Black Music and Politics in Brazil: From Samba to Funk[1]

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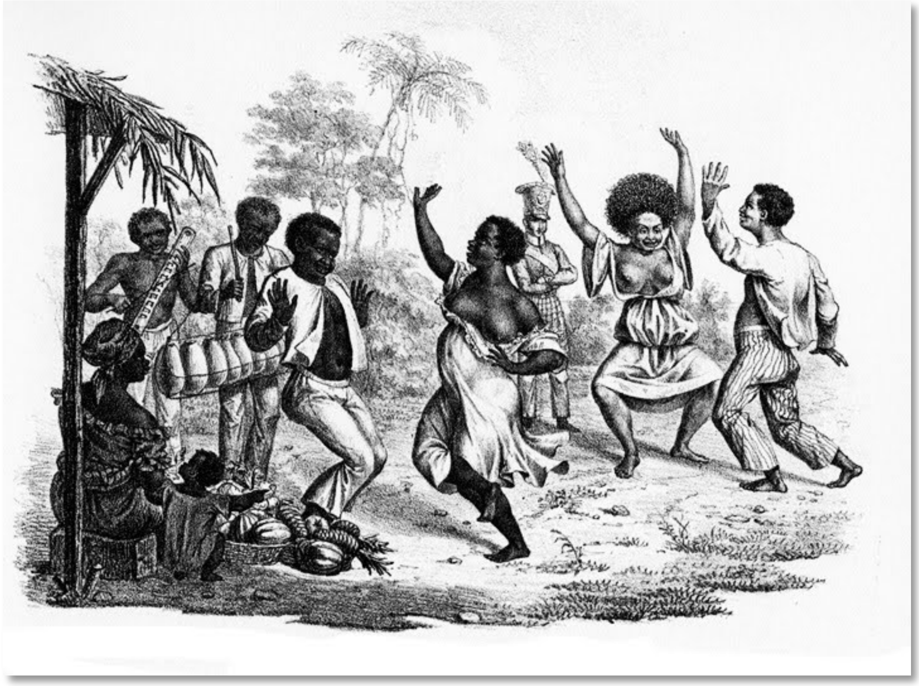
Introduction: *Batuque* in the City

In 1817, the naturalists Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius and Johann Baptist von Spix traveled to Brazil with the convoy of Archduchess Leopoldina, Austrian bride of the Portuguese Prince Pedro de Alcântara, future Emperor of Brazil. After the royal wedding, the scholars embarked on a scientific mission to Brazil. The expedition produced numerous results of scientific character and has become a cornerstone for representations of the exoticism and exuberance of Brazilian landscapes and natural life. The ethnic diversity of the then Portuguese territory in Tropical America was included in this repertoire of exoticism and exuberance, especially the African and indigenous presence. The expedition also included the Austrian painter Thomas Ender, the presumed author of the engraving below (Lopes & Freitas, 2008).



Batuque in Sao Paulo, 1820, Thomas Ender.

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[1] This presentation is based on my PhD thesis. Some versions of the same argument was published as Pinho, 2001 and 2011. I would like to thank Justin Perez for text revision.

Known as "Batuque in São Paulo", the work portrays a group of blacks dancing enthusiastically to the sound of *sui generis* instruments, like the “*reco-reco*”, apparently made of bamboo, and a vibraphone or marimba of gourds[2]. Sitting in one corner a fruit seller, a woman, enslaved or free, observe the scene, the child points to the group and directs the mother, and a police officer, probably an “*alferes*” (second lieutenant), watch the scene. Two couples dance in the center, hands in the air and smiling with abandon, the women dancing with breasts showing. The representation condenses a precise set of meanings to produce an understanding of the black presence and the black body in Brazilian social processes[3]. Under the gaze of the armed arm of the state in formation, African dance expresses a wild sexuality.

The scene appears to represent a suburb: outskirts where the situation of the African presence and the production of a place or territory, that is, a location for “culture” as an expression of a marginal condition, coincide. As a represented scenario for a scene of subjection/subjectification we can take the image as an index for the structured play of tensions between the expressive autonomy of black vernacular cultures in Brazil and its encoding regulation, a process coetaneous with the production of a national imaginary and its racially based contradictions (Hartman, 1997; Kossoy & Carneiro, 1994).

In this presentation I seek, very briefly, to identify and consider a contradiction embodied in expressive forms of popular music. I argue that these forms of music are a counter-narrative, having posed an alternative and longstanding critical review within and opposed to the monumental versions of a stabilized national identity. Here I consider black music as a social phenomenon, that is, as a discourse and identity-expressive platform, and not from a structural or formal point of view. This is a task for which I have no qualifications, and that others such as Sandroni and Doring and Carvalho have approached much better[4]. Nevertheless, what interests me now is to discuss how sociability and territories, representations and identities have been produced around and in relation to musical forms, and how this production has been a locus of a conflict throughout Brazilian history over the delimitation of legitimate and illegitimate conceptions of the nation, modernity, the body, race, and culture (Avelar & Dunn, 2011).

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[2] Gourds, dried fruit of various cucurbits used as amplifiers.

[3] Obviously we did not take the picture as necessarily a direct representation of reality or a real scene, but as a representation properly, however the elements chosen to represent precisely reveal that production of meaning that I try to stress (Lopes & Freitas, 2008).

[4] See for instance the articles of Sandroni and Doring in IPHAN, 2006; and the work of Carvalho, 1997; 1999.

As I hope it is clear, when I'm talking about blacks and whites I do not have in mind any essentialist conceptualization of race. Conversely, it is precisely the tensions and conflicts around the black presence in public space and in the national imagination that act and produce racialized subject positions.

Obviously the body and sexuality, as strategic devices of power, are central for the production of subjectivities and political governance in post-colonial nation-building. Because, as we know, race and sexuality appear in colonial history as a political category, intrinsically associated to projects of subjection and control. At successive times and throughout the history of Brazil's Republican period, black culture (coded as popular, peripheral, or "*favelada*"), has been the object of repression, violence, extraction, panic and anxiety, from the point of view of white dominant thinking. (Vainfas, 1997; Stolke, 2006; Wade, 2009).

Thus, in the following, I briefly reconstitute the articulated critical moments of this history of struggle, ambivalence, desire, and abjection around black music in Brazil. I trace these themes from the portrayal of the "civilizing" campaign around the "*batuques*" in the positivist dawn of the republic until the contemporary panic around "*pagode*" music in Bahia and funk music in Rio de Janeiro, with some emphasis on the history of the carnival.

As a semblance of conclusion, I consider how the possibilities of rereading help us see a critique expressed by and in the music itself, a critique that revolves around the antagonisms and the "resistance"[5] of Black vernacular music on the critical horizon of peripheral modernity.

"*Degradation of our Costumes*": Blackness against the Nation

Since the sixteenth century, at least, we have record of African slaves dancing and playing instruments in Brazil. Jose Tinhorão describes the proliferation of art forms that incorporated singing and dancing, some with religious overtones, other purely secular (Tinhorão, 1988).

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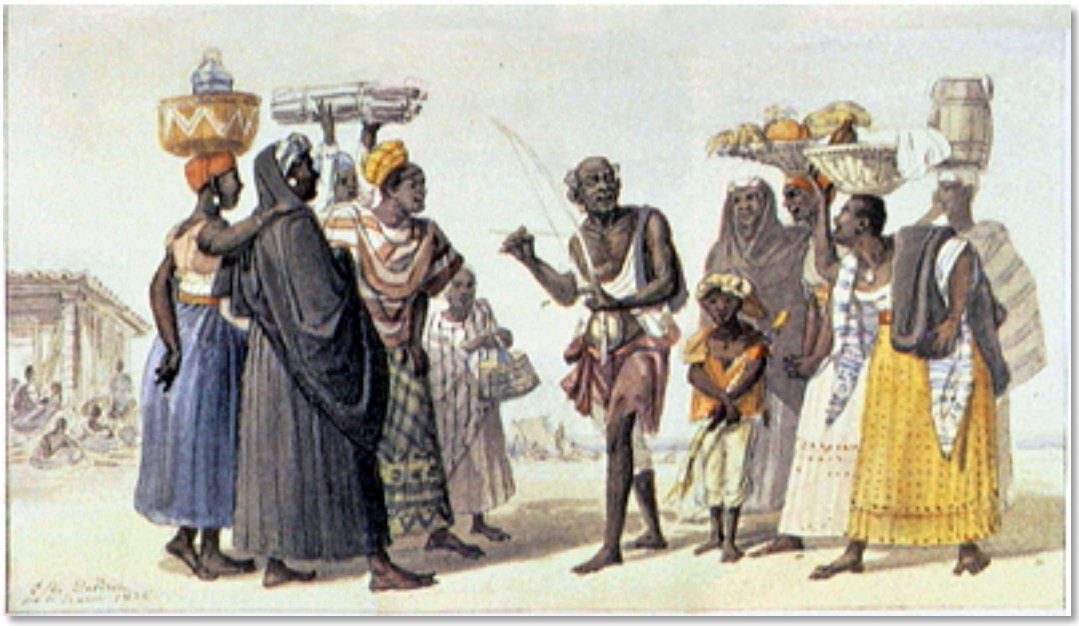
[5] Taken here as emic concept.



Berimbau's Player, 1826, J. B. Debret.

The position of the white elite with respect to black insistent musicality varied over time between the colonial and Machiavellian tolerance of Conde dos Arcos - for whom the diverse cultural practices of Africans prevented their union against whites (Reis 1993) - even outspoken republican intransigence and even angry public opinion, abundantly recorded, for example, in Rodrigues, which reproduced excerpts of letters to the press as well as news articles of that time where one hears the call for Westernization:

"*Since long, we have already requested the police action against these rehearsals* (batuques) *(...) and how they continue to approach the festivities of the Carnival (1902), since even plow our protest against this degradation of our customs*" (Rodrigues , 1977 (1933): 158).

We can see how the image of the city of Salvador da Bahia, as a civilized and white city, appeared threatened by the African presence. Elites and local public opinion engaged in a crusade for decades in the name of civilization, which meant Westernization (Ferreira 1999, Albuquerque, 1996). Between the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, we witnessed the demoralization and prohibition of "entrudo " (Shrovetide) (1853), and its eventual replacement by carnival, the so-called "*party of civilization*". The idea was to reproduce the models of the Carnival of Nice and Venice in Bahia. However, it was soon realized that black groups, with their drumming (batuques), would spoiling the civilized party.

Rafael Vieira Filho gives a fairly complete picture of the diversity of manifestations by people of black or African descent in the carnival in for this period. For example, the so-called "*batuques*" (drumming), more or less informal groups of young black and/or browns males, circulated by the marginal areas of the city, at least in the ones that allowed them to. Furthermore we had the *afoxés*, strictly tied to Candomblé (afro-Brazilian cult) houses, which left the streets singing songs in Yoruba. In relation to one of these *afoxés*, the lombrosian physician, presumed founder of anthropology in Brazil, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, says, *"It would be a colossal Candomblé wandering the city streets*" (Rodrigues, 1977: 171). And finally, there were the more structured black carnival clubs.

To Vieira Fo, the emergence of these clubs corresponded with the reorganization of black identity in Salvador, motivated by the abolition of slavery and the attempt to integrate into society without abandoning their African identity. Copying the style of allegorical "civilized" parades, blacks wanted to show their greatness and their ability to perform, dissociating themselves from the "batuques", which were too "wild" as well from the white clubs, and from which they were by definition excluded.

Looking at the list of clubs we can clearly see the emphasis on Africanness and insistence on Sign-Africa, back strongly in the 1970s: "*Folia Africana*", "*Lembranca da Africa*", "*Lanceiros Africanos*", "*Africanos em Pandega*","*Lutadores da Africa*", "*Congos da Africa*", etc..

The presence of black music, as an African presence, and in the form of samba and chulas, was not restricted to carnival and was present in the whole fabric of social life in Salvador. Jocelio Telles dos Santos describes several examples of the spread of this so-called "*thunderous entertainment*" as it reterritorialized city spaces through conscious, meaningful practice: "*the drumming, officially defined as dances of black Africans or their descendants, took place in the streets, squares, houses and yards of Salvador from the eighteenth century*" (Santos, 1998 : 17).

Between 1905 and 1914 several municipal ordinances repeatedly prohibited Africanized clubs and drumming in Salvador. One edict of 1905 explicitly prohibits "*display of drumming with African customs*." Still, between 1905 and 1930 numerous groups such as "blocos" and "cordoes" proliferated. Also during this period, the already mentioned afoxés came to flourish.

Recalling some afoxés from 1930s: "*Folia Africana*", "*Lembranca dos Africanos*", "*Congos da Africa*", "*Lutadores Africa*" or "*Otum Oba*", it is clear that the reference to Africa still remains, over thirty years after the black clubs of the nineteenth century *"(Pierson, 1971 (1942):. 247 p.)*

In the late nineteenth century, the "*entrudo*" (Shrovetide), seen as a "barbaric" practice, was legally banned as we saw. It was replaced by carnival, "*party of civilization,*" which was seen as more appropriate to the modernization and westernization process of the "national body." (Queiroz, 1999: 51). This would be the bourgeois carnival, the "*big carnival*", which at this point was parallel to and decoupled from the black, or little, carnival in representations and space. The black or African carnival was still not "popular" at this point, because the very idea of "people", so important in later representation of the carnival, was poorly qualified or valued at this moment.

From 1870, blacks, mulattos, and the poor in general met to have fun in this "small carnival," taking advantage of the opportunity of the official bourgeois carnival. In 1910, some of these more stable groups, called ranchos, were allowed to parade in the Central Avenue in Rio de Janeiro. The schools-of-samba emerged out of the development of these ranchos.

In Brazil, the development of the Carnival, imported from Europe, gave way to an opening, so that manifestations of African origin could be developed in association with Western ways, initially doubling the carnival, and then doubling the representation of Brazilian society. In this sense, making a synthesis but an offshoot. The black carnival appeared somewhere else and as something else, other than that of white or bourgeois carnival, and was constituted in a contradictory relationship with this in the course of the historical process.

Within the gaps created in their surrounding social and historical circumstances, people of African descent created a discourse institutionally embodied in organizations, like samba schools and *afoxés*. This tradition was not deposited in certain pre-defined subjects. Rather these subjects were constituted by and in, with new emphasis and vigor in the 1970s.

The "*bloco afro*" Ile Aiye emerged in 1974 as a cornerstone for the development of modern African inspired carnival groups in Salvador. Originally, this "bloco" was to be named "Poder Negro," or "Black Power," but this name was seen as an ill-advised political move given the political climate in Brazil in 1974 at the height of the military dictatorship (Risério, 1981; Agier, 2000). "Ile Aiye," which was chosen in its place, meant in free translation, "Mundo Negro" (Negro World) in Nago, or, more literally "House of This World." In the metaphysics of "Candomblé Ketu" in Bahia, the Aiyê, as the material and visible world, oppose the Orun, as the immaterial world of spirits and supernatural entities.

The first parade of the "bloco" in 1975 was announced with a flyer: "Ile-Aiye 75: only one original block - WE ARE AFRICANS IN BAHIA". This announcement caused perplexity and scandal in public opinion. The first year that Ilê came out at the carnival, 1975, the most important newspaper in Salvador, "*A Tarde*" published a note that read:

> "*RACIST BLOCK, jarring NOTE: Driving placards that read inscriptions such as:. 'Negro World', 'Black Power', Black to You ', etc., Ile Aiye group, nicknamed racism block, gave an ugly spectacle this carnival. Besides the improper operation of the topic and the North-American imitation, revealing huge lack of imagination, because in our country there are a plethora of reasons to be explored, the members of the 'Ile Aiye' – all colored people - even joke whites and others who watched at the official podium. Because of the existing racism ban in the country is to be expected that the members of the 'Ile' otherwise return next year, and use in another form the natural instinct characteristic of the carnival. We have no racial problem in Brazil. This is one of the great happiness of the Brazilian people.* "(A Tarde, 12/02/1975 quoted in Silva, 1988: 279).

The Ile Aiyê is still currently active in Bahia (**VIDEO Ilê**).

Outside the arena of the Carnival, in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, we observe the same counter-discursive identity invention and the same conflicts over authenticity and value of culture, as well as over the idea of nation, and the position of the black subject in national narrative and space.

Since the pioneering work of Carlos Benedito Rodrigues on Black Soul and Hermano Vianna on Funk in Rio de Janeiro in the 1980s, it was already clear that a new relationship began to settle among Brazilian young people of African descent, the cultural industry and, elements of global black culture. This was reflexively outlined by the Hip-Hop movement in Brazil and specifically by the peripheral modernity of the rap group from Sao Paulo, Racionais Mc's. (Silva, 1984; Vianna 1988). (**VIDEO Racionais**). Initially seen as expressions of cultural imperialism, the Hip-Hop movement in Brazil was attacked by both the hegemonic white press and black intellectuals and activists, yet with notable exceptions such as Carlos Alberto Medeiros.

The material the hip-hop movement availed itself to for remaking their identity came from the global world of goods and images.[6] Significant examples of these appropriations and reinventions in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro are reggae, funk and pagode.

As I have argued elsewhere, reggae, as a diasporic cultural repertoire, is disseminated throughout the sociocultural landscape of Salvador and in an impressively persistent mode (Pinho, 1998, 2001). Reggae music became part of the massive cultural repertoire of African descendants in Salvador from the second half of the 1970s. Reggae music and meanings associated with Rastafarianism gained strength in the city thanks in large part to the role of Gilberto Gil and the initial success of Jimmy Cliff. The concert Gil and Cliff performed in Salvador in 1981 undoubtedly represented an important milestone. (Cunha, 1991). Thereafter reggae gained strength as part of the self-stylization and self-representation of young African descent people, a re-invention of the self with politicized and globalizing contours. Recent developments in this modern tradition led to the consolidation of the “Resistance Reggae” scene, born in the cities of Cachoeira and Sao Felix in Bahia’s inland (Falcon, 2012).

Even in the 1970s the funk-soul fever seduced young blacks in various parts of Brazil. Carlos Benedito Rodrigues da Silva, in “Black Soul Aglutinação Espontânea ou Identidade Étnica,” examines the black soul movement, showing that from 1978 in the city of Campinas in São Paulo the "Afro Soul" group became the leader of this movement. The author advances the thesis that he would resume in his book on reggae in Sao Luis. He argues that the traditional ways of "black culture", understood as those of African origin, were not the only ways that people of African descent expressed or articulated black identity. Modern and transnational forms of black culture would, from this point, operate *"as a cultural manifestation that identified them somehow (by types of clothing, dance music, etc.)"* (Silva, 1984: 245).

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[6] Discussing the image reproducibility Walter Benjamin says, "*this technique emancipated confronts modern society in the form of second nature*" (1996: 174).

The 1980s witnessed the explosion of funk music in Rio de Janeiro, where funk balls in popular communities attracted tens of thousands of people every weekend. As discussed by Vianna and more critically by Carlos Pamlombini, the genre incorporated homemade technology to make Brazilian electronic music based on the experience and values of the cultural universe of the "*favela*" (slum). From the beginning, the genre included self-reflection about the black subject's marginalized condition, the coexistence with organized crime, police repression, and racism (**VIDEO - Cidinho and Doca**). The genre has subsequently developed an interest in sexual themes. As the performances are characterized by groups of boys who perform erotic dances and women who sing and dance, analysis of the music has ranged from the celebratory to the critical: for some it is an expression of a popular feminism, while for others it is pornographic and degrading (Herschmann, 1997; Vianna, 1988; Palombini 2013).

At various times the bourgeois press has produced intense moral panic over the funk parties that occur in the slums and over the alleged connection between funk and the so-called "arrastoes" (massive plunders) that occurred on the beaches of the South Zone of Rio in the 1990s, as Paul Amar and others have discussed. Furthermore, allegations of what is possibly a real connection between the artists and the drug dealer chiefs in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and with leaders of the "Comando Vermelho" (Red Command) have further contributed to the criminalization of the artists and their music.

The deployment of UPP (Pacifying Police Units) in some favelas of Rio de Janeiro, especially those near the tourist areas, has become a constitutive element of the contemporary scenario of these conflicts. This is an effect of the concern of state authorities with the heightened foreign presence that will occur during the upcoming World Cup in Brazil. In Morro do Cantagalo, for example, that is in the border between the famous neighborhoods of Copacabana and Ipanema, residents, researchers and members of the funk association (APAFUNK) have pointed to the "pacifying" police repression of the funk parties as a source of constant repression and arbitrariness. As in other communities, this eventually leads to violence and conflict (Amar, 2013; Scruggs & Lippman, 2012).

More recently we observed the emergence of so-called "ostentatious funk," (funk ostentacao). (**VIDEO TA PATRAO**) This is a particular form of funk, which emerged in Santos, in coastal region of São Paulo. Unlike Sao Paulo rap, "ostentatious funk" is not politicized, while extoling the consumption of luxury goods.

Pagode, the third and final genre that I will discuss, exhibits different contradictions between politics, market and subjectivity (**VIDEO Ed City**). Pagode is seen as a Brazilian genre *par excellence*, making it distinctive from funk and reggae. Pagode traces its roots to samba, descending more or less in straight line, from the Eleven Square (Praça Onze) connection in the early twentieth century. Contemporary pagode in Bahia has been the subject of intense controversy and a certain kind of "moral panic." It has been disqualified as vulgar, "poor", and overly sexual (Moura, 2001; Oliveira, 2001).

We must understand pagode as both a musical and commercial genre, as well as a popular festive event. The Pagode group "É O Tchan" and other groups that set a certain image in the media as a structure involving the singers, the dancers, the clothes, and the athletic dancing style, feeds and reflects the experience of many of the more or less spontaneous "pagodes" that proliferated, and continue to proliferate, in all the popular neighborhoods of Salvador as forms of collective enjoyment of African descent music. (**VIDEO Eh Tcham**). The Pagode Bar "*Proibido Proibir*" (Forbidden to Forbid), where I conducted fieldwork in 1995, was much closer to the spontaneity associated with the tradition of black drumming (*batuque*) and distant of the commercial genre format that prevailed later (Pinho, 1998a).

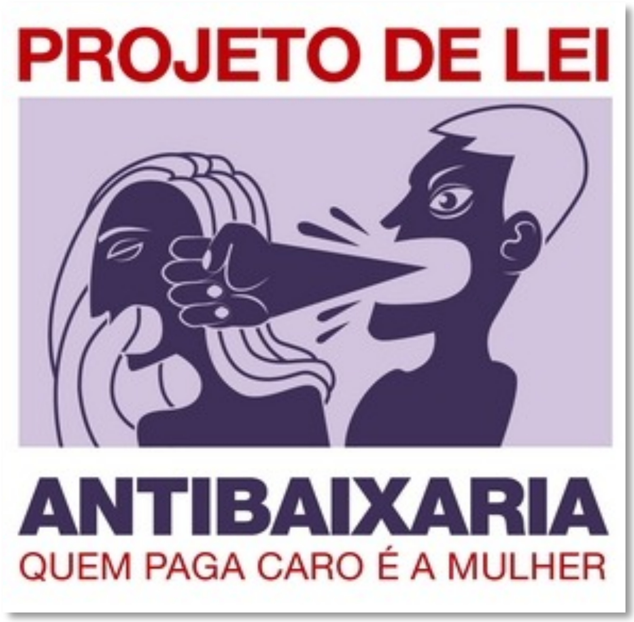
ESPACOCULTURAL
PROIBIDO PROIBIR
BAR E RESTAURANTE

Proibido Proibir Pagode Bar. Salvador. 1995. Author's Picture.

While the genre has acquired a new space in the larger music industry, no longer a mere minor culture in Salvador, the mainstream press still regards pagode degraded, coarse, vulgar, and typical of the “inferior” sectors of society. Pagode’s rapid and remarkably unexpected assumption into a more national place took those who saw the process locally, like me, by surprise. Yet pagode carried, and still carries, the stigma of being supposedly apolitical and hypersexualized.

In 2012, at the initiative of state representative Mrs. Luiza Maia, of the Workers Party, and with the support of feminists and researchers from the field of gender relations, the Legislative Assembly of the State of Bahia approved the so-called "*Anti-Debauchery Law*”(Lei Anti-Baixaria). The Project aimed to prevent public funds from being used to pay artists whose work work demeaned the image of women and encouraged violence against them (Pinho, 2011).

We should cannot avoid to note the constellation of discourses and representations, full of historicity and contradiction, that manifest themselves around this debate over “*baixaria*”, and which invaded the streets of the city of Salvador, putting the respectability of black music of popular origin, and their suitability for models of civilization and “culture” once again at the center of debate.



Anti-Debaucherie Law campaing poster.

Black Presence: "*Resistência*" as Deconstruction

Paul Gilroy (1993) emphasizes the modernity of black cultural forms as a counter-modernity. He argues that the status of black music comes from its ability to express the will and experiences of slaves and their descendants. The music of the Black Atlantic is exemplary for producing primary expressions of cultural distinctions in the form of "*popular historicism*," also incorporating controversial representations of sexuality and gender.

Black Music is not just constituted by expressive forms and meanings but also institutions and territories. As I have shown in this paper, this includes Square Eleven (Praca Onze), the Liberdade neighborhood, the Samba Schools, the "periphery", the Ile Aiye. The discursive engagement as critical translation of a contradictory position, which defines race and the black presence in the mestizo nation (Wade, 2009), feeds back a field of live and alternative discourse in relation to hegemonic versions about the "truth" of culture and nation. This field would be understood as a locus of subversion and resistance, as developed with remarkable anticipation by Roger Bastide (1971).

In "The African Religions in Brazil," Bastide develops a set of anti-culturalist arguments that allow us to consider the living African tradition in Brazil as inhabiting historically rooted social structures. The Afro-Brazilian tradition operates procedures of subversion while still inhabiting these structures. Thus, as with my first example of black carnival, black carnival was made possible by this form of dwelling with and subverting the bourgeois carnival[7].

This dwelling is a practical way of deconstructing on a sociological basis. In other words, to the extent that cultural processes develop in a social environment structured by relations of power and inequality, production and reproduction of inequality are cohabiting articulated processes. This structure, as a sociological structure, also involves the contradiction Bastide talks of as a culture of resistance (Bastide, 1971).

Black culture for Bastide is designed primarily as a religious tradition; it is understood as participating in a "*battle of civilizations*" within the slave society. My argument is that we could also take the set of divergent cultural practices - the public drumming, for example - of Africans and their descendants as participating in the struggles that constitute "culture" as a space of conflict (Fry et al 1988.; Fo Vieira, 1998;. Santos, 1998, etc.).

However, the idea of "*resistência*" appears constantly linked to the black subjects who constituted themselves throughout history as black and from African descent. For example, this is explicitly invoked and considered as an aesthetic category under the process of Reafricanization in Salvador. Speaking on the Ile Aiye, Joao Jorge Rodrigues, organic intellectual and Carnival founder of African descent bloco afro Olodum says:

> *"Now, the song of Ilê is a song of resistance and expression of confidence of the black race, the people, to wage their struggles and find their own values to express themselves in the present. So the black music of Ile Aiye set fire in the poor and black neighborhoods, has resurrected the confidence and is yet to do this every year. The idea of black organizations, addressing participants in and fighting for space, finally, a new man* "(Rodrigues, 1983: 248).

The living tradition of afrodescendant expressive forms have formed a discursive and dispersive field through symbolic and material practices creating a complex procession of images and constituting a subject: "*the black, as a new man*." This place is shaped as a strategy of resistance and is formed by this network of referrals and references, as a black world, in the hermeneutic sense, operating as a tradition to the extent that legitimate values and reincorporating forefathers and historic symbols, a perspective that splits, as a semiotic fracture, the space of representation for the nation and modernity (Spivak, 1990). And so I come to my last point.

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[7] "*The movements of deconstruction do not destroys structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures*. "(Derrida, 1999: 92).

The black or African presence in Brazil emerges as the "*negro problem*" after the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the proclamation of the republic in 1889. As in the North American context, the social order of slavery, albeit racialized, found in institutional sources hierarchical links to the political economy, founded on slavery and its consequences in the field of politics and culture, which was troubled with the abolition and incorporation of the former slaves as new citizens.

The new republican social order and the new class society based on "*free work*", intended to be the foundation of a modern society, and in this sense analogous to the industrialized societies of the North, regarded as the "cradle of civilization". However, the African and black presence, the same presence which in the past was not only the enslaved, productive force, that moved the colonial economy, but also, as develops Gilberto Freyre (1995 [1933]), the soul and intimate nature of the social life itself, was now undesirable because it bears witness to the ongoing risk of regression to barbarism.

Black culture - drumming and Candomblé - and the black self as subject, meant the impossibility of modernization for Brazil. Our modernity, (post)colonial, would be trapped in this tough dilemma and the contradictions of unequal social order fall on the shoulders of racialized subjects. The expulsion of the black out of the modern social order established the position of blackness throughout the century. Out of modernity, excluded from the representation of the People and even from the industrial workforce, we long remain as a sign of backwardness.

As we know, this has changed from the Vargas/modernist period with the merger - cannibalization - of the black culture as national culture (Pinho, 2004). But the social order was not able to incorporate the black populations in the same way it had done with the "black culture." We remain both inside and outside of modernity, needed as the symbolic basis of nationality but excluded under the weight of racism and structural inequalities. Conditioning then, the field erected by these expressive forms - black music – stands in as a representation for that very contradiction.

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