  
 For integration and  
 Still do today  
 They developed  
 They are developing this nation  
 Their culture, their music and dances  
 They gather their memories here  
 Then the black achieved  
 His freedom  
 And our civilization  
 Embraced his customs  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô, when the floating tomb arrived  
 Ô-ô-ô-ô, the black liberated himself.]

By celebrating the warriors and the kings captured in Africa and brought as slaves to Brazil, the samba also insists on how enslaved Africans achieved freedom, integrated in country, and proved helpful in the development of the nation. In 1978, Salgueiro's samba *Do Yorubá à luz, a aurora dos deuses* explained the origin of the Candomblé orixás. According to the lyrics, enslaved Africans sent to Brazil were "kings, heroes and Yoruba gods." This same year, the *escola de samba* Beija-Flor de Nilópolis, presented the theme *A criação do mundo na tradição nagô* [The world's creation in the Nago tradition] and in the sacred Bahia, the three African princesses Iyá Kalá, Iyá Detá, and Iyá Nassô circulated the story of the world's creation by Obatalá.

By 1968, the sambas were being recorded. In the 1970s, Brazilian television began broadcasting the parades. The growing commoditisation of Rio de Janeiro's carnival caused the local and lower class communities to lose their visibility. Many *escolas de samba* began to choose their drum queens<sup>13</sup> from white Brazilian models and actresses instead of Afro-Brazilian women. However, the *mulatas* continued to be an important Brazilian export product (Caldwell 2007: 58-59). For example, in March 1978, Prince Charles of Wales visited Brazil and in an official reception in Rio de Janeiro, during a show of Beija-Flor, the prince danced samba with the *mulata* Pinah. Because of the images showing the prince dancing very close to her, Pinah was later referred to as the "black Cinderella who enchanted the prince".

Until the 1980s, the *escolas de samba* parades were held at different sites in the city (Ferreira 2005). In 1983, Leonel Brizola (1922-2004), governor of Rio de Janeiro, commissioned the construction of the *sambódromo*, a permanent parade ground with bleachers built on either side, devised to accommodate thousands of spectators. The structure, designed by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, occupies a 700 m stretch of the Marquês de Sapucaí Avenue. The *sambódromo*, officially called "Passarela do Samba Professor Darcy Ribeiro"<sup>14</sup> consists of ordinary seats, where lower class people can attend the carnival by

13. The drum queen or *rainha da bateria* is a woman usually chosen for her beauty. Very often wearing a small bikini during the parade, the queen dances samba while leading the way for the percussion group.
14. The name pays tribute to Darcy Ribeiro (1922-1997), Brazilian anthropologist and politician, a member of PDT (Partido Democrático dos Trabalhadores [Democratic Workers Party]), whose leader was Leonel Brizola. As vice-governor in Brizola's first government (1983-1987), he conceived the CIEP (Centro Integrados de Ensino Público [Integrated Centers of Public Education]), a specific kind of school aimed at providing education, as well as cultural

buying a ticket, the cost of which varies between seven and three hundred dollars. It also includes VIP cabins, sponsored for the most part by private companies, where rich tourists, celebrities, politicians, and members of the elite can attend the parades while indulging in expensive food and drink. Rio de Janeiro's parade of *escolas de samba* is divided into six groups. The "special group" is the most important. It is composed of fourteen *escolas* that parade on Sunday and Monday. Group A or the "access group" counts ten *escolas* that are all members of the Associação das Escolas de Samba do Rio de Janeiro. They parade on Saturday and the champion has access to the special group. Group B includes fourteen *escolas* and their parade is held on Tuesday, the last day of carnival. The parades of groups C, D, and E are held in Madureira and do not receive media attention. Today, dozens of other Brazilian cities have their own *escolas de sambas* parades.

### Carnavalizing and Commodifying Slavery and Africa

Since their creation, Rio de Janeiro's *escolas de samba* have repeatedly developed themes related to Africa, Brazil's proslavery past, and Afro-Brazilian historic actors. In 1988, Brazil commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery. The *escola de samba* Mangueira presented the samba *Cem anos de liberdade, realidade e ilusão* [One hundred years of freedom, reality and illusion] composed by Hélio Turco, Jurandir and Alvinho. At a time when the transition to democracy

Será...	[Is it true
Que a lei áurea tão sonhada	That the dreamed-of Golden Law
Há tanto tempo assinada	Signed so long ago
Não foi o fim da escravidão	was not the end of slavery
Hoje dentro da realidade	In present day reality
Onde está a liberdade	Where is the freedom?
Onde está que ninguém viu	Where is it? Nobody saw
Não se esqueça que o negro também construiu	Young man
As riquezas do nosso Brasil ...	Do not forget that the Black has also
Sonhei...	built
Que Zumbi dos palmares voltou	The wealth of our Brazil ...
A tristeza do negro acabou	I have dreamed
Foi uma nova redenção.	That Zumbi of Palmares came back
	The sadness of the Black was over
	It was a new redemption.]

---

activities, to children of lower classes. The connection between his name and the *sambódromo* is simple: after the end of Rio de Janeiro's carnival, the *sambódromo*'s cabins are used as CIEP's schools.

was still incomplete, the lyrics questioned the effectiveness of the abolition of slavery:

Unlike the previous Salgueiro's sambas proclaiming the abolition of slavery, this samba's lyrics introduced a new vision of Afro-Brazilian history. According to this version, supported by the emergent black movements (Saillant and Araujo 2007: 463; Mattos and Rios 2005: 290), the Golden Law did not put an end to slavery as Afro-Brazilians continued to live in poverty. This change in the samba lyrics can also be perceived in the next year. In 1989, Salgueiro's samba called *Templo negro em tempo de consciência negra* [Black temple in a time of black consciousness] not only recalled Afro-Brazilian historical actors celebrated in the last twenty years, but also exalted black beauty. For the first time the lyrics included the word race and supported racial equality and the end of social prejudices:

*Livre ecoa o grito dessa raça  
E traz na carta  
A chama ardente da abolição  
Oh! Que santuário de beleza  
...  
Revivendo traços da história  
Estão vivos na memória  
Chica da Silva e Chico Rei  
Saravá os deuses da Bahia  
Nesse quilombo tem magia  
Xangô é nosso pai, é nosso rei  
Ô Zaziê, Ô Zaziá  
O Zaziê, Maiongolê, Marangolá  
Ô Zaziê, Ô Zaziá  
Salgueiro é Maiongolê, MarangoláVai, meu samba vai  
Leva a dor traz alegria  
Eu sou negro sim, liberdade e poesia  
E na atual sociedade, lutamos pela igualdade  
Sem preconceitos sociais  
Linda Anastácia sem mordança  
O novo símbolo da massa  
A beleza negra me seduz  
Viemos sem revolta e sem chibata  
Dar um basta nessa farsa  
É festa, é Carnaval, eu sou feliz  
É baianas, O jongo e o caxambu vamos rodar  
Salgueirar vem de criança  
O centenário não se apagará*

[Free, echoes the cry of this race  
 And brings in the Letter  
 The ardent flame of the abolition  
 Oh! What a beautiful sanctuary  
 ...  
 Reviving the traces of history  
 They live in memory  
 Chica da Silva and Chico Rei  
 Save the gods of Bahia  
 There is magic in this quilombo  
 Xangô is our father, he is our king  
 Ô Zaziê, Ô Zaziá  
 O Zaziê, Maiongolé, Marangolá  
 Ô Zaziê, Ô Zaziá  
 Salgueiro is Maiongolé, Marangolá  
 Go my samba go  
 Take the pain, and bring me joy  
 Yes I am Black, freedom and poetry  
 And in the present society, we fight for equality  
 Without social prejudices  
 Beautiful Anastácia un gagged  
 The new symbol of the masses  
 Black beauty seduces me  
 We came without rebellion and whip.  
 Put an end to this humbug  
 It's festival, it's carnaval, I am happy  
 It's baianas.]<sup>15</sup>  
 We will turn the jongo and the caxambu<sup>16</sup>  
 We have played with Salgueiro  
 since we were children  
 The centenary won't vanish.]

- 
15. All the women from the state of Bahia are called *baianas*. Usually associated with Candomblé priestesses (Matory 2005: 28), they dress in a traditional manner mixing Brazilian elements like long voluminous skirts (white or colourful), and African elements like long necklaces and earrings, as well as scarves worn on one shoulder and around the head. Today the *baianas* are also traditional characters in Bahian culture: they are identified as the descendants of former slaves who work as street vendors of “ethnically marked food” (29). Today, each *escola de samba* has its *ala das baianas*, a group of elderly female dancers, wearing typical *baianas* costumes.
16. *Jongo* and *caxambu* are cultural manifestations involving dance and music, played and sung by the slave and black communities of the Brazilian Southeast rural area. Today, these manifestations are being recuperated and memorialized, through the development of associations and *comunidades remanescentes dos quilombos* or “quilombos remainder communities” (Mattos and Lugão Rios 2005).

The lyrics pay tribute to different Afro-Brazilians who fought and overcame slavery such as Chica da Silva, Chico Rei and Zumbi. This samba highlights the beauty of blackness and of the Afro-Brazilian musical traditions like Jongo and Caxambu. It celebrates Candomblé deities like Xangô and the slave Anastácia, an Afro-Brazilian saint who is represented wearing a muzzle-like facemask. The lyrics also emphasize that the new society, emerging with redemocratization, calls for the end of inequalities. Carnival is not only a place of celebration but also one to disseminate political claims.

As with the development of African connections, the emergence of Afro-Brazilian social, political, and racial claims were also commodified. Rio de Janeiro's favelas, considered as the cradle of *escolas de samba*, also became touristic. In February 1996, filmmaker Spike Lee chose the Pelourinho (Salvador) and Santa Marta's favela (Rio de Janeiro) to shoot Michael Jackson's music video for his single *They Don't Care About Us*. This initiative generated protests from various authorities, including the famous former soccer player Pelé, Minister of Sports at the time, who argued that the project would show only the negative side of the favelas and therefore damage the city's image abroad. However, members of the community warmly accepted Jackson's presence. According to Milton de Souza Filho, who led two *escolas de samba* in the neighbourhood, the experience was "very constructive" because for the residents who live in "a poor world surrounded by a rich world, an island of misery surrounded by wealth," music is "occupational therapy" (Schema 1996). Later, Souza Filho revealed his plans to create a Michael Jackson Museum in Santa Marta to be able to remember this moment of fame. The museum was only created one day after Jackson's death<sup>17</sup>, the governor of Rio de Janeiro Sérgio Cabral announced the creation of the Space Michael Jackson in Santa Marta's favela, at the exact same place where the pop star recorded his video.

In 2007, three of Rio de Janeiro's *escolas de samba* of the special group presented themes related to Africa. The samba of Beija-Flor, whose theme was *Áfricas: do berço real à Corte Brasileira* [Africas, from the royal cradle to the Brasileira court], did not glorify the abolition of slavery, but rather established a connection between Africa and Brazil:

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17. Michael Jackson died on 25 June 2009.

*Sou quilombola Beija-Flor*  
*Sangue de Rei, comunidade*  
*Obatalá anunciou*  
*Já raiou o sol da liberdade*  
*Oh! Majestade negra*  
*oh! mãe da liberdade*  
*África: o baobá da vida ilê ifê*  
*Áfricas: realidade e realeza, axé*  
*Calunga cruzou o mar*  
*Nobreza a desembarcar na Bahia*  
*A fé nagô yorubá*  
*Um canto pro meu orixá tem magia*  
*Machado de Xangô*  
*cajado de Oxalá*  
*Ogun yê, o Onirê, ele é odara*  
*É Jeje, é Jeje, é Querebentã*  
*A luz que vem de Daomé*  
*reino de Dan*  
*Arte e cultura, Casa da Mina*  
*Quanta bravura, negra divina*  
*Zumbi é rei*  
*Jamais se entregou, rei guardião*  
*Palmares, hei de ver pulsando em cada coração*  
*Galanga, pó de ouro e a remição, enfim*  
*Maracatu, chegou rainha Ginga*  
*Gamboa, a Pequena África de Obá*  
*Da Pedra do Sal,*  
*viu despontar a Cidade do Samba*  
*Então dobre o Run*  
*Pra Ciata d'Oxum, imortal*  
*Soberana do meu carnaval,*  
*na princesa nilopolitana*  
*Agoyê, o mundo deve o perdão*  
*A quem sangrou pela história*  
*Áfricas de lutas e de glórias*  
*I am quilombola*

[Blood of kings, the  
 Obatalá<sup>18</sup> community has announced  
 The sun of freedom has just risen  
 Oh! Black majesty  
 Oh! Mother of freedom  
 Africa: the baobab of life Ile-Ife  
 Africas: reality and royalty, axé<sup>19</sup>  
 Calunga crossed the sea  
 Nobility disembarked in Bahia  
 The Nago and Yoruba faith  
 A song for my orixá has magic  
 Axe of Xangô<sup>20</sup>  
 Sceptre of Oxalá  
 Ogun yê, o Onirê, he is beautiful  
 It's Jeje, it's Jeje, it is Querebentã  
 The light that comes from Dahomey  
 Kingdom of Dan<sup>21</sup>  
 Art and culture, Casa da Mina  
 How bravery, divine black  
 Zumbi is king  
 He never delivered himself, guardian  
 king  
 I will see Palmares pulsing in each  
 heart  
 Galanga,<sup>22</sup> gold powder and the  
 redemption  
 Maracatu, Queen Ginga arrived  
 Gamboa,<sup>23</sup> the Little Africa of Oba<sup>24</sup>  
 From the Stone of Salt<sup>25</sup>  
 the City of Samba emerged  
 Then double the rum  
 For Ciata of Oxum<sup>26</sup>, immortal  
 Sovereign of my carnaval  
 in the Nilopolitana<sup>27</sup> princess  
 Agoyê, the world owes apologies  
 to those who bled for the history  
 Africa of fight and glories.]

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18. Obatala or Oxala is a Candomblé orixá or deity. He is the god of peace, purification, purity, the lord of gestation (Matory 2005: 129 et 378).
19. Àse (Yoruba) or Axé (Portuguese) means energy, power, and nature's strength.
20. Xangô or Shango is a Candomblé orixá or deity associated with thunder and justice (Matory 2005:151).
21. The name Danxomê, originates from Dahomey, and means in the womb of "Dan," the snake god.
22. This is a reference to Chico Rei who before being enslaved was the king of Galanga in West Central Africa.



The samba updates the past through an extensive collection of references: Dahomey Kingdom, vodun, Candomblé, and orisha cult. The lyrics also emphasize African historical characters like Queen Nzinga and Galanga as well as Afro-Brazilian historical actors like Zumbi de Palmares and Tia Ciata. The assertion “I am quilombola,” a member of a quilombo, underlines the fact that the fight of Afro-Brazilians is not over, and those who resisted are now models to be followed. In this reconstruction, Africa is an idealized place of freedom and peace. The middle passage translated here by *calunga*, a term usually identified both as the spirit of death and the sea (Kiddy 2000: 54), is seen not as a negative journey, but as what allowed the African royalty to disembark on Bahian shores. Beija-Flor’s parade did not insist on the sufferings caused by slavery and the slave trade. The float *Calunga cruzou o mar* [Calunga crossed the sea], celebrating the orixá Olokun and symbolizing the middle passage, did not depict a slave ship. Using various tones of blue, it represented Yemanjá instead, the goddess of the seas. By insisting on the legacy transmitted by African royalties, the parade showed Candomblé orixás as Xangô (figure 1) and Oxalá. One allegorical float exalted the queen Na Agontimé (figures 2 and 3), the wife of Agonglo (r. 1789-1797), King of Dahomey, and the putative mother of King Gezo. After the murder of her husband, she may have been sold as a slave and sent to Brazil by King Adandozan (r. 1797-1818). Today it is largely accepted that Na Agontimé brought the royal *Nesuhué* cult practiced in the Casa das Minas, also known as Querebentã de Zomadonu from Abomey (Verger 1952; Pares 2001). Located in São Luís do Maranhão, this Candomblé house is associated with the religious tradition of jeje, a “nation” linked to the Ewe, Gen, Ajá, and Fon speakers (Matory 2005: 5). The samba also evokes Queen Njinga (1582-1663) who, after being baptized as Ana de Sousa, finally resisted Portuguese domination in Angola. Galanga, a mythical figure of Afro-Brazilian

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23. Gamboa quarter is located in the old downtown of Rio de Janeiro, close to the city’s harbour, in the North.
  24. Oba was equivalent to the title of king in the Kingdom of Benin, situated in present-day Nigeria.
  25. *Pedra do Sal* is in the Saúde quarter, close to the Largo da Prainha, in Rio de Janeiro, where the quilombo remainder community of Pedra do Sal is located. The place has a special significance to the Afro-Brazilian community of Rio de Janeiro as one of the centers of Rio’s Little Africa.
  26. Oxum is a Candomblé *orixá*, a goddess associated with sweet water (151).
  27. This is a reference to the full name of the school “Beija-Flor de Nilópolis,” Nilópolis being a suburb of Rio de Janeiro.



Figure 1. Xango, Beija-Flor's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.



Figure 2. Beija Flor's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.



Figure 3. Beija Flor's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.

history usually associated with Chico Rei, and Zumbi were celebrated with two luxurious floats as well.

Afro-Brazilian actors remembered in this samba were not only those who resisted by fighting against slavery. During the parade, other historical actors were also honored such as Hilária Batista de Almeida (1854-1924) or *tia Ciata* [aunt Ciata], a Candomblé priestess born in Salvador and who moved to Rio de Janeiro by 1876. To make her living in Rio de Janeiro, she became a *quituteira*, a street vendor who prepares and sells cakes, pastries, etc. *Tia Ciata*, who used to work dressed as a typical *baiana*, became a popular figure in the city. Her house at Praça Onze was located at the heart of Little Africa, a region between the port and the *Cidade Nova* in Rio de Janeiro. At her home, musicians and composers met to play instruments, sing, and dance. *Tia Ciata* is seen as the one who promoted the connections between Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, who helped to disseminate Candomblé in the Empire's capital, and who was closely associated with the emergence of samba (Moura 1995).

Using a mix of orange, red, and brown colour tones, Africa was represented as an exotic and rich continent marked by the glory of its past and the richness of its fauna and natural resources. The school

emphasized Africa's contribution to Brazilian culture through monumental allegoric floats and luxurious and flashing costumes decorated with exotic bird feathers. In spite of this idealized image of Africa and Africans, Beija-Flor did more than honour African and Afro-Brazilian heritage — the last verses of the samba clearly assert that the world owes an apology to those who were slaves in Brazil.

Still in 2007, Salgueiro's theme was titled *Candaces*, homage to the queens (also known as Kandakes) of the empire of Kush (Nubia) in East Africa that flourished before the Christian era. By highlighting the role of African women and Afro-Brazilian women, the samba's lyrics support an Afrocentric idea, according to which Ancient Egypt, cradle of the Western world was indeed a Black civilization:

<i>Majestosa África</i>	[Majestic Africa
<i>Berço dos meus ancestrais</i>	Cradle of my ancestors
<i>Reflete no espelho da vida</i>	Reflects in the mirror of life
<i>A saga das negras e seus ideais</i>	The saga of Black women and their ideals
<i>Mães feiticeiras, donas do destino ...</i>	Sorceresses, mothers,
<i>Senhoras do ventre do mundo</i>	Mistresses of the world's womb
<i>Raiz da criação</i>	Root of creation
<i>Do mito a história</i>	From myth to history
<i>Encanto e beleza</i>	Enchantment and beauty
<i>Seduzindo a realeza</i>	Seducing royalty
<i>Candaces mulheres, guerreiras</i>	Kandake women, warriors
<i>Na luta ... Justiça e liberdade</i>	In the fight ... Justice and freedom
<i>Rainhas soberanas</i>	Sovereign queens
<i>Florescendo pra eternidade</i>	Flourishing for all eternity
<i>Novo mundo, novos tempos</i>	New world, new times
<i>A bravura persistiu</i>	The sweat of slavery
<i>Aportaram em nosso chão</i>	Their bravery resisted
<i>Na Bahia ... Alforria</i>	They arrived on our soil
<i>Nas feiras tradição</i>	In Bahia ... manumission
<i>Mães de santo, mães do samba!</i>	In the market tradition
<i>Pedem proteção</i>	Candomblé priestesses, mothers of samba
<i>E nesse canto de fé</i>	They ask for protection
<i>Salgueiro traz o axé</i>	And in this chant of faith
<i>E faz a louvação</i>	Salgueiro brings the axé
<i>Odojá Iemanjá</i>	And sings the praises
<i>Saluba Nanã!</i>	Odo já Iemanjá
<i>Eparrei Oyá</i>	Salú bá Nanã!
<i>Orayê Yéo, Oxum!</i>	Eparrei Oyá
<i>Oba Xi Obá.</i>	Orayê Yéo, Oxum!
	Oba Xi Obá.]

Even if there was no relation between the kandakes and the Atlantic slave trade, the samba underscores the importance of Africa and Africans in the building of great civilizations. Salgueiro's theme promotes self-esteem by establishing a correspondence between the past and the present. African queens who ruled and fought as warriors echo the Afro-Brazilian women who suffered under slavery but who continued to fight after the abolition. By exhibiting luxurious costumes and allegorical floats in gold colours, the parade exalted sorceresses, "mothers," and Egyptian queens like Nefertiti (figure 4). The float dedicated to the

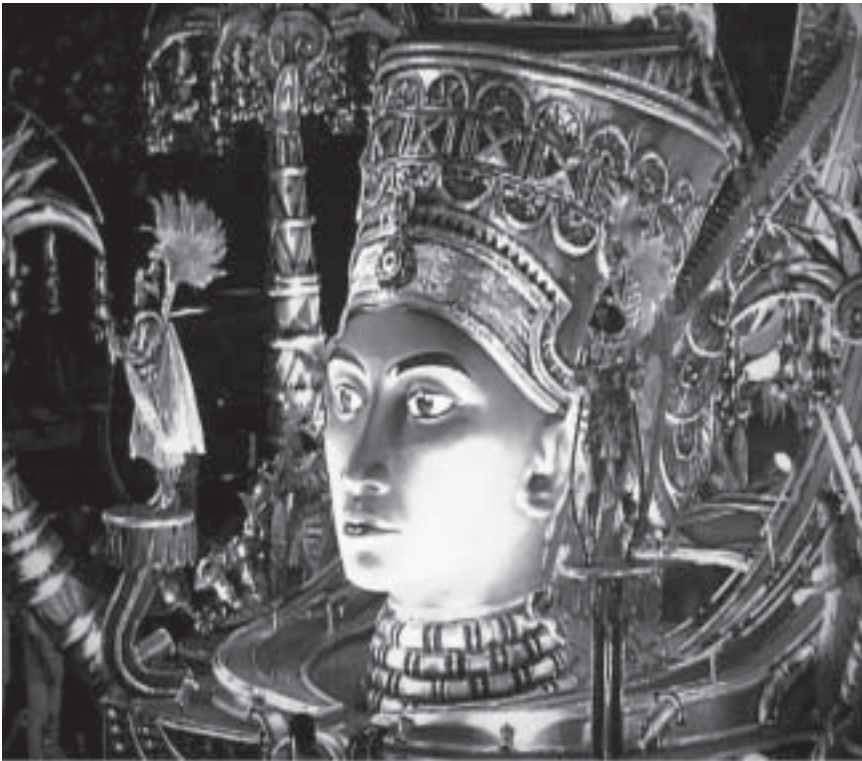


Figure 4. Salgueiro's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.

Meroitic Empire (figure 5), was made up of fourteen women chosen within the Salgueiro community. One exuberant float depicted the arrival of African queens in Brazil, while another celebrated the memory of *Tia Ciata*, the woman who contributed to the emergence of samba (figure 6).



Figure 5. Salgueiro's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.



Figure 6. Salgueiro's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.

The *escola* Porto da Pedra presented a theme about racism and segregation in South Africa. The idea of Africa as the cradle of humanity present in Salgueiro's samba reappears here. In addition, the fight for freedom is represented not by an Afro-Brazilian hero, but by Nelson Mandela:

<i>Destino a minha vida</i>	[Destiny of my life
<i>Minha luta pela liberdade</i>	My fight for freedom
<i>A nove filhas de um só coração</i>	The nine daughters of one single heart
<i>Ao Sul do berço da humanidade</i>	At the south of humanity's cradle
<i>O Anjo Invasor me deu a cor</i>	The invader angel gave me color
<i>mas cor não tenho</i>	But I don't have color
<i>Eu tenho raça e a cada farsa,</i>	I have race and at each mockery
<i>a cada horror</i>	At each horror
<i>O meu empenho, meu braço, meu valor</i>	My tenacity, my arm, my valor
<i>Se ergueu contra o monstro da cobiça</i>	Rose up against the monster of greed
<i>Caveirão da injustiça, filha da segregação</i>	Skull of injustice, daughter of segregation
<i>Liberto permanece o pensamento</i>	Thought remains free
<i>Ele foi meu alento</i>	It was my relief
<i>Quando o corpo foi prisão</i>	When the body was a prison
<i>O nosso herói Mandela é</i>	Mandela is our hero
<i>Senhor da fé, clamou o povo</i>	Lord of faith, he led the people
<i>E o Tigre encontra o Leão</i>	The Tiger meets the Lion
<i>A maior inspiração de um mundo novo</i>	The biggest inspiration of a new world
<i>Do gueto, um palco de glória</i>	From the ghetto, a stage of glory
<i>Corre em meu sangue a história</i>	History runs in my blood
<i>Num mundo misturado</i>	In a mixed world
<i>Matizado com as cores deste chão</i>	Colored with the colors of this soil
<i>Um canto a ser louvado,</i>	A chant to be praised
<i>ser humano ante a fome e a privação</i>	Human beings facing hunger and privation
<i>Museu da Favela Vermelha</i>	The Red Location Museum
<i>Minha alma se espelha na face do irmão</i>	The brother's face mirrors my soul
<i>É hoje, vou cantar</i>	Today, I will sing
<i>Minha gente é o lugar</i>	My people this is the place
<i>que eu sempre quis</i>	I always wanted
<i>Na Avenida, meu irmão, vou abraçar</i>	In the avenue, my brother, I will embrace
<i>Viver a igualdade e ser feliz</i>	Living equality and being happy
<i>Liberdade, pelo amor de Deus</i>	Freedom, for the love of God
<i>Liberdade a este céu azul</i>	Freedom of this blue sky
<i>É minha terra, orgulho meu</i>	It's my land, my proud
<i>Porto da Pedra canta a África do Sul</i>	Porto da Pedra sings South Africa.]

By remembering South Africa's past and referring to the distinction between colour and race, the theme of Porto da Pedra also evokes the fight against racism in Brazilian society. While slavery and segregation are linked together, the samba also establishes relations between Mandela's liberation and the equality to be achieved by Afro-Brazilians. The parade showed essentially two moments of South African history. The period of racism and segregation was symbolized on the one hand by various groups of dancers wearing black and white costumes and on the other hand by a huge allegoric float called "Racist Segregator Angel" exhibiting a large sculpture of a white angel with his arms and mouth wide open in an aggressive posture. The second period, symbolizing the end of racism and reconciliation, was represented by colourful costumes and allegoric floats: one dedicated to Nelson Mandela (figure 7) and another depicting the Red Location Museum. The connections between the South African struggle against racism and the Brazilian black movement are finally presented in a major allegory entitled "Reconciliation." This float was dedicated to ninety-three-year-old activist, artist and writer, Abdias do Nascimento who participated in the parade with other Afro-Brazilian activists (figure 8), including his wife Elisa Larkin do Nascimento and the actress Zezé Motta.

## Conclusion

The promotion of bonds with Africa during Rio de Janeiro's carnival is the expression of a larger movement of reafrikanization visible in Candomblé, music, and the performing arts. At the heart of Afro-Brazilian cultural assertion is a dialogue with Africa that has been inspired to some extent by the African American movement for civil rights. If the emergence of this new reafrikanization is partially due to a larger phenomenon of globalization, in which the North American vision of racial relations plays an important role, the cultural dialogue with Africa is also the expression of the rise of the South Atlantic as an alternative space of claims for recognition. If the South Atlantic's formation was modulated by the slave trade, it constitutes today an autonomous zone, in many ways independent from both the Occident and Christianity. If the Occident and Whites are still part of this space, their position has weakened. Today, the South Atlantic is a "natural" expansion zone for Brazil but also for African powers, like Nigeria and South Africa. As a modern space of recognition of "Africanity," it is also a modern area that rebuilds those peoples and cultures that had been disrupted and devalued by the slave trade. In many cases, the reconstructing of the





Figure 7. Porto da Pedra's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.



Figure 8. Porto da Pedra's parade, Rio de Janeiro, Grupo Especial do Rio de Janeiro, 2007.

bonds with “Africa” is imagined and idealized. What is “African” is what looks like or sounds “African” (Sansone 2003), partly to the gaze of tourists and anthropologists who sought to find “Africanisms” or African traces in Bahia (Herskovits 1943; Verger 1952; Bastide 1983). At the same time, this reaficanization allows for the emergence of new African and Afro-Brazilian male and female actors like Zumbi, Chico Rei, Na Agontimé, Queen Nzinga, and Chica da Silva. By self-identifying with these new historical actors, Afro-Brazilians are rebuilding the memory of slavery and rewriting its official history by slowly erasing the image of absolute victims they had in the past and constructing a new positive image of themselves as fighters.

Through the reinvention and the rebuilding of the broken bonds between Brazil and Africa, on both sides of the Atlantic, cultural assertion supports the construction of a positive image of slavery’s heirs. Despite the lack of permanent public monuments and museums commemorating slavery and the slave trade in Brazil, the representations of Africa in Rio de Janeiro’s carnival offer crucial elements to understand the evolution of slavery’s public memory in the country and how its reconstruction is articulated with other African and African American movements of self-assertion. Since the beginning, successive governments tried to regulate and civilize Rio de Janeiro’s carnival. If traditionally the social order was inverted during the days of carnival, gradually the violence and disorder have been repressed and forbidden. The government exerts its control on carnival by predetermining the order of the processions, granting financial support, and establishing an organized competition. Moreover, the parades are expected to celebrate official episodes of Brazilian history. In spite of these interventions, the parades of some *escolas de samba* continue to stage forgotten elements of Brazil’s proslavery past. If the celebration of historical actors like Zumbi de Palmares was already present in the 1950s, since the 1980s the parades have started expressing new aspects of Afro-Brazilian civil rights movements by questioning the official history and by promoting Afro-Brazilian mythical characters who symbolize the connections between the African past and the present.

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