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Racism, Culture and Black Identity in Brazil

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, an evolutionist paradigm dominated the studies of socio-racial relations in Brazil; that of the contradiction between a society of status (inherited from the past) and a society of contract or class (in formation). The latter would be implanted by the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, and would necessarily eliminate the former. In such a framework, the question of black identity could be conceived of only as theoretically residual, and actually out of the contemporaneous realm. Bastide tried to overcome this difficulty, turning to the idea of the 'cut principle': one could conceive the permanence (autonomous or, even, intentional) of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices, in a context where status associated with blackness would no longer make sense. In this case, the theoretical solution is psychological: there would be individual dramas and fragmented (schizophrenic?) identities, and meanwhile the old racial stratification would be contradictory to new social classifications (Bastide, 1970: 66; Bastide and Fernandes, 1959). In an evolutionist perspective, black (racialised) social identity would no longer fit into a theory of modern social relations. This last category would include only individual dramas, dilemmas and psychological maladjustments, always transitory (and theoretically residual), generally observed among blacks out of their 'place', that is, in a situation of social ascendancy (Pierson, 1971; Azevedo, 1955; Fernandes, 1968, 1978).

Despite their theoretical and ideological variations, these analyses (prevailing in the 1940s–1960s) shared two presuppositions. Firstly, the fact of theoretically subordinating racial identity to social position; secondly, the fact of separating, as Bastide did exemplarily, the sociological analysis of blacks in urban and industrial society (studies realised, in this case, in São Paulo), and the anthropological analysis of Afro-Brazilian cultural practices (investigated, by Bastide, in Bahia).

The idea of a relative autonomy of racial identity would come later, in the 1970s, in particular with the studies of Carlos Hasenbalg. Thus, the question of racism was opened within the scope of social sciences in Brazil. Nevertheless, marked by a unique social negativity, and still without reference to cultural history, black identity appears in these studies as merely a

depreciated status in the labour market. Racism is pointed to in functionalist terms, as an instrument manipulated by capitalism in order to maintain the subordination of black workers (Hasenbalg, 1979, 1985). The efficacy of such an 'ethnicization of labour force', according to Wallerstein's terms (1988: 49), needs, in fact, to be included in the detailed analysis of the historical constitution of the racial dimension of social life, considered as a process and as a part of Brazilian culture. This is what I shall do as a first statement of this text.

More generally, I propose to consider simultaneously the racial, social and cultural dimensions of the construction of a black identity in Bahia. That is, to take into account, at the same time, modifications in the social position of blacks in the recent process of socio-economic restructuring, the historical formation and current reproduction of Brazilian racism, and the political uses and internal transformations of black culture.[1]

In this way, I shall try to understand the emergence of a recent diacritic discourse (black and/or African) in Bahian culture, within groups and institutions of a religious, leisure, social or political character. In fact, this evolution also suggests the need to re-examine past analyses that foresaw, implicitly or explicitly, the disappearance of racial differences in the social modernity, and the dissolution or extinction of the Afro-Brazilian culture in the mestizo and syncretic Brazil. Both race and culture will be, then, re-examined in the present case study.

SOCIAL CHANGE, POWER RELATIONS AND BLACK IDENTITY

Just as a clash exists, in Brazil, between heterodox forms of work and labour relations (Lautier, 1987), it can be said that a clash also exists, at the collective level as well as within individual trajectories, between various modalities of social identification. On the one hand, new classes—the middle class and the new working class, principally—are clearly present in the field of Bahian political and social struggles. These classes produce the local standards of modernity in terms of work, consumption, political discourse, living conditions and leisure. On the other hand, social positions are reproduced in day-to-day urban relations, using the backdrop, codes and metaphorical language of family relations in order to classify individuals and to qualify their social conditions (Agier, 1992). Social pseudo-categories (the 'poor', the 'middle class') are recreated within great ideological cleavages, and allude more to the problems of humanity and citizenship than to mere social condition (Telles, 1991). In this situation, poverty is synonymous with family dependence and with political invisibility. It is also present, as a set of negative social representations, in the struggle for status carried out within working-class families or in the lower middle class.

In enquiring about the spectrum of present social statuses, we find 'politically informed social identities' (Da Matta, 1985: 57) or, rather, identities defined in relation to the access to social and political recognition of the individual. This citizenship, which is not given and always needs to be achieved, is distributed unequally among the various professional categories and social strata. Experienced in the daily life of the individual, this problem is trans-

lated through political and social movements into the opposition of the ideas of exclusion and citizenship.

The reorganisation of urban space in Bahia in the period 1965–1985 (transference of *favelas*[2] to the periphery of the city; new middle-class neighbourhoods along the city's ocean drive; an extensive area of housing complexes in the northern zone of the city) evidenced and reinforced the differences between a visible society, the poor masses that should remain invisible, and flows of modern social mobility. The city which in 1950 had a population of 400,000 inhabitants, today has a population of more than two million, an extensive petrochemical area (52 factories in Camaçari), various petroleum exploration and refinery units, the Aratu industrial complex, etc.

Social, urban and economic changes have been particularly important during the past 40 years in Bahia (see Agier *et al.*, 1994). Nevertheless, with respect to the social production of identities, they have been significant only as part of the great dream of democratic redemption that from the late 1970s succeeded the toughest era of the military dictatorship. Progressively, the democratisation of civilian life has made evident the selective character of urban life and economic transformations, and the complete unachievement of the welfare state. This has resulted in a greater political visibility and aggression for the excluded, frustrated and exploited of all kinds (blacks, women, slum dwellers, homosexuals, proletarians, etc.). Numerous labour unions, neighbourhood and mothers' associations, cultural and political movements, etc., were developed and could demand, with relatively little restraint but also without real success, those social rights which belong to an economic and political modernity.

This introduces the question of identities in modernity. In a society where the state does not act as a direct and general orderer of the social life, social movements (and the new identities that they bring to life) are channels used by citizens in an attempt to achieve citizenship. To feel oneself, present oneself and have oneself represented as middle class, slum dweller or working class, or even to affirm oneself as black, signifies the following: (i) to manifest positions in the order of status (which implies immediate social 'rights'), (ii) to search for legitimising cultural differences, and (iii) to define true interest groups. Sociabilities and movements are thus formed in which dreams and resistance projects are born, alongside hegemony and struggle for power.

It is as a part of these recent economic and political changes, and as an expression of civil society movements, that we understand the emergence of new 'black' practices and discourses that have gone on in Bahian society, principally in the last two decades. Nevertheless, it would be fitting firstly to question what part of the population is concerned with this movement. The definition of this population constitutes a problem in itself. According to census categories, 'negroes' (*pretos*) represent just under 20 per cent of the population of Salvador. But, in the various black circles, all persons who are non-white are considered 'black' (*negro*), and this group forms nearly 80 per cent of the population.

The social scientist does not have to choose between two conflicting principles of racial classification, both of which refer to the same racialism, as

will become evident. He or she has to explore the margin created by this symbolic conflict. Within this margin, relational identification is developed. The various mechanisms of *negra* identification operate in a population which is undeterminedly black and mestizo.

The current recomposition of Afro-Bahian identity (i) is a produce of racialised social relations (with a tendency that passes from the racial dimension of identity to the ethnic dimension); (ii) refers to an urban social space that, without being closed, can be described as a whole (in the sense of a similarity of social positions and of a set of redes); and (iii) can be defined as the searching for a different self (the 'black self'), appropriating and transforming the Afro-Brazilian culture. I will touch upon each of these three dimensions below.

SLAVERY, RACIALISM AND RACISM

The reinvented identity of black Bahians can be characterised, firstly, as the symbolic transformation of a group that has previously been defined by the racism of the other. In order to analyse the formation of current Bahia racism, it is necessary to point out four cumulative historical moments.

The status of slaves

A primary element of status is the political invisibility of the slave's condition. In effect, the radical invisibility of slaves in the nascent ideology of an independent Brazil must be acknowledged in order to understand how, in 1824, the liberal intelligentsia could write in the country's first constitution that 'liberty is an inalienable right of man', while 48 per cent of the population was still enslaved.

This same question of political invisibility is found in present problems of citizenship, experienced individually or expressed collectively in social movement. Between the present category of the 'excluded' and the old category of the slave, a theoretical analogy exists (the association of a social condition with a political position) and, at the same time, a direct, historical affiliation.

In the absence of individual juridical status, the slaves exercised their social identity through their relationship with the master, attempting to negotiate, within the context of white power, individual or collective spaces of autonomy or social promotion, or even their freedom (Mattoso, 1979; Reis and Silva, 1989).

In master–slave relationships, intimacy, cordiality and the master's protection of the slave were maintained as long as the slave stayed in his 'place'. This compensatory and conditional familiarity continues to constitute a characteristic of domination. Today, for example, it is verified directly in the labour relations within the greater part of domestic employment. It also manifests itself in the childhood remembrances of black adults, in which a 'protective white family' is frequently found and is often an object of nostalgia and rarely of rancour.

The racialist theory

Parallel to the development of movements sympathetic to the abolition of slavery (and among the abolitionists themselves), during the mid-nineteenth century and some years after Independence (1922/1923), a liberal and nationalist form of thought developed. In order to create a Brazilian identity, it was necessary to classify the various social and cultural groups that existed: Native Amerindians, colonists of Portuguese origin, and blacks—slaves or ex-slaves.

Turning to the theses of European racialism of the time—naturalist and evolutionist—the Brazilian intelligentsia consolidated the system of domination formed during slavery, exchanging juridical subjugation for racial theory. Indians, blacks and the whites were observed and classified according to the combination of their physical appearance and social position.

Gobineau, one of the principal inspirers of Brazilian racialism, was also the French ambassador to Brazil in Rio de Janeiro from April 1869 to May 1870. It is worth noting that, if on the one hand the state of Brazilians' racial 'degeneration' (an allusion to their racial mixing) angers him, on the other hand, he is sensitive to the fact that the emperor, Pedro II, recognised as a liberal and an abolitionist, is aware of his ideas with respect to race. Together, they talk 'about the emancipation [of the slaves], that he [Dom Pedro] intends to grant at the earliest possible instance, and about the best possible way to head emigrations in the direction of Brazil, particularly the emigrations of Catholic Germans' (Raeders, 1934: 48). Later, Gobineau would make numbered projections for the suppression, in 'less than 200 years', 'of the pitiful elements of the contemporary ethnic composition [of Brazil], fortifying them with alliances of higher value with European races' (Gobineau, 1873/1874: 148).

A racialist, Gobineau is also an adept of the naturalist thought prevailing at the time. Thus, still in Brazil, he cannot help but be moved by the dazzling beauty of the tropics: 'This Brazil is a wonderful country and I believe that the old world does not present anything like it in terms of its wildness' (Raeders, 1934: 32). He is happy to receive as a present from the emperor himself 'a graceful indigenous oar and bow' (ibid.: 48), or to have with him a worldly conversation about the *guaraní* language. In the moulds of the scientism of the time, racial classification consisted of, above all, a process of naturalising observation. The racialists thus give the same attention to nature and the purity of vegetation as they do to nature and the purity of populations. A similar approach can be found, almost a century later, in Gilberto Freyre's project envisaged to create a body of knowledge specific to the tropics, the so-called 'tropicology'.

The 'fable of the three races' (Da Matta 1987) would associate the set of indigenous ethnic groups—unified by outside eyes into the category *Indio*—with savagery and the marginality; black skin and negroid features with social inferiority; and the European appearance with power and rationality.[3] Within this train of naturalist thought, blacks were labelled with features drawn from observation of their social condition and position, and from aesthetic and moral values that, until that time, constituted the common

thought of white domination. Carelessness, irresponsibility, dishonesty, Dionysiac tendencies, dirtiness, ugliness, coarseness, the incapacity to reason, etc., were thus explicitly and systematically associated with the black 'race', forming what today are called black stereotypes.[4]

The systematic policy of whitening

The policy of whitening (*branqueamento*) of the Brazilian population, and the modernising discourses that accompanied it, prevailed during the end of the nineteenth century—the Abolition era (1888) and the era of the First Republic (1889)—and the beginning of the twentieth century. It was no longer possible to pass from racial hierarchising to eugenism, as the pure logic of racialist thought dictated. Consequently, in a society where the mixing of races was already well advanced, a policy of whitening of the Brazilian 'race' was initiated. This was achieved by way of public measures encouraging European immigration—a policy that was inspired by an explicit principle of Aryanisation of the country, and that had as its aim the extinction and dilution of the black 'race', which would result in the ascent of a Prometheic society (Skidmore, 1976).

Thus, the progressive miscegenation of Bahian society is a cultural fact, not a natural occurrence. It cannot be separated from the official imposition of Aryanisation (by the political and intellectual elites). This policy has left its marks on the evolution of the racial composition of the population of Salvador.[5] An ideological mark is found in expressions such as 'clean up the race' or 'improve the race', used in the 1930s by black mothers referring to their children born from a union with a man of lighter skin (Pierson,1971: 182).

The ideology of racial democracy

As the fourth step of Brazilian racial thought, the ideology of racial democracy was developed beginning in the 1930s, during the era of the *Estado Novo*[6] and the formation of Brazilian nationalism. It again takes up and reformulates the previous constructions: the intimacy of racial domination, the meeting and dissolution of the three races in a national project, the tropical peculiarity of the Brazilian nature and culture, the national ideal of whitening.

This ideology is supported by two principal arguments. On the one hand, it is based on appearance: the cordiality of Brazilian social life, a perception reinforced by foreigners' observations. It was because of this that, in the 1930s, confronted with a timid and unfruitful effort to organise a black movement in Bahia (the *Frente Negra*, Black Front), the Bahian press replied in the following terms:

> It has always been a motive for surprise and admiration for the foreigner, the lack of distinction that he finds in Brazil, among all men (. . .). It was thus before 1888 and thus it has been since. In the world, we are a people born and raised outside the hateful backdrop of racial prejudices, in this respect superior to other peoples. Bahia (. . .) has no need for 'black fronts', copied from other climates, in order to present to Brazil the

perfect fraternization of its sons (*A Tarde*, Salvador, 12/06/32, in Brandão, 1987: 41).

It is, indeed, enough to look through a stranger's eyes at Bahian society to perceive the peculiarity of social customs and ways of self-presenting and relating to others. These customs and ways are expressed outwardly with embraces, hands on others' shoulders, the attribution of loving nicknames, the use of dimunitives, congratulations, flattery, and other forms of enchancing interpersonal relations. These manners attempt to, and usually succeed in, eliminating the effects (tensions and conflicts) of social differences and domination within the public domain. It is the universe of the 'cordial man', a notion used by the historian Buarque de Holanda, in his book *Raízes do Brasil*, first published in 1936. As a response to the criticism of his interpretations of Brazilian cordiality, Buarque de Holanda was careful to note, in 1948, that cordiality was not to be confused with kindness and that, as a reference to the emotions involved in social life, these last could mean friendship as well as enmity. 'The discipline of sympathy', the cordiality referred to by Buarque de Holanda, is the generalized socialization of the codes of 'intimacy, family and privacy'.[7]

The second principle of the ideology of racial democracy is the theory of miscegenation. It is significant that this argument was extracted from a work of social anthropology, *Case Grande e Senzala* by Gilberto Freyre, published in 1934. Gilberto Freyre's reasoning is the following: Brazilian society could hardly be racist, owing to the intimacy of relations maintained, since the era of slavery, by the Master's sons (and by the Master himself) with black servants, particularly the women. This domestic intimacy in inter-racial relations would generate a reciprocal habit of living with racial differences, favouring a mixing of the population, notwithstanding the strong differences and social dependencies contained within these racial relations (Freyre, 1974; Bastide, 1970: 77–87).

Founded on these two arguments, the myth of racial democracy in Brazil progressively took hold as an imposition: the social, or even institutional, prohibition of speaking about racism or racial prejudice. It is what Florestam Fernandes called 'the prejudice of not having prejudice', or that which a French sociologist, in the 1950s, praised as 'the great wisdom of Brazil': the fact of knowing how 'to avoid discussing this' (Lambert, 1953: 61). The ban on racist speaking was even written into one of the Institutional Acts of the military regime which began in 1964.

Racial and unracial self-image of blacks

The Brazilian racism of today is made up of a complex system of domination, which has incorporated these various phases. Four successive strata—composed by the master–slave relationship, the racialist theories, the policy of whitening and the ideology of racial democracy—formed the Brazilian racial thought and practices. It is thus a system formed by the coexistence of: (i) an important set of racist stereotypes; (ii) the secularised assumption that the place of blacks is in the lower layers of the social hierarchies and outside the holds of power; (iii) a discipline of interpersonal relations whose purpose

is to avoid conflictive situations; and finally (iv) the prejudice that affirms that it is not convenient to speak of racism in the land of all the mixtures.

A primary dimension of the self-image forged in the Bahian black movement consists of remaining in this complex terrain of racialised social relations, simply inverting the values attributed to the old terms. In this way, the term 'black' (*negro*), disparaging according to the values forged during slavery, has become a banner for blacks and mestizos engaged in the movement, or 'assuming' their physical appearance. The very word 'race' (*raça*) was reintroduced, with inverted meaning, as praise for the physical, mental and artistic qualities of the *raça negra*. In this way, for example, the stigma of Dionysiac tendencies, until that time counterposed to competitiveness and to work, was transformed into a festive competence of a 'race' that would be a natural creator of culture and commercialisable pastimes. The physical features of blacks, which the stereotypes of Brazilian history associated with barbarity and rudeness, have become positive values created in the name of a purity and force arising from Nature itself. Thus, the myth of black beauty as a 'pure beauty' can be read as a form of cultural resistance, as well as an inverse revival of the romantic aversion to miscegenation.

This inverted usage, by black Bahians, of the notion of *raça negra* has the same power and the same drawbacks as the use of the metaphor of the 'pariah' by nineteenth-century European feminists (Varikas, 1990). In both movements, formal homologies in inversion and naturalisation of identity allow the same minimum level of resistance to be understood. Nevertheless, this process of identification consists of no more than a rehandling of the substance of a group whose boundaries and references have already been defined by the system of racial domination. For the 'black race' in Bahia, as well as for 'pariah' women of nineteenth-century Europe, it would be better to be excluded (radically outside society) than dominated. The invention of a black identity *per se* can hardly integrate into the constraining system of predefined racial relations: Brazilian racism in Bahia does not have a form of exclusion and segregation, but rather a diffused and unconfessed form of integration and domination. As a pseudo-racial identity, being black became a shameful identity within the social and political order. It needs, thus, to be related to other dimensions of social relations, and to build its own social urban space.

This brings to the forefront two questions: (1) what is the place of blacks within the overall social structure? and (2) does a sociability and a relational backdrop exist which can contribute to the creation of a black *milieu* within urban relations?

THE SOCIAL PLACE OF BLACKS

For the most part, blacks find themselves in the lowest levels of the social hierarchy and represent the majority of the population living in precarious work, habitation and survival conditions.

Numerous in the various strata of the so-called informal sector, the black population of Salvador also finds itself in some old specialisations. These specialisations serve as closed job markets (*Baianas de acarajé*,[8] maids, dock workers, members of the tourist industry). Other less-mentioned black

specialisations have also been slowly developed, within modern professional spheres: oil extraction, metallurgy and construction workers; certain jobs in petrochemicals; co-opted posts in the social or cultural public sector.

These specialisations have served as channels through which blacks have integrated some visible socio-professional categories, even when the functions performed are not synonymous with social ascendancy. These changes of position within a socio-professional structure itself in a process of change, have occurred to such a major extent that we must question again the status and identity of the 'new blacks', as Bastide and Fernandes called blacks in ascendancy in São Paulo of the 1940s.[9]

To have access to these channels implies two types of specific knowledge. Firstly, there is the knowledge of all the racial biases conditioning entrance into modern professional sectors. One should be aware, for example, that blacks have easier access to employment in a public company than in a private one (in this case, colour prejudice operates individually and without control); that the support networks for obtaining employment (formed by relatives, neighbours or in the sociability of black institutions) function better in companies that are less demanding in terms of educational or professional standards; or, furthermore, that a custom exists, in some companies, of envisaging blacks only in certain functions.

Secondly, one must know how to translate in terms of employment—or rather, to make socially operational—the potential of relations built within the leisure, religious or political spheres of black socialisation. Even if these networks originally have the same form as those that cross the spectrum of all society, using the same family, neighbourhood or political bases, they are the object of reinterpretation (internal and/or external), which points to the role of some racial solidarities and/or Afro-Bahian institutions. These result in new anchorages of networks: in the proximity of black neighbourhoods, in family relations (whether social or symbolic) developed in the *terreiros*[10] or in the conviviality of Afro-Bahian cultural and carnival associations, solidarities are born in which one finds various kinds of support in the search for jobs, money or housing.

The existence of such networks makes the individual choices and strategies, based upon racial identity, possible within the job market. A salaried worker can leave his job to become a professional in an Afro-Bahian cultural or religious institution. One can choose to 'become black' (even if he/she is a mestizo) in order to enter into networks through which, by friendly or political co-optation, one can obtain a job in public service, etc.[11]

In the presence of this specific experience to create their own place in the work market, a certain community of social position (if not of social condition) can be identified among the blacks of Salvador. Moreover, once the salaried sectors, presenting themselves *a priori* as egalitarian, have been reached, the frustrations and discriminations (the strangling of careers, unequal salaries) are experiences which unmask the efficiency of racial prejudices and stereotypes. Faced with the development of these manifestations of racial discrimination, black workers have developed various strategies: labour union or political action (in political parties); identification with the company and a personalised relationship with the employer; the

elaboration of a behaviour which attempts to, at the individual level, beat back racist prejudices related to physical appearance, dress, competence or social discipline (Agier and Guimarães, 1991: 368–369); political action or withdrawal into the black community.

As to this last point, in another text I have already emphasised the strong socialisation within the black milieu (family or personal participation in Afro-Brazilian religious, cultural or community life; having grown up in black neighbourhoods, with its groups of friends, etc.) as a favourable factor in becoming engaged in new Afro-Bahian cultural associations. Those people whose life-stories are marked by an effort, on the part of their family of origin, towards educational and professional development, and by individual involvement in labour union activities, tend to participate in the most political currents of the black movement (Agier, 1994a). One finds, at times, in these late currents, a kind of unfolding of functions, in discourses reproducing a classicist thinking (where black is associated with 'proletarian' and white with 'bourgeois').

In all cases, and notwithstanding strong internal ideological differentiations stirred up by these life-stories, the space formed by the black and Afro-Brazilian relations within the society presents itself as a viable option when viewed as a place where frustrations, social criticisms, demands for rights, and projects can be pursued.

Far from constituting a caste, the black population of Salvador is spread out among different job sectors. At the same time, it delimits within these sectors a homogeneous space of positions, knowledges, frustrations and demands. Moreover, new tensions appear, originating from various levels of the social and professional hierarchies, and not merely from the point of view of poverty. These tensions incite the perception of racism in current changes and create a search for free and respected spaces.

Delimited in this manner by a rereading of social, urban and work relations, the Afro-Bahian space can also be identified from the inside as a set of networks, hierarchies and symbols. This universe is the place where various discourses of black difference are produced. In these discourses, a line of force prevails, whose axis is the search for cultural specificity, capable of supplying those who possess it a place within the present reordering of local social and political forces. These are the aspects that will now be examined.

CULTURE, NETWORKS AND POLITICS

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an unprecedented rise in the number of Afro-Brazilian events and institutions in the city of Salvador de Bahia. Some 30 Afro-Bahian cultural and carnival groups (totalling approximately 20,000 members) are registered.[12] It is estimated that more than 2000 houses of Afro-Brazilian cults exist (there were only 100 registered in 1940), half of them united into a local federation. There are at least 10 groups of political mobilisation and thought (some of them recently united themselves as the *Conselho da Entidades Negras da Bahia* (Council of Black Entities of Bahia)—CENBa). There are dozens of *capoeira* schools.[13] Various Afro theatre and dance companies have been formed during the last 20 years, as

well as various formal and informal groups of black writers, musicians, and studio artists. Some black politicians (having run for and been elected to municipal government) have established alliances with Afro political, cultural or religious groups. Professional associations have a marked black presence; others are influenced by political solidarities or strategies formed within the black networks, or by the personal role of black leaders in labour union leadership.[14] Various newspapers and pamphlets, at irregular intervals, have spread initiatives and varying points of view of these groups, and have called for the mobilisation of the 'black community' against racism, for the defence of their culture, defence of their civil and social rights, or for the building of a political plan 'from the black point of view'.

In order for a community to exist, however, is it enough to give it a name? Seen from the outside, the growing participation in this hetereogeneous Afro-Bahian universe seems to compose a space characterised by the same political questions present in all social movements (the individual or collective search for a social awareness). The contemporary black identity's process is, indeed, a form of social movement, but culture represents, as the black militants say, 'the fighting arm of the blacks' in Bahia. When the 'black world', as its leaders choose to call it, is observed using the questions of anthropology—What are the social relations? What is the symbolic system?—it presents a set of networks, analogies and correspondences, pointing to a totality and leading to the questioning of its coherence.

It would certainly be possible to trace the history of cultural practices that today form the Afro-Bahian space. A fairly old division of influence among the different 'nations' historically present in Bahia could, thus, be verified: the domination of the Yoruba over the other ethnic groups in the religious sphere, the Bantu in the rituals domain, the Hausa in political resistance, etc. Nevertheless, acting in this way, the anthropologist would easily fall into a culturalist trap. He would do the same work of substantiation of identify that is occurring in the Afro-Bahian movement: reconstructing genealogies; eliminating any idea of spontaneous generation; thinking of present groups in terms of affiliation and segmentation: the Afro-Bahian *blocos* have their origin in the *afoxés* and the saga of the black presence in carnival is based upon an 'essence': the *batuque* (Angolan-originated dance and percussion feast); Afro dance, developed professionally during the last 20 years, searches for its identity in the *samba* step (*samba* is a Bantu term); *capoeira* is Bantu; *candomblé* is viewed, above all, as a Yoruba ritual (and from Ketu), and the other ethnic–religious nations are situated in relation to this reference; etc. Origins are searched for. Upon reconstructing possible genealogies, lines of purity are created, serving as the budding principles of internal domination.

To deal with culture in a non-culturalist way requires a relational and political anthropology, even more when confronted with a strong process of internal substantiation of identity, the analysis of which leads to the question of ethnicity in urban and plural society.[15] In Bahia's case, the relational and political approaches represent two steps of the analysis. Initially, it must be said that at the base of any religious or cultural group there is a relational order. Firstly, it is relational in the social sense: it is

generally through the family, domestic, or neighbourhood channels that one comes to know the Afro-Bahian therapeutic and religious circuits, in the same way that neighbourhood groups are the places where *samba* and carnival groups are formed. It is relational, as well, in the symbolic sense: the divinities, whatever their original pantheon (African, European or Amerindian), exist, above all, as a symbolic partner in an interpersonal relationship. They accompany the daily life of each person. They are found in small domestic altars, in the form of images, small statues and posters. Increasingly, in Bahia, they take the form of popular figures from various religious spheres: Oxalá/Jesus Christ, *Preto Velho*, Iemanjá, Santa Barbara/Iansã, Saõ Jorge/Oxóssi (and some forms of the 'native' *caboclo*), the twin Ibeji/Cosme and Damian, etc.

This religiousness is formed by apprenticeship, at home and in one's neighbourhood, in the symbolic interpretation of individual joys and misfortunes. This apprenticeship may occur through diverse sorts of relationships—with a relative, a maid, a *mãe-de-santo* (priest) of the neighbourhood, etc. (Agier 1994b). In fact, no one can claim to be the owner of this popular religiousness, in the same way that no one can truly control the formation, in neighbourhoods, of *samba* groups, or control the relationship maintained by these groups with transmitted musical and dance knowledge.

At the same time, however, a second question, this one political, has to be raised. In effect, an internal movement of identity affirmation and of diacritic interpretation of culture permeates this set of institutions and practices and, in some way, 'densifies' it, using an image from Geertz. This movement is formed within the daily sociability of the three or four most important *terreiros* and their respective allied temples, within the *Federação Baiana do Culto Afro-Brasileiro* (Bahian Federation of Afro-Brazilian Cults) and the Intecab (*Instituto de Estudo da Cultura Afro-Brasileira*) (Institute for the Study of Afro-Brazilian Culture), among the Afro carnival's *blocos* and *afoxés*, and the principal groups of Angolan *capoeira*, in the initiatives of the *Conselho das Entidades Negras da Bahia* (Council of Black Entities of Bahia) (CENBa) and of other more or less stable cultural institutions and groups of thought and action (such as a recent *Comitê Permanente de Defesa das Religiões Afro-Brasileiras* (Permanent Committee for the Defence of Afro-Brazilian Religions)).

This process is active in all Afro-Bahian contemporary culture. Simultaneously it develops a politicisation and a bureaucratisation of each part and of the whole. This permits the distinction and identification of this space, in general, as a political partner.

The most important *terreiros* have, thus, developed a political existence, assumed by their civil societies. Made up of *ogãs*[16] and laypersons who have an affinity to *candomblé*, they administrate the *terreiros*'s public relations, in particular their relations with society and the state. In the same way that the civil societies of *candomblé* separate the *terreiros* from the fate of the households and from the family histories in which they were born, the Afro-Bahian carnival *blocos* have surpassed their initial convivial and familial form, to become cultural enterprises and associations receiving funds from the City Council, land or building from the local state authority, and the title of

Association of Public Interest—as was the case with the Ilê Aiyê group in 1989, or the *Olodum* group in 1984.

This process of federation of intra- and inter-groups is not imposed from the outside; it corresponds to a relational order formed within the Bahian Afro-Brazilian cultural milieu itself.

Its reality is provided by a shortlist of some cases observed in which one can:

(1) simultaneously take part in a political group and a cultural association;

(2) simultaneously be an *ogã-de-atabaque* (notable who leads with percussion) in a *terreiro* and member of an Afro *bloco*;

(3) have a relative in a *terreiro* (and therefore have access to it, through familial lines and with familial proximity, until feeling the need to be initiated) and to be a militant in a black political movement;

(4) practice *capoeira*, be part of an Afro *bloco* and participate in a group of cultural thought;

(5) be a *mãe-de-santo* and have a brother involved in a cultural group;

(6) be an *abiã* (a woman in the first initiation phase) of a Ketu *terreiro* after having participated for several consecutive years in an Afro *bloco*;

(7) be an *ogã* or member of the board of a civil society of *candomblé*, at the same time being a militant in a political group; etc.

In other words, the integration of the various components of the black milieu is, at once, political, ideological and relational. This last quality is, in this set, determinant. In fact, the unity created among the diverse components of the so-called 'black world' is made possible by the existence of a community of social, familial and symbolic relations, supplying the structured texture of sociabilities. These networks are the channels for circulation of persons and ideas who do not experience any 'cut' between cultural and social order (as Bastide's famous term highlighted; see Bastide, 1970), but transfer the problems of their sociological integration to their cultural/familial universe. In these sociabilities, then, centralising forces of diacritic expression ('black' or 'African') are born, whose issue is political, in the sense of being a search for adjustment and integration in the new economic, social and political structures of society as a whole.

In order to produce these politically informed identities, the various movements that institutionalise 'black' culture try to control its practices. Not by obstructing the emergence of new forms (it is known, for example, in Salvador, that the *Federação Baiana do Culto Afro-Brasileiro* 'does not control rituals', even less so, because it is exactly the flexibility of the rituals that offers a widening of black culture's space), but rather by giving meaning to them, that is, classifying and hierarchising the new forms. This operates in various realms: religious, the culture–carnival associations, *capoeira*, etc. In some respects it is a question of separating the wheat from the chaff. As such, it is necessary to construct a line of purity, reconstructing genealogies, affiliations and segmentations. It is against this backdrop that internal legitimacy is attributed to the forms that arise and persist: the recognition by the diverse federations (of cults, of carnival clubs, of black entities, etc.). The first thing that a *mãe-de-santo* does, upon establishing her house, is put up the certificate of the *Federação do Culto*, where her name, the name of the house

and its nation (Ketu, Angola, Caboclo, etc.) are established. In other words, in order to be a full member, it is necessary to be situated within the genealogy of the field, and identified with a segment of this field.

A common position exists in this movement, which consists of systematically delimiting (identifying) purity and various impurities. This can be translated as a kind of division of religious work when, for example, a member of a cult house of the Ketu nation, in that it is a representative of the 'purity' of *candomblé*, 'does not recognise the existence of *eguns* (spirits of the dead)', according to the *mãe-de-santo*, but sends her spiritual daughters that received these spirits to another temple—where they will install them and take care of them.

Through these stances, *candomblé* tries to transform itself into a quasi-church (organised with hardened and classified rituals), capable of competing on an equal footing with the Catholic church, or of responding to aggression (and the competition) of new so-called 'Protestant' churches. It is necessary, therefore, to overcome an old political inequality, embodied in the old Christian adage which states that African cults cannot achieve the status of religion, because they are too subjected to the 'affairs of man' and, hence, can exist only as magic (see Augé, 1982: 32). In this way political–religious discourses which publically condemn all forms of 'syncretism' of *candomblé* and catholicism are developed. In opposition to the continuance of the 'ancient accommodation', established in times of repression and fear, a return should be made to the 'African matrix' and the cults should 'evolve without losing the essence' (*A Tarde*, 09/22/90).[17]

It is interesting to note the return of the same debate, some time later, in the local press, with the title: 'To accept or not accept a syncretism of Carnaval?' (*sic*). This time, 'the only truly Afro *bloco* in Bahia' (Ilê Aiyê, which makes references to Africa, and the prohibition of whites as members) is counterposed to Olodum, which has been criticised for opening up to whites and its ideological 'decharacterisation' (*A Tarde*, 02/18/91). The yardstick of this debate is the recent 're-Africanisation' of carnival in Bahia (see Risério, 1981).

THE GHETTO MODEL

In this text I have maintained that, despite multiple political divergences, within the Afro-Bahian religious, carnival, leisure and political groups, a set of formal homologies exists in the elaboration of a contrastive identity in each area. However, we have seen that these congruities are nourished in a sociability that simultaneously relates people, institutions, and discourses. Finally, these links are developed in their own urban spaces, reappropriated or led by blacks. These homologies, networks and places constitute the basis of the Afro-Bahian milieu.

The three major principles which unite these cultural practices are the following: segmentation, genealogy and purity. They are the ideological references of the structuring and autonomy of this space.

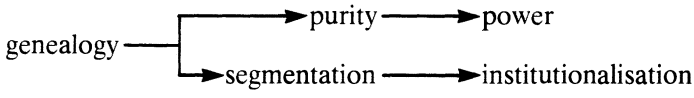
Firstly, the principle of segmentation represents a social and organisational unity of an ethnic character.[18] But it is also, in fact, a product of the

increasing institutionalisation of each part of the Afro-Bahian milieu front of its own 'white world'.

Secondly, genealogy furnishes the logical backdrop that allows one to think and function, institutionally, in terms of segmentation. At the same time, it is within a genealogical point of view that an ideological line of plurity is constructed.

Finally, purity is an idea that works as much in individual, psychological and philosophical areas, as in the constitution and political function of the Afro-Brazilian space in Bahia.[19] Purity constitutes, then, a measure of power, present in the internal and external relations of this 'black world'.

Thus, we have a set of meanings whose logical connections form a two-branch line of force that orders the sense of representations and practices:



The combination of these elements forms the imaginary model of the ghetto, as if it were the only ideological resource still available and consistent with its actors' dreams of socio-political and collective participation. But this modern logic of black identity is complicated by the fact that Bahian racism, as mentioned above, is not a racism of exclusion and segregation, but of integration and domination. This explains the obstinacy of certain current leaders in wanting to reject the old religious syncretisms, or in blocking non-blacks' access to its cultural associations, or in praising the social and political conquests of the blacks of South Africa or the United States (two models of ghetto racism). This also explains the growing use of the symbol of the *quilombo*, the ancient Maroon community, as a separate solution, in the discourses (political or poetic) that emanate from the black movement (Agier, 1990).

What are the effects of this ethno-political movement under these conditions? Firstly, the whole process is merely an effort (always opposed) of diacritical reappropriation (racialist or culturalist) of a tradition which has already been socialised and disseminated—by forms of racial domination—among a population much larger than just that of blacks and mestizos. When reconstructing the 'black difference' as a total difference, one always confronts the question of whether the black person, an object of racism and social discrimination, is truly a cultural other.

Nevertheless, in this search, politically informed, for identity, this movement tends to transform a population which is an object (of racism) into an ethno-political subject. Being such, the meaning and force of this identity movement lie beyond a strictly political configuration. It has a profound influence on transforming Afro-Brazilian culture, introducing to it new lines of force, new tensions concerning the meaning of practices, and new functions.

RACE, CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

Three theoretical issues are suggested by observation of the current Bahia situation—in racial, cultural, and ethnic areas. These are discussed briefly below.

Firstly, the Bahian contemporary case contradicts the traditional opposition between class and race. For example, in the *paulista* school of the 1940s and 1950s (Fernandes, Ianni, Cardoso, Nogueira, etc., but also Bastide, and 'Bahian' Pierson and Azevedo), race and racial prejudice were viewed as a stigma inherited from slavery, that should progressively lose meaning and function in the developing class's society, and/or in the miscegenating process. Furthermore, diverse authors (particularly Nogueira, 1955) maintained that a distinction exists between colour and race: when, in the United States, 'origin-prejudice' could be considered as an authentic form of racism, 'mark-prejudice' in Brazil could be viewed merely as ostracism based on colour or appearance, which could be attenuated or eliminated by social qualities. In any event, racial identity was viewed as historically and theoretically residual and would increasingly become less significant. Nevertheless, the Bahian economic and social changes of the 1970s and 1980s has created situations of professional competition which have made racial inequalities and prejudices more visible. The re-emerging of black identity in the same period and place suggests that some form of racialised status consciousness is possible—as a relational and, at least, as an optional identity—in developing and 'individualising' societies. It was apparent that, even if this process was born in the period of a general movement for civil rights in the world, it took on its own form in Brazilian, or rather Bahian, cultural history and social situations.

Secondly, the Bahian case suggests that a relational and political approach to culture shows how this dimension of life is subjected to sociological challenges. Meanwhile, in society's advance to increasing *mestizaje* (cultural and racial), diacritic movements emerge to ensure integration and resolution of sociological problems of exclusion, inequality or status—in other words, of citizenship. Furthermore, 'cultural' features (some types of ritual, of language or dress) can even be arguments for inverted discrimination. One can easily attest, therefore, the existence of a process of social organization of cultural difference (Barth, 1969). The need for sociological boundaries determines the necessity of cultural substantification and differentiation and, therefore, determines the cultural dynamics itself. This political work on culture leads to the question of ethnicity.

The idea of ethnicity is a sort of problematic solution: from the subjects' point of view, it represents an effort to pass from a negative to a positive identity.[20] Ethnic identification is thus a product of race relations (Banton, 1979; Balibar, 1988). For the scientist, the idea of ethnicity qualifies a series of practices, institutions and representations, that can be defined methodologically in a negative manner: it is not the realm of social classes, or of races, or solely of the culture, but it needs these dimensions of social organisation, racism and cultural tradition to lend it weight. However, it does something more: it contains the anthropological idea of a totality, capable of integrating

the individual self to a collective subject. In contemporary and urban situations, the need of and the search for these totalities—the so-called urban ethnicities, in a non-substantialist sense—have to be understood critically (Carneiro da Cunha, 1986; Seyferth, 1983; Agier, 1991).

In the Bahian debate, which confronts Bahianity with blackness, culture is interpreted, used and transformed by social forces. In this context, the attention and the responsibility of the anthropologist are even more important to allow development of a non-culturalist analysis of culture.

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NOTES

1. Concerning this last point, articles by Borges Pereira (1983, 1984), Carneiro da Cunha (1986) and Seyferth (1983) have already indicated some paths of analysis.
2. Slum communities on the outskirts of the major Brazilian cities.
3. The trilogy of superiority (for whites), marginality (for natives) and inferiority (for blacks) that the poet Caetano Veloso points out, in a precise formula of Brazilian racism: 'The white adult *macho* always in command / (. . .) Cross out the Indians / Don't expect anything of the blacks' (*O Estrangeiro*).
4. A proliferation of proverbs, stories and sayings about blacks has sedimented these negative stereotypes in the common mind. It is, however, a 'shameful' knowledge: each one acts as if it were others who use racist verbalisation—which is secularised but hardly socialised. The so-called 'implicit' character of Bahian racism, often emphasised, is a result, in fact, of a peculiar learning process that teaches two elements: racial classification, and the non-verbalisation of the principles of classification. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz's book (1993), published after the preparation of this paper, develops a pioneer analysis of the elaborating of a specific complex of racialist ideas among Brazilian institutions and scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
5. Taking as reference four important years, which pertain to the various phases of racial relations (1807, 1897, 1940, 1980), and considering the declarations of colour from a nominalist, and not realistic, point of view, one can observe that the proportion of the black population of Salvador presents a progressive decline, from 52% in 1807 to 38.4% in 1897, 20.1% in 1940 and 17.3% in 1980; and the rate of mestizos presents a progressive rise: 20.1% in 1807, 29% in 1897, 51.1% in 1940 and 58% in 1980. It is verified that, in the period 1900–1940 (when the political imposition of Aryanisation dominated), the decline in the number of blacks was more accentuated (−47.6%), as well as the progression of the number of mestizos (+76.2%). These changes slowed down after 1940. (Note: the data from 1807 and 1897 are estimates, those from 1897 inferred from the death registers; the data from 1940 and 1980 come from censuses.)
6. 'New State': the term refers to the period of Getúlio Vargas' government and his populist and nationalist agenda.
7. Buarque de Holanda (1987: 101–112 and 143–146). Later, Roberto Da Matta would develop and enrich these analyses (1983, 1985).
8. Women street vendors who, dressed in a traditional attire, sell typical Bahian dishes of African origin.
9. At the petrochemical plant in Bahia, for example, non-white workers represent 73.8% of the contracted labour force (17.8% are black). In another text, I deal with the situation of black workers in this industry (Agier, 1994a).
10. The cult house for the practice of Afro-Brazilian religion called *candomblé*.
11. This kind of question certainly has to do with the internal conflicts that manifested themselves early on, during the creation of the black political groups of the 1970s. One of the aspects of these conflicts was physical appearance, and its criterion was the similarity with a certain standard of racial Negro purity. Blacks who were somewhat mestizo were thus

rejected or discriminated against within the movement. Whoever was black with light skin or straight hair risked being called a 'sham black' or a 'lying black' (Silva, 1988: 284).

12. These associations have been grouped into two specific categories of the Bahian Federation of Carnival Clubs: the Afro *blocos* (17 groups registered in this category in 1991) and the *afoxés* (7 groups registered in 1991). The number of associations registered in the federation varies from year to year, according to the financial resources of their leaders. Narrower and regular links, and now a specific federation, distinguish the Afro *blocos* from the rest of the carnival clubs.
13. *Capoeira* was introduced by the first slaves, of Bantu origin. A 'pure' form of *capoeira* is being defended by a small group of schools that practise '*capoeira de Angola*', close to the black political and cultural movements. The instruction in these schools is given in an environment of severe initiation by a 'master' to his 'disciples'. An altered form, called '*regional capoeira*', was developed in the 1930s and was incorporated in the 1970s into health or martial arts clubs, particularly numerous in middle-class neighbourhoods. Finally, a 'street *capoeira*' was developed by street youth as a form of leisure activity and as a source of informal income gained from tourists. All these three forms represent, today, a job market in development, where being black is a sign of competence (see Costa Araujo, 1994).
14. These characteristics are mostly present in the association of *Baianas de acarajé*, association of washerwomen, labour union of domestic servants, labour union of dockworkers, of metallurgy workers, etc. Recent efforts to join black labour union members, or black students, black employers, etc., at the state or federal level, are indicative of the present dynamic of this movement.
15. See the basic statements of Barth (1969) for the predetermination of the sociological context's frontiers in the study of ethnicity, and also the network analysis and 'situational perspective' for the study of urban culture among anthropologists of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (Mitchell, 1969, 1987).
16. The *ogã* is a notable, initiated or not, who supports the temple both economically and politically.
17. We can see here how the forgetting of social and political contexts of cultural creation is linked to 'substantialist thought' (Amselle, 1990: 28, 29, 62). Teles dos Santos (1989) studied the simultaneity of diverse new phenomena in Afro-Brazilian religion: re-Africanisation, bureaucratisation, the fight against 'syncretism', politisation, etc.
18. This character was translated in an informant's words (black and labour unionist) as 'the diverse segments of the black ethnicity'.
19. This idea of purity is found, thus, in the poetic seeking of a substantial self (the '*ser negro*'), of its foundations and roots. It suggests that the ontological dimension is necessary to the political movement (Agier, 1990).
20. In this subjective sense, Michael Banton counterposes the concept of ethnicity 'reflecting the positive tendencies of identification and inclusion', to the concept of race, which refers to the 'negativist tendencies of dissociation and exclusion' (Banton, 1979: 153).

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