

Zumbi and the Voices of the Emergent Public Memory of Slavery and Resistance in Brazil

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RESÜMEE

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Entwicklung der öffentlichen Erinnerung an Sklaverei in Brasilien. Er versucht zu verstehen, warum Sklaverei nach und nach im öffentlichen Raum sichtbar wird. Bei der Untersuchung der Initiativen zur Förderung des materiellen und immateriellen Erbes der Sklaverei widmet der Text der Erinnerung an den Widerstand gegen die Sklaverei, verkörpert durch Zumbi, den Anführer des quilombo Palmares, der größten und dauerhaftesten Sklavenfluchtsiedlung, besondere Aufmerksamkeit. Er belegt die wachsende Präsenz von Sklaven und Sklavinnen, die gegen die Sklaverei gekämpft haben, im öffentlichen Raum als Teil eines umfassenderen Phänomens, das in verschiedenen Städten der Karibik und Lateinamerikas erkennbar ist. Der Beitrag schließt damit zu zeigen, dass die wachsende Zahl von Denkmälern für Zumbi in Brasilien nicht nur aus dem Bedürfnis entspringt, schwarze historische Akteure sichtbar zu machen, sondern auch das Ergebnis der Forderungen ist, gegenwärtige soziale und ethnische Ungleichheiten zu beenden.

Brazil imported the largest number of Africans in all of the Americas and was also the last country in the American continent to abolish slavery. After the end of slavery, the majority of the descendants of Africans who were deported to Brazil remained economically and socially excluded. As in the rest of the Americas, Europe, and Africa, emerging initiatives highlighting the memory of slavery in the Brazilian public space has largely resulted from the political struggle of Afro-Brazilian actors seeking social justice. Through popular festivals, music, visual arts, and religion, various black groups have promoted the connections between Brazil and Africa. However, in Brazilian cities with large populations of African descent, including Salvador (Bahia) and Rio de Janeiro, the memory of slavery was restricted to the private sphere or to specific occasions and places, by remaining largely absent from the public space.

Despite the increasing visibility given to slavery in the international arena, Brazilian initiatives commemorating and memorializing slavery are recent and scarce. The absence of monuments and museums specifically dedicated to slavery that persisted until recent years in Brazil indicates how difficult it has been for the nation to deal with its slave past, because most individuals of African descent, which today constitute more than 50 percent of the total population, still occupy the lower ranks of Brazilian society. In addition, Afro-Brazilians do not wish to be constantly identified with a negative image of victimhood, embodying the tragedy experienced by their ancestors.

In the first section of this paper, I explain how the memory of slavery remained confined to the private sphere and concealed in Brazilian public space. The second section then examines some public and private initiatives promoting tangible and intangible heritage of slavery in various Brazilian cities, especially in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Finally, the third section discusses the impact of the international rise of the public memory of slavery in Brazil. I seek to understand how slavery gradually started gaining visibility in the public space by giving particular attention to the public memory of resistance against slavery, embodied by Zumbi, the leader of Palmares *quilombo*, the largest and longest lasting Brazilian runaway slave community. I show that the emphasis on slave rebels and maroons is not particular to Brazil, but part of a broader Latin American and Caribbean context, in which the visibility of the populations of African descent is growing. Consequently, the images of enslaved men and women are no longer simply equated with those of the victims, but rather with the image of slave fighters and resisters.

Slavery in Brazilian Public Memory

The abolition of slavery in Brazil consisted of a long process involving various factors. Enslaved men and women fought against slavery by running away, creating fugitive slave communities, organizing rebellions, and purchasing their freedom and the freedom of their relatives. When slavery was finally outlawed in 1888, the Brazilian state did not provide land, employment, or education to the newly emancipated men and women. In the rural areas, most former slaves continued working for their former masters for little or no wages, whereas others moved to urban areas in search of better living conditions and work opportunities.¹

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Brazilian intellectual and economic elites increasingly promoted whitening policies. Based on eugenic arguments, the idea of whitening aimed to slowly eliminate the African component of the Brazilian population.² Following the abolition of slavery, Brazilian monarchy and the rural elites encour-

1 R. Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery, 1850–1888*, Berkeley 1972.

2 There is a large literature on Brazilian whitening policies. Among others, see M. Corrêa, *Ilusões da liberdade: a escola Nina Rodrigues e a antropologia no Brasil*, Bragança 1998, and L. M. Schwarcz, *O espetáculo das raças; cientistas, instituições e questões raciais no Brasil*, São Paulo 1993. More recently, see A. A. Romo, *Brazil's Living Museum: Race, Reform, and Tradition in Bahia*, Chapel Hill 2010, and P. Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil*, Chapel Hill 2011.

aged the immigration of Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German workers to gradually replace the slave workforce of the coffee plantations in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. From 1884 to 1893, almost one million European immigrants arrived in Brazil. Although European immigration contributed to increase the country's white and mixed population, whitening policies were not successful.³

The whitening policies and the myth of the three races – sustaining that Brazil was formed by the balanced contribution of three human groups (indigenous, Europeans and Africans) – which had emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century, helped to promote the idea that Brazilian society was essentially mixed and characterized by harmonious racial relations.⁴ During the 1940s, these ideas of racial mixture and racial harmony were embodied in the term “racial democracy,” an ideology that overtime basically denied the existence of racism and racial inequalities.⁵ In the 1950s, the image of Brazil as a “racial laboratory” or a “laboratory of civilization” was disseminated abroad, especially through the work of Brazilian physician and anthropologist Arthur Ramos (1903–1949), who in 1949 became the director of the Department of Social Sciences of UNESCO. In this same year, the fourth session of the General Conference of UNESCO approved a major initiative to fight racism and in 1950 the fifth session of UNESCO's General Conference approved a study of racial relations in Brazil.⁶ Just a few years after the Holocaust, in a period when racism and segregation persisted in the United States and had become state doctrine in South Africa, UNESCO's aim was to explain how Brazil succeeded in producing racial harmony. Eventually, the monographs produced by scholars who participated in the UNESCO study, including Florestan Fernandes, Roger Bastide, Harry W. Hutchinson and Charles Wagley concluded that despite the appearance of racial tolerance Brazil was a country marked by the existence of racial and social inequalities instead of harmonious racial relations.⁷

The debates on racial relations initiated in the 1950s intensified in the 1960s. During the military regime (1964–1985) the idea of racial democracy was gradually transformed into an ideology of the Brazilian state. In the 1960s, Florestan Fernandes was the first Brazilian scholar who systematically criticized racial democracy, influencing subsequent

3 See among others T. H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934*, Chapel Hill 1980, and G. R. Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1988*, Madison 1991, especially chapter 3.

4 On the idea of racial harmony, see G. Freyre, *Casa-grande & senzala*, Rio de Janeiro 2003 [1933]. On the myth of the three races see L. M. Schwarcz, *Le complexe de Zé Carioca: notes sur une certaine identité métisse et malandra*, in: *Lusotopie* (1997), pp. 249–266, on p. 253 and Ana Lucia Araujo, *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic*, Amherst 2010, p. 213.

5 See A. S. A. Guimarães, *Racismo and anti-racismo no Brasil*, São Paulo 1999, p. 62; A. S. A. Guimarães, ‘Depois da democracia racial’, in: *Tempo Social*, in: *Revista de Sociologia da USP*, 18, (2006) 2, pp. 269–287, on p. 269.

6 See UNESCO, *The Race Question*, Paris 1950, and Alfred Métraux, *Une enquête sur les relations raciales au Brésil*, in: *Le Courier*, Publication de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture 8-9, August–September, 1952, pp. 6.

7 R. Bastide and F. Fernandes, *Branços e negros em São Paulo; ensaio sociológico sobre aspectos da formação, manifestações atuais e efeitos do preconceito de cor na sociedade paulistana*, São Paulo 1959.

studies on racial relations.⁸ Since then, despite the growing number of studies on racial relations developed by Brazilian scholars and the Afro-Brazilians' struggle against racism, the myth of three races and the ideology of racial democracy, also sustained by the idea of *mestiçagem* (racial mixture) remain fully alive in Brazil. However, the end of the military dictatorship in 1985 and the commemoration activities of the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1988 contributed to the emergence of important initiatives aiming to fight racial inequalities and make the memory of slavery and the roles of Afro-Brazilian historical actors visible in public space.

In 1978, the creation of the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement) led to organization of several local festivals commemorating Zumbi, the black leader who was assassinated in 1695 by the Portuguese army that then destroyed the *quilombo* after decades of successful resistance.⁹ In 1983, the Brazilian black movement organized several activities on November 20 to celebrate the anniversary of the death of Zumbi as well. These activities intensified in 1988 with the commemoration activities of the centenary of Brazilian abolition of slavery. As part of the celebrations, various conferences and exhibits were organized, and numerous scholarly books focusing on Brazilian slavery were published. In addition, the government created the Fundação Cultural Palmares (Palmares Cultural Foundation) to promote and preserve Brazilian black heritage. The year 1988 was marked by the approval of the new Brazilian democratic constitution that established for the first time that racism was a crime. Article 68 of the Act of the Transitory Constitutional Disposals law, also determined that remnants of *quilombo* communities had the right to ownership of land they occupied.

Following these first initiatives, during the 1990s affirmative action had become a crucial element in the fight against racism. In 1995, the 300th anniversary of the death of Zumbi was widely celebrated all over the country. Since then, the Brazilian black movement has replaced the commemoration of May 13, the day of the signature of the 'Golden Law' abolishing slavery, with the commemoration of November 20, which in 2003 officially became National Black Consciousness Day. This change was the result of a process that transformed the official narrative of Brazilian slavery and its abolition. Hence, Afro-Brazilians are depicted as men and women who fought for their freedom and not as passive and grateful victims who received the gift of freedom from the royal heiress.

Heritage of Slavery

Although in Brazil African heritage is deeply intertwined with the tangible and intangible heritage of slavery, the valorisation of African culture is a recent trend, which is part

8 See F. Fernandes, *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes*. São Paulo 1965. See also F. H. Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão no Brasil meridional: o negro na sociedade escravocrata do Rio Grande do Sul*, São Paulo 1962. Anani Dzidziyeno was the first African American sociologist to discuss racism in Brazil. See A. Dzidziyeno, *The Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society*, London 1971, and A. S. A. Guimarães, *Preconceito de cor e racismo no Brasil*, in: *Revista de Antropologia*, 47, (2004) 1, pp. 9-43, on p. 25.

9 See Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*, p. 217.

of the international rise of the public memory of slavery in Europe, Africa, and other countries of the Americas in the last twenty years. Initiatives promoting African heritage in the Americas and slavery sites in Africa are very often associated with the development of tourist initiatives that have been receiving increasing support from international agencies such as UNESCO, especially through The Slave Route project launched in 1994.¹⁰ In the public context, memory is not a simple issue of transmission. It is also related to the various forms different groups (including governments, official agencies, and NGOs) with particular political and economic interests fight to occupy the public space.

Today men and women of African descent are the majority of the Brazilian population. Despite this fact, Afro-Brazilian presence has been largely neglected in public official written and visual narratives since the colonial period. Except in the works of foreign artists who started visiting Brazil in the seventeenth century, black enslaved women and men were rarely portrayed in Academic painting and until the end of the nineteenth century they barely appeared in literary works.¹¹ The abolition of slavery did not change this situation. On the contrary, the official narrative of the abolition in Brazil focused on the redeemer Princess Isabel (1846–1921), who signed the Golden Law abolishing slavery on May 13, 1888, and not on black historical actors.

In the early twentieth century even though the emergence of a modernist movement in visual arts and literature introduced a growing number of representations of black individuals, with the rise of the whitening theory, the *mestiço* (mixed-race person) became the symbol of the Brazilian nation, concealing and diluting black presence in favour of celebrating *mestiçagem*. Consequently, over the first half of the twentieth century, few monuments and museums highlighted the Afro-Brazilian presence, including the monument to *Mãe Preta* (Black Mother) unveiled in São Paulo in 1955, the Museu do Negro (Black Museum) created in Rio de Janeiro in 1960, and the Museu Afro-Brasileiro (Afro-Brazilian Museum) unveiled in Salvador (Bahia) in 1982.¹²

In Brazil, as in other slave societies, enslaved men and women and their descendants preserved a collective memory of slavery, but these recollections were often scarce and usually remained among the members of the family, restricted to the private sphere and small circles. In these groups in which the chain of transmission was not totally disrupted, personal and collective memories remained alive in various instances, including Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé,¹³ and cultural traditions, including different forms of

10 See The Slave Route project, http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=25659&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html [accessed 5 August, 2011].

11 See A. L. Araujo, Gender, Sex and Power: Images of the Enslaved Women's Bodies, in Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (eds.), *Sexuality and Slavery: The Carnal Dynamics of Enslavement*, Athens, forthcoming.

12 On Museu do Negro, see M. Wood, The Museu do Negro in Rio and the Cult of Anastácia as a New Model for the Memory of Slavery, in: *Representations*, 113 (2011), pp. 111–149. On the Monument to Mãe Preta, see Alberto, *Terms of Inclusion*, p. 209–211.

13 Candomblé is an "Afro-Brazilian religion of divination, sacrifice, healing, music, dance and spirit possession," see J. L. Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, NJ, and Oxford 2005, p. 1. Candomblé temples were traditionally organized according to the orixás (Yoruba 'deities') and 'nations' (Mina, Jeje, Nagô, Congo, Angola, etc.), usually associated with the broad regi-

dance and music.¹⁴ During the first half of the twentieth century, Afro-Brazilian religious festivals and Brazilian Carnival were among the exceptional occasions when Afro-Brazilian historical actors were celebrated in the public arena. Since the early 1930s the themes of each *escola de samba* became more sophisticated.¹⁵ Actually, the lyrics and themes developed by Rio de Janeiro samba schools since the end of the 1950s featured slavery themes and celebrated Afro-Brazilian historical actors who resisted slavery. Among them were not only Zumbi, but also other individuals who were freed by their masters or who were able to buy their freedom, like the Brazilian-born freedwoman Chica da Silva and the legendary character Chico Rei. In the 1970s, the growing importance of Afro-Brazilian actors in Rio de Janeiro's school of samba parades, was accompanied by the increasing visibility of Bahian Carnival which started gaining attention from the mass media. A new positive black identity, usually in connection with the African American movement for civil rights, emerged in Bahia, where new Carnival and cultural groups (*blocos*) such as *Ilê Aiyê*, *Olodum*, *Malê Debalê*, and *Timbalada* publicly asserted blackness through the promotion of Afro-Brazilian culture. During Bahian Carnival, these *blocos* often presented in their parades themes underlining slave resistance in Brazil.¹⁶

Until the end of the 1980s, Carnival, along with some religious festivals, remained one of the only occasions in which slavery appeared in the public arena. However, during this period, following the growing visibility of the Brazilian black movement, the way slavery was depicted in Carnival parades changed. Although in other important areas of Brazilian popular culture, like television, idealized representations of slavery continued to predominate, the early celebratory representations of the abolition of slavery, seen as a gift given by Princess Isabel, along with the figures of Black Mother, were slowly replaced with representations of Afro-Brazilian historical actors who fought slavery or who were successful in gaining their freedom.

In Brazil, intangible heritage of slavery remains alive both in the rural and urban areas, especially among the numerous communities of *quilombo* remnants (*quilombolas*), a category that includes groups of descendants of former enslaved individuals who occupy the same land and who share common identity elements.¹⁷ As in the past, these communities convey the memory and the heritage of slavery in processes engaging 'with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present.'¹⁸ In

on of embarkation of enslaved Africans. In addition to Matory's book more recent studies include S. Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé*, Durham 2010 and L. N. Parés, *A Formação do Candomblé – História e Ritual da Nação Jeje na Bahia*, Campinas 2007.

14 On how slavery is embodied in dance and ritual see R. Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*, Chicago 2002 and A. Brivio, *Foreign Vodun: Memories of Slavery and Colonial Encounter in Togo and Benin*, in A. L. Araujo (ed.), *Living History: Encountering the Memory of the Heirs of Slavery*, Newcastle, 2009, pp. 245-268.

15 J. N. Green, *Beyond Carnival. Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*, Chicago 2001, p. 27.

16 See M. Agier, *Anthropologie du carnaval: la ville, la fête et l'Afrique à Bahia*, Marseille 2000.

17 Today the communities defined as remnants of *quilombos* comprise not only the lands originally occupied by runaway slave communities but also the lands obtained through purchase, heritage, donation, or simply occupation.

18 L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, London/New York 2006, p. 44.

this context, *quilombola* communities interpret and represent the past in various ways,¹⁹ through Candomblé and Catholic ceremonies and festivals, music, and dance performances like *jongo*, the practice of 'playing stick' or in martial arts such as *capoeira*.²⁰ During the 2000s an increasing number of Candomblé temples, most of which were already important tourist landmarks, were officially included by the IPHAN (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional/ National Historical and Artistic) in the list of national heritage.²¹ In 2008 *capoeira* was listed as intangible national heritage as well. This recent recognition is marking an important change, as Candomblé and *capoeira* were extensively repressed by the Brazilian state until the end of the 1950s, and continued to be marginalized and ascribed to the poor Afro-Brazilian population during the second half of the twentieth century.

For the eyes that want to see, Brazilian slave past is visible through its tangible heritage including the *charqueadas* (salted meat factories) of Rio Grande do Sul, the former coffee plantations of the Paraíba Valley, or the former sugar plantations and sugar mills of the Northeast region. In the Paraíba Valley and Rio Grande do Sul some estates were restored and transformed into hotels. In the Fazenda Ponte Alta (Barra do Piraí, Rio de Janeiro) and the Charqueada São João in Rio Grande do Sul, the original slave quarters were preserved. The Fazenda Santa Clara (Valença, Rio de Janeiro), one of the largest coffee producers of the region, which held 2,800 slaves, is visited by hundreds of tourists each year. However, these privately owned initiatives do not aim to emphasize the slave past of the region and are still perceived as rural tourism. Most of these rural sites are owned by local families and were adapted to receive tourists who can visit the property, stay for one or two nights, celebrate marriage and anniversaries, and also visit the buildings of the former slave quarters or the sites where enslaved men or women were beaten to death. Even though in some visits it is mentioned that enslaved men and women were responsible of running these large states, most sites are organized to emphasize the wealth of their owners and the luxury of their 'European' lifestyles.

Likewise, in the urban areas of former slave ports such as Recife, and Rio de Janeiro, very few heritage or touristic initiatives focus on the slave past. Until some years ago, the old port zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the city downtown area, was abandoned and the populations still living in that area remained neglected by the public authorities. Whereas parts of the Salvador port neighbourhood are neglected, other areas where enslaved

19 M. K. Smith, *Issues in Cultural Tourism Studies*, London / New York 2009, p. 79.

20 Jongo is an Afro-Brazilian dance and music manifestation, found particularly in Brazilian South East region. For more information, see S. H. Lara and G. Pacheco (eds.), *Memória do Jongo: As Gravações Históricas de Stanley J. Stein: Vassouras 1949*, Rio de Janeiro: Edições Folha Seca, 2007) and the documentary *Jongo, Calangos e Folias: Música Negra, Memória e Poesia* (2008), by H. Mattos and M. Abreu, <http://ufftube.uff.br/video/9RBAHO8O6474/Jongos-Calangos-e-Folias-M%C3%BAsica-Negra-Mem%C3%B3ria-e-Poesia> [accessed August 5, 2011]. On "playing stick," see the documentary *Versos e Cacetes: O Jogo do pau na cultura afro-fluminense* (2007) by M. R. Assunção and H. Mattos, <http://ufftube.uff.br/video/G2SY2DSB1KSS/Versos-e-Cacetes-O-jogo-do-pau-na-cultura-afro-fluminense> [accessed August 15, 2011].

21 It is important to note that a Candomblé temple such as Casa Branca (Salvador, Bahia) was included in 1986 by the IPHAN in the list of Brazilian national heritage.

men, women, and children disembarked were transformed into elegant restaurants and expensive apartment buildings with a great view to the Bay of All Saints. In both cases, the various slavery landmarks do not contain any kind of plaque or stone indicating the role they played during the period of Brazilian slavery.

Although several museums, especially in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, are partially or sometimes entirely dedicated to African arts, religions and traditions, until 2011 a museum specifically dedicated to slavery had not yet been created in Brazil. Several public and private museums all over the country—including the Museu da Inconfidência (Ouro Preto, Minas Gerais), the Museu do Escravo (Belo Vale, Minas Gerais), the Museu de Artes e Ofícios (Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais), the Museu Imperial de Petrópolis (Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro), the Museu Histórico Nacional (Rio de Janeiro), the Museu do Negro (Rio de Janeiro), the Museu da Cidade (Salvador, Bahia), the Museu Náutico da Bahia and the Museu Júlio de Castilhos (Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul)—contain objects and sometimes one or two rooms dedicated to slavery. However, the issue of slavery is almost never directly addressed. The Atlantic slave trade frequently appears under the topic of ‘trade’ and slavery is almost always referred to as being part of the general colonial context of ‘labour’. The permanent exhibitions presented in these institutions do not provide any detailed account of the Luso-Brazilian slave trade and slavery and do not explain the past and present consequences of slavery in Brazil. Instead, most of the exhibitions follow old museography, trends that do not require the spectator’s participation. These exhibits usually display nineteenth-century European iconography, especially the reproductions of lithographs by Jean-Baptiste Debret (1768–1848), depicting daily Brazilian slave life, especially physical punishments. The Museu Júlio de Castilhos, like some other Brazilian museums, displays instruments used to torture enslaved men and women. Although these objects and images inform the visitor about the cruelty of slavery, which was a crucial institution in Rio Grande do Sul and not only in more well-known Brazilian states such as Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, they reduce the image of Afro-Brazilians to victimised individuals by failing to indicate their crucial role in the construction of the Brazilian nation.²² In the Museu da Cidade the presentation of slave life is limited to few glass displays containing miniatures depicting enslaved men and women performing different activities in the urban and rural areas. This same approach can also be found in the Museu Histórico Nacional, although its permanent exhibition was recently redesigned, inscribing the Luso-Brazilian slave trade in the international context.

In 2004 the Museu AfroBrasil was founded in the city of São Paulo to promote African arts, culture, and heritage. Despite providing information on slavery from the point of view of the Afro-Brazilian population, the museum’s curator Emanuel Araújo refused to make slavery the central aspect of the museum.²³ In the last twenty years, through

22 On the images and narratives that emphasize the suffering of the Brazilian black population see M. S. dos Santos, ‘The Repressed Memory of Brazilian Slavery’, in: *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11 (2008) 2, pp. 157–175.

23 See K. Cleveland, *The Art of Memory: São Paulo’s AfroBrazil Museum*, in: A. L. Araujo (ed.), *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, New York 2012, forthcoming.

the initiative of Afro-Brazilian communities, an increasing number of local community museums were created all over the country to promote Brazilian black history. However, these small and young institutions are not always engaged in constructing an alternative narrative of Brazilian slavery. Lacking the appropriate resources to survive, they remain unstable, and have to keep their focus on the development of educational activities such as workshops of Afro-Brazilian dance, music, arts and cuisine.²⁴

Over the last fifteen years several slavery sites were discovered in Rio de Janeiro's Gamboa neighbourhood, close the city's old port. In 1996, an archaeological excavation in a private property at 36 Pedro Ernesto Street (former Cemitério Street) revealed a burial ground containing bone fragments of dozens of African enslaved men, women, and children. Known as Cemitério dos Pretos Novos, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thousands of African men, women, and children were buried in this site which was situated close to the Valongo wharf and slave market, where from 1780 to 1831 thousands of enslaved Africans disembarked when the Atlantic slave trade was still legal in Brazil, and where the largest Rio de Janeiro slave market was located between 1818 and 1830.²⁵ This site was described in detail by the numerous travellers who visited Rio de Janeiro during the nineteenth century, including Maria Graham (1785–1842)²⁶ and Robert Walsh (1772–1852).²⁷ French artist Jean-Baptiste Debret also described the market and one of its ware-rooms in the text accompanying his lithograph 'Boutique de la Rue Val-Longo' published in his *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil* (1834–1835).²⁸ Between 1824 and 1830 alone – before the Cemetery of Pretos Novos was closed because of the official ban on the Brazilian slave trade – more than 6,000 newly arrived Africans were buried at the site.²⁹

Despite the numerous descriptions of the Valongo slave market in travel accounts, the exact location of the wharf remained unknown for over a century, and even historians and archaeologists believed that it could have been destroyed. Actually, in 1843, the wharf underwent major works and was renamed 'Empress Wharf' to receive the Empress Teresa Cristina who arrived in Brazil that same year to marry the Brazilian emperor Dom Pedro II. As Jaime Rodrigues points out, the renewal works and the new name given to the wharf were intended to conceal the slave past of the site, replacing it with a celebratory memory of Brazilian monarchy. In March 2011 – as part of the project 'Rio

24 On these Afro-Brazilian community museums see, F. Saillant and P. Simonard, 'Afro-Brazilian Heritage and Slavery in Rio de Janeiro Community Museums', in: A. L. Araujo (ed.), *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, New York 2012, forthcoming.

25 J. Rodrigues, *De Costa a Costa: Escravos, marinheiros e intermediários do tráfico negreiro de Angola ao Rio de Janeiro (1780–1860)*, São Paulo 2005, pp. 298–299.

26 Maria [Graham] Callcot, *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence there during 1821, 1822, 1823*, London 1824, Project Gutenberg: <http://gutenberg.org/etext/21201> [accessed 5 August, 2011].

27 R. Walsh, *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829*, London 1830, pp. 323–324.

28 J.-B. Debret, *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil*, Paris 1834–1839, vol. 2, plate 23.

29 On the cemetery of Pretos Novos, see Portal Arqueológico dos Pretos Novos, <http://www.pretosnovos.com.br/> [accessed 5 August, 2011]. See also the documentary *Memories on the Edge of Oblivion* (2010), by A. Cicalo, <http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/socialanthropology/visualanthropology/archive/phdmphil/> [accessed 5 August, 2011].

de Janeiro: Porto Maravilha' ('Rio de Janeiro: Wonderful Port') aiming at recuperating the city's old port especially in view of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games – drainage works were undertaken in the region.³⁰ At this occasion the ruins of Valongo wharf, which had been totally hidden first by the granite blocks of the Empress Wharf, then by an embankment built during the major urban reform led by the mayor Pereira Passos in the early 1900s, and finally by the Avenue Barão de Tefé, were eventually rediscovered. The excavations also recovered numerous African artefacts, including ceramic pipes, cowries employed in religious practices, and buttons made of animal bones. Reacting to the discovery, the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, Eduardo Paes, stated that the ruins of Valongo quay are 'our Roman ruins', and promised that a memorial to exhibit the findings would be created in the Valongo garden at Morro da Conceição, in the port zone.³¹

Salvador has the largest population of African descent in Brazil. In the city, usually depicted by Bahian tourism authorities as the 'capital of joy' and where tourists are received with the slogan '*sorria você está na Bahia*' ('smile you are in Bahia'), there are several heritage buildings associated with the region's history of slavery. Among these sites is the Solar do Unhão, a former sugar mill set on the waterfront of the Bay of All Saints. The site comprises several buildings, including a church, some of them dating back to the seventeenth century. In 1943 the site and some of its buildings that conserved original elements were registered in the list of national historical heritage by the IPHAN.³² In 1963, the state government of Bahia acquired the entire site. The buildings were restored to house the Museu de Arte e Tradições Populares (Museum of Art and Popular Traditions). In 1966 the Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (Bahia Modern Art Museum) was relocated at the site and since then its permanent and temporary exhibitions occupy the various buildings. In 1993 these buildings were again renovated. In the basement of the main three-story building there is a pier and a *senzala* (slave quarter), which has a direct access to the sea. The *senzala's* floor is fully preserved, and between 1967 and 2007, a touristic restaurant occupied it. In the restaurant, the same location where enslaved men and women used to live, the tourists could eat 'typical' Bahian food and be served by waitresses dressed like 'baianas', i.e. black women street vendors. Whereas there was no plaque indicating that the restaurant was originally a *senzala*, during the meals tourists could attend demonstrations of *capoeira* and other stereotyped performances of Afro-Brazilian dance.³³ In 2007, when Solange Farkas became the museum's director, the touristic

30 See Rio de Janeiro: Porto Maravilha, <http://www.portomaravilhario.com.br/> [accessed 5 August, 2011]. A video on the project is available at <http://vimeo.com/8096894> [accessed 5 August, 2011].

31 R. Daflon, Ruínas nos Subterrâneos do Porto Maravilha: Escavações de obra de drenagem da Zona Portuária encontram restos do cais da Imperatriz e do Valongo, *O Globo*, online edition, March 1, 2011, <http://oglobo.globo.com/rio/mat/2011/03/01/escavacoes-de-obra-de-drenagem-da-zona-portuaria-encontram-restos-dos-cais-da-imperatriz-do-valongo-923909746.asp> [accessed 5 August, 2011].

32 See IPHAN, Process no. 1069-T-82, Livro de Belas Artes, Inscription 288-A, September 16, 1943, and Livro Histórico, Inscription 220, September 16, 1943.

33 *Capoeira* is an Afro-Brazilian martial art, combining dance and music. See M. R. Assunção, *Capoeira: The History of an Afro-Brazilian Martial Art*, London and New York 2002.

restaurant was closed. The *senzala* was transformed into an art gallery, and a new café was opened in the adjacent area close to the pier. Every week the museum also presents live music performances. The music played is not traditional Brazilian music but instead jazz and hip-hop. Although tourists and local visitors still can associate the site with a *senzala*, there was no effort to add any plaque with information about the site. Very probably the government of the state of Bahia does not wish to highlight this unpleasant aspect of the architectural ensemble, perhaps to not disturb the ‘beauty’ of the site.

Like the Solar do Unhão’s *senzala*, it is not uncommon to listen stories about the basement of the present-day Salvador’s central market, known as Mercado Modelo. Indeed, the original central market was located in another site close to the current location, but in 1969 a fire destroyed the early building. In 1971, the market moved to the present-day three-story building – constructed between 1843 and 1861 to function as the customs house – which was abandoned and vacant since 1958.³⁴ In 1984, following a huge fire, the building was renovated and the basement was discovered, rehabilitated, and opened to the public. Because the basement is located at the sea level and is often flooded by the sea, there is a popular belief that the site housed a slave prison or yet a slave depot, where enslaved men and women were gathered together before being sold. Until today locals report that the laments of enslaved persons who were held in the basement can be heard during the night. Although the relation between a customs building and a slave depot is logical, after 1831 the slave trade to Brazil was outlawed. Even though thousands of enslaved Africans continued to enter the country until the early 1850s, they could not be disembarked in the Salvador’s main port area and gathered in a public building in the Lower Town. The legend however is a good example of how the local Afro-Brazilian population deals with the lack of visible and official marks indicating the existence of slavery sites in Salvador. From this erasure, relying on existing images and recollections, Afro-Bahians developed a new story, by inventing and imagining where these sites were located and what kind of activities were performed in these places.

Commemorating Slave Fighters and Rebels

The fight of Afro-Brazilian organized groups to make the memory of slavery visible in the public space was a long process that gained some importance during the 1960s, but which was drastically interrupted by the military coup in 1964. In 1974, four years before the creation of the Unified Black Movement, the Brazilian composer and singer Jorge Ben composed the song *Zumbi*. The song’s video clip was showed on *Fantástico*, Brazil’s most popular television show broadcasted on Sundays. The clip mixed images of nineteenth-century European travel accounts depicting slave markets and physical punishments inflicted on enslaved men and women in Brazil with images of a perfor-

34 The information on the dates of construction can vary. See Paulo O. de Azevedo, *A Alfândega e o Mercado, Memória e Restauração*, Salvador 1985.

mance by black actors and actresses dressed in white and breaking their chains. Despite the chaos depicted in the play, the image of black individuals breaking chains conveyed through the performance was powerful and also representative of a period when the opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorship was growing. The song's refrain – 'I want to see what will happen/ When Zumbi arrives/ Zumbi is the Lord of war/Zumbi is the lord of demands/When Zumbi arrives/It is he who commands,' not only reinforced the image of Zumbi as a black warrior of the past, but connected him to the persisting fight against social and racial inequalities led by black Brazilians.³⁵

In 1984 the Brazilian filmmaker Carlos Diegues—a member of the movement Cinema Novo ('New Cinema of Brazil') that created films featuring Brazilian social problems—brought slavery and slave resistance to the big screen with his film *Quilombo*. The film gave continuity to his *Ganga Zumba*, released in 1963. In *Quilombo*, Zumbi is depicted as a warrior and a hero. Unlike Ganga Zumba, who capitulated to the enemy forces, Zumbi fought the Portuguese to defend the *quilombo*. Refusing to die at the hands of the Portuguese army, he committed suicide, by jumping off the mountain.

If until few years ago, Brazil had few public monuments commemorating slavery, today the country has numerous monuments commemorating Zumbi of Palmares. Zumbi became the quintessential symbol of the fight against slavery and racism. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the commemoration of slave fighters in the public space was not a specific feature of Brazil. In 1967, during the government of François Chevalier in Haiti, a statue commemorating the unknown maroon was unveiled in front of the National Palace in Port-au-Prince. The statue of the maroon contributed to inscribe black nationalism in the official memory of Haiti.³⁶ In the following years several other monuments commemorating maroons were unveiled in Caribbean and Latin American countries. In 1976 a statue in homage to the maroon El Yanga was unveiled in the municipality of Yanga (state of Veracruz), in Mexico. In 1985 a statue commemorating Bussa, the leader of the 1816 rebellion was unveiled in Saint-Michael, Barbados. In 1991, a monument to the slave rebel was created in Matanzas, Cuba to commemorate the enslaved men and women who participated in the Triunvirato rebellion. In 1997, a monument '*al Cimarron, a la memoria de la rebeldia esclava*' ('to the maroon, to the memory of slave revolt') was inaugurated in Cuba, a trend that continued in the following years. In 2003 a statue in homage of the slave rebel José Chirino was created in the municipality of Coro, in Venezuela. The creation of these various public monuments in homage to slave rebels and maroons is both the consequence of postcolonial fights in the Caribbean and the growing visibility acquired by Afro-Latinos in South America.

35 See Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*, p. 217; Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil*, Middletown 2000, p. 71; and C. Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture*, Chapel Hill 2000, p. 178.

36 See D. Béchacq, *Le parcours du marronage dans l'histoire haïtienne: entre instrumentalisation politique et réinterprétation sociale, Haïti face au Passé*, special issue edited by Carlo Célius, in: *Ethnologies*, 28 (2006), pp. 203-240.

The decline of the military regime and the first democratic elections for governor, senator, and deputies at the federal and state level in 1982, allowed black Brazilian activists, such as Abdias Nascimento (1914–2011) to be elected to the National Congress. As a deputy between 1983 and 1987, Nascimento was a pioneer not only in proposing a law to make the anniversary of Zumbi's death a national holiday but also by submitting a second project to create a memorial to the unknown slave at Praça dos Três Poderes in Brasília. Although these two projects were never approved, their very existence indicates that already in the early 1980s the Brazilian black movement was concerned with creating permanent public places to pay homage to black historical actors. Despite this concern, the first monument commemorating a slave rebel in Brazil was unveiled in 1986, after the end of the military dictatorship. The bronze statue of Zumbi, a replica of a head from the Kingdom of Benin from the collections of the British Museum, is located in the central square of Presidente Vargas Avenue in Rio de Janeiro.³⁷

Other monuments celebrating Zumbi were erected across a number of Brazilian cities during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2002 a full-body statue of Zumbi was unveiled in the downtown area of Duque de Caxias, a city in the region of Baixada Fluminense, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In May 2009, also in the state of Rio de Janeiro, a bust of Zumbi was unveiled in the city of Petrópolis. In the same state, monuments in cities such as Volta Redonda, Búzios, Três Rios and Campo Grande honoured Zumbi. In addition, all over the country, squares were named for Zumbi in cities such as Araras in São Paulo and Curitiba in Paraná. Brasília, the capital of the country, also has a square named Zumbi with a bust of the *quilombo* leader. The plaque at the base of the monument reads 'Zumbi, the black leader of all races'.³⁸ Also in Brasília, on March 21 1997, the name of Zumbi was added to the Book of National Heroes, a steel book containing the names of several Brazilian male historical figures, located at the monument Panteão da Pátria e da Liberdade Tancredo Neves (Tancredo Neves Pantheon of Homeland and Freedom), unveiled in 1986 at the Praça dos Três Poderes.³⁹

Despite these initiatives, until the 2000s, the city of Salvador did not unveil any notable public monument focusing on its slave past. Instead the city chose to highlight its connections with Africa without necessarily emphasizing slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. In the historic city centre, there is not a single plaque associating the numerous buildings and squares to any activity related to slavery and the slave trade. Even in 1985, when UNESCO added Salvador's historic centre – including a square known as 'Pelourinho' where one of the cities' whipping posts was located – to the World Heritage

37 For more details of the controversies related to the construction of the monument see M. de C. Soares, *Nos atalhos da memória: monumento a Zumbi*, in P. Knauss (ed.), *Cidade vaidosa: imagens urbanas do Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro 1999, pp. 117–135, on p. 129.

38 Author's translation of: 'Zumbi, o líder negro de todas as raças'.

39 Tancredo Neves (1910–1985) was a Brazilian politician. In 1984 he was one of the leaders of the movement *Diretas Já*, which called for direct election of the president. Eventually, Neves was elected indirectly as president of Brazil in 1985. However, one day prior to taking the oath of office, Neves was sent to the hospital with diverticulitis and died some weeks later, thus never taking office.

List, the decision was based essentially on the colonial characteristics of the architectural ensemble. Although this decision was taken some years prior to the 1994 inauguration of the UNESCO Slave Route project, the ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) report on Salvador did not even mention the word 'slavery' but rather compared the city to other Latin American slave ports by underscoring its colonial past and position as a crossroad of cultures.⁴⁰

In November 2004, four busts were unveiled at Praça da Piedade in Salvador to commemorate the four leaders of the 1798 Tailors' Conspiracy who fought to abolish slavery and who were condemned to death one year later. At the base of the busts of the enslaved man Manuel Faustino dos Santos Lira (1775–1799), the freedman Lucas Dantas do Amorim Torres (1774–1799) and the freemen Luiz Gonzaga das Virgens e Veiga (1762–1799) and João de Deus do Nascimento (1771–1799), there is a plaque containing a short biography of each martyr and a paragraph that reads: 'Martyr of the revolutionary movement of 1798, titled "Cowries Conspiracy", "Tailors" Revolt", or "Tailors' Conspiracy", he defended the cause of the independence of Brazil, the proclamation of the Republic, the abolition of slavery and equal rights to all citizens'.⁴¹ Through this set of statues, for the first time, the fight of four black leaders was highlighted. The text not only emphasizes that the Tailors' Conspiracy was the only revolt for Brazilian independence that included the abolition of slavery in its program, but also represents an interesting example of how public memory works, by establishing a connection between the past struggle for the abolition of slavery and the present fight for social justice. The official recognition of the memory of Tailors' Conspiracy rebels was reinforced by the passing of Law no. 12.391 in March of 2011, which established that the names of the four black leaders were to be inscribed in the steel book of national heroes deposited at the Tancredo Neves Pantheon of Homeland and Freedom in Brasília. Despite these two initiatives, the Praça da Piedade remained abandoned. By May 2011, the bust of Manuel Faustino dos Santos Lira was stolen, and since then the municipality has decided to remove the sculptures from the square.

On May 30, 2008 Salvador unveiled its first monument commemorating Zumbi, more than twenty years later than Rio de Janeiro. Bahia's black movement was not so well organized as in Rio de Janeiro, where it had the support from the Democratic Labour Party. The monument was the result of a joint initiative of the Palmares Cultural Foundation, the NGO *A Mulherada* (an organization for the defence of black women's rights), the Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil, and the municipality of Salvador, whose mayor was João Henrique de Barradas Carneiro. A public contest chose the sculpture in homage to Zumbi, which would be placed at Praça da Sé, in Salvador's historic centre. The artist Lázaro Souza Duarte won the contest and was awarded the amount of € 15,000. The

40 ICOMOS, World Heritage List number 309, December 28, 1983.

41 Author's free translation of: 'Martir do movimento revolucionário de 1798, intitulado Conspiração dos Búzios, Revolta dos Alfaiates ou Conjuração Baiana, defendeu a causa da independência do Brasil, da proclamação da república, da abolição da escravidão e dos direitos iguais para todos os cidadãos'.

full-body bronze statue on a granite square base represents Zumbi as a warrior holding a spear. On the base of the sculpture, the text inscribed on two plaques recalls Afro-Brazilians' fight for freedom:

*Zumbi of Palmares, leader of the country's first democratic experience. The monument to Zumbi of Palmares is the symbol of the resistance of Brazilian black people and the materialization of the memory of fights and conquests by the exercise of freedom and the strengthening of black consciousness.*⁴²

*Zumbi dos Palmares. The time has come to take away our nation from the darkness of racial injustice. Born free in 1655, in the Mountain of Barriga, Union of Palmares, Alagoas. Grandson of Aqualtune, he did not allow his people to be subjugated by the Portuguese Crown, because he wanted freedom for all, within and outside the quilombo. He continued the fight and became the quilombo's leader, and was hurt in 1694, when the capital of Palmares was destroyed. On November 20, 1695, he was killed and decapitated. After 300 years, the date of the death of this leader of the black resistance was established by the black movement as National Black Consciousness Day.*⁴³

The monument and the two texts accompanying it show an important shift in the narrative of Brazilian slavery. The emphasis and the popularization of the image of Zumbi, a warrior who fought against slavery, helped to transform the image of the enslaved in Brazil. Presented in the past as passive victims, enslaved men and women are now displayed as powerful fighters.

On November 15, 2007, Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil opened the Memorial Park of Palmares Quilombo, the most important initiative promoting a historical site associated with the resistance against slavery.⁴⁴ The park is located near the city of União dos Palmares, at Serra da Barriga, in the state of Alagoas, situated in a region close to the *quilombo's* original location. The process that resulted in the creation of this park started in the 1980s, during the military dictatorship. In 1986 the IPHAN recognized the Serra da Barriga as national heritage by inscribing the site in the list of archaeological, ethnographic and landscape sites.⁴⁵ On March 21, 1988, the year of the centenary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil, a federal decree officially established the site as a national monument. The construction of the country's first Afro-Brazilian cultural theme park received the support of the Palmares Foundation, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, and several other government agencies. A total of € 950,000 was invested. The various structures in the park occupy an area of 33,000 square feet in a 692-acre site. It comprises a complete structure to receive tourists, including a visitors' centre, various belvederes, a replica of Zumbi's house, and indigenous huts. The memory of Zumbi and his fellow fighters was finally honoured with a permanent site, even though its location

42 Author's free translation from Portuguese.

43 Author's free translation from Portuguese.

44 Parque Memorial Quilombo dos Palmares, <http://serradabarriga.palmares.gov.br/>.

45 See Livro Arqueológico, Etnográfico e Paisagístico, Inscription 090, of February 19, 1986, Process no. 1069-T-82.

remains far from the most important of Brazilian tourist destinations. Each year on November 20, several ceremonies are held in the Memorial Park. In November 2011, according to his will, the ashes of the activist Abdias Nascimento were buried in the park during a ceremony with several world-renowned African diaspora activists and scholars.

New Public Narratives?

A close examination of Brazil's initiatives to commemorate slavery through monuments, museums, and memorials indicates that the country is far behind several other nations in Africa, Europe and the Americas, which since the 1990s have started publicly acknowledging their role in the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Until the 1980s, the public narratives on Brazilian slavery conveyed especially during Carnival tended to support the ideology of racial democracy. With the end of the military dictatorship in 1985, these narratives have shifted. Instead of emphasising victimhood, public celebrations and official commemorations gradually started underscoring resistance, by emphasising the memory of Zumbi and other Afro-Brazilian historical actors who fought for freedom. Despite these changes, very few Brazilian museums dedicate any space to slavery in permanent and temporary exhibitions, which are usually restricted to one or two rooms. Slavery is presented as part of the history of labour, very often through images from the nineteenth-century European travel accounts and miniature figurines depicting scenes of work and physical punishment. This widespread superficial approach focusing on victimisation and victimhood, constantly associating the Afro-Brazilian population with a passive image, prevents the understanding of slavery as a historical and contemporary phenomenon, concealing its legacies of racism and social inequalities. Despite the persisting obstacles in creating permanent public places dedicated to slavery, the growing number of international initiatives focusing on slavery is contributing to slowly making Brazilian slavery visible through various initiatives such as monuments, memorials and museums. Moreover, because Brazil will host important international events (2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games) in the next few years, bringing slavery to the public space may become a financially viable prospect in developing cultural tourism in some regions of the country.

The increasing presence of enslaved men and women who fought against slavery in the public space is part of a broader phenomenon, visible in several cities of former slave societies in the Caribbean and Latin America. This visibility is closely associated with the international attention that slavery is receiving in the public arena, not only in the Americas, but also in Europe and Africa. Although in Brazil the first initiatives commemorating Zumbi started in the 1970s, the growing number of monuments celebrating him indicates that this phenomenon is not simply related to the necessity of making the history of black historical actors known to wider audiences. This huge popularity is also the result of the demands of social actors to end social and racial inequalities that still mark former slave societies like Brazil, a country that has difficulty in dealing with

its slave past and officially recognizing the crucial role of its black population, perhaps because of the fear of discussing financial and memorial reparations. Ultimately, the increasing importance of Zumbi is helping to convey a new image of the populations of African descent not only in Brazil, but also across the diaspora.