

# Umbanda and Africa

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**ABSTRACT:** This article argues that scholarship on Umbanda (a distinctively Brazilian hybrid of Candomblé, Kardecist Spiritism, and popular Catholicism, with romanticized indigenous elements) manifests certain limitations that lead to insufficient emphasis on the religious tradition's internal doctrinal, ritual, and organizational variation. It compares the complex and ambivalent place of African traditions in Umbanda and Candomblé, highlighting the extent to which Umbanda has been seen as derivative, more distant from Africa. The article also notes other distorting factors such as *centros* in the southeast of Brazil being considered normative, and scholars focusing inordinately on the question of the tradition's "birth." The case of Umbanda underlines the Brazilian context of Afro-Brazilian traditions, in contrast to an emphasis on transnationalism.

**KEYWORDS:** Umbanda, Candomblé, Brazil, Africa, African religions, Yoruba diaspora, transnationalization

Umbanda is a distinctively Brazilian religion that came to prominence in the early twentieth century as a hybrid of Candomblé and Kardecist Spiritism,<sup>1</sup> with elements of popular Catholicism and a romanticized appropriation of indigenous figures. It has developed to occupy a complex spectrum of doctrinal and ritual forms between Afro-Brazilian and Kardecist traditions, with important regional variations.<sup>2</sup> Umbanda deserves more scholarly attention than it has received for three related reasons. First, it is a uniquely Brazilian religion that refracts its social context to an extent and in a manner that distinguishes it sharply from Kardecism, Candomblé, and other

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related religions. Second, in its capacity as a provider of spiritual services (along its spectrum of doctrinal and ritual forms) it achieves a very broad “market penetration” among Brazilians of different classes and races. Third, as I will argue in this article, its defining characteristics (whether Afro-Brazilian or uniquely Brazilian), rather, Umbanda is best characterized by the dynamic manner in which it occupies a spectrum of religious forms that refract specific social contexts. However, a number of features of scholarship on Umbanda have occluded this central aspect: e.g., defining it narrowly as Afro-Brazilian; comparing it to Candomblé in terms of its preservation of African elements; and taking as representative only groups in the large cities of south-eastern Brazil.<sup>3</sup> In this article, I will discuss Umbanda’s relation to Africa in order to argue for the value of paying closer attention to the internal variation of Umbanda in its national, rather than transnational, context.

Exploring the extent to which Umbanda is rooted in and continues to manifest African elements is a useful way to highlight its differences from Afro-Brazilian traditions. A radical approach, like that of Ortiz, would be to divorce Umbanda from Africa altogether. This involves two distinct logical moves. First, Umbanda is distanced from Africa: “Umbanda is not a black religion; in this sense, it is opposed to Candomblé.”<sup>4</sup> Second, it is linked to the specifically Brazilian context: “If ‘Candomblé’ and ‘Macumba’ are African religions, the Spiritism of Umbanda is, on the contrary, a—I would say *the*—national religion of Brazil.”<sup>5</sup> However, a more nuanced consideration of the place of Yoruba elements—the dominant African ethnic influence in Brazil—leads to seeing Umbanda as an exceptional case of a “marked process of nationalization” undergone by Afro-Brazilian traditions, to varying extents, since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In this light, the present article offers a supplement to J. Lorand Matory’s case for the transnational nature of Candomblé, the most well-known and well-studied of the Afro-Brazilian traditions, “the political economy, iconographic vocabulary, and interpretive discourses that Candomblé has produced and been produced by have never been Brazilian alone, African alone, or Brazilian and African alone. They have always been radically transnational and, particularly, circum-Atlantic, even in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>7</sup> Matory’s emphasis on transnational dialogue is an important and necessary corrective to scholarly views of Candomblé, in part because it underscores the extent to which Yoruba groups in Africa and the Americas have mutually influenced each other and continue to do so. As such, it made a major contribution to the literature on the African diaspora within the broad paradigm of “Atlantic history.”<sup>8</sup> Matory’s argument is also important because it emphasized that Yoruba traditions are “traditions.”<sup>9</sup> They were, and are, just as dynamic, dialogic, and flexible as others (including, of course, Catholicism, Kardecism, and

Pentecostalism). They are just as able to work strategically with claims to the “high ground” of pure continuity with the past (real or imagined); and, under colonialism, they have been more susceptible to having their “traditional” status imagined by others. That is, Matory challenges biased assumptions that diasporic African traditions developed independently of static, pure African roots.

However, Matory’s focus on Candomblé is potentially problematic, insofar as he draws conclusions regarding “African-American experience” throughout the Americas.<sup>10</sup> Candomblé is not the most typical of Afro-Brazilian religions. In terms of the factors that Matory highlights, it is unique in its degree of past and present contact with Africa, in its emphasis (especially since the 1930s) on the issue of the purity of its African roots, and on its more recent moves toward “desyncretization” and “re-africanization.”<sup>11</sup> Candomblé is quite distinct from other Afro-Brazilian traditions (e.g., Babassuê in Pará; Batuque in Rio Grande do Sul; Candomblé de Caboclo and Jurê in Bahia; Canjerê in Minas Gerais; Catimbó, Cura and Pajelança from Pernambuco through Amazônia; Macumba in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo; Tambor de Mata or Terecô in Maranhão; Tambor de Mina in Maranhão and Pará; Toré in Sergipe; Xambá in Alagoas, Pernambuco and Paraíba; and Xangô and Jurema in Pernambuco).<sup>12</sup>

Matory moves academic discussion of Candomblé beyond views that see it in terms of derivative echoes of Africa or constrained responses to a white-dominated, slave-holding colonial society, and reasserts “the role of African-American [including Afro-Brazilian] agency in creating these forms of cultural representation and self-representation.”<sup>13</sup> However, Candomblé is also unique among Afro-Brazilian traditions in its dynamic interrelation between insider and outside views, in part reflecting the greater attention that it has received from national and foreign scholars. Matory critiques “anti-essentialist” historiography that sees an emphasis on pure Yoruba roots as an academic “invention of Africa” on the grounds that such views attribute agency to white scholars, denying it to Afro-Brazilians.<sup>14</sup> This is a false dichotomy, however. The agency of *candomblecistas* includes their creative and autonomous appropriation of ideas of nagô (Yoruba) purity put forward by Edson Carneiro, Ruth Landes, Roger Bastide and others. In this same light, it is arguable that ongoing dialogue with Africa—and assertion of Candomblé as a black Atlantic religion because of it—is less a core feature than it is one of a number of factors that have been drawn upon strategically by Afro-Brazilians as they work out their identities and allegiances in a national context. Matory is certainly right that Candomblé has a transnational dimension, but it is not clear that it is as central as he holds it to be, nor can the claim be generalized to other Afro-Brazilian traditions, and even less so to Umbanda. Stephen Selka echoes Matory in calling for a “diasporic perspective” in the study of

Afro-Brazilian traditions (not just Candomblé), but Selka places more emphasis on the national context and on the polyvalent identities that result from Afro-Brazilian agency. In the words of Selka, “Afro-Brazilian identity is based on multiple and overlapping imagined communities that are themselves based on different religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, Candomblé) and national identities (Brazilian, Jeje, Nagô, etc.)”<sup>15</sup> The case of Umbanda underlines such work with agency and identity within Brazilian society, suggesting that an emphasis on transnational dialogue—however central to the “African” of the most well-known Afro-Brazilian tradition—pays insufficient attention to the Brazilian side of things.

### THE SPECTRUM OF UMBANDAS

Umbanda’s many variants make it difficult to characterize core beliefs and practices. The following brief sketch captures a number of elements, though not all *terreiros* or *centros* manifest all of these.<sup>16</sup> Umbanda emphasizes spirit-possession: in a typical ritual, a number of mediums enter into trance and are possessed, often to the sound of drums. The possessing entities are disembodied spirits, not deities. The spirits then offer consultations to clients who line up, and are generally not charged, for the spiritual advice and services; the spirits come in order to work. The most common “guides” or “saints” that possess umbandist mediums are: (1) *caboclos* (strong-willed, forceful, well-intentioned, healing, indigenous spirits), (2) *pretos velhos* (calm, humble, christianized, former slaves), (3) *exus* (potentially dangerous and maleficent, potentially wise and helpful spirits, ritually associated with cemeteries and crossroads, uniquely able to undo the evil work of other *exus*), and (4) *pombas giras* (female counterparts to the *exus*, with a sexualized moral ambivalence).<sup>17</sup> But a number of other types of spirits are also common including *baianos* (spirits of Bahia), *boiadeiros* (“cowboys,” hybrid indigenous/white spirits), *crianças* (children), *marinheiros* (sailors), *Zé Pilintras* (a trickster figure prominent in Jurema), *eguns* (ancestral spirits), and *ciganos* (“gypsies”). The formalized theology shared by most *umbandistas* (practitioners of Umbanda), with many variants, preserves pride of place for the Orixás: higher, never-embodied spirits who head up the “seven lines” (or hierarchies) under which are the many “spirits of the light.”<sup>18</sup> *Exus* and *pombas giras* are generally considered “spirits of the darkness” and do not fall under the seven lines. Expert mediums often work with at least one spirit from each of the seven lines.

Scholars of Umbanda generally situate Umbanda’s emergence in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1920s and the 1930s, although there were contemporaneous developments in Porto Alegre, and *centros* in São

Paulo that can be traced to 1929.<sup>19</sup> There is scattered, though unreliable, evidence for an earlier “birth.”<sup>20</sup> Umbanda’s most prominent myth of origin holds that seventeen year-old Zélio de Moraes incorporated a powerful indigenous spirit “of the seven crossroads,” Caboclo das Sete Encruzilhadas, at a Kardecist center in Niteroi on 15 November 1908. This enlightened spirit then guided the formation of the religion, and the date is celebrated in some *centros* in commemoration.<sup>21</sup> Emerson Giumbelli argues that this myth of origin was consolidated only around the time of the death of Moraes in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup>

Given the dearth of evidence regarding the emergence of Umbanda as a distinct religious tradition, it is curious that so much effort has been dedicated to the topic, by both *umbandistas* and scholars, and that such discussions almost universally frame the possession of Moraes as the “birth” or “founding” of Umbanda. This tends to presuppose an artificial unity, a core set of characteristics that can be defined in terms of that point of origin. Bruno Faria Rohde offers an astute critique along these lines. He suggests that Umbanda’s roots lie with older Afro-Brazilian traditions, and he points to the eighteenth-century Calundu-angola as a potential precursor.<sup>23</sup> However, Rohde himself presumes too much in making this suggestion. On the one hand, this quest for an older point of origin, based on parallels to earlier practices, is itself unstable: the *calundus* can be traced earlier, including a lesser presence in Portugal.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, placing such weight on suggestive parallels, without clear evidence of intervening influence, merely presupposes a different sort of artificial unity (that of a unitary diachronic trajectory). Historian Laura de Mello e Souza—who made a similar appeal to this same case in her earlier work—concludes, “I no longer believe that the end of the line explains the genesis of the process, i.e., that there is a coherent nexus between . . . Umbanda and Calundu-angola.”<sup>25</sup> As Maria Laura Cavalcanti notes, scholarly emphasis on Umbanda’s origins reflects distorting presuppositions, and these obscure “the particular form [of Umbanda], in which heterogeneity and fluidity are distinguishing characteristics.”<sup>26</sup>

The possibility of a multi-point, nebulous emergence of Umbanda in the early twentieth-century (though hinted at by Renato Ortiz) is seldom considered in scholarly literature. I mention this not as an alternative hypothesis (which would simply face the same lack of evidence) but as a query intended to highlight how scholars seek to define Umbanda as a unitary religion, in terms of its possessing certain core characteristic beliefs and practices, rather than as a relational tradition, in terms of internal variation that refracts social and political tensions in distinct contexts. Camargo argues that the development of Umbanda cannot be explained “merely by the diffusion and continuity of cultural traces and complexes,” and he shifts focus to the social functions it plays in specific areas of Brazilian society.<sup>27</sup> This prompts

us to heed Duglas Teixeira Monteiro's insight that "*Umbanda* represents the passing of the moment of disintegration during which traditional rites had been simplified: the priest had yielded to the healer and the faithful to the client."<sup>28</sup> This emphasis on links between ritual and social relations allows us to make sense of *Umbanda*'s variability in terms of its relation to Brazilian society.

Despite some movement toward institutionalization, it remains the case that "diversity is characteristic of this religion."<sup>29</sup> Individual *centros* are led by *pais*- or *mães-de-santo* (saint fathers/mothers) and tend to be organized along bureaucratic lines.<sup>30</sup> A number of federations emerged (the first in 1939, with most founded in the 1950s), and a national congress was first held in 1941. These resulted in a greater degree of doctrinal, ritual, and organization uniformity among participating groups, though many *terreiros* and *centros* have no formal affiliations and manifest an extremely broad range of variations in belief, practice, and organization. Writing in 1961, Cândido P. F. de Camargo concluded that the results of attempts to unify *Umbanda* were "weak, if not negative."<sup>31</sup> Lisias Nogueira Negrão, writing in 1979, considered the federations in the city of São Paulo to have made progress in institutional unification, but not in imposing ritual and doctrinal norms.<sup>32</sup> The main axis of variation is that between "white" *Umbanda*, which strongly resembles Kardecism (including an absence of explicitly African artifacts and images, and the strong presence of Christian elements, e.g., group repetition of the "Our Father") and variants that bear strong resemblances to Candomblé in ritual, dress, and artifacts.<sup>33</sup> Bastide, studying *Umbanda* during the mid-twentieth-century period of consolidation and legitimization, described it as "a religion in the making, not yet crystallized, organized, multiplying in an infinity of sub-sects, each with its own ritual and mythology."<sup>34</sup> This alone should alert us to the fact that such variation may be a constitutive feature of the tradition rather than an early passing phase.

One of the main characteristics that scholars of *Umbanda* have noted in the last decades is the marked extent to which this religion reflects Brazilian society. Scholars argue that it mirrors Brazilian social and political structures, that the nature of relations with spirits are homologous with those in Brazilian society and that the religion's spirits reflect social groups in the country's past and present.<sup>35</sup> These views support the broader claim that *Umbanda*'s spectrum of doctrinal, ritual, and organizational variants is central to the tradition, not part of an earlier phase or a case of outlying exceptional cases. I argue that it is precisely this close relation between *Umbanda* and its social context that results in its internal variation. More fundamentally, as French ethnologist François Laplantine noted, "*Umbanda*, in the image of Brazil, is disconcerting because it is multiple, contradictory and constantly evolving."<sup>36</sup>

Several other features of Umbanda underline its responsiveness to specific social contexts. It creates a space where ambiguous moral agency is prized, and demonstrates “the legitimacy of the rogue, the underhanded and the personal favor [*do malandro, da sacanagem e do favor*].”<sup>37</sup> It “positions itself as a religion that encourages social mobility, . . . [and] this mobility is open to all, without exception.”<sup>38</sup> It offers something of a middle ground between private and public spheres, allowing greater freedom for women’s participation.<sup>39</sup> It reflects, more explicitly than other Brazilian religious traditions, the patron-client relations that are central to Brazilian society.<sup>40</sup> Spirits who act as patrons to their clients, and the *pai-de-santo* in an Umbanda *centro* is “the center of a network of distribution where magical services are exchanged for money with wealthy clients, celebrations are exchanged for recognition by the general public and the *filhos-de-santo* and money invested in the *centro* become symbols of success.”<sup>41</sup> The emergence and continued prominence of hierarchical patron-client relations is, of course, inseparable from the history of slavery and race in Brazil, just as these are inseparable from issues of access to education and the formation of a *habitus* adjusted by/to inclusion in the changing conditions of labor in Brazil’s “peripheral modernity.”<sup>42</sup> I argue elsewhere that specific features of umbandist ritual allow participants to re-imagine their own agency within a virtual space that is both like and unlike the social spaces of patron-client relations.<sup>43</sup>

Umbanda is a small tradition. In the 2000 census, 397,000 Brazilians self-identified as *umbandistas*; by comparison 118,000 Brazilians claimed Candomblé as their primary religious affiliation and 2.2 million Kardecism.<sup>44</sup> A 1994 survey focusing more specifically on religious adherence reported slightly higher numbers, with “close to 1.5 million adult Brazilians . . . [belonging to] Afro-Brazilian religions,” including Candomblé, Umbanda, and others.<sup>45</sup> According to the Brazilian census, the number of people self-identifying as members of Afro-Brazilian religions is in decline: 0.6 percent in 1980; 0.4 percent in 1991; and 0.3 percent in 2000.<sup>46</sup> These adherence statistics are, of course, misleading. Umbanda’s importance is in large part a function of the fact that many non-*umbandistas* participate regularly in its rituals for spiritual healing services.<sup>47</sup>

In the end, it is not entirely clear whether Umbanda is growing or declining, especially given the limitations of the census data. However, the way this question has been approached reveals a further limitation in scholarship: a tendency to generalize based on limited cases. Sociologists of religion at the Universidade de São Paulo, taking the number of *centros* in that city as an indicator, argue that Umbanda achieved its “apogee” in the 1970s and that it has since declined, in large part through losing adherents to Candomblé.<sup>48</sup> However, Umbanda’s importance was growing in the north of Brazil during this same period, where

dramatic “umbandization” consisted not only of the growth in numbers of umbandist *centros*, but in the absorption of umbandist elements by other traditions.<sup>49</sup> In the north “Umbanda’s penetrative force overcame the very boundaries of the religions of African origin.”<sup>50</sup> In the south a “candomblization” or “re-africanization” of Umbanda began in the 1960s.<sup>51</sup> Ângela Cristina Borges Marquez, based on research in Montes Claros in the north of the state of Minas Gerais, notes that Afro-Brazilian religions, primarily Umbanda, Quimbanda, and Candomblé, are growing in numbers of both practitioners and clients.<sup>52</sup> In São João da Boa Vista, a small city in the interior of the State of São Paulo where I conduct fieldwork, the numbers of *centros* and clients have increased over the last few years. One possibility is that the samples that indicate growth are non-representative. Another is that Umbanda has rebounded since Negrão, Reginaldo Prandi, and others evaluated its status in the 1990s. A more interesting possibility is that the situation of Umbanda varies in different social contexts, e.g., in the north and in the interior. This remains an open question, though Carneiro suggested that the heterogeneity of Afro-Brazilian traditions reflects three regionally-distinct processes of nationalization.<sup>53</sup> Minimally, the fact that portrayals of Umbanda as a cohesive religion are almost all based on studies in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro means that the scholarship tends to beg this question, among others. For example, most scholarly accounts consider the *pretos velhos* to be core figures in Umbanda, and so they are in the southeast. However, according to Yoshiaki Furuya, they are largely absent in Amazonia, or a sub-type of *caboclo*.<sup>54</sup> Minimally, asserting the *preto velho* to be an essential, defining element of Umbanda flies in the face of the broader evidence; moreover, regional variations arguably exemplify the relational nature of the tradition.

Once we begin to contemplate the possibility that variation is fundamental to Umbanda, other interesting questions arise. For example, it is generally accepted not only that Umbanda originated under conditions of urbanization but that its growth and elaboration reflect urban conditions of social tensions and upheaval. Ortiz argued influentially that “the birth of the umbandist religion coincides precisely with the consolidation of an urban-industrial class society,” and Diana Brown argued that “Umbanda is pre-eminently a religion of urbanites.”<sup>55</sup> On the one hand, it is important to extend “urban” here to include small cities, themselves going through significant economic and social transformation. On the other hand, Yoshiaki’s study of “umbandization” in Amazonia shows this process to be present even in small centers where little social disruption had occurred. He concludes, it is “not . . . sufficient to simply understand ‘Umbandization’ as a reaction to the sweeping social changes of the last years;” the growth of Umbanda in small centers cannot be interpreted “simply as an ‘imitation of big-city ways’. . . . It becomes necessary to find something else to explain this ‘Umbandization’ that develops

prior to socio-economic changes.”<sup>56</sup> Umbanda’s ritual and therapeutic sensitivity to local social tensions offers a potentially useful element of this explanation. For example, Ismael Pordeus Jr., in his study of Umbanda in the interior of the state of Ceará, argues that the figure of the *caboclo* serves an important function in the strategic construction of ethnic and regional identities; and Ângela Cristina Borges, in her study of a distinct type of Umbanda in the north of the state of Minas Gerais (“Umbanda sertaneja—one more among Brazil’s Umbandas”), argues that the figure of the *exu* reflects the particular hybrid “*ethos sertanejo*” of that region.<sup>57</sup>

Distinct social contexts, especially immigration from the northeast to the large urban centers in the south, played an important role in the development of many Brazilian religions. It influenced the manner in which Umbanda and Candomblé both manifest a spectrum of variants, but in different ways. Here again, taking Candomblé as the model for Umbanda masks the latter’s distinctiveness. Parés draws attention to the “polarization between ‘African’ and ‘national’ Candomblés, the former more closed and the latter more open to ethnic and racial mixing.”<sup>58</sup> A tension between “African” *centros* and those more open to a broader social spectrum has been prominent in Candomblé since at least the late nineteenth century.<sup>59</sup> This tension was amplified in the late twentieth century by internal immigration. Prandi points to the increasingly universalized and accessible nature of Candomblé as the key factor in Umbanda’s decline in the southeast.<sup>60</sup> Paul Christopher Johnson frames this shift within Candomblé as a “social extension,” moving from traditional to public forms, in part as a result of the increasing prominence of Afro-Brazilian elements in popular culture, making “the religion that was ethnically specific” now “presented as universally available.”<sup>61</sup> The recent emphasis on the re-africanization, de-syncretization, and de-catholicization of Candomblé is closely connected to these developments, as they have occurred “precisely at a moment of great expansion of the cult of the *orixás* and the entry into its ranks of an increasingly white population.”<sup>62</sup> In Candomblé, greater emphasis on African roots is, in part, a market response to a hybridizing white valuation of pure black tradition, where the “national Candomblés” reflect the historical trajectory of ad hoc encounters between different groups. In this light, Candomblé manifests a tension between “roots” and “routes.”<sup>63</sup>

Umbanda, on the other hand, appears to have no pure roots to return to (or, rather, it has various, depending on which account one reads), a fact that may explain in part the many attempts to narrate its “birth.” It manifests neither a hybridity of roots nor of routes, but one of refraction. The spectra of its variations are much more complex than a polarity between Africa and Brazil; it bridges, while legitimizing,

a broad set of social distinctions.<sup>64</sup> The place of Africa, of Yoruba traditions, and of race in Umbanda is more complex than is the case in Candomblé.

### “AFRICAN” IN BRAZIL

In the Brazilian literature, Umbanda has two distinct relations to Africa (leaving aside Kardecist, Catholic, and romanticized indigenous elements): Yoruba influences via Candomblé, and “Bantu” influences, related to Macumba.<sup>65</sup> There are two problems with the emphasis on “Bantu” traditions. First, Bantu refers to a broad family of languages not a specific ethnic group.<sup>66</sup> Its usage in the Brazilian literature is valuable insofar as it extends discussion beyond a narrow focus on Yoruba traditions, but it lacks any further specificity and so remains under-developed and not particularly helpful. Second, as with the *calundus*, discussed above, it is important to distinguish between broad influences and the more specific issue of the alleged origin of Umbanda. In arguing for the predominance of Bantu influences on Umbanda, for example, Malandrino takes as an analytical premise that “the religious expressions of Brazilian groups belonging to the Bantu tradition, throughout their history, can be understood as continuous forms, granted that there is no maintenance of an equivalent whole, that some aspects are recuperated, other rejected, and still others transformed in a manner that aims at symbolic reorganization.”<sup>67</sup> This is a particularly weak form of “continuity,” one not well suited to clarifying the definitive origins of Umbanda. We are left with an intriguing claim that Central African influences may have played an important role in the origin of Umbanda, but this claim has insufficient specificity.

The case of Umbanda’s relation to Yoruba traditions is more complex and more revealing. Umbanda’s supposed roots in and ongoing relations to Africa have been, and continue to be, very dynamic. In general terms, using “Yoruba” to describe Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian traditions is potentially confusing for several reasons.

First, the origin of the term “Yoruba” is itself complex. It likely began as a Hausa term for a certain group of “others,” originally limited to the Oyo state or group, and later used by missionaries to refer to the broader group.<sup>68</sup> Kólá Abímbólá argues that “‘the Yorùbá’ are not, and never were, a tribal group. Rather the hallmarks of ‘Yorùbá’ are to be found in a unique set of religiophilosophical beliefs.”<sup>69</sup> Granted current usage in this latter sense, it is important to recognize both that Yoruba cultures continued to shift in their West African homeland even as derivative beliefs and practices began parallel developments in the Americas, and also that Yoruba traditions in Africa and the diaspora developed in a mutual influential dialogue.<sup>70</sup>

Second, the Yoruba were only one, albeit the most important, of the religious and cultural groups whose members were brought as slaves to Brazil and who had a long-lasting impact on Afro-Brazilian traditions. In Brazil, “nagô” was the main term used to define people of Yoruba descent and their religious traditions (as “lucumi” is in Cuba).<sup>71</sup> In its African origin, “nagô” appears to have been a self-appellation of a small Yoruba group, extended by the Fon of Dahomey into a generic term for Yoruba-speakers; its use to refer to people of Yoruba descent in general became prominent only in the Americas.<sup>72</sup>

Although Yoruba speakers were the dominant African group, in demographic terms, after the 1820s in Bahia, Central African groups were more prominent in earlier periods.<sup>73</sup> Nagô influences were dominant in the formation of Candomblé, and they have become increasingly so down to the present day. Of course, others “nations” remain important as “Today Candomblé houses generally claim to belong to one of the three main nations, Natô, Jeje, and Angola, which are characterized by the worship of different kinds of spiritual entities. The Nagô worship the orixás, the Jeje the voduns, and the Angola the enkices.”<sup>74</sup>

This picture of nagô pre-eminence as an influence in the development of Candomblé is complicated by two factors. First, though nagô was the primary term for Yoruba speakers in Bahia, they were called by other names in different parts of Brazil, including primarily “mina” in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>75</sup> Second, the scope of these terms varied. Though “nagô” referred primarily to Yoruba speakers as a group, that usage could expand to include non-Yorubas or contract to only specify Yoruba subgroups. Similarly “mina” referred to both Yoruba speakers and to West Africans more generally in the southeast of Brazil.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, insofar as “Yoruba” points to a transnational bridge between Africa and Brazil, the foundation of this bridge is unstable both historically and socially on both sides of the Atlantic. The point here is not that the denotation of “nagô” has been altered to the point that historical links to African beliefs and practices have been severed; that is clearly not the case.<sup>77</sup> (As many as 20 million Brazilians self-identify with Yoruba ancestry.<sup>78</sup>) Rather, appeals to the purity of Yoruba origins play a strategic ideological role, not least in recent very public processes of “re-africanization,” “de-syncretization,” and “de-catholicization.”<sup>79</sup> Matory highlights both sides of this coin,

Africanness is also constituted by a genealogy of interested claims and practices, available for selective invocation as precedents. The naturalization of these claims and practices is situational and impermanent. In other words, both the explicit, formal practices and the underlying logics of African and African-American cultures can, in my view, change vastly without making those cultures objectively un-African.<sup>80</sup>

“Africanness” here is defined in terms of a strategic use of discourse that also seeks to hold onto an “objective” sense of “African;” meaning that the concept is both a discursive construct and objectively real. There is no problem with this view, as long as the middle ground is carefully staked out. The best alternative to trying to “eat one’s cake and have it too” is not, despite appearances, to eat one’s cake by halving it in two.<sup>81</sup> That is, it is untenable to both acknowledge Afro-Brazilians’ agency in appeals to “Africa” in the work of constructing their religious and cultural identities, and yet hold that terms like “Yoruba” have some stable transnational referent, whether ultimately rooted in Africa or not.

This ambiguity forces us to turn to the local context, albeit with transnational elements always in mind. As Joseph M. Murphy notes, “It is difficult to argue that the diaspora model fits the contemporary state of Yoruba religious traditions.”<sup>82</sup> On the one hand, in defining “Yoruba,” the issue of origins tends to emphasize the African historical context. This problematizes “Yoruba” given that, as Matory argues, African and American (broadly speaking) Yoruba traditions developed in part through dialogue. Defining “Yoruba” as purely African and historical ignores the transnational dynamism of this group of traditions. Thus, it smuggles in an emphasis on the purity of African roots, and this emphasis must be examined rather than presupposed, especially given its prevalence in many of the traditions that claim these roots.<sup>83</sup> As Robin Law notes, citing Matory, “African ethnicities were subject to transformations through the process of displacement across the Atlantic; and conversely . . . new ethnic identities constructed in the diaspora could be fed back into the homeland through the repatriation of ex-slaves to Africa.”<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, a focus on diasporic encounters and dialogue problematizes the “neo” of “neo-Yoruba,” seeing change as somehow supplementary to the essence of Yoruba cultures themselves. For example, Law’s mention of “new ethnic identities” in the quotation above begs the question of whether these identities were, for example, still Yoruba or not. We should not be too quick to essentialize Africa by finding its echoes in the Americas, nor to use either geography or chronology to sunder “old African” Yoruba traditions from “new American” ones. There is truth in both sides, and a careful consideration of specific cases is needed to draw out the details.

There is a clear lesson here with respect to scholarship on Umbanda. Characterizing Candomblé in either of these ways—in terms of either a romantic construct or an authentic descendent (or representation) of African beliefs and practices—obscures and marginalizes core characteristics of Umbanda. That is, focusing on either the invention or the purity of African origins shifts attention from the social and political context in which Umbanda’s spectra of doctrinal and ritual forms takes shape. It focuses on myths rather than functions, on origins rather than

on strategies of identity formation. As Selka notes, “Candomblé is perhaps the best known of the African-derived religions practiced in Brazil. Its popularity partly stems from the common belief that Candomblé is closer to its African origins than its alternatives, such as Umbanda, that have more fully integrated Christian and other European beliefs and practices.”<sup>85</sup> Selka rightly underlines how Candomblé, as paradigmatic Afro-Brazilian religion, is used as the measure of Umbanda, relegating it to a secondary level by virtue of its supposed greater distance from Africa. At the same time, it would be worth highlighting even more clearly the value of not accepting this characterization. Framing Umbanda as an “alternative” among “the African-derived religions” misses the unique extent of its relation to Kardecism and its significant doctrinal and ritual differences from Afro-Brazilian traditions.

More to the point, it fails to note the extent to which umbandist groups vary amongst themselves. Some emphasize African roots, but others claim Kardecist, “Brazilian,” Guarani, Vedic, Egyptian, Esoteric, Lemurian, and/or extraterrestrial roots, ideas elaborated mainly in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>86</sup> Crucially, various presenters at the First Brazilian Conference of Spiritism and Umbanda, in 1941, described their religions origins in a wide variety of terms: “on Earth for more than one-hundred centuries, with roots lost in the unfathomable past of the most ancient philosophies,” “the Upanishads,” “the lost continent of Lemuria,” “Egypt,” and a more general identification with the history of esoteric thought (Lao Tzu, Confucious, Buddha . . . Vedanta, Patanjali . . . Greece, Krishna, Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus . . . Moses . . . China, Tibet and India . . . Orpheus.)”<sup>87</sup> Bastide interpreted this as a move to distance Africa, and wrote “to make the slaves brought to Brazil no more than a link in an initiatic chain that stretches much farther back.” Prandi argues that “‘Cleaning up’ the new religion of those elements most compromised by a secret and sacrificial initiation tradition was to take Kardecism as a model, one capable of expressing the ideas and values of the new republican society.” Finally José H. M. de Oliveira sees it as one of several strategies of legitimization in the face of political persecution during the dictatorship of the Estado Novo.<sup>88</sup> Certainly, legal sanctions against *curandeirismo* and other magical therapeutics (prominent from 1890 and tailing off only in the late twentieth century) are an important part of the story of Umbanda’s evolution.<sup>89</sup>

These and related points are valuable in explaining Umbanda’s de-emphasis of Afro-Brazilian elements, but with three provisos. First, the basic point is that Umbanda is responsive to its social context. Second, we must keep in mind that these strategies are not universal among umbandist groups. These developments do not characterize Umbanda as a whole, but instead, they point to one of the many axes along which this religious tradition expresses internal variation.<sup>90</sup>

Neither the affirmation of nor rejection of African roots is characteristic of Umbanda (or, rather, both are, depending on the context). Third, it is essential to recognize the centrality of Brazilian ideas of, and attitudes to, race, which were closely linked to Umbanda's development.<sup>91</sup> Three racially-loaded processes appear to have been central in the early formalization of the religion: (1) the *empretecimento* (blackening) of Kardecism, as Spiritists sought more stimulating rituals; (2) the *embranquecimento* (whitening) of Candomblé due to the presence of increasing numbers of white members, often new immigrants, and the formation of a "low Spiritism" among the lower classes; and (3) the reception of indigenous spirits by Kardecist groups, and the subsequent rejection of these *caboclos* as unevolved.<sup>92</sup> In the following decades, institutionalized groups distanced themselves from African elements through processes of legitimization, in part reflecting Brazil's "myth of three races" and the ideology of "racial democracy."<sup>93</sup> In the 1960s rejection of this ideology as racist, Umbanda was again positioned to respond differentially, with its spectrum of variants, from Kardecism-like to Candomblé-like. Candomblé, on the other hand, with its bipolar (vs. Umbanda's multi-polar) syncretism, became a primary site of contestation as examinations of racism in Brazil became more critical in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>94</sup> As different evaluations of the *preto velho* spirits in the south and north suggest, Umbanda, by virtue of the extent to which it refracts its social context in a spectrum of religious forms, is not as polarized as Candomblé in the face of racialized social tensions. It continues to occupy a complex spectrum even as the poles themselves shift.

## CONCLUSION

Scholarship on Umbanda has been hampered by four limiting perspectives. First, Umbanda's historical, sociological, and ritual uniqueness has been occluded by its being characterized as one among the Afro-Brazilian traditions. Second, the resulting comparison with Candomblé, framed as the prototypical Afro-Brazilian religion, characterizes Umbanda as secondary, an impure mixture with less fidelity to African roots. Third, overreliance on studies of Umbanda in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, has led to the neglect of other areas of the county, including the interior of those two states. Fourth, as a corollary of these factors, there has been insufficient emphasis on doctrinal, ritual, and institutional variation as a core characteristic, rather than a marginal phenomenon. This last, most basic, limitation reflects attempts to characterize Umbanda in terms of a core set of beliefs, practices, and organizational forms, along with a historiographic emphasis on the birth or origin of the religion.

Umbanda is worthy of study above all because in its internal variation, and not in any core set of beliefs or practices, it refracts its social context to a remarkable extent. Arguably, this is a feature common to all religious traditions. However, its prominence in Umbanda underlines the value of studying this neglected religion as an exemplary case of relations between religion, power, and social differentiation. It is an unfortunate side-effect of tendencies to essentialize religions—e.g., to emphasize generic and normative models of world religions in the classroom—that the social dynamism of “hybrid” traditions is too often passed over in silence. By defining Umbanda as an Afro-Brazilian religion, and by characterizing Afro-Brazilian religions as transnational, we ignore the broad and responsive range of variation that is so characteristic of Umbanda, thereby missing the centrality of its national context, its responsiveness to and refraction of issues of race-based hierarchy, exclusion, and marginalization in Brazilian society. As Paul Cohen notes, “the Atlantic paradigm, by emphasizing mobility, fluidity, and broad transnational frames of reference, risks obscuring the realities of power.”<sup>95</sup> It is important to emphasize the agency of *umbandistas*, but we must do so without losing sight of the complex, and specifically Brazilian, social tensions that frame the spectrum of Umbandas.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Candomblé is the most important and well known of many distinct Afro-Brazilian religions. Its key rituals include initiation, divination, and the *roda-de-santo* (saint wheel) in which initiated members dance counter-clockwise, to intense, syncopated drumming, until they enter into a trance state, becoming *cavalos* (horses) for the *orixás*. Kardecism has its roots in a mid nineteenth-century French appropriation of the American Spiritualist movement. Kardecism's beliefs include the possibility of communication with disembodied spirits, reincarnation, karma, the universal spiritual evolution of humankind and a correlated hierarchy of spiritual realms, ranging from largely material to fully spiritual, the

aid of evolved spiritual guides and the hindrance of non-evolved spirits, a plurality of inhabited worlds, a transcendent God, and Jesus Christ as an exceptionally evolved spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Engler, "Umbanda and Hybridity," *Numen* 56:5 (2009), 564–70; Cândido Procópio Ferreira de Camargo, *Kardecismo e umbanda: uma interpretação sociológica* (São Paulo: Livraria Pioneira Editora, 1961), 13–15; Cândido Procópio Ferreira de Camargo, *Católicos, Protestantes, Espíritos* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1973), 166–72; José Guilherme Cantor Magnani, *Umbanda* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1986), 43; Lindsay Hale, *Hearing the Mermaid's Song: The Umbanda Religion in Rio de Janeiro* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), xiv–xv.

<sup>3</sup> Most religious studies scholars, if they have heard of Umbanda at all, lump it together as a rough equivalent to Candomblé: e.g., "Macuba, Candomblé, and Umbanda" are "African-Derived Religions" (Carolyn M. Jones and Theodore Louis Trost, *Teaching African American Religions* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 171). Even very solid ethnographic studies of Candomblé by non-Brazilian scholars tend to misleadingly present Umbanda as just one among the "Afro-Brazilian" traditions: Umbanda is "a nationalized Afro-Brazilian tradition" (Paul Christopher Johnson, *Secrets, Gossip, and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé*. [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002], 95, see 45, 52–53); it is one of a range of "Afro-Brazilian activities" (Emma Cohen, *The Mind Possessed: The Cognition of Spirit Possession in an Afro-Brazilian Religious Tradition* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007], 30 see 214n5). See Tina Gudrun Jensen, "Discourses on Afro-Brazilian Religion: From De-Africanization to Re-Africanization," in *Latin American Religion in Motion*, ed. Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 279.

<sup>4</sup> Renato Ortiz, "A morte branca do feiticeiro negro," *Religião e Sociedade* 1 (1977), 43. All translations from Portuguese and French are mine.

<sup>5</sup> Renato Ortiz, *A morte branca do feiticeiro negro: umbanda e sociedade brasileira*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1978, Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999), 96, emphasis in original.

<sup>6</sup> Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1948, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1977), 16. See also Esther Pressel, "Umbanda Trance and Possession in São Paulo," in *Trance, Healing, and Hallucination: Three Field Studies in Religious Experience*, ed. Felicitas D. Goodman, Jeannette H. Henney and Esther Pressel (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 224. Further supporting the idea that differences and tensions between Umbanda and Afro-Brazilian traditions reflect specificities of the Brazilian context, a distinctive aspect of these religions' spread to Argentina is the fact that Batuque and Umbanda tend to be practiced alongside one another in the same *templos*. See Alejandro Frigerio, "Umbanda e africanismo em Buenos Aires: duas etapas de um mesmo caminho religioso," *Comunicações do ISER* 35 (1990): 52–63.

<sup>7</sup> J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matrarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17. See also J. Lorand Matory, "Jeje: repensando nações e transnacionalismo," *Mana - Estudos de Antropologia Social* 5:1 (1999): 57–80.

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay,

eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2001); and Patrick Manning, "Africa and the African Diaspora: New Directions of Study," *Journal of African History* 44 (2003): 487–506.

<sup>9</sup> See Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–62. On "tradition" as site of ideological struggle, see Steven Engler, "Tradition's Legacy," in *Historicizing Tradition in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Gregory P. Grieve (Berlin and New York: DeGruyter, 2005), 357–78; Steven Engler, "Tradition," in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, 4 vols., ed. Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 4:1907–11. Reflecting this critical perspective, this article uses the term "tradition" throughout, in order to highlight the importance of relational and strategic claims to normatively valued origins and trajectories. The word "religion" is used only when attention is being drawn to a tradition that is presented, and valued, in an essentialized and normatively institutionalized form.

<sup>10</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 292.

<sup>11</sup> Roberto Motta, "A eclesificação dos cultos afro-brasileiros," *Comunicações do ISEER* 30 (1988): 31–43; Reginaldo Prandi, "Referências sociais das religiões afro-brasileiras: sincretismo, branqueamento, africanização," in *Faces da tradição afro-brasileira: religiosidade, sincretismo, anti-sincretismo, reafricanização, práticas terapêuticas, etnobotânica e comida*, ed. Carlos Caroso and Jeferson Bacelar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1999, Rio de Janeiro/Salvador: Pallas/CNPq, 2006), 93–111; Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, "Reafricanização e sincretismo: interpretações acadêmicas e experiências religiosas," in *Faces da tradição afro-brasileira: religiosidade, sincretismo, anti-sincretismo, reafricanização, práticas terapêuticas, etnobotânica e comida*, ed. Carlos Caroso and Jeferson Bacelar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1999, Rio de Janeiro/Salvador: Pallas/CNPq, 2006), 149–57.

<sup>12</sup> Despite early arguments for "unity without uniformity" among the Afro-Brazilian traditions (Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia*, 16; see Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition [1932, São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1945]), there are significant historical, doctrinal, ritual, and organizational differences between these various traditions. The degree to which they constitute one or more distinct families or variants remains an open question. For example, Quimbanda is a tradition closely related to Umbanda (the "left side" of Umbanda) that emphasizes the instrumental, often amoral, use of magic, appealing primarily to *exus* and *pombas giras*. See Fernando Giobellina Brumana and Elda Gonzales Martinez, *Spirits from the Margins: Umbanda in São Paulo* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1989), 459, and Ângela Cristina Borges Marquez, *Umbanda sertaneja: cultura e religiosidade no sertão norte-mineiro* (M.A. thesis, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2007), 187–197.

<sup>13</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 45. For comparable arguments, see also Beatriz Góis Dantas, "Repensando a pureza nagô," *Religião e Sociedade* 8 (1982): 15–20; Roberto Motta, "A invenção da África: Roger Bastide, Edison Carneiro e os conceitos de memória coletiva e pureza nagô," in *Sincretismo religioso: o ritual afro. Anais do IV congresso afro-brasileiro*, ed. Tânia Lima (Recife: Fundação

Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1996), 24–32; and Maria Lina Leão Teixeira, “Candomblé e a (re)invenção de tradições,” in *Faces da tradição afro-brasileira: religiosidade, sincretismo, anti-sincretismo, reafrikanização, práticas terapêuticas, etnobotânica e comida*, ed. Carlos Caroso and Bacelar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1999, Rio de Janeiro/Salvador: Pallas/CNPq, 2006), 131–40.

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Selka, *Religion and the Politics of Ethnic Identity in Bahia, Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 151, 2, accents corrected. See also Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 81.

<sup>16</sup> “*Terreiro*” (grounds) is the most common term for the cultic space of candomblé, as “*centro*” (center) is for Kardecism. Both terms are used in Umbanda, with the former more prominent for rituals at the Afro-Brazilian end of the spectrum of ritual forms, and the latter for those at the Kardecist end.

<sup>17</sup> *Exu* is pronounced “eh-shoo.” *Exus, escoras* (in essence a more friendly and protective, male or female, type of *exu*), and *pombas giras* are the dominant spirits in Quimbanda and are less central in Umbanda (Borges Marquez, *Umbanda sertaneja*, 35, 91–92, 103–105).

<sup>18</sup> Some *umbandistas* refer to their guides as “*orixás*.”

<sup>19</sup> Diana Brown, “Umbanda and Class Relations in Brazil,” in *Brazil: Anthropological Perspectives. Essays in Honor of Charles Wagley*, ed. Maxine L. Margolis and William E. Carter (1977, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 277; Diana Brown, *Umbanda: Religion and Politics in Urban Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37–46; Renato Ortiz, “Ogum and the Umbandista Religion,” in *Africa’s Ogun: Old World and New*, ed. Sandra T. Barnes, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 91–3; Ortiz, *A morte branca*, 42–43; Lisias Nogueira Negrão, *Entre a cruz e a encruzilhada: formação do campo umbandista em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1996), 65, 67.

<sup>20</sup> José Henrique Motta de Oliveira, *Das macumbas à umbanda: uma análise histórica da construção de uma religião brasileira* (Limeira: Editora do Conhecimento, 2008), 90–91; Alfredo d’Alcântara, *Umbanda em julgamento* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Mundo Espírita, 1949), 164; and Diamantino Fernandes Trindade, *Umbanda e sua história* (São Paulo: Ícone Editora, 1991), 56.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, *Religion and Politics*, 38–41; José Henrique Motta de Oliveira, “Eis que o caboclo veio à terra ‘anunciar’ a umbanda,” *História, imagem e narrativas* 4:2 (2007): 176–188; Oliveira, “Entre a Macumba e o Espiritismo,” 106–16, 160–4; Oliveira, *Das macumbas à umbanda*, 90–102; Alexandre Cumino, *História da umbanda: uma religião brasileira* (São Paulo: Madras, 2010), 137–138.

<sup>22</sup> Emerson Giumbelli, “Zélio de Moraes e as origens da Umbanda no Rio de Janeiro,” in *Caminhos da alma: memória afro-brasileira*, ed. Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (São Paulo: Summus, 2002), 183–217.

<sup>23</sup> Bruno Faria Rohde, “Umbanda, uma religião que não nasceu: breves considerações sobre uma tendência dominante na interpretação do universo umbandista,” *Revista de Estudos da Religião (Rever)* 9 (2009); see Luiz Mott, “O calundu angola de Luzia Pinta: Sabará, 1739,” *Revista IAC* 2 (1994): 73–82. On the relation between the *calundus* and Umbanda more generally see Brígida Carla Malandrino, “‘Há sempre confiança de estar ligado a alguém’: dimensões utópicas das expressões da religiosidade *bantú* no Brasil” (Ph.D. dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2010), 173, 223–230.

- <sup>24</sup> Daniela Buono Calainho, *Metrópole das mandingas: religiosidade negra e inquisição portuguesa no antigo regime* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Garamond, 2008), 87–92.
- <sup>25</sup> Laura de Mello e Souza, “Revisitando o calundu,” <[http://www.historia.fflch.usp.br/sites/historia.fflch.usp.br/files/CALUNDU\\_0.pdf](http://www.historia.fflch.usp.br/sites/historia.fflch.usp.br/files/CALUNDU_0.pdf)>, January 2002, accessed December 2011. See Laura de Mello e Souza, *O diabo e a terra de Santa Cruz* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1986), 355.
- <sup>26</sup> Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti, “Origens, para que as quero? Questões para uma investigação sobre a umbanda,” *Religião e Sociedade* 13:2 (1986), 100.
- <sup>27</sup> Camargo, *Católicos, Protestantes, Espíritas*, 166.
- <sup>28</sup> Douglas Teixeira Monteiro, “Churches, Sects, and Agencies: Aspects of Popular Ecumenism,” *Diogenes* 25 (1977), 48–9, emphasis in original.
- <sup>29</sup> Borges Marquez, *Umbanda sertaneja*, 205.
- <sup>30</sup> For an admirable study of tensions between traditional and bureaucratic forms of leadership, see Yvonne Maggie, *Guerra de orixá: um estudo de ritual e conflito*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1977, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2001).
- <sup>31</sup> Camargo, *Kardecismo e Umbanda*, 53. See also Diane Brown, “O papel histórico da classe média na umbanda,” *Religião e Sociedade* 1 (1977), 38–9.
- <sup>32</sup> Lisias Nogueira Negrão, “A Umbanda como expressão da religiosidade popular,” *Religião e Sociedade* 4 (1979), 178. See also Patrícia Birman, *O que é umbanda?* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983), 94–106.
- <sup>33</sup> There are two senses of “white Umbanda” in the literature: the Kardecist end of the ritual spectrum, and the “pure Umbanda” that allegedly originated with Zélio de Moraes in 1908. I use the former. For brief overviews of differences between Umbanda and Candomblé, see Magnani, *Umbanda*, 29–40, and Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, *Candomblé e umbanda: caminhos da devoção brasileira*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2000, São Paulo: Selo Negro Edições, 2005), 126–127.
- <sup>34</sup> Roger Bastide, “Naissance d’une religion,” in *Religions africains au Brésil: Contribution à une sociologie des interpénétrations de civilisation* (1960, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995), 443.
- <sup>35</sup> Peter Fry, “Manchester e São Paulo: industrialização e religiosidade popular,” *Religião e Sociedade* 3 (1978), 45, 47; Maria Helena Villas Boas Concione, “Caboclos e pretos-velhos da umbanda,” in *Encantaria brasileira: o livro dos mestres, caboclos e encantados*, ed. Reginaldo Prandi (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2001), 282; Fernando Giobellina Brumana and Elda Gonzales Martinez, *Spirits from the Margins: Umbanda in São Paulo* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1989), 45; Patrícia Birman, *Fazer estilo criando gênero: possessão e diferenças de gênero em terreiros de umbanda e candomblé no Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UERJ/Relume Dumará, 1995), 44–5.
- <sup>36</sup> François Laplantine, “Os sistemas de representações da doença e da saúde na umbanda em Fortaleza,” *Comunicações do ISER* 30 (1988), 52.
- <sup>37</sup> Peter Fry, “Homossexualidade masculina e cultos afro-brasileiros,” in *Para inglês ver: identidade e política na cultura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1982), 13. See also Concione, “Caboclos e pretos-velhos,” 284–286; Brumana and Martinez, *Spirits from the Margins*, 40–2.

<sup>38</sup> Reginaldo Prandi, *Os candomblés de São Paulo: a velha magia na metropole nova* (São Paulo: Hucitec/Edusp, 1991), 58.

<sup>39</sup> Esther Pressel, "Spirit Magic in the Social Relations between Men and Women (São Paulo, Brazil)," in *A World of Women: Anthropological Studies of Women in the Societies of the World*, ed. Erika Bourguignon (New York: Praeger, 1980), 123–5.

<sup>40</sup> On patron-client relations, see Shepard Forman and Joyce F. Riegelhaupt, "The Political Economy of Patron-Clientship: Brazil and Portugal Compared," in *Brazil: Anthropological Perspectives. Essays in Honor of Charles Wagley*, ed. Maxine L. Margolis and William E. Carter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979): 379–400.

<sup>41</sup> Fry, "Homossexualidade," 75.

<sup>42</sup> Michel Agier, "Ethnopolitique: racisme, statuts et mouvement noir à Bahia," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 32:125 (1992): 57; Florestan Fernandes, *O negro no mundo dos brancos*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1972, São Paulo: Global Editora, 2007), 65–6, 83–8, 105–17.

<sup>43</sup> Steven Engler, "Ritual Theory and Attitudes to Agency in Brazilian Spirit Possession," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21:4 (2009): 460–492, and Steven Engler, "Brazilian Spirit Possession and Theory of Ritual," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University* (2009): 1–28.

<sup>44</sup> Cesar Romero Jacob, Dora Rodrigues Hees, Philippe Waniez and Violette Brustlein, *Atlas da filiação religiosa e indicadores sociais no Brasil* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2003), 101–5.

<sup>45</sup> Antônio Flávio Pierucci and Reginaldo Prandi, "Religious Diversity in Brazil: Numbers and Perspectives in a Sociological Evaluation," *International Sociology* 15:4 (2000), 633.

<sup>46</sup> Reginaldo Prandi, "As religiões afro-brasileiras e seus seguidores," *Civitas: Revista de Ciências Sociais* 3:1 (2003), 18–9.

<sup>47</sup> Camargo, *Kardecismo e Umbanda*, 99–110; Renato Ortiz, "Ética, poder e política: umbanda, um mito-ideologia," *Religião e Sociedade* 11:3 (1984), 50–1; Paula Montero "A cura mágica na Umbanda," *Comunicações do ISER* 20 (1986): 39–47; Ari Pedro Oro, "Negros e brancos nas religiões afro-brasileiras no Rio Grande do Sul," *Comunicações do ISER* 28 (1988): 33–54.

<sup>48</sup> Negrão, *Entre a cruz e a encruzilhada*, 103–41; Prandi, *Os candomblés de São Paulo*, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Yoshiaki Furuya, "Umbandização dos cultos populares na Amazônia: a integração ao Brasil?" *Senri Ethnological Reports* 1 (1994): 11–59; Luiz Assunção, *O reino dos mestres: a tradição da jurema na umbanda nordestina* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2006), 111–2.

<sup>50</sup> Furuya, "Umbandização," 44.

<sup>51</sup> Reginaldo Prandi and Vagner Gonçalves da Silva, "Axé São Paulo," in *Meu sinal está no teu corpo*, ed. Carlos Eugênio Marcondes Moura (São Paulo: EDICON/EDUSP, 1989), 220–239; Prandi, *Os candomblés de São Paulo*; 74; Reginaldo Prandi, "African Gods in Contemporary Brazil: A Sociological Introduction to Candomblé Today," *International Sociology* 15:4 (2000), 644.

<sup>52</sup> Ângela Cristina Borges Marquez, "Interculturalidade e ciências da religião: reflexões sobre o ensino religioso no norte de Minas Gerais," paper presented

at the annual meeting of the *Sociedade de Teologia e Ciências da Religião* (SOTER), Belo Horizonte, 12 July 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia*, 28–31.

<sup>54</sup> Furuya, “Umbandização,” 17. Attentiveness to variation on this issue raises the possibility (albeit remote) that Negrão was too harsh in taking Brumana and Martinez to task for holding that the *pretos velhos* are minor figures, based on their fieldwork in São Paulo. See Negrão, *Entre a cruz e a encruzilhada*, 34, and Brumana and Martinez, *Spirits from the Margins*, 290.

<sup>55</sup> Ortiz, *A morte branca*, 15; Brown, *Religion and Politics*, 132.

<sup>56</sup> Furuya, “Umbandização,” 45–6.

<sup>57</sup> Ismael Pordeus Jr., “De índio a caboclo: a (re)construção da identidade na umbanda,” in *Sincretismo religioso: o ritual afro. Anais do IV congresso afro-brasileiro*, ed. Tânia Lima (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1994), 113–26; Borges Marquez, *Umbanda sertaneja*, 220, 225, emphasis in original. Borges Marquez traces the trajectory of Umbanda in that region from Kardecist roots in the 1940s, through growing convergence with Candomblé, to its present distinctiveness.

<sup>58</sup> Luis Nicolau Parés, *A formação do candomblé: história e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2007), 138.

<sup>59</sup> Rachel E. Harding, *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), and Parés, *A formação do Candomblé*, 132–138.

<sup>60</sup> Prandi, *Os candomblés de São Paulo*, 91 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Christopher Johnson, “Migrating Bodies, Circulating Signs: Brazilian Candomblé, the Garifuna of the Caribbean, and the Category of Indigenous Religions,” *History of Religions* 41:4 (2002), 313.

<sup>62</sup> Josildeth Gomes Consorte, “Em torno de um manifesto de ialorixás baianas contra o sincretismo,” in *Faces da tradição afro-brasileiro: religiosidade, sincretismo, anti-sincretismo, reafirmação, práticas terapêuticas, etnobotânica e comida*, ed. Carlos Caroso and Jeferson Bacelar, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1999, Rio de Janeiro/Salvador: Pallas/CNPq, 2006), 80.

<sup>63</sup> James Clifford distinguished between “roots hybridity” and “routes hybridity” in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Jonathan Friedman, “From Roots to Routes: Tropes for Trippers,” *Anthropological Theory* 2:1 (2002): 21–36. Peter Wade develops the distinction further in “Rethinking Mestizaje: Ideology and Lived Experience,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 37:2 (2005): 239–257, while Matthias Röhrig Assunção uses the same play on words to draw much the same distinction in a less developed manner in “Brazilian Popular Culture or the Curse and Blessings of Cultural Hybridism,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 24:2 (2005), 162.

<sup>64</sup> Engler, “Umbanda and Hybridity,” 11–20.

<sup>65</sup> See Liana Trindade, *Conflitos sociais e magia* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2000), *passim*; Malandrino, “Há sempre confiança,” *passim*.

<sup>66</sup> I am grateful to Joel E. Tishken for underlining this point.

<sup>67</sup> Malandrino, “Há sempre confiança,” abstract (n. p.).

<sup>68</sup> Robin Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: 'Lucumi' and 'Nago' as Ethnonyms in West Africa," *History in Africa* 24 (1997): 205–219, and Joseph M. Murphy, "Yoruba Religions in Diaspora" *Religion Compass* 4:7 (2010): 400.

<sup>69</sup> Kólá Abimbólá, "Yorùbá Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World*, ed. Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, and Ian A. Skoggard (New York: Springer, 2004), 317–8.

<sup>70</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 267ff.

<sup>71</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic*, 5, 56–7.

<sup>72</sup> Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade," 212–13; Luis Nicolau Parés, "The 'Nagôization' Process in Bahian Candomblé," in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 187; and Parés, *A formação do candomblé*, 25.

<sup>73</sup> Parés, "'Nagôization' Process," 190; João José Reis and Beatriz Gallotti Mamigonian, "Nagô and Mina: The Yoruba Diaspora in Brazil," in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 91; Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 45. On Central Africans, see James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441–1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>74</sup> Parés, "'Nagôization' Process," 185. On nagô dominance see Rodrigues, *Os africanos no Brasil*, 342, 365; Arthur Ramos, *O negro brasileiro, 1<sup>o</sup> volume: etnografia religiosa*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1934, Rio de Janeiro: Graphia Editorial, 2001); Arthur Ramos, *As culturas negras no novo mundo*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (1935, São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1979), 189–201; Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia*, 19, 23; Ruth Landes, "Fetish Worship in Brazil," *The Journal of American Folklore* 53:210 (1940), 268; J. Lorand Matory, "The English Professors of Brazil: On the Diasporic Roots of the Yoruba Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41 (1999), 75–9.

<sup>75</sup> Reis and Mamigonian, "Nagô and Mina," 99–105.

<sup>76</sup> Reis and Mamigonian, "Nagô and Mina," 83, 99; Mariza de Carvalho Soares, "From Gbe to Yoruba: Ethnic Change and the Mina Nation in Rio de Janeiro," in *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, ed. Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 231–47.

<sup>77</sup> Marco Aurélio Luz, "A tradição dos orixás, continuade transatlântica," in *Sincretismo religioso: o ritual afro. Anais do IV congresso afro-brasileiro*, ed. Tânia Lima (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco/Editora Massangana, 1996), 155–162.

<sup>78</sup> Abimbólá, "Yorùbá Diaspora," 318.

<sup>79</sup> See n. 9 supra. On the role of early informants in shaping scholarly views of "pure" Yoruba traditions in Brazil see Stephen Palmié, "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Globalization," in *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essay in Honor of J. D. Y. Peel*, ed. Toyin Falola (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), 43–82.

<sup>80</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 15.

<sup>81</sup> See Steven Engler, "Constructionism vs. What?" *Religion* 34:4 (2004): 291–313, and Steven Engler, "Two Problems with Constructionism in the Study of Religion," *Revista de Estudos da Religião (Rever)* 5 (2005): 28–34.

<sup>82</sup> Murphy, "Yoruba Religions in Diaspora," 407.

- <sup>83</sup> Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 115–48; Stephen Selka, “Mediated Authenticity: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in Brazilian Candomblé,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11:1 (2007), 13.
- <sup>84</sup> Law, “Ethnicity and the Slave Trade,” 205.
- <sup>85</sup> Selka, “Mediated Authenticity,” 7.
- <sup>86</sup> Bastide, “Naissance,” 445–7; Oliveira, *Das macumbas à umbanda*, 114–9; Cumino, *História da umbanda*, 33–79, 204–207; Mario Teixeira de Sá Junior, “A invenção da alva nação umbandista: a relação entre a produção historiográfica brasileira e a sua influência na produção dos intelectuais da umbanda (1840–1960)” (Master’s thesis, Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul, 2004), 77–80.
- <sup>87</sup> Cumino, *História da Umbanda*, 204–210.
- <sup>88</sup> Bastide, “Naissance,” 446; José Henrique Motta de Oliveira, “As estratégias de legitimação da Umbanda durante o Estado Novo: institucionalização e evolucionismo,” *Horizontes* 4 (2007): 133–43; Prandi, *Os candomblés de São Paulo*, 49.
- <sup>89</sup> Yvonne Maggie, “O medo do feitiço: verdade e mentiras sobre a repressão às religiões mediúnicas,” *Religião e Sociedade* 13 (1986): 72–86; Yvonne Maggie, *Medo do feitiço: relações entre magia e poder no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional, 1992), passim; Ana Lúcia Pastore Schritzmeyer, *Sortilégio de saberes: curandeiros e juizes nos tribunais brasileiros (1900–1990)* (São Paulo: IBCCRIM, 2004). 55ff.; and Antonio Carlos Duarte de Carvalho, *Feiticeiros, burlões e mistificadores: criminalidade e mudança das práticas populares de saúde em São Paulo, 1950 a 1980* (São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2005), 121ff.
- <sup>90</sup> Rohde, “Umbanda, uma religião,” 91.
- <sup>91</sup> Rohde, “Umbanda, uma religião,” 85.
- <sup>92</sup> Edison Carneiro, “The Structure of African Cults in Bahia,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 53:210 (1940), 276; Camargo, *Kardecismo e Umbanda*, 34–35; Ortiz, *A morte branca*, 4–45; Diana Brown, “Uma história da umbanda no Rio,” in *Umbanda e Política* (Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1985), 11; Brown, *Umbanda: Religion and Politics*, 38–48; Hale, *Hearing the Mermaid’s Song*, 126.
- <sup>93</sup> Roberto DaMatta, *Relativizando: Uma introdução à antropologia social* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1987), 58–85; Fernandes, *O negro*, 38–48, 59–63; Demétrio Magnoli, *Uma gota de sangue: história do pensamento racial* (São Paulo: Editora Contexto, 2009), 143–62.
- <sup>94</sup> Agier, “Ethnopolitique,” 63, 76; Magnoli, *Uma gota de sangue*, 157–62.
- <sup>95</sup> Paul Cohen, “Was there an Amerindian Atlantic? Reflections on the Limits of a Historiographical Concept,” *History of European Ideas* 34:4 (2008), 408.