

Narratives, characters, performances: the *Baiana* as the face of Candomblé

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Abstract

This article describes how the *Baiana*, a regional folk-type in Brazilian culture could be shaped with the contribution of the literature, music, religion and scholarly works, its role in the shaping of Brazilian-ness and Afro-Brazilian identity, with some possible effects in the lives of the real people referred under this label.

Keywords: gender; racial identity; Regionalism; Afro-Religiosity.

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Resumo

Esse artigo descreve como a baiana, um tipo regional da cultura brasileira, teria sido construída com a contribuição da literatura, música, religião e textos acadêmicos, seu papel na formação da brasilidade e identidade afro-brasileira, como possíveis efeitos nas vidas das pessoas reais referidas sob este rótulo.

Palavras-chaves: gênero; identidade racial; regionalismo; afro-religiosidade.

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O que é que a baiana tem?

(Dorival Caymmi)

O que é que a baiana tem?
Tem torço de seda, tem!
Tem brincos de ouro, tem!
Corrente de ouro, tem!
Tem pano-da-costa, tem!
Sandália enfeitada, tem!
Só vai no Bonfim quem tem
(O que é que a baiana tem?)
Só vai no Bonfim quem tem
Só vai no Bonfim quem tem
Um rosário de ouro, uma bolota assim
Quem não tem balagandãs não vai lá no Bonfim
(Oi, não vai no Bonfim)
(Oi, não vai no Bonfim)¹

The lyrics transcribed above (from the song recorded and immortalized by Carmen Miranda in 1939) and the photograph shot in 1949² by Pierre Verger are indexes of the *baiana*'s popularity as an icon of Brazilian regionalist typology. Although devoid of any explicit mention of Afro-religiosity, the song might stand as an item-by-item description of the priestess in the photograph (or vice versa); it is almost as if one had inspired the other.

The reason for this character's appearance as the protagonist of the narrative on race/skin color/ethnicity and the legitimacy of its priesthood that has been woven through Candomblé is justified by the fact that, during the investigation for my doctoral thesis (Cruz 2008), upon being asked the question

¹ What does the Baiana have?

She has a silk turban
She has gold earrings
She has gold chains
She has a *pano-da-costa*
She has embroidered sandals
Only those who have go to the Bonfim Church
(What does the Baiana have?)
Only those who have go to the Bonfim Church
Only those who have go to the Bonfim Church

A gold rosary with beads like these
If you have no balagandãs you can't go to the Bonfim Church
(Oh, you can't go to the Bonfim Church)
(Oh, you can't go to the Bonfim Church)

² See in Verger 2002: 185 fig. 157

“If Candomblé had a face, what would it be?”, almost 100% of the interviewees in my doctoral research invariably came up with an identical response. They described the face of a middle-aged black woman wearing traditional *baiana* garb. Some of the respondents further described that woman as portly. Although their descriptions do not quite match the one provided by the song’s lyrics (in which no mention is made of the character’s race, skin or color). The face of Candomblé would therefore appear to have a specific gender, race, skin color, age range and regional origin. However, neither Nina Rodrigues nor Manuel Querino –pioneers in the description of Candomblé during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries– make any mention of the founding of Candomblé whereas, by the 1930s, Édison Carneiro had heard and reported on the story of the “three African princesses” - Iyá Akalá, Iyá Adetá and Iyá Nassô, who established Candomblé in Salvador (Carneiro 1978: 56). It is impossible to establish whether this story already circulated in Nina Rodrigues’ day but, if it did, it may not have been considered remarkable enough to be repeated to the *doutor*.³ However, when it was told in the 1930s, it underscored the fact that the protagonists of Candomblé were predominantly female.

That face did not appear totally out of the blue. The early investigations of Nina Rodrigues, Manuel Querino and João do Rio into the Afro-religious field again recorded no specific mention of gender exclusivity. Although Rodrigues’s research was carried out in *terreiros* led by *mães* (mothers) *de santo*, he also alludes to *pais* (fathers) *de santo*, with no explicit gender markers beyond this, except for the major feminine attribute of hysteria, which he states as structural in trance possession. This scenario did not change until after the 1930s.

As for Pierre Verger, he was not a participant in Modernist or Regionalist cultural movements but, according to his own testimony (*Pierre Fatumbi Verger – Mensageiro entre Dois Mundos*, 1998), was at least partly drawn to Bahia by Jorge Amado’s 1935 novel *Jubiabá* (1935). Amado was the most widely-translated (not to mention bestselling in his native country) exponent of Modernist Regionalism in Brazilian literature. Earlier modalities of Regionalism may be found in Brazilian literary history in novels of the 1800s such as *O Sertanejo* or *O Gaúcho*, by Gonçalves Dias and José de Alencar, respectively.

During this period, plots and characters were founded on a romantic narrative that idealized heroes and heroines from far away lands and distant times. Within the Brazilian context, such distances of space and time could be played out by proxy against the vast landscapes of the Brazilian Empire. The heroes and heroines of Romantic Regionalism or Indianism, as exemplified by Peri and Ceci –the protagonists of novelist José de Alencar’s epic novel *O Guarani* (1857)– barely reflect real inhabitants of the aforementioned landscapes. In all respects, Alencar’s ill-fated lovers would feel at ease with their virtues and noble sentiments in the South of France, in Somerset or in the Scottish Highlands of that same period. In Brazil, criticism of Romanticism was voiced by the Realist and Naturalist movements and underscored by the shock of truth provided by Euclides da Cunha’s disclosure of the horrors of Canudos.

Notwithstanding, Regionalism didn’t disappear forever. It returned, newly-equipped with a quasi-ethnographic details (akin to those of Naturalism) that reproduced language, social types and customs in the work of writers such as Simões Lopes Neto (from the state of Rio Grande do Sul) or São Paulo’s Monteiro Lobato. After the Modern Art Week of 1922 and its resulting literary trends, a new Romanticism appeared, adopting regional types both rural and urban as the protagonists of stories which, on one hand, proposed to reproduce language, types and customs and by the other, inserts contemporary concerns like politics and social struggle. The new-Romantic characters of this trend illustrate a tendency towards paternalism, stereotyping and a certain complacency that purports to be social realism, presenting types almost devoid

³ Although Nina Rodrigues was a member of the medical profession, the form of address has long been reserved by the subaltern classes for any adult male with even a semblance of higher education.

of subjectivity, despite their richly picturesque qualities or their colorful and anecdote-filled plots. The dominant characters are men and women of the *people*. Novelists Guimarães Rosa and José Lins do Rego distanced themselves from this approach, the former through a fantastic, eminently literary and complex style often compared to that of James Joyce, the latter through neo-realistic, subjectivist narratives in which concepts such as social realism or “the people” hardly put in an appearance.

However, it was Jorge Amado’s picaresque novels that continually exalted a particular place (Salvador da Bahia) and its vivid popular types: fishermen, street urchins, prostitutes, rogues of every description, *stevedores*, policemen, craftsmen, laborers, musicians, *capoeira* fighters and the so-called *povo-de-santo* (adepts of Candomblé). In Amado’s Salvador-based novels, nearly all the characters interact with Candomblé which is presented as a latent, invisible force driving the plot. In *Jubiabá* (a novel read by Pierre Verger in Paris), it is a *pai-de-santo* who anchors the shattered lives around him with hieratic dignity.

But when Verger lands in Salvador in 1949, the Afro-religious field had been occupied by a new dominant character who would also be duly depicted and revered in other novels by Amado (such as *Tent of Miracles* and *Shepherds of the Night*): the stout, elderly black woman clothed in characteristic garb which simultaneously endow her with the qualities of a loving nursemaid and jovial cook, yet the complexity and riches of her picturesque garments conferred clear signs of respectability and apartness, like those displayed by a porcelain doll standing in a showcase. She was, however, a real person, and already known by her name –*baiana*– easily recognizable in large Brazilian coastal cities since the mid-1800s, and depicted in postcards and prints of that period.

Enters the *Baiana*

In 1938, a decade before Pierre Verger’s arrival, another important character in this scenario arrived in Salvador: Ruth Landes. This is how the anthropologist introduces us to the *baiana*:

“Negro women were everywhere, in colorful skirts and turbans and white blouses reflecting the sun. Usually they were older women, powerful in appearance and self-confident, and keenly interested in the work at hand.”
(Landes 1996: 17)

The image of the *baiana* that appears on the cover of the first Brazilian edition of *City of Women* [trans. *A Cidade das Mulheres* (Civilização Brasileira, 1967)] is iconic: duly consecrated in and by the media (including literature, cinema and Carnival parade themes). Throughout the book, *baianas* (occasionally referred to as “*naô* black women”) are the real protagonists, which worth to call the attention upon the author’s in her pioneering, who preceded everything else that happened regarding to the exposition and reiteration of the *baiana*’s role.

During the interregnum that covers the period between Ruth Landes’s arrival in Salvador and the present day, the *baiana*’s image has been further enriched by a series of other factors, among which I might emphasize the world of Samba School parades in Rio de Janeiro’s Carnival –the most universally recognized symbolic moment of Brazilian-ness–specifically, her incorporation by composers, musicians and craftsmen as a major signifying component of this realm. Rio’s Carnival is a ritualized celebration of nationality [as a product by one hand, of the State-led “domestication” of the Carnival itself and, by the other, of the construction of the category “povo” as an instance of legitimization of the populist state, where the lower classes– hereupon resignified as either “trabalhadores” or “artistas”– stand as a silent alibi for the elite in charge (Oliveira 2006; Paranhos 2003)] in which images, values, characters and narratives are continuously re-engineered, year after year, parade after parade. The Samba school’s myth of origin (indeed, the myth of origin of the samba itself) tell us that the *ala das baianas* represents the primordial and most authentic

core of the Samba Schools, and the latter is related to quasi-religious meetings said to have been held at Tia Ciata's *terreiro* of Candomblé in the Cidade Nova quarter.⁴

However, Carnival historians currently agree that the *baianas* from the Samba Schools which paraded in the 1930 to 1950 were originally cross-dressed men which escorted the School, clearing the way for the parade in the crowd, and eventually acting as guards whenever fights burst with rival schools (Araújo 2009). In 1960 the Mangueira Samba School introduced an *ala das baianas* in its annual parade; the participants of this group were the wives and mothers of Mangueira's samba community who, due to modesty and decency, could no longer parade as dancers or *cabrochas*. Other schools emulated this initiative in the following years. At last, in the 1970s, the *ala das baianas* became mandatory item in every Samba School parades, working as a trademark of the group's authenticity. In 2006 the Independent Samba School League (which establishes rules for the Carnival parade), waived the obligatory rule of feminine exclusivity in the *ala das baianas*, by the reducing of the number of ladies up to take part in the parade due to, according to some sources⁵ their conversion to evangelical faith.

This *baiana's* transference from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro –which was then the federal capital city and, more so than it is today, the cultural showcase of Brazil– leads to her universalizing as a national symbol that transcends her earlier status as a mere regional type. Samba Schools were not solely responsible for this process. Popular music itself (as demonstrated by the song in the epigraph), notably songs composed by Dorival Caymmi (who settled in Rio de Janeiro in the 1930s) and sung by Carmem Miranda, were also crucial not only to a dissemination of the *baiana's* image but also as source of inspiration for the creative dynamics of Samba Schools in general.

Nowwithstanding, we must not forget that Ruth Landes alternatively calls their natives of *baianas* and “*nagô* black women”, and this denomination recalls a specific character attributed to them: their association to the Candomblé *terreiros* reputed as “pure Africans”, which make them superior to *mestiças* and *caboclas* women. However in this specific case, the connotative *nagô*, is not necessarily associated to the women's supposed ethnic background. Landes didn't ask them about their ancestral origin, besides the mythical one. If some of them ever could biologically descend from the despised (by Nina Rodrigues and Roger Bastide) Bantu or from the Jêje, it is not discussed in any part of the book. Therefore the label *nagô* is rather rooted in an *ethos*, which include skin color, age range, biotype, garments, body techniques and job, whose set suppose (but not necessarily take for grant) a certain cult affiliation.

Baianas as Pretas-Velhas

Let us fix our gaze upon the *mãe preta* [or “black mother”], another character belonging to Brazilian visual repertory, possessing identifying features that closely resemble those of the *baiana*. Another product of 1800s Romanticism, she was often portrayed as the Romantic heroine's affable, tender chaperon-nursemaid and epitomized in the 1930s and 1940s by the character of *Tia Nastácia* in the phenomenally best-selling and widely loved series of children's books written by Monteiro Lobato. Through the powerful mass-media appeal of Brazilian *telenovelas* and television miniseries, the *mãe preta* grew steadily more popular than the *baiana*, especially after *Tia Nastácia* appeared on a daily basis in the broadcast television series “*Sítio do Pica-pau Amarelo*”, which aired for over thirty years. The *mãe preta* also appears as a deified entity in Umbanda: the *preta-velha* [or “old black woman”] who, unlike the *baiana*, belongs to the domestic

4 Anecdote retrieved from oral tradition and “canonized” by scholarly literature, mainly by Moura (*Tia Ciata e a Pequena África do Rio de Janeiro*, 1983) and later by Hermano Vianna (*O Mistério do Samba*, 1995), and Sérgio Cabral (*As Escolas de Samba do Rio de Janeiro*, 1996). [inserir as referências completas de todas estas obras na bibliografia].

5 “Carnavalescas se convertem e não querem mais desfilar”, in: ALC – Agência Latino-Americana e Caribenha de Comunicação, available at: <http://www.alcnoticias.org/articulo.asp?artCode=3942&lanCode=3> accessed on 02/18/2007.

realm and not to the street. The *preta-velha* does not possess the independent, self-confident attitude of the *baianas*. She usually displays a humble, indulgent posture, she is less talkative albeit incisive in her pronouncements. Generally speaking, *pretos-velhos*

“[...] are characterized as humble, patient, long-suffering, and good. Umbanda leaders repeatedly stressed to me their *humildade* (humility), *bondade* (friendship), and *caridade* (charity) and tended to characterize them as subservient” (Brown 1994: 68).⁶

Throughout her lengthy description of *baianas*, Ruth Landes shows the reader how they share many of the traits attributed to the *pretas-velhas* (humility and subservience excepted), as exemplified in the following episode:

“[The ceremony] was harshly interrupted by Faustino who, still drunk, began a loud monologue. He talked louder and louder, until Menininha came and took over the ceremony. Still he talked. She “pulled” a song. He continued talking and fussed with his soiled suit. Suddenly exasperated, she called in her powerful voice – I don’t like this, folks! If you must talk, do it in the street.’ – It was a shocking reprimand, and Faustino fell silent, like the others. She started to sing again. He left, muttering sulkily. But when he reached outdoors he rebelled, shouting wildly, yelling that the others would not let him use the gourd, that they defamed him saying he was drunk and made mistakes. Then he quieted and soon was seen urinating. Menininha sang. He returned, grumbling faintly, and went out again. Returning once more, he “pulled” a verse loudly and appropriately, in honor of the goddess then being praised. Menininha startled, hushed herself, then sweetly seconded it. I marveled at her kindness.” (Landes 1996:231-232)

Thus *baianas* and *pretas-velhas* share both phenotypical and behavioral traits, at least when we consider the domesticated versions of both characters. In the case of the *preta-velha* this trait is associated to a domestic version of the slavery, when it is brought to the intimacy of the masters’ household, and the slavewoman is perceived as a “member of the family”, usually as a nanny or a wetnurse. Is in this quality that the *mammy*, the United States correlate of the *preta-velha*, is also regarded. Not as an individual, but as an artifact. A mother-thing which idyllic reminder of how good was the United States’ Old South domestic relationships, in an imagined and idealized tones (Wallace-Sanders 2008). Would we consider the same regarding the *preta-velha* concerning the idealized image of the “archaic Brazil” (we’ll see it more below, concerning to Roger Bastide’s stands)?

It is interesting to note that most of the *pretas-velhas* –their grandmotherly appellations (‘*vovó*’ is Portuguese for ‘granny’) followed by their “nations” of origin– are Bantu (*Vovó Maria Conga*, *Vovó Cambinda*, *Tia Maria de Angola*, etc.) so that, according to Ordep Serra and Lorand Matory (both of whom disagree with Beatriz Góis Dantas), no matter what the skin color of whoever invented the schema or is its agent, what counts here is that, because they are predominantly Bantu and usually identify themselves as slaves and not as Africans (Souza 2006), according to Rodrigues, Carneiro and Bastide the *pretas-velhas* would be inferior to the *baianas*.

In the cult of the *pretos-velhos*, references to African origin (such as ‘*cambinda*’, the one underlined by Câmara Cascudo) are less valued than their “slave” origin. Therefore, Africa appears as a reference, but most of the *pretos-velhos* performances are directed to a Brazilian *being* born in the *senzalas*. Thus, *pretos-velhos* might even be regarded and worshipped as “African”; however, it is in their representation as “slaves” that belief in the power of their “magic” is based (Souza 2006: 134).

⁶ For a more detailed characterization of *pretos-velhos*, see Mônica Dias de Souza (2006).

Nevertheless, another significant detail must be highlighted. According to Diana Brown, *pretos* and *pretas-velhas* would be results of acculturation; of the purging of African barbarism through the Christianization of slaves plus the redemption by suffering and humiliation derived from their condition as slaves, also emphasized by Souza in his writing on Spiritualist Umbanda:

In this religious network, *pretos-velhos* are the usual category, reflecting certain conventions about “slavery”, with the predominant idea that the “slaves” were subjugated by the whites, controlled through physical punishment and forbidden to practice their religion. This regime provided the development of two types of spirits: rebellious ones and passive ones. The rebels transmit messages of discontent which prevent them from evolving spiritually and eventually produce an evil that is two-fold, for they not only bring about evil but damage the soul by standing in the way of its spiritual evolution. Passive spirits are considered to possess beneficial wisdom, because they have knowledge of magic that they use to fight against evil-doing; beyond this, they transmit Christian ideals such as patience, peace, love and humility (Souza 2006: 126-127).

We might also reach another intermediate point between the *baiana* and the *mãe preta/preta-velha* in which gender representation is related to suffering, hard work and submission, as demonstrated by the behavior of the *baianas*. This is exemplified in Patrícia Birman’s mention of an “eternal suffering” (Birman 1995: 138) and also touched upon by Souza in reference to the *ethos* of the *preto-velho* (Souza 2006: 120). Birman’s subject here are Candomblé women, which role model are the *baianas* (here understood as the Candomblé women from the past–“as antigas”) as semi-mythical characters. It would these women interviewed by Birman somehow influenced by *preta-velha* ethos or their role as afro-religious women is rather socially located driven? Anyway, in this regard, *pretas-velhas* and *baianas* are likely to converge, although the *baiana* stands in opposition to the *preta-velha* in the same way that town opposes country. The *baiana* is closely associated with the market place (where she can be seen with her tray of sweetmeats); with the street; and with social life. Meanwhile, the *preta-velha* is an unmistakably domestic persona. Like every other symbol, the *baiana* is not univocal in its representation. Her oldest version was a regional type found in large Brazilian coastal cities during the second half of the nineteenth century, directly derived from the *negras de ganho*⁷, many of them slaves who were sent out into the streets by convents and manors to sell delicacies made by their mistresses or by themselves, according to Gilberto Freyre (2002: 539).

It is possible that those women who freed themselves continued to engage in the same activity and thus became financially independent although certainly not socially respectable since, being women, they were not supposed to be out in the street to begin with, dealing with people of all kinds. Mariza Corrêa (2000) states that Ruth Landes was the first scholar to assign leadership in Candomblé to the *baiana*; in Corrêa’s reading of Landes, those women had a crucial importance, since the Candomblé *terreiros* were centers of social activity and redistribution of wealth and services in the poor neighborhoods of Salvador. I have been unable to locate where, precisely, in her book Ruth Landes says any of this but Corrêa’s interpretation is somehow redolent of Roger Bastide’s fascination with the image of an archaic, more solidary and cordial Brazil. Even though Corrêa shares a point of view that is common to Frazier, Pierson and Landes herself –one in which black people in Salvador did not live in an African culture– she also stresses that the *image* of the *baiana* –a national symbol thanks to Carmen Miranda, as pointed out in my opening paragraph– represented recognition of the relevance of blacks in Brazilian culture. This phenomenon notwithstanding, in order to achieve such a prominent status and easy recognition, black had to be bleached and feminized by the agents referred to by Corrêa as the “dominant group”. Consequently, the most representative image of blackness as Brazilian-ness is the *mulata*.

⁷ Slaves who provided income to their masters by peddling goods and services in the streets.

Baianas and some conclusive implications in Brazilian-ness

Even after the ascension and entronement of the *mulata* as a symbol of Brazilian-ness, the *baiana* continues to exist on a subaltern level. The logical operator that connects the *mulata* to the *baiana* in the same sentence is one that distinguishes between Nature and Culture, in which the former term holds prominence over the latter. While the *mulata* as an icon of Brazilianness expresses a view of themselves cherished by Brazilians –sensual, libidinous *mestiços*– plays the role of Nature, the *baiana* synthesizes tradition, the past, an archaic Brazil while playing the role of Culture. The *mulata* expresses a real, *modern* being, while the *baiana* represents the result of an elaborately constructed baroque pre-modernism. These dualities might be schematized as follows:

<i>mulata</i>	<i>baiana</i>
nature	culture
woman	mother
body	garments and ornaments
flesh	fat
new	old
individuality	hierarchy
society (<i>gesellschaft</i>)	community (<i>gemeinschaft</i>)
modernity	tradition
miscegenation	racial purity
present	past
street	house

According to this scheme, the street is the domain of the *mulata*. The *baiana* was not cast out of her original environment; she was merely converted to domesticity, her identity increasingly admixed with that of the *mãe preta*; and if, by any chance, she appeared in the street, she should do so with fewer adornments than the ones that characterized her in the past, reduced to a plain housewife of sorts. Gradually, the trays of delicacies are to be found in the laps of *mulatas* styled as *baianas* –the so-called *baiana de turista*. The “authentic” *baiana* is now a character confined to the *terreiro*, timidly and clumsily shuffling whenever she is sighted *outside* her “specific” environment. I no wonder that the emergence of the *mulata* as character in Brazilian imagery as a model of a sexualized femininity and aesthetics, but in modern art and popular music coincided with the *preta-velha*-ization of the *baiana* in the 1930s. The *mulata* was thus invested with a sexual attribution from which the *baiana* became virtually withheld. She is now innocuous as a woman. The rejection of the sexuality of the *baiana* as well as – how pointed out Mariza Corrêa (1996) – the hypersexualization of the *mulata*, both revolving around the desire of the white male, signalizes to the social rejection of black women. As says the proverb quoted by Gilberto Freyre (2002).

“White woman for marrying, *mulata* for fucking, black woman for working”

The way to this re-elaboration of *baiana* femininity in her virtual cloister had already been paved not by Ruth Landes, but by Édison Carneiro, who wrote of Candomblé as a “woman’s job”, albeit the job of an affable woman, a housewife; the most literal *preta-velha*.

“This hierarchical division would appear to confirm the opinion that Candomblé is a woman’s job – essentially domestic, familiar, walled, removed from the struggle for the daily bread” (Carneiro 1978: 117).

The *mãe-de-santo* whose photograph is mentioned in the beginning of this paper led the highly prestigious and historically important Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá⁸ for three decades. By 1957, Mãe Senhora’s social

⁸ The Candomblé *terreiro* in Bahia that best expresses the grandeur of “nagô ritual purity”.

mobility had allowed her to obtain the national title of “*Mãe Preta do Ano*” (Santos 1988), which seems to be in conformity with the image of domesticity now conferred upon the *baianas*. However, Mãe Stella, her second successor (and the present titleholder for the leadership of that *terreiro*) is part of a new generation of Candomblé adepts, a new generation of Brazilians, beneficiaries of the recently-achieved democratization of the country’s educational system and of advances in the political-institutional apparatus. These changes have made it possible for her to establish a dialogue with new trends in the debate on gender and rights as well as the concept of female leadership in Candomblé as advocated by Mariza Corrêa’s reinterpretation of Ruth Landes. If ever the *mães-de-santo* of Candomblé held the local influence claimed by Corrêa and other romantic defendants of this view, the current situation would appear to be somewhat changed. The cloister described by Carneiro seems not to have undergone much alteration but, nevertheless, *mães-de-santo* such as Mãe Stella have skillfully created a symbolic place of their own within Brazilian society, one in which they earn prestige and recognition from academics and politicians, write books, deliver lectures, take part in seminars and conferences that extend beyond a religious agenda, and are occasionally invited by the President himself to state events. If the drive to return home and be cared for by the good *mãe-preta* were to stand as justification for the aforementioned recognition, it is always interesting to note that the beneficiaries of such attention would appear to be less than content with their new status.

But how much of the official interest for the *mães-de-santo* actually still reflects the shared imagery of idealized and paternalistic racial relationships based on the character of the *preta-velha*?

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Glossary

Ala – Row of components in a School of Samba parade

Baiana – Female born in the state of Bahia, Brazil

Bantu – African linguistic group. In Afro-Brazilian religions it designates *terreiros* (known as belonging to “Angola” or “Congo” nations of Candomblé) and rituals that use Bantu languages in their liturgy

Caboclo/Cabocla – Technically, they are products of racial intermixture between Indians and whites. It also refers to entities worshipped in Afro-Brazilian religions identified as an Indian or someone with an Indian parent as well as the *terreiros* and rituals where these entities are the main cult objects. *Caboclo* chants and liturgy are performed in Brazilian Portuguese. Some people say that there is a “*Candomblé de Caboclo*”, a gentile or indigenous Candomblé, opposed to the “*Candomblé de Nação*”, more identified with Africa.

Cabrocha – Old fashioned name for a Samba School female dancer. Nowadays is used the term *destaque*. As is true of the costumes of all members of any given Samba School, her costume incorporates the School colors. In terms of design the closest visual parallel is with the apparel of burlesque queens of yore or Las Vegas show girls (sequined bikinis, feathers and high heels)

Candomblé – Afro-Brazilian religion, organized as a cult with initiation. Originally from the Brazilian North-Northeast, it is nationwide spread nowadays

Capoeira – Brazilian martial art with an attributed African origin

Jêje – Those *terreiros* and rituals in Afro-Brazilian religions in which West African Ewe-Fon dialects are used as liturgical language

Mãe (or Pai) de santo – Literally, “Mother (or Father) of the saint”, they are the high priests of Afro-Brazilian religions.

Mulata – Although technically the product of racial intermixture between black and white, the term is also used generically to designate an extremely beautiful and sensual woman usually working as a show girl

Nagô – *Terreiros* and rituals in Afro-Brazilian religions. Brazilian psychiatrist and ethnologist Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906) identified these *terreiros* as Yoruba in origin and his classification continues to be upheld to the present day. In Candomblé, *terreiros* identified as *nagô* are reputed to be “pure African” and, therefore, of superior quality when compared to others of different denominations.

Nations of (Nações de) Candomblé – Models of cults around which the Candomblé *terreiros* are organized. The nations basically differ from each other in their liturgical language and their repertory of chants, rhythms and dances. The nations are divided into two main groups: Sudanese (or Jêje-Nagô) and Bantu (or Angola-Congo)

Preto-velho/Preta-velha – Literally, “old black man” or “old black woman”. Entities worshipped in *Umbanda* respectively depicted as Uncle Tom and Mammy types, who symbolize the wisdom of old age and Christian virtues of endurance through suffering, patience and humility

Samba School – Groups that gather to play and dance samba, the main attraction during Carnival, at which different Schools parade in glittering costumes and highly elaborate floats, accompanying a drum band (called *bateria*), singing a song specially composed for the occasion. Costumes and float decorations are inspired by this tune (called a *samba-enredo*). Samba Schools originated in Rio de Janeiro, although they are currently to be found almost anywhere in the Brazil (and sometimes abroad) in various guises. In cities like Rio, São Paulo and Florianópolis sites called *sambódromos* have been built to house the parades and each of the larger Schools in Rio and São Paulo congregate as many as ten thousand components

Terreiro – Cult house in Afro-Brazilian religions

Umbanda – Afro-Brazilian religion strongly marked by the influences of Spiritualism and Catholicism. Umbanda chants and liturgy are performed in Brazilian Portuguese.

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