

Religion and black cultural identity

Roman Catholics, Afro-Brazilians and Neopentecostalism

Vagner Gonçalves da Silva

Abstract

Over the last decade, a number of religious groups have assumed differing positions on the relationship between 'black identity' and religion. In this article, I intend to present some of the tendencies in the current debate between the Afro-Brazilian religions and the black Roman Catholic and Evangelical movements. I suggest that this debate be constructed from positions engendered from the interrelationships of these groups and from the policies for promoting the legacy of African symbols as a part of Brazil's national heritage.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian religions, Catholicism, evangelicals, black movement, Afro-Brazilian Ministry, black identity, ethnicity.

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Rita Amaral

Introduction

During the last few years I have been working on a research project, the object of which is to analyze the role that the Afro-Brazilian religions and their symbols have played in the construction of Brazil's national identity in general, and of black groups in particular¹. However, considering that during the last few decades a number of religious movements, in addition to the Afro-Brazilian ones, including the Black Catholic and Evangelical movements, have assumed certain positions on the relationship between 'black identity' and religion, this article intends to present some of the tendencies of the contemporary debate between these three religious fields. I suggest that this debate be constructed from positions that arise from within these fields and from the dialogs between them and their interrelationships with the policies for promoting the legacy of African symbols as a part of Brazil's national heritage. I identify at least three logical approaches to this debate: 1) the emphasis placed on the centrality of the Afro-Brazilian religions in the construction of black identity promoted by public agencies, whether religious or non-religious, by what is known as the Movement of 'People of African origin'; 2) the appropriation of aspects of Afro-Brazilian religiosity by the Black Catholic Movement, reinterpreting them in the context of the inculturization of theology and the liturgy, and 3) the denial (or minimization) of these religions as the only paradigmatic axis for the construction of

¹ The research was conceived by Vagner Gonçalves da Silva and Rita Amaral and the project initially received financial support from FAPESP, and currently from CNPq. For an overview of the project see Amaral e Silva, 2006, and the website: <http://www.doafroabrasileiro.org/>.

this identity on the part of black evangelical ministers. In these three fields Afro-Brazilian religiosity goes through a process of ‘culturalization’, but with meanings that differ according to the approach of each of the camps.

I will start by indicating some of the characteristics of these groups and the dialogs (be they pacific or conflicting) between them.

From the “Afro-Brazilian *terreiros*” to the “traditional people and communities of African origin”.

We do not need to revisit the long history of the development of the Afro-Brazilian religions in order to demonstrate the ambiguous position that they occupied in the public and private lives of the various social classes and ethnic groups in Brazil. During the period of Portuguese domination, non-Catholic religious practices ran the risk of being punished by the Tribunal of the Holy Office (the Inquisition). Many Africans and their descendents were punished for dissident religious practices. In the Constitution of the Brazilian Empire (that was founded after Independence in 1822), Catholicism remained the official religion and the presence of other religions was restricted to the private domestic space of people’s homes, or to buildings that did not have the external appearance of a temple. The first newspaper reports of the repression of *terreiros* installed in urban spaces date from this period. In the Republican Constitution (passed in 1889 after the overthrow of the monarchy), the separation between State and Church was established, but in practice there was no religious freedom for the adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions. The Republican Penal Code, by including spiritism, magic and its spells as crimes (art. 157), as well as the activities of witch doctors (art.158) created legal instruments through the use of which many of these adepts were accused, judged and condemned. During the period referred to as the Second Republic (established in 1930 by the populist dictator Getúlio Vargas), although still repressed, the *terreiros* were nevertheless fundamental elements in constituting the socialization of blacks and people of mixed race that spread throughout Brazilian society. Amusements and festivals were organized from inside the *terreiros*, like the carnival blocks, cordons and samba schools in Rio de Janeiro, the *maracatus* in Pernambuco and *afoxés* in Bahia, among countless other festivities and celebrations all over the country, such as the *jongo*, open air religious *festas* and pilgrimages.

Some of these manifestations even became to be seen as positive characteristics of the singularity of Brazilian culture, both within and outside the country. To give a few of the better-known examples: the sambistas João da Baiana and Pixinguinha popularized sambas with words that referred to magic and Candomblé. Carmem Miranda, dressed as a *Baiana* or *Mãe de Santo*, took her songs overseas, and with them elements of these religions. Jorge Amado, one of the greatest Brazilian writers, from his earliest works in the 1930s chose Baiano adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions as inspirations for his heroes, heroines and mythical characters like Antonio Balduino, Jubiabá, Pedro Archanjo, Dona Flor and Vadinho. Thus the Afro-Brazilian religions, situated in this ambivalent position between partial recognition due to their ‘cultural legacy’ (promoted by Vargas’ policies of cultural integration) and the de facto repression as ‘practicing religions’ (due to their lack of legitimacy under Catholic hegemony), established themselves through alliances, dialogs and conflicts between the originally black world of the *terreiros* and the outside world which, at least publicly, maintained a ‘strategic distance’ from this African legacy. A good example of this ‘national schizophrenia’ in relation to manifestations of black origin was the Mission of Folklore Research, idealized by Mario de Andrade, at the time director of the Culture Department of São Paulo. The objective of the mission, in 1938, was to film and record scenes and songs from Afro-Brazilian religious rituals and popular *festas* in the North and Northeast of the country. However, in order to be able to film and record these examples of ‘Brazilian culture’ the Mission needed to apply for a license from the police, as many of the religious activities that it intended to observe were subject to state control and inspection, like the *catimbós* and *xangôs* of the Northeast.

This stigma stemmed from the social relationships established under slavery, and also, once slavery had been abolished, continued under the impact of the ‘scientific’ theories of racism that pervaded society at the turn of the last century and were divulged by authors like Nina Rodrigues. This doctor was the first ethnographer of Candomblé to use the Afro-Brazilian religions as an empirical demonstration linking the supposed racial inferiority of the blacks with the nature of their cultural life. By the time these theories were officially abandoned they had already caused as much damage as the socioeconomic hardships that these people had suffered.

In the context of the black political movements of this time, neither Candomblé nor similar practices enjoyed much prestige.

The Black Brazilian Front (1931-1937), the first movement of its kind to be organized nationwide, thought that the integration of black people into society would be easier if they distanced themselves from anything that was seen as culturally backward: 'exotic' dances, samba, drum beating and Capoeira etc. (Hofbauer, 2006:359). Thus, elements from the African past were not considered strategic for the affirmation of contrasting identities nor for the political fight of black people for social and cultural recognition.

Similar positions were also defended by militants of the left. Jorge Amado, who was a member of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) from 1933 to 1954, advocated in a number of novels that people should move away from the alleged limitations imposed by popular beliefs in favor of the political fight that would transform their standard of living. Antonio Balduino, a character in the short novel *Jubiabá* (1935), is an excellent example of this attitude. A poor boy who was born on the hillsides of Salvador, the determining influence on his childhood was the community run by the *pai-de-santo* Jubiabá. As a grown man, after experiencing a number of rejections and cases of racial discrimination, he becomes a defender of the fight of the trade unions and the right to strike as a way of confronting the abuses of the ruling classes. He interrupts a ritual in the honor of Oxossi at the *terreiro* of Pai Jubiabá to encourage those present to join the strike:

“My people, you know nothing... I'm thinking inside my head that you don't know anything... You have to see the strike. Blacks go on strike, they're not slaves anymore. What good is it for blacks to pray, to come and sing for Oxossi? The rich give orders for the feast of Oxossi to be cancelled. Once the police closed down the feast, when Oxossi appeared as Oxalufã, the old man. And they took Pai Jubiabá with them, to prison. Oh yes, you remember. What is it that black people can do? Nothing, not even dance for the Orisha. So you don't understand anything. Black people are on strike, bringing everything to a halt: cranes, trams, electricity. Where's the light? Only from the stars. Blacks are the light and the trams. Blacks and poor whites, they're all slaves. All you have to do is to want not to be a slave anymore. My people, let's join the strike; the strike is like a bead necklace – everyone together is (a) beautiful (thing). If (the chord breaks and) one bead falls, all the others fall too. My people, let's go!” (Amado, 1935:299)

I would stress that this political position of the author's, transferred to many of his fictional characters, does not exactly disqualify the *terreiro* as a legitimate space for the production of social values. Jorge Amado himself was greatly responsible for the propagation of popular culture and was also a defender of religious freedom. As a deputy for the Brazilian Communist Party he presented an amendment to the constitution of 1946 guaranteeing religious freedom in Brazil.

Continuing in the artistic field, Glauber Rocha's *Barravento* (1962) is another example of this viewpoint of the relationship between Afro-Brazilian religions, identity and politics. It was filmed under the aegis of the *Cinema Novo*, which very willingly incorporated elements of popular culture, but also criticized the submission of blacks and the poorer classes to what it considered the ideology of the ruling classes. Right at the beginning of the film the following message appears on the screen:

“On the coast of Bahia live blacks who pull in the ‘xereu’, whose ancestors came to Brazil as slaves. Worship of the African gods continues to this day and this entire people is dominated by a tragic and fatalistic mysticism. They accept poverty, illiteracy and exploitation with a passivity characteristic of those who await the coming of God's kingdom. Iemanjá is the Queen of the Waters and the old mother of Irecê, the Dame of the Sea, who both loves and punishes fishermen. *Barravento* is the moment when things of the earth and the sea are transformed and sudden changes occur in their love and social lives.”

Glauber Rocha explains his motives for this view when narrating his conception of the film:

“One [Luís Paulino] told me [the plot] in my room and I fell asleep. Candomblé. Mysticism. Alienation. (...) The mediocrity of Protestantism, the hypocrisy of Catholicism, the unconscious servility of Candomblé. In Faulkner I found blacks who rebelled. And the Cuban Revolution shook up all the lyrical pretensions of the petty bourgeoisie (...) I abandoned the plot and engaged in arbitrary materializations. I reorganized the black mythology in line with a religion/economic dialectic. Religion opium of the people. Down with the Father. Down with folklore. Down with *Macumba*. Long live the man who fishes with a casting net, with his hands. Down with prayer. Down with mysticism. I attacked God and the Devil. *Macumbeiro de Buraquinho*, without ever

having been initiated. I began filming according to the real laws of materialist anthropology. *Cinema Novo*.” (Rocha, 2004:335)

In fact, at this time the field of religion and the political concepts of the left were in disagreement, above all when it was a question of religions which constituted a series of rituals associated with mysticism and trances (or ‘unconsciousness’). However, it is not hard to understand this disagreement, or antagonism, between a political outlook based on historical materialism that denounced the bourgeois strategies for creating economic and social relations based on ‘alienation’ of the working classes and on the fetishism of merchandise, and a fetishist religious ideology like that of the Afro-Brazilian cults. It should be noted, however, that this antagonism (between religion and left wing politics) was not entirely insuperable, at least for a few organized Catholic groups that were part of the Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEB) which became more prevalent from the 1970s onwards. This movement, strongly influenced by the Theology of Liberation, interpreted the Christian mission as including the need to fight for social and economic justice. The ‘option for the poor’ chosen by these groups brought them into close contact both with militant organizations that were resisting the military dictatorship and other popular religious groups such as the *terreiro* communities. In the 1990s, after the redemocratization of the country, the CEBs lost their influence, both within and outside the Catholic church. But in a certain sense they opened the way for the development for the Social and Black People’s Ministries.

The Afro-Brazilian religions continued to be seen as relatively irrelevant, as elements of political mobilization or identity, until at least the 1970s. From then on at least three factors determined a change in direction:

The first of these was the internal struggle of religious leaders for visibility, rights and respect. Utilizing the greater degree of social prestige due to their presence in cultural and academic areas, and in the media, these religions (above all Candomblé and Umbanda) began to be seen as legitimate possibilities of mass conversion, not only for black people, but also for people of mixed race, whites, artists, intellectuals and members of the urban middle class, including the cosmopolitan inhabitants of the metropolises in the Southeast of Brazil. Curiously, this tendency to elevate the universal conversion to the Afro-Brazilian religions damaged the ethnic character of their traditions of African origin.

The second factor is the diversification of ideological tendencies and political parties which made it possible for these religions to be gradually incorporated into the black social movements and government policy. It was within this context that the *terreiros* began to be seen as spaces in which important cultural elements of the country's African heritage had been preserved, as ritualistic languages, philosophical values, traditional cuisine and styles of dress.

The emergence of the Unified Black Movement (MNU) at the end of the 1970s² and of the redemocratization process in the following decade were essential for this new approach.

The activities and the agenda of this Movement, which included a significant number of denunciations and demands that questioned the living conditions of the black population and the limitations of Brazil's much vaunted 'racial democracy', resuscitated previous arguments, including '*quilombismo*'. *Quilombismo*, in which the activities of Afro-Brazilian communities that were resisting the current situation were seen as comparable to the struggles of their ancestors, was presented by Abdias do Nascimento, The *quilombos*, as spaces for socio-political action, and one of their most famous leaders, Zumbi dos Palmares, reemerged as symbols of the struggle and of the requirement for an effective transformation of Brazilian society that guaranteed the rights of the country's Afro-descendent people. This decade also saw the beginning of a series of steps taken by the black movement and national heritage government entities that resulted in the preservation of the Serra da Barriga (in Alagoas), where the Quilombo de Palmares had been located, as a National Monument. It was thus no surprise that the Abolition Centenary March organized by the black social movements in Rio de Janeiro in 1988 demanding greater state participation in the fight against racism, was also called the "Zumbi March Against Discrimination". Another politically and symbolically significant event was the change of the date for the celebration of emancipation from May 13 (the date that the abolition law was signed by Princess Isabel) to November 20 (the alleged date of Zumbi's death).

With the redemocratization of the country a new stage of the relationship between civil society and government began, with the state and the

2 For an overview of the formation of this see, among others: Barbosa, 1994; Nascimento e Nascimento, 2000; Hanchard, 2001; Silva, 2003; Contins, 2005; Hafbauer, 2006; Alberti e Pereira, 2007; Pereira, 2008; Silva e Pereira, 2009; Pereira, 2013.

1988 Constitution at least partially conceding to the demands of the black movement. The creation, in this same year, of the Palmares Foundation (under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture) with the objective of '*promoting the preservation of cultural, social and economic values, originating from the influence of black people, in the formation of Brazilian society*' opened the door for a series of actions that moved towards meeting these demands. The status of the *quilombos*, for example, now officially established as areas inhabited by the remaining Afro-descendants who had the right of ownership, extended to urban areas, including the *terreiros*. During Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (1995-2002) racism in Brazil was officially recognized, and in the government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) that followed a series of actions were taken directed at the black population, including the creation of the Secretariat for Policies and the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR), affirmative action and Law 10639 that made the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture mandatory in schools.

The third factor was the cultural-artistic movements that emerged, above all in Bahia, led by the 'Afro blocks' that initially proposed a street carnival as an alternative to the file past of the carioca samba schools, and even to Salvador's carnival, characterized as it was by an 'apartheid' of ethnicities and spaces. These blocks, with their references to rhythms, colors, aesthetics and dances, in which the quest for Africa is highly valued as a form of expression and construction of identity, emphasized their cultural connections with the Afro-Baiano religions. They offered a more current (and globalized) version of the carnival blocks (such as *afoxés* and *maracatus*) than that of their predecessors, who had also been linked to the *terreiros*. The Ilê Aiyê block, created in 1974, serves as a benchmark for this movement. Founded by the family of the *mãe-de-santo* Hilda Jitolu, the block emphasized both its connection to religion (by starting its procession with ceremonial rituals asking for the blessing and protection of the Orishas) and its commitment to black activism. Other blocks that were formed later also emphasized, to a greater or lesser extent, these connections, including Olodum (1979), Araketu (1980), Muzenza (1980) and others³.

As a consequence of this process, the prestige that Afro-Brazilian culture began to enjoy led to the government creating public policies through its

3 See, among others, Risério, 1981; Sansone e Santos, 1997; Guerreiro, 1981; Agier, 2000.

heritage entities, and beginning to establish official recognition and protection strategies. These initially took the form of conservation orders for the *terreiros* as material legacy and, more recently, the inclusion of *festas*, culinary items, musical styles and dances as the immaterial heritage of black culture in Brazil; the corollary of this process is still underway.

These public policies and social and artistic movements have created an impact in the Afro-Brazilian religious field, above all in the dispute for prestige and visibility between the different traditions and models of rites, also known as the ‘nations of Candomblé’. The first of these was to strengthen the recognition of the nations of Jeje-Nagô origin (such as *Queto Candomblé*, *Tambor de Mina*, *Batuque*, etc.) in the Candomblé ‘segment’, to the detriment of other forms of rites such as the *Candomblé de Angola*, *de Caboclo*, and *Jurema*, among others that are considered to be more ‘permeable’ to non-black influences. The second was the greater appreciation of Candomblé compared to Umbanda. In a list of 22 *terreiros* compiled between 1985 and 2013⁴ by municipal, state and federal bodies, seventeen belong to the Jeje-Nagô tradition. Only 4 belong to the Angola nation and just 1 to the Jurema tradition. As far as I know, not a single Umbanda *terreiro* has received a preservation order until now. This is without doubt a consequence of the idea that Umbanda is considered ‘syncretic’ or ‘white’ and consequently without the symbolic potential to preserve ‘standards of Africanism’. In fact, in recent years there has been a significant increase in the use by pastors, militants and academics of terms such as ‘temples or religions of African origin’ or even ‘traditional *terreiro* communities’ when referring to practicing *terreiros* of the Jeje-Nagô or Angola nations. It is a curious fact that these expressions are generally used to distinguish these *terreiros* from those that practice other Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Umbanda and Jurema. It is not necessary to revisit the long historical process, that began in the 19th century, during which the Jeje-Nagô (or Yoruba) nation gained supremacy as a result of the combined action of religious leaders, politicians, academics and artists. I would only like to mention that the process of reafrikanization and desyncretization that a number of Candomblé *terreiros* have undergone during recent decades, at least in the political discourse, is a consequence of this development.

4 See Annex 1 – *Afro-Brazilian religions and public space – a Chronology*.

This tendency to measure and appreciate these religions in terms of a ‘tradition and culture of the Orishas’ was already present in countless discussions within the field of Afro-Brazilian religions, as well as in the international sphere, and was articulated during the various editions of the World Conference on the Traditions of the Orishas and Culture, held from the early 80s at the initiative of Yoruba leaders from Nigeria, such as Wande Abimbola, in association with religious leaders from the Yoruba diaspora in the Americas. After these conferences an increasing move in the direction of elevating the reaffricanization of Candomblé in Brazil was observed. In the 1980s I met a few priests in São Paulo who were actively participating in this movement for which they preferred to use the term ‘tradition of the Orishas’ to designate the type of rite they used in their *terreiros* (called “egbes”⁵) rather than ‘Candomblé’, considered to be a term that referred to a ‘distorted’ model of the cult, as it brought together traditions that were not strictly of devotion to the Yoruba gods (Silva, 1995). Now a reaffricanized *pai-de-santo* prefers the term ‘Ibilê’ (cult of the divinities of nature or the earth). In this context the idea of an ‘African origin’ of the cult prevailed, and coming acquainted with it was considered a form of regaining the ‘authenticity’ and ‘purity’ or the ritual, while the need for promoting the ‘deatholicization’ and ‘desynchronization’ of the sacred practice consecrated in the *terreiros* was emphasized.

Thus, distinctions generated from within the religious field are now being reproduced in the sphere of public policies for reasons that are both strategic and conceptual – at times it is impossible to separate the two. From the strategic point of view, the traditions that supposedly have not succumbed to Catholicism or ‘syncretism’ are more effective as a means of government action directed at the identification (and incorporation into Brazilian heritage) of elements that belong to ‘civilizing African values’⁶. The nationwide visibility that leaders and adepts of the *terreiros* of this tradition, like the Terreiros do Gantois and Ilê Opô Afonjá, among others, have

5 A Yoruba word which designates a family, religious, or territorial community.

6 The expression “civilizing values” has the purpose of attributing an important status to African societies that the terms ‘civilization’ and ‘civilized’ have acquired in academic circles and in general. These terms were applied to European societies during the period of social evolutionism in the 19th century, in contrast to the terms that were used to describe non-European societies, such as barbarous, primitive and uncivilized. In my view, the use of this expression to classify societies that were not ‘civilized’ (in the commonly used sense) is justified as a method of combating a hierarchy-oriented view of the different models of society. However, its use is not a criticism of the usual classification, and may be revoked as a parameter.

acquired, has contributed to the articulation of the required support from society and the implementation of these policies.

From the conceptual point of view, this is a redefinition based on the idea that the *terreiros* are 'traditional communities' (not that they are not), in the same way as the indigenous communities, which opens up opportunities for receiving support from the government, which, in an officially lay state, could not on principle support groups that were defined exclusively by their religious practices. Not being only defined by these practices, however, these groups have become potential beneficiaries of these policies, without attracting the hostility of religious groups who feel their interests have been damaged, such as the Neopentacostals.

The movement for the valorization of Africa expressed itself in innumerable ways, both among academics and political militants. Pan-Africanism, defended by important figures like Abdias do Nascimento, had the effect of valorizing the experience of blacks in Brazil as being similar to that of the African experience. The titles of the 4 volumes of the Sankofa series, published between 1994 and 2008, based on further education courses given at the Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), serve as good examples of this new approach: "The African Origin of the World" (vol. 1) and 'Culture and Movement; African origins and black activism in Brazil' (vol. 2)⁷. Another more recent example can be found in the text of the 'National Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Traditional Peoples and Communities of African Origin – 2013-2015', distributed by the Secretariat of Policies for Racial Integration and the Secretariat of Policies for Traditional Communities, of the Federal Government; the cover of the document reads: 'In defense of African Ancestry' and 'For a Brazil without Racism'. One can see that the strategic and conceptual dimensions are interconnected. One often notices that care is taken to avoid the word *terreiro* in this material as, for example, in the subtitle of a photo of adepts of the Bate Folha *terreiro*, which reads "Traditional Territory of the Bate Folha Manso Banduquenqué" (Plano, 2013:19).

Curiously many ideas included in this discourse, in which the term 'religion' tends to be substituted for 'culture' (and the corresponding terms: '*terreiro*' for 'territory' or '*egbê*'; 'Afro-Brazilian' for 'of African origin' etc.), are contrary to other tendencies also found in the religious field, in the Catholicism of

7 Nascimento, 2008a and 2008 b

the Agents of the Black Ministry and the Afro-Brazilian Ministry, that have adopted the concept of ‘inculturalization’.

The people of the saint and the saints of the people: the clamor heard by the Catholic church.

The Second Vatican Council (1962) was a landmark in terms of the Catholic Church’s theology opening up to the world. One of these transformations, in the area of the liturgy, was the permission for Mass to be conducted in the vernacular, as well as the incorporation of the traditional local symbols of a variety of peoples. A new idea emerged of a church with a mission of universal conversion, of cultural differences (including religious ones) that no longer separated people. Specific beliefs were now seen as manifestations of the presence of God, conferring flexibility on the church’s pastoral action (Oliveira, 2011).

The application of the directives of the Second Vatican Council in Latin America led to the strengthening of the Theology of Liberation, a movement of religions practitioners who were sympathetic to Marxism and committed to the fight against social injustice. The Ecclesiastical Base Communities (CEBs), formed in the 1970s and 80s, were working class community groups generally located in districts in the outskirts, whose work was directed at the transformation of the socio-economic conditions of poor communities. It was within this context that the Agents of the Black Ministry (APNs) emerged, made up of priests, religious practitioners, clerics and laymen, whose objective was to denounce the social exclusion of the blacks, even in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church itself⁸. The group was not entirely made up of Catholics, it also included blacks from other religions, including Afro-Brazilian ones. An important landmark in the activities of this group was the Campaign for Fraternity in 1988, that adopted the slogan ‘Listen to the clamor of this people’ and questioned the position of blacks (and poor people in general) in Brazilian society. The Afro-Brazilian Ministry (PAB), officially created by the National Congress of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB), emerged as a result of the APNs

8 For further information on APNs, Afro Ministry and characteristics of the incultured liturgies, consult, among others, Damasceno, 1990, Valente, 1994, Borges, 2001, Pereira, 2001, Souza Jr, 2001, Sanchis, 2001, Bina, 2002, Burdick, 2004 and Oliveira, 2011.

These entities were decisive in the questioning of the place of blacks inside the Church, and its relation to their place in society at large. Inside the Catholic church a reevaluation of the century-old manifestations of 'black Catholicism' occurred, which had in general been marginalized, such as the *festas* of the black brotherhoods (of Our Lady of the Rosary, among others), the *congadas*, *moçambiques*, *ternos*, etc. These were now seen as expressions of an 'authentic black theology'. It should be remembered that in 1980 the first 'Seminary of Black theology' was held, which substantially brought the church and the black movements closer together. They also turned their attention to the well-known 'Afro-Catholic syncretism' (which associated the gods of African origin with the Catholic saints), not to attack it, but rather to affirm its vitality as the expression of 'a genuine faith of the black people'. In it they recognized Christian, community and ancestral values. Thus aspects of the Afro-Brazilian religions, usually designated generically as 'African elements', were introduced into the liturgy of the *incultured* Mass, with drum beating, music, dance, offerings of food, clothes with bright colored patterns etc.⁹. In some of these celebrations the ritual is directed at the same time at a Catholic saint and his or her equivalent in the Afro-Brazilian religions. An example of this is the *Festa* of Santa Barbara-Iansã, which takes place along with the Mass at the Church of the Rosary of the Blacks in Pelourinho in Salvador, bringing together Catholics, Afro-Brazilians and the public in general. During the *feira*, priests and the congregation greet the saint and invoke the Orisha by shouting *Eparrei Oya!* It is not uncommon for initiates to go into the Orisha's state of trance during the street celebrations.

This combined activity, along with the use of a common lexicon by the black movement and *incultured* Catholicism, forms a semantic field in which it is possible to identify the elements that most frequently combine to create a frame of reference.

The marking of territory is one of them. The lack of access to space (land, dwellings etc.) is denounced as one of the greatest deprivations imposed on rural populations, blacks and Indians. The Earth-without-wrongs Mass

9 In communion, in addition to the bread and wine that represent the body and blood of Christ, the food traditionally offered to the Orishas is placed at the foot of the altar, there is drum beating and the faithful dance, and even the presence of priests from Afro-Brazilian religions. A recent analysis of these liturgies has been conducted by Rosenilton Oliveira (2011).

(1978)¹⁰ and the Quilombos' Mass (1981)¹¹, by paying tribute to Indians and black people respectively, celebrated them as martyrs and victims of social injustice, emphasizing the need for transformation and reparation. This *mea culpa* of the Catholic Church¹², or at least a part of it, indicated the need to include a message in the liturgy itself indicating the type of transformation that their evangelical work aimed to achieve.

It is no coincidence, then, that the APNs chose the term *quilombo* when appointing their state directories, which in turn were made up of smaller nuclei called *mocambos*. The headquarters of this organization in São Paulo is called the *Quilombo Central* (Oliveira, 2011:39). The ecumenical vigil organized by the APNs at the top of the Serra da Barriga in 1995, in tribute to Zumbi dos Palmares, showed the potential of the *quilombo* for both political action and as a symbol of resistance.

The convergence of activities of the APN and PAB also included other traditional spaces of black culture, religious or otherwise, including *terreiros* and samba schools. For example, celebrations that were infrequent, such as the holding of Catholic Masses to celebrate the anniversaries of these institutions or their members, took on a different connotation when they were conducted by black priests or adopted the incultured liturgy. In one of these Masses for the anniversary of the Unidos do Peruche samba school in São Paulo, held in 2000, at the end of the Catholic celebration I was able to witness a spiritual cleansing of the samba school's main hall conducted by the priest and the school's *Baiana* women (many of whom were initiates of Afro-Brazilian religions) who sprinkled water using leaves that are sacred to the Orishas.

Another important item for reflection is the interpretation of the image of Our Lady of the Appearance, Brazil's black patron saint, celebrated in the incultured Masses as *Senhora* or *Mãe Quilombola*. (*Our Lady* or *Mother Quilombola*)

10 Celebrated by D. Pedro Casaldáglia, Bishop of São Félix do Araguaia, in Goiânia, in 1978, as a tribute to three martyred Jesuit missionaries and to the Indian people themselves (Oliveira, 2011:97)

11 Tribute for the 350th anniversary of Zumbi's death, celebrated on November 29, 1981 in Praça Campos, in Recife, a location of great symbolism as it was there that Zumbi's head, decapitated in Palmares, was displayed. The statue of Zumbi's head placed in his honor in Praça Onze, Rio de Janeiro, also assumed iconic significance. The area has traditional ties with black culture.

12 It should never be forgotten that during colonial times the Catholic Church was one of the powers that contributed to the submission and destruction of the Indians and gave its support to slavery.

The statue of the saint, originally an Our Lady of the Conception, was supposedly found in 1717 in the Paraíba River in the state of São Paulo, with the head detached from the body. The parts were stuck together and a rosary was placed around the neck to conceal the severance, so that the image appeared very similar to Our Lady of the Rosary, the saint worshiped by the black population. There are two representations here: Our Lady of the Conception, patron saint of the Portuguese Empire, and Our Lady of the Rosary, patron saint of the oppressed, including the black population. It is as if the head of the saint is the State and her body the People. Since then, and due to the fact that the statue is 'blackened', very probably due to the effect of river water, a part of the Brazilian population has seen the statue as the Black Patron Saint of Brazil¹³.

Thus, the idea of a gentle, pacific black mother gradually gave way to images of resistance, like that of Anastácia, a blue-eyed slave who supposedly resisted the sexual harassment of her owner, thus rejecting the role of being forced into being a mixed-race mother. Her statue only depicts the head of a muzzled woman, as if the strength that allowed her not to submit her body to the sexual abuse of her owner was concentrated in the head. Curiously, this cult seems to create a similarity with the decapitated head of another hero, Zumbi, indicating as they do the reversal of the treatment of Our Lady of the Appearance's head which was stuck back on. In Anastácia's case, the absence of her body permitted the people to symbolically create one. In fact, such black bodies, even today, are threatened by their social invisibility. In the afro Masses Anastácia has been invoked as a saint, a new version of the black mother. Her martyrdom has been associated to that of Jesus, for each carries the instruments of their own torture: the crown of thorns in the former case, the muzzle and captive's chain in the latter.¹⁴.

As I have shown, today the black Catholic movement, through its innumerable associations, moves between icons of war and resistance, like Zumbi and the slave Anastácia, without abandoning the conciliating and gentle image of the Virgin Mary, that had been transformed into the Great Black Mother and the *Quilombola* of the Appearance.

13 For further details on this 'blackening' process of the image, see Santos, 2007

14 For further information on the *Escrava Anastácia*, see, among others, Souza, 2007.

What is the color of “Brazil’s blackest religion”?

The Black Evangelical Movement

The discussion of the subject of black cultural identity has always been a thorny one inside the evangelical churches (whether missionary or Pentecostal, according to the distinction made by the Brazilian Statistics Bureau (IBGE) in its demographic censuses) and has become even more tense over recent years with the systematic attack by the Neopentecostals (as well as by churches of other denominations) on the Afro-Brazilian religions and their symbols. If in the United States the black Protestant Churches were an important catalyzer for ethnic awareness and mobilization for the fight for civil rights, in Brazil their profile is entirely different¹⁵. Firstly, this is due to the smokescreen that confuses the question of social inequalities in Brazil when based on race, and to the difficulties in identifying what can effectively be defined as the ‘black or African legacy’ within Brazil’s mixed-race culture. Secondly, it is due to the type of evangelizing mission of these churches which emphasizes the universality of access to the grace of the Holy Spirit and the practice of its faith (including manifestations such as speaking in tongues). This access is an individual experience of conversion which transforms the converted from a ‘creature of the world’ into a ‘child of God’. And not permitting, within the brotherhood of the converted, hatred, difference, discrimination for any reason, including skin color, the mission of conversion becomes the main objective of the proselytizing work of which the natural consequence would be a juster social order. However, these churches, even having lived under the military dictatorship, remained impermeable to the influence of leftwing political ideologies, in contrast to the Catholic Church with the Theology of Liberation and the CEBs. The truth is the Evangelical Churches feared and fought against communism due to its materialist and anti-religious preaching. And even recently, after redemocratization, the election of conservative evangelical politicians shows that this trend has remained unaltered in the majority of the churches which support them.

But the absence of a black movement in the evangelical field does not mean that the problems relating to black identity do not have a place within

15 For a comparison between black Pentecostals in Brazil and the United States, see Contins (1995, 2002, 2003)

the context of Pentecostal faith¹⁶ and that initiatives are not taken by black leaders and ministers aimed at its organization.

Indications of these initiatives can be identified, as pointed out by Burdick (2011:189), in the case of Benedita da Silva, a black evangelical leader who was elected and participated in the National Constituent Assembly of 1988, in the 'Sub commission of Blacks, Indian populations and Minorities', as well as in the occasional denunciations of racism through the propagation and proselytizing channels provided by the Pentecostal Churches. They can also be identified, in a more systematic form, in the creation of groups for reflection and black militancy which emerged at the end of the 1980s with the centenary of the abolition of slavery. It was at this time that the black movement tried to bring together the various groups that focused on the black population, including those for religious confession. This resulted in the emergence of the 'Ecumenical National Committee for Combating Racism' (CENACORA), linked to the 'National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil' (CONIC) as well as to many other institutions, including the *Missão Quilombo* (of the Pentecostal Church 'Brazil for Christ'), the *Comunidade Martin Luther King Jr* (of the Pentecostal Church 'Christ in God'), *Pentecostais Negros do Rio de Janeiro* and *Capoeiristas de Cristo*, among others. Today the Black Evangelical Movement¹⁷ is composed of groups of this nature, discussion forums, promotional websites and other initiatives. However, talking at cross-purposes and a lack of consensus between the various denominations present considerable challenges.

One of the topics of dissension is precisely the place attributed to the African legacy, including the Afro-Brazilian religions, in the construction of black evangelical identity.

The title and content of a book by Pastor Marco Davi Oliveira, one of the leaders of this movement, is suggestive, permitting reflection about these challenges: *The blackest religion in Brazil. Why are more than eight million blacks Pentecostal?*

The aim of the book is to understand the meanings of the changes that have occurred in the religious field in Brazil over the past decades, during which the demographic censuses have shown a reduction in the number

16 Even because since its first appearance at the beginning of the 19th century and throughout its various phases of development, Pentecostalism's greatest supporters have been from black and poor communities.

17 For further information on this movement, see Silva, 2011.

of Roman Catholics and an increase in the number of Evangelicals, above all Pentecostals¹⁸. Oliveira argues that the large contingent of blacks in the Pentecostal Church shows that it has become an option for the poor and excluded and therefore ‘*the blackest religion in Brazil*’. The author certainly knows that Catholicism is the largest religion in Brazil, with 73.7% of Brazilians declaring their adherence to it, 44% of whom are either black or of mixed race, almost the same as their percentage in Brazil’s total population (44.7%). Among the 15.4% that declare themselves evangelicals, the proportion of blacks and people of mixed race (45.6%) is slightly higher than the percentage of these groups in the population as a whole. And among those who declared themselves adherents of the Afro-Brazilian religions (0.3%) the proportion of blacks and people of mixed race (48%) is higher than their percentage in the population as a whole. In other words, Catholicism is the ‘blackest religion in Brazil’ in absolute numbers and the Afro-Brazilian religions, especially Candomblé, are the ‘blackest’ in proportional terms.¹⁹ However, Oliveira’s argument is not quantitative, but qualitative, as he argues that the majority of blacks who profess Catholicism do not actually practice it, in contrast to the ‘religious Pentecostal blacks’ who effectively engage with their churches and behave accordingly. In addition, in terms of the liturgy, singing, ecclesiastical posture and language, it is Pentecostalism that reaches out the most to the black community (Oliveira, 2004:20). This argument is based on the concept that Pentecostalism, since it first appeared in the United States, appropriated the ‘spirituality’ of the Africans, which also led to the development of a different style in its cult, based on effusive religious songs, invigorating experiences of dancing and expressions of joy. The presence of the Holy Spirit supposedly gave black people access to a spiritual rebirth based on their experience in the body. In the same way, the black Pentecostal cult in Brazil expresses a ‘more evident Brazilianness’, due to the ‘more relaxed manner and irreverence of Afro descendent culture’ (Oliveira 2004:68).

However, at this point things become more complicated. If, on the one hand, the use of the body, the musicality (expressed in rhythms like samba,

18 The book, published in 2004, discusses the 2000 IBGE census; however, the data for 2010 reinforces the general trends of 2000. In the following references I will be using information from the 2000 census.

19 The 2010 census presents some transformations in this data which it is not possible to deal with in this article. However, Candomblé continues to be the religion with the most adepts who declare themselves black (21.1%).

blues, soul, rap, negro spirituals, jazz and many others (Oliveira, 2004:69), and the importance of the ancestral legacy, are ‘reminiscences’ of an African religiosity that are valorized by the evangelical churches, they also relate to the negative image of Africa that is combated by these churches (as a place of pagan practices and idolatry) and to the Afro-Brazilian religions (supposedly dedicated to the worship of ‘devils’ of African origin, such as the Orishas and other guides)

Oliveira thus seeks to question the ‘Candomblé myth’ (the religion which is best known as a synthesizer of these ‘reminiscences’ and currently greatly incentivized by the black movement) as the most appropriate religious choice for Brazilian blacks. Firstly, he affirms that the religious diversity of the Africans who came to Brazil goes far beyond Candomblé, including Islam, for example. Secondly, because the Afro-Brazilian religions have increasingly distanced themselves from black people and poor people due to the high cost of their offerings and the lack of a committed community as a result of the disputes and competition between their members. Finally, the individualism in ethical questions and the exclusivity of these entities have led to a lack of a proselytizing strategy that has compromised their growth, as demonstrated by the low number of people who declared themselves adepts of Afro-Brazilian religions in the last census (0.3%). (Oliveira, 2004:101).

Oliveira, however, does not intend to argue in favor of Neopentecostal religious intolerance which ‘demonizes everything that comes from Africa’. The author even denounces such intolerance as a form of racism within the evangelical movement. And he goes further, doubting that this segment is really that inclusive in relation to black membership. He finds that the participation of blacks in the organization and hierarchies of evangelical institutions is not proportional to the size of this population. The low number of marriages between black evangelicals is also an indication that they have sought partners outside their ethnic group due to the lack of racial awareness, a problem overlooked by these churches. The ideology of ‘whitening’ also resonates through the pews of the evangelical churches. On this point John Burdick (2002) is more optimistic, affirming that in Pentecostalism, although black consciousness is not expressed in the discourse, it can be found in the daily religious experience. Blacks in this environment tend to rise above being ashamed of their color, improve their self esteem and acquire a greater awareness of the prejudice that exists outside the church as

a result of their participation in a religious community where they are seen as equals rather than inferiors. The higher rate of marriages between black women and white men demonstrates that within this context women are less victim to the stereotype that exists outside the church that tends to 'sexualize' them and diminish their chance of finding a partner who is interested in a serious relationship (Burdick, 2002:193).

At any rate, the paradoxes of the black evangelical movement are directly related to the question of organizing Brazil's national culture. How can 'black Brazilianness' be defined without including Africa and without mentioning the values of the Afro-Brazilian religions? I suggest that we now have some proposals for alternatives that confront this paradox.

One of them is called Black Theology, a variation of the Theology of Liberation which emerged in the 1960s from within the black Protestant churches in the United States and which seeks elements in the bible which legitimize the struggle of the people of God for liberation from all forms of submission. The Exodus from Egypt, a biblical narrative that recounts the liberation of the Jewish people, is one of the most quoted passages as it refers to this experience of liberation on African soil. Currently this alternative does not, however, appear, like the Theology of Liberation itself, to be a very effective as a tool for action, although it remains an inspiration.

Another alternative has been the reappropriation of symbols associated with the African legacy in the Pentecostal context, but in a form that is disassociated from their relationship to the Afro-Brazilian religions. One example is the *Capoeira de Cristo*, also known as 'Evangelical Capoeira' or 'Gospel Capoeira', where the words contain no references to the Orishas or Catholic saints. The first National Encounter of Evangelical Capoeiristas took place in Goiânia in 2005, and the theme that was chosen was *God - the true ancestor of capoeira*²⁰. In this context there is a refutation of the contribution of African spirituality to the formation of capoeira, as is indicated in the title 'God' is the 'true ancestor' of the practice, whose origin, however, was in fact intimately connected with Candomblé.

Another example is the 'acarajé of the Lord' or 'The Lord' fritter', created by evangelical women who want to disassociate this traditional food from Bahia from the Afro-Brazilian religions (the *acarajé* is offered by devotees

20 www.capoeira.jex.com.br/

to the Orisha Iansã) and from the image of the *baianas* who traditionally sell *acarajés* wearing a white turban, wide white skirts and bead necklaces ('guides'), recognized nationwide as the typical dress of the *terreiros*. This process began with the general demonization of all the food made by the *baianas* in their traditional costumes of Candomblé *mães de santo*. According to Bishop Edir Macedo (1996:48), founder of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God:

Everyone who eats the dishes sold by the famous *baianas* is subject, sooner or later, to suffer stomach problems. Almost all of these *baianas* are 'filhas de santo' or 'mães de santo' who put spells on the food to make it sell. Some people even vomit up what they have eaten, even when it was a long time before. It may seem like a joke, or a children's tale, but those who have frequented our services have seen close up the deeds of Satan and his angels, even in routine things like this.

Next they began to produce these dishes for evangelicals, who sold them in front of Neopentecostal churches without using the traditional costumes worn by the *baianas*, alleging that their *acarajés* were blessed by God²¹.

Alongside this project of denial of Afro religiosity there is also an effort to define the 'contours of Brazilianness'. As Edir Macedo affirmed in 1996, the 'Exu tradition' must be expelled as it has turned Brazil into one 'vast *terreiro*'. The problem is to discover how not to throw away the baby with the bathwater...

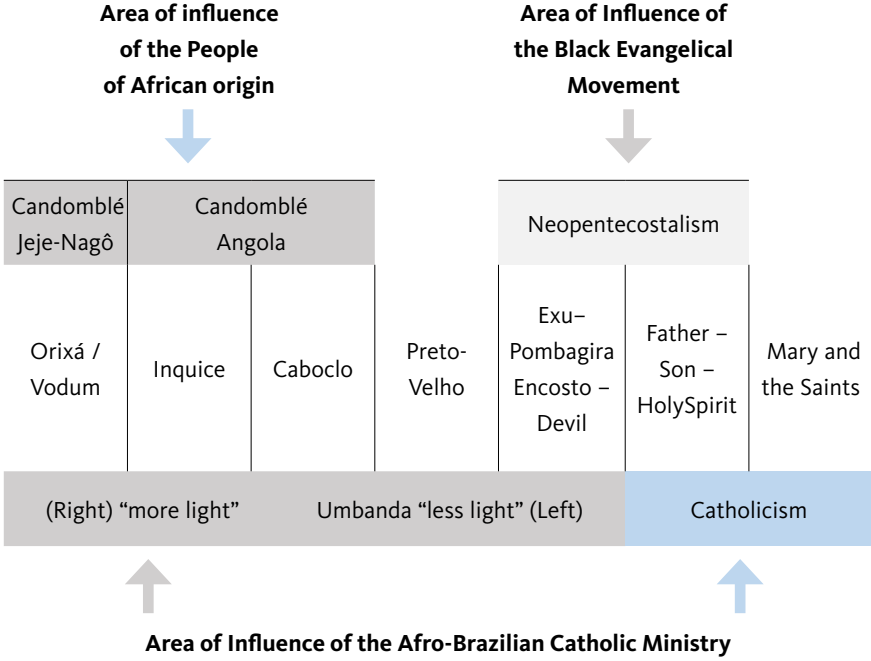
Some final considerations

Religion, color, cultural identity and political action do not always walk side by side. The 2010 census conducted by the IBGE showed that Catholicism, although it has lost adepts, continues to be the declared religion of the majority of the Brazilian population (64.6%); the evangelicals continue to grow (22%), with the Pentecostal churches showing the greatest growth in this segment. Only a minority (0.3%) declare that they belong to one of the Afro-Brazilian religions. In relation to color, and if we take blacks and people of mixed race together, the evangelical churches have the largest population in proportional terms (57.4%), followed by Candomblé and Umbanda (51.9%)

21 I broached this subject in Silva, 2007 e 2013.

and Catholicism (50.9%). If we take only the black population into account, Candomblé and Umbanda are the ‘blackest’ religions (21.1%), followed at a distance by the Pentecostal evangelicals (8.5%) and black Catholics (7.5%) In absolute terms the majority of the black and mixed race populations of Brazil officially profess the Catholic faith, which probably explains the strength that the association between the Afro-Brazilian religions and Catholicism still enjoys, and the option of the black Catholic movement to return to this Christian *and* Afro-Brazilian identity as a method for conducting their missionary activities and racial politics.

The graph below shows the range of religions discussed in this article (with their main spiritual entities) and the range of influence of the black movements:



Without intending to be conclusive, but rather indicating some of the trends that appear to permeate the contemporary debate, it can be affirmed that, as far as the active use of the symbols of the African legacy are concerned, the role of the Afro-Brazilian religions has been the most significant. However, there is a considerable difference between the roles played by the various denominations. Thus the references closest to the Jeje-Nagô traditions

(which basically cultivate the Orishas and Voduns, the first of which are better known due to the internationalization of the Yoruba traditions by the African diaspora) are seen as closer to the 'origin' which is considered to be 'pure' or 'authentic'. The Angola Candomblé, which worships the *Inquices* (divinities of the Bantu peoples) and *Caboclos* (entities that represent the spirits of the indigenous peoples of Brazil) enjoy less prestige in relation to Yoruba traditions. And Umbanda even less. This religion associates the African gods and Catholic saints with Kardecist spiritualism. It absorbed the Candomblé entities and redefined its cosmology using a hierarchical method in which the Orishas and Saints occupy the highest level and are considered 'spirits of light'. In this religion, the *caboclos* and *pretos velhos* (the spirits of African slaves) are considered intermediaries. *Exus* and *pombagiras*, on the other hand, are considered to be on the left side, and thus 'spirits of darkness'. They are situated on the lowest rung of this ladder, as, due to Catholic influence, they are associated with the devil. Catholicism, on the other hand, basically cultivates the Holy Trinity (made up of the figures of God the father, God the son and the Holy Spirit) and many intermediaries, such as Mary (mother of God the son), the saints and angels. Neopentecostalism inserts itself between these two systems and articulates them as if it were a sort of doorway that permits or prevents the passage from one system to the other. Of course the aim of Neopentecostalism is to eliminate all the intermediaries of the other systems by promoting the war against evil, which is seen as Jesus' war against the *Exus* (a synonym for manifestations of the Devil).

In the recent policies of ethno-racial affirmation that emphasize the right to difference and the struggle for social equality, the work of denouncing the hardships experienced by the black population also takes the form of attacking ideologies that see Brazil and a mixed-race and syncretic country. Thus there is a convergence towards the Yoruba-based traditions (seen as 'pieces of Africa planted in the heart of Brazil'²²), which have become the chosen field of political action, both of the black movements interested in the 'recuperation' of the African legacy, and by the State, which wants to promote programs that compensate these populations, such as establishing cultural aspects of black African origin as part of the national legacy. Thus one perceives articulation between the State, the religious movements and

22 Bastide, 1978:67.

politicians (black politicians and their allies) for the 'black' religions, or the 'African Origin' to be seen as a cultural option and not just a personal conversion. A good example was the controversy surrounding the statues of the Orishas installed by the town council of Salvador in the Dique do Tororó as part of the restoration of the area. There was opposition from the evangelicals who argued that a public body could not promote the symbols of a particular religion. In reply, the mayor's office stated that the statues were not a reference to a religion, but to a culture of which the religion was a part: the culture of Bahia, in which the Orishas were consecrated icons (Sansi, 2007).

These dialogs also result in transformations of the rituals inside the *terreiros*. The denominations that are positioned at (or tend towards) the pole of the most 'syncretic' traditions, like Angola Candomblé, Caboclo Candomblé and Umbanda, have much less visibility in the sphere of the black political movements. These traditions are now beginning to react. Today, for example, it is possible to perceive a reafrikanization process of the Bantu traditions and an organization of the *terreiros* that is directed at a wider catchment area. There are also indications of the same transformations occurring in Umbanda. The substitution of May 13 for November 20 has generated changes in the cult of the *pretos velhos*, who were traditionally celebrated on the former date, when they manifested in the form of generous, conciliating and wise slave spirits, á la Pai Tomas. However, recently it has been possible to meet the spirits of *pretos velhos* who manifest as *ex-quilombolas*, having died in rebellions and while escaping, indicating a move in the direction of the figure of Zumbi (who died on November 20). (Souza, 2007). It should also be mentioned that, in the same way, warrior Orishas (Ogum and Iansã), and those that represent Justice (Xangô) and the inversion of order (Exu), are seen as icons for the struggle of the black movement and are associated with the resistance movement of the *terreiros* against religious intolerance.

In the context of the 'place' of the Afro-Brazilian religions in the Catholic Afro-Brazilian Ministry, we know that the Christian catechism developed in Brazil as a complex systems of relationships between the Catholic experience and the religions of African origin, leading to the presence of Catholicism, in some of its aspects, inside the *terreiros*. Now it is a question of bringing the *terreiro* to the churches, so that the evangelizing mission can begin to exchange 'liturgical experiences', but also engage in the struggle for equality and ethno-social justice. In this context, Orishas and Catholic saints reaffirm

their 'closeness', this time in a way legitimized by the church, or at least by a part of it. In other words, seeing Our Lady of the Appearance as *Mãe Quilombola* and sanctifying the power of resistance of the slave Anastácia (or of Zumbi) reveals the force of these symbols for less-privileged Catholics and adepts of the Afro-Brazilian religions.

To close, if we reflect on the 'place' of the Afro-Brazilian religions in Neopentecostalism, we see that their religious, or even 'cultural' symbols, are considered a result of demonic activity. In this 'segment' they profess the need to break with the 'tradition' of Brazil as 'a vast *terreiro*' (Macedo, 1996) or with the 'myth of Candomblé' (Oliveira, 2004). From the point of view of public policies involving ethnicity, some evangelical leaders affirm that there are more blacks (in absolute terms) in evangelical religions than in the Afro-Brazilian ones. This, in their view, means that these churches would be the best partners for government in their policies for the area. They emphasize 'Pentecostalism as an option for the poor, the blacks and the excluded' (Oliveira, 2004). In this context there is now a potential field of action for black groups and movements concerned in renewing their discourses and activities, making a break with some of the moral and public conduct values of the Afro-Brazilian religions in favor of ethical values that are considered more morally 'rigid'.

At any rate, it seems that Brazil today is experiencing a dilemma between religious and political convictions with ethical and ethnic appeal. If, on the one hand, a wing of the Catholic church wants to open its doors to the Orishas, on the other there are *terreiros* that want to distance themselves from the Catholic church, mostly as a consequence of the discourse repudiating syncretism and the mixing of races that has been adopted by certain segments of reaffricanized Candomblé and the black movement. But this is also against the wishes of large numbers of Afro-Brazilian adepts who belong to less Yoruba-influenced cults, such as those with indigenous influences (Caboclo and Jurema Candomblés) or Kardecist ones (Umbanda of the *preto velhos* and a large number of other entities). If the evangelicals say that neither the saints, nor the Orishas, *caboclos* and *guias* offer a path to heaven or to justice on earth, at least for many black (and white) adepts these gods continue to participated in their lives as heroes or villains, responsible for the joys and woes of everyday life.

The ways in which these theologies, liturgies, pantheons, values and practices relate to these social and political agents seems to have led to the

emergence of novel attitudes towards the real meaning of syncretism, mixed races, African legacy, Brazilian culture, political participation and social justice. This is an extremely interesting field of observation which deserves research that associates religion, culture, politics and the public sphere from the perspective of these entities that manifest in the form of trances – Orishas, the Holy Spirit and Exus – these conceptions of what Brazil is, or what it should be.

If on the level of national culture Afro-Brazilian values have had an important role in establishing a ‘mixed race’ identity (Brazil as the ‘country of the mulattas, of carnival, samba, football, *macumba*, *feijoada* and syncretism), the groups that generated them continue in a situation of social and economic disadvantage and are asking themselves which is the best path forward through this jumble of religious values and political action.

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Annex 1 – Afro-Brazilian religions and public space – a Chronology

1591-95 1618-21 1763-69	Visits from the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition: practitioners of Afro and Afro-Brazilian religions persecuted.
1824	Constitution of the Empire: Catholicism is the official religion. Prohibition of non-Catholic temples (other religions restricted to people's homes or to buildings that do not look like temples). First newspaper reports on <i>terreiros</i> installed in urban spaces.
séc. XIX	Foundation of the oldest <i>terreiros</i> still operating: Casa das Minas and Casa de Nagô (São Luis), Sítio do Pai Adão (Recife), Casa Branca do Engenho Velho (Salvador).
1890	Republican Penal Code. Spiritism, magic and spells become a crime (art. 157) as well as witch doctors (art. 158), for which many participants of Afro-Brazilian religions are accused and put on trial.
1891	Republican Constitution. Establishes the separation of Church and State and freedom of worship. Conditions for the organization of <i>terreiros</i> improve.
c.1890	Casa de Tia Ciata (Hilária Batista de Almeida) and of other “tias baianas”, in the area around Praça Onze, become centers for spreading <i>carioca</i> samba, with singer/composers such as Donga, Sinhô, João da Baiana and others..
1900	Publication of <i>O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos</i> , by Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. The first ethnography of Afro-Brazilian religions
1908	Zélio de Moraes founds the Tenda Espírita Nossa Senhora da Piedade, traditionally considered to be the first to practice Umbanda
1910	Foundation of the Terreiro do Axé Opô Afonjá, by Mãe Aninha (Eugênia Anna dos Santos) in Salvador
1912	“Operation Xangô”: invasion and destruction of the main <i>terreiros</i> in Maceió and surrounding areas, accused of being allied to the deposed governor Euclides Malta
1930-45	Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship. <i>Terreiros</i> operated under strict vigilance from the Secretariats of Public Safety and Mental Hygiene Services
1934	Publication of <i>O Negro Brasileiro</i> , by Arthur Ramos, first volume of the Bibliotheca de Divulgação Científica series, the main information source for works about Afro-Brazilian religions
	Publication of <i>Jubiabá</i> , by Jorge Amado. Candomblé themes become a characteristic of Brazil's widest read writer of the time.
	I Congresso Afro-Brasileiro (Recife), organized by Gilberto Freire
1937	II Congresso Afro-Brasileiro (Salvador), organized by Édison Carneiro and Aydano do Couto Ferraz

1938	Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas, idealized by Mário de Andrade, records scenes and music from Afro-Brazilian religious rituals and popular <i>festas</i> in the North and Northeast
1939	Foundation, in Rio de Janeiro, of the União Espírita de Umbanda do Brasil, the first federation of this religion in the country. Carmen Miranda sings “ <i>O que é que a baiana tem?</i> ”, in the film “ <i>Banana da Terra</i> ”, dressed as a <i>baiana</i> , a stylized version of the typical dress of the Candomblé <i>mães-de-santo</i> .
1940	Charlatanism (art. 283) and the activities of witch doctors (art. 284) continue to be offences in the Penal Code, of which participants of Afro-Brazilian religions continue to be accused.
1941	I Brazilian Congress of Umbanda Spiritism
1946	The Frenchman Pierre Verger lands in Salvador where he settles, becoming one of the main photographers and ethnographers of Candomblé and its African origins
1961	II Brazilian Congress of Umbanda Publication of <i>O candomblé da Bahia – rito nagô</i> , by Roger Bastide.
1964	Afro-Brazilian religious festivals (like the Festa de Iemanjá) become part of the tourism calendar in the region December 31 officially declared <i>Dia do Umbandista</i>
1971	Joãozinho da Goméia, one of the most popular <i>pais-de-santo</i> in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo dies Publication of <i>As religiões africanas no Brasil</i> , by Roger Bastide
1976	Inauguration of the statue of Iemanjá on Praia Grande, São Paulo, and the inclusion of her <i>feira</i> , on December 8, in the city's official tourism calendar
1982	Foundation of the Museu Afro-brasileiro in Salvador with a collection of photos and ethnographic documents by Pierre Verger and panels of the Orishas sculpted in wood by Carybé
1983	Clara Nunes, the singer who sold most records with Afro-Brazilian themes, dies
1984	Creation of the Conselho Estadual de Participação e Desenvolvimento da Comunidade Negra in São Paulo with the participation of members of the Afro-Brazilian religions
1985	Serra da Barriga, where the Quilombo de Palmares was located, is preserved by the Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN)

1985-2013	<p><i>Terreiros</i> are declared as African heritage by government institutions:</p> <p>(1985) Sítio de Pai Adão (Recife, FUNDARPE)</p> <p>(1986) Casa Branca do Engenho Velho (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(1988) Terreiro Filhos de Oba (Laranjeiras, IPC)</p> <p>(1990) Axé Ilê Obá (São Paulo, CONDEPHAT)</p> <p>(1995) Terreiro Ilê Wopo Olojukan (Belo Horizonte, CMP)</p> <p>(1999) Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2002) Ilê Axé Omim Iyá Yamassê – Gantois (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2002) Casa das Minas (São Luís, Maranhão, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2003) Inzo Manzo Bandukenké – Bate Folha (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2004) Terreiro Pilão de Prata (Salvador, IPAC)</p> <p>(2004) Ilê Axé Oxumaré (Salvador, IPAC)</p> <p>(2004) Terreiro São Jorge Filho da Goméia – Terreiro do Portão (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Mariolaje – Olga do Alaketu (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2005) Zoogodô Bogum Malê Rundó (Salvador, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Axé Ajagunã (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Ilê Axé Opô Aganju (Lauro de Freitas, IPAC)</p> <p>(2005) Terreiro de Santa Barbara de Mãe Manodê (São Paulo, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2006) Ilê Axé Alabaxê (Maragojipe, IPAC)</p> <p>(2006) Terreiro de Jauá (Camaçari, IPAC)</p> <p>(2008) Seja Hundé – Roça do Ventura (Cachoeira, IPHAN)</p> <p>(2009) Sítio do Acais (Alhandra, IPHAEP)</p> <p>(2013) Ilê Axé Oxumaré (Salvador, IPHAN)</p>
1986	Menininha do Gantois, the most popular mãe-de-santo in Brazil, dies.
1988	<p>March of Zumbi against Discrimination (<i>the Centenary of Abolition March</i>, RJ).</p> <p>Foundation of the Fundação Palmares (under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture)</p>
1995	<i>Zumbi dos Palmares March against Racism, for Citizenship and for Life</i> , (Brasília, MNU), celebrating the 300th anniversary of the death of Zumbi dos Palmares. Document drawn up demanding policies of protection for the Afro-Brazilian religions by government authorities.
2000	The IBGE Census (2000) shows that 0.3 % of the Brazilian population professes to belong to an Afro-Brazilian religion and that, in proportional terms, these include the largest number of blacks and people of mixed race.
	Statute of Racial Equality instituted under Law 3198
	Institution of the Register of Cultural Property of an Immaterial Nature (Programa Nacional do Patrimônio Nacional)

2001	I World Conference on Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and Connected Forms of Intolerance, Durban, South Africa. President Fernando Henrique recognizes the existence of racism in Brazil.
2003	Teaching of African culture and history and Afro-Brazilian culture in schools becomes mandatory under Federal Law 10639
	Foundation of SEPPIR (Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial)
2004	Salvador institutes the World Day for the Combat of Religious Intolerance (January 21) as a tribute to the death of Mãe Gilda, a victim of religious persecution
2005	Foundation of the Museu Afro Brasil in São Paulo, bringing together the largest national collection of works and documents about Afro-Brazilian culture.
2007	National Policy for Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples instituted.
	Municipal Law 7216/07 regulates the historical and cultural preservation of the African and Afro-Brazilian legacy and creates the General Registry of Religious Communities of Afro-Brazilian culture in the municipality of Salvador, Bahia
2009	Candomblé and Umbanda are declared as immaterial heritage of the State of Rio de Janeiro
2010	Statute of Racial Equality instituted under Law 12288
2013	National Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Traditional People and Communities of African Origin.