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Scott Ickes, *African-Brazilian Culture and Regional Identity in Bahia, Brazil* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2013), pp. xi + 322, $74.95, hb.

The basic problem of this book lies in the inclusion of Africanness in Bahianness and hence, at least to a certain extent, in Brazilianness:

> During Brazil's First Republic (1889–1930), Bahian elites feared that their largely African-descended population prevented or at least decreased the possibility that Salvador could achieve the level of progress Europe or the United States had attained. […] African-Bahian culture in particular was considered antithetical to reigning notions of civilization and came under attack in public forums. (p. 4)

Ickes seems willing to carry the white man's burden of unconditional admiration for all aspects of the native culture. He inveighs against those who stress the 'barbarism, and unhygienic conditions' of some of the main practices of Candomblé and related cults. Yet, some of these things were, and to a large extent still are, all too real. The main ritual consists in animal slaughter accompanied by steps of dance on the red soil. I believe Candomblé and related cults, like the Xangô of Recife, need no embellishment for their greatness to be recognised. These religions have a keen sense of communion and feast in their primitive and baroque splendour, inherited not only from West Africa, but also from the Iberian tradition. Their enthusiasm, dancing and ecstatic trance are metaphysical experiences of a first magnitude.

Which were the social forces that led to the movement of inclusion of Africanness into Bahiannesss? Ickes gives scant attention to the rapidly advancing secularisation of the elites. This entailed the weakening of the Catholic element of syncretism, leading to an attempt to make religiously self-sufficient its supposedly pure African ingredients, largely under the guidance of social thinkers with no overt confessional allegiance. This process is implicitly present in the endless disputes concerning the Washing of Bonfim, dealt with by Ickes over the length and breadth of his book. He says that 'the archbishop of Salvador himself stepped in to enforce prohibitions on the Washing of Bonfim twice between 1930 and 1954 because of its relationship with *fetichismo*' (p. 235).

It is unlikely that the predecessors of the archbishop a century earlier would have acted in a similar way, because neither Church nor Terreiro cared then for, or even understood, their religious specificity. *Fetichismo,* with this name, or others, is largely an invention of ethnologists. In a way, the archbishop was echoing Edison Carneiro's project of a rejection of syncretism by the Candomblé. Carneiro was an active Marxist. The existence and the evolution of the Afro-Brazilian religions could not be understood but as the consequence of a structure of social class relationships. According to his project, political priority should be given to freeing *Candomblé* from the Catholic Church: 'Catholicism has not been the only factor of syncretism in Bahia. But it has been the main influence upon this process' (see Edison Carneiro, *Religiões Negras*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1981 (original 1936), p. 98).

At last this kind of syncretism was solemnly anathematised at 'II Conferência Mundial da Tradição dos Orixás', held in Bahia in July 1983. But no matter how imprecise may be their religious identity, Afro-Brazilians have clung to it and have been markedly reluctant to change their cults into conventional religions. Syncretism still thrives in Brazil. Cultists are more likely to convert to Pentecostalism than to put into practice the exhortations of intellectuals.

The reader gets the impression that Ickes failed to do a comprehensive homework before drafting his book. He mentions anthropologist Arthur Ramos as 'based in São Paulo', which was never the case. I am surprised to see Ramos receive the lavish praise of having been 'the most influential of Brazilian scholars on Afro-Brazilian culture' (p. 205). He did indeed exert some influence. This was essentially due to his adhesion to a Jungian-flavoured interpretation of the Afro-Brazilian religions as existing in a world of myths hardly known to the very devotees of the Candomblé.

Roger Bastide's memorialism has a clear affinity with Ramos's programme. They were the forerunners of what may be termed *candomblé de salão*, conference room Candomblé, the knowledge of which, such as it exists in books, articles, dissertations, and so on, can replace, with several advantages, the actual doing of field work.

In spite of his Marxism, which he only occasionally chose to highlight, Carneiro was an even bigger influence on practically everything that was published on the Afro-Brazilian cults after him. Roger Bastide, for instance, had no qualms about adopting his ideas contrasting the 'pure' (*Nagô*) and 'degenerated' (*Bantu* or *Caboclo*) Candomblé shrines ('terreiros'), expressing them with very nearly the same words and even the same phrasing (transposed into French) previously used by Carneiro.

Concerning the 'Afro-Brazilian Congresses', held at Recife, in 1934, and at Salvador in 1937, many legends have accumulated. The volumes of essays supposedly resulting from these conferences bear at best an uncertain relationship with what actually happened during them. If I read the same list referred to by Ickes, 'the support for the congress of eight renowned scholars from the metropoles of North America and Europe' (p. 67) seems to have amounted to kind words of encouragement.

Ickes' scholarship has other occasional failings. I hope I will someday find the origin of the following passage: 'In Pernambuco, after 1930, political elites rejected the notion of racial mixing and constructed the "*homem do Nordeste*" as a strong, capable, educable, and cooperative white worker and citizen' (p. 233). Ickes is quoting from Stanley Blake, *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011). But which were Blake's sources and how much credit do they deserve?

Ickes is prone to stress the role of some culture heroes, like Cláudio Tavares, and even more so, his brother Odorico. As he writes

> [Odorico] Tavares was a key figure in the expanding network that linked the press, practitioners of African-Bahian culture and especially the Candomblé community, public intellectuals, the plastic arts, the tourist industry and the government. Perhaps as an outsider he could act relatively freely, like Juracy Magalhães, Roger Bastide, or Pierre Verger. He was not part of already established patron-client relationships. (pp. 220–1)

I agree with the first part of this statement, although one would think that such a network could hardly have existed without the accompaniment of implicit or explicit patron-client relationships. The two Frenchmen may have different stories, all the more so as Bastide was based in São Paulo and not in Bahia. But the natives certainly knew that without insertion in some network or networks of patron-client relationships, it is impossible to survive in Brazil.

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