

Anthropological Involvement in Possession Cults.

This paper is a product of a two month's visit - my first - which I paid to Brazil this summer.<sup>1</sup> I went with the intention of finding a good site for future fieldwork on Afro-Brazilian cults. Last year I started work on a theoretical paper on these cults, which I had hoped would lead to a D.Phil. But one result of my visit is that I have decided to limit my research solely to the theoretical paper.

In Brazil I spent 2½ weeks in Rio, eleven days in Salvador, 2 weeks in Recife and one week in Fortaleza and Sao Luis.

One of the most unexpected features of the trip was to discover how deeply anthropologists were involved in the cults they study. The most interesting example of this was in Salvador. So while this paper draws on all my experience (i.e. from other places as well), I shall concentrate on Salvador as the special case. Salvador does have many unique features, and it is perhaps unfair to generalize too widely from it. But there are many lessons - I think - that can be learned about Brazil and about anthropology from the involvement of anthropologists in possession cults in Bahia. Hence the emphasis of this paper is on the role of the anthropologist. I do not deal with the roots of the cults in Brazilian popular culture.

The approach adopted here is thus two-fold. I want to examine some of the assumptions underlying fieldwork, and the circumstances in which it is done. I want to indicate the way these assumptions or circumstances are referred to (or more usually - not referred to) in the ethnographic texts. By illustrating this with reference to the literature on Afro-Brazilian cults I hope to make certain general comments about the difficulties of doing fieldwork in initiate societies. This is something which one receives no guidance about. And the effect of the anthropologist on the community he studies - and vice versa - is practically never mentioned. In addition, by describing something of the context in which anthropologists work in Salvador I hope to throw some light on the control of "popular culture" within Brazil - control which affects the anthropologists as well.

But first, in a brief and highly impressimistic manner, I want to describe my visit to Salvador. I will then go on to discuss in detail the involvement of anthropologists with their cults.

## 2. Salvador

Salvador is a port, the historic first capital of Brazil, the centre of the ~~slave~~ and sugar trades. It is built on two levels, the upper and lower cities. The upper city contains most of the churches and baroque architecture, particularly in the Pelourinho district. The poorer areas are in the lower city and outer suburbs. In Salvador 70% of the population is black, whereas the figure is about 20% for the rest of Brazil. Salvador is the centre of Afro-Brazilian culture and religion. The religious cults are called candomble,<sup>2</sup> and derive from West African religious practises in Nigeria and Dahoney. They feature possession by deities or African orixas as the central part of the ceremonies. Possession is traditionally - though not exclusively - limited to women. Most of the terreiros or cult-houses are found in the suburbs.

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1. This paper was first given to a Graduate Seminar of Brazilianists at the Latin American Centre, Oxford, in November 1975. I have made a few minor alterations in this version.

2. See Glossary for foreign words.

In my eleven days there I met a lot of people, particularly anthropologists. Among them was an Argentinian anthropologist of German-Jewish extraction called Anita,<sup>1</sup> who has been married to a black cult-leader for over twelve years. She is at war with just about all the other anthropologists in Salvador. In part this feud is a result of her marriage, which led to a split in the terreiro which her husband's late mother ran. Some of the other leading anthropologists in Salvador were at one stage affiliated to it - though not any more. She has started S\* \* \* \*, the Society for the Study of Black Culture in Brazil. This is financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and an independent American source. While I was in Salvador she had a "highly successful meeting" with these two sponsors, which enabled her to get funds for this independent organization. It is staffed by outside ethnographers, with high professional standards of research.

She is in opposition to or conflict with "Fidel," who runs C\* \* \* \* (the Centre for Afro-Oriental Studies) and "Ricardo", who runs the Fundacao Cultural de Bahia. "Fidel" is an ill-looking bureaucrat in his late 30's, beset with administrative troubles. He is engaged on a government supported project to record all African culture in Salvador on tape and film. This is a new undertaking, and, it seemed to me, curiously parallel to the ethnographic task S \* \* \* \* had defined for itself.

On my first to C \* \* \* \* I briefly met Jacques Pasteur, an elderly pear-shaped anthropologist who has been living in Salvador for over thirty years. He regards Afro-Bahian culture as his private preserve, and can hardly bear to talk to young researchers who represent a potential threat. He is, however, collaborating with Fidel and C \* \* \* \* on their systematic survey.

Meeting Pasteur at C \* \* \* \* was something of a coincidence, because the previous night I'd been taken by "Barb'ra" (an American research student) to 'her' terreiro for a festa. Afterwards we went to Casa Branca for another ceremony. Casa Branca is reputedly the oldest cult-house in Salvador, and many of the oguns, or men with ritual membership of the cult, come from the highest strata of Bahian society. And in the seat of honour - for the most distinguished visitor - was Pasteur himself, with a sociological friend from Sao Paulo.

Now Fidel is a close friend of Ricardo's; the latter running a small empire from the centre of the Pelourinho, where the oldest buildings are. Ricardo is directing the restoration of this area, and comparable sites in Bahia. His Fundacao is more like a court than anything else, with himself the centre of attention. Anita was trying to get him to preserve candamble sites (threatened by development) as part of the genuine cultural heritage of Salvador. For all his notoriety I found Ricardo a fascinating figure. He was "born in a cult-house" as they say - his mother was an initiate i.e. Filha-de-Santo. Hence his involvement with the cults has been life-long. He is now not so bound up with anthropology, but has produced monographs of good quality; and was formerly a professor of <sup>2</sup> Anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia. He was, incidently, compadre to Fidel's child, and this was the first thing he told me.

Ricardo and Fidel are both associates of a very stupid man, that I didn't meet, called Vladimir. Vladimir had written a bad book on Capoeira (stylized fighting-dance), and was also studying the cults.

In addition I met several anthropologists at the Federal University of Bahia. One of them told me about a local political figure who waged a "magic war" against the Governor of the State because he (the politician) wasn't made president of the telephone corporation. Another version I heard of the same tale was that he waged the magic war (through a terreiro) until he was made president of the telephone corporation. What seemed significant to me was that these stories had currency in the first place. I paid one visit to Thales de Azevedo on my arrival in Salvador. He is the most senior of anthropologists there, and stands above all factional conflicts.

<sup>1</sup> I use pseudonyms for all people at present working in Salvador.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. godfather.

I also spent some time with an American research student from New York, called Barb'ra, who had had difficulty in doing any fieldwork in Salvador. She felt a sort of "Mafia" of anthropologists had tried to exclude her from the cult-houses and from access to published material. Whenever I returned from a lunch, dinner or tea engagement with one of the above people she would grab me and drawl melodramatically "Well, what happened? Tell me all about it." I found this rather exhausting, as I did the shuttling between the groups. After eleven days I'd had enough; and fled to Recife. Last but not least I visited two terreiros.

Now in a sense this is my fieldwork, these are some of the people I met and some of the impressions I gained. In the time honoured tradition of anthropological monographs I will now proceed to give an analysis I shall deal primarily with the involvement of the anthropologists in the cults they study.

### 3. Involvement of the Anthropologists.

One of the difficulties in talking about the 'involvement' of anthropologists is that we are dealing with initiate or secret societies, most of whose practices and beliefs are of an esoteric nature. Many people may be affiliated in some loose sense to the cult; but few (i.e. initiates) penetrate it and gain the body of lore that is at its heart. Thus the problem for a student of such a society is greater than in other areas of social study - something which one receives no guidance about in Oxford. Also it is not clear how we can best define "involvement". However I found that most of the anthropologists had become involved in the cults to the extent of making offerings to the deities or orixas, participating in other rituals, helping to prepare food i.e. in the overall cycle of cult-life. None that I met in Salvador admitted to having been possessed. However I did hear of one student of Social Sciences at the Federal University of Bahia, and one other at Campinas (near Sao Paulo) who had both become cult-leaders (pai-de-santo). I met one researcher in Recife who, since starting research on Xango had become a filha-de-santo i.e. initiate. Ricardo, as noted above, was 'born in a cult-house', as was Nunes Pereira, an anthropologist who worked in Maranhao. Anita, though a white Argentinian of German-Jewish extraction, told me without any self-consciousness that she 'lived' black culture. With her husband, a well-known figure in Afro-Bahian circles, she participated fully in cult-life.

But, we may now ask, is this at all important? Isn't anxiety about 'objectivity' somewhat misplaced? For if we are studying initiate societies, there is no alternative to involvement. And surely the more involved we become, the more information we'll have access to. Hence we will be in a better position to write monographs.

But unfortunately the situation is not so simple. At the most obvious level the involvement of the anthropologist is practically never acknowledged, at least not in the monographs I've read. That complex network of relationships, the emotional loyalties that bind the 'scholar' to his 'community', receive scant mention. Any suggestion that the student made an offering or two, felt attracted to the power of the orixas, or underwent other rituals practically never occurs. For this side - for the raw emotions - one has to go to frankly autobiographical or sensational works such as David St. Clair's "Drum and Candle: First hand experiences of voodoo and spiritism", A.J. Langgruth's "Macumba", or Pedro McGregor's books. But if we reject overt journalism (which may communicate a feel for the subject) what is wrong with supposedly objective or ethnographic study based on years of involvement? Nothing, so long as we are told something about this involvement, and how the data were collected. For example, Anita and her husband produced a very detailed description of the Egun cult, in Salvador - published in 1969. The article is called "Ancestor Worship in Bahia". It deals with the Yoruban cult of the dead, brought to Salvador in the nineteenth century. There are only two such houses, run by men, in the whole of Brazil; and they are in Salvador. They are also closed to outsiders. Now Anita's husband is a priest in the senior Egun cult-house, which is on the island Itaparica. And

Anita, as noted above, "lives black culture". But no reference to this is to be found in their article. Only through slight personal acquaintance am I able to say which of the two Egun cults is described. To do full justice to the 'scientific' intentions of the authors this information should be placed at our disposal. As the Handbook of Latin-American Studies said, "It is never made clear when, where or how, or by whom the data were collected".

A notorious example of this problem is afforded by Roger Bastide's "Le Candomble de Bahia: rite Nago", published in 1958. It is the most famous single work on candomble known to anthropologists outside the field of Afro-Brazilian studies. This monograph claims to give a definitive account of the most traditional rituals and beliefs in Nago (i.e. Yoruban) candomble. But there is not one reference to the circumstances in which the data were collected, nor, for example, to the number of cult-houses visited. According to Anita, Bastide was introduced to Salvador by Pasteur in the late 40's or early 50's; and never spent more than a month or three weeks in the place at one time. The work is thus a synthesis, a product of about 10 years acquaintance with Salvador - as well as Africa. According to her, parts of it are accurate e.g. description of the Exus; but other parts 'rubbish!' I don't have the esoteric knowledge necessary to make such a judgement. But the absence of any clue to the conditions of fieldwork is enough to raise one's suspicions.

However the 'involvement' of the anthropologists has its effects on them and the cults in ways that extend beyond an omission or two in the list of terreiros visited. The anthropologist has a definite role to play in the structure of the cult-house. He may very well be made an ogun - or honorary member, like the local police chief or leading politician i.e. a successful and potentially influential member of the community. But as "the professor", spending a lot of time in one or perhaps more terreiros, he is a status symbol. By his frequent presence he attests to the prestige and power of the cult; particularly if it becomes known that he has made an offering, or is thinking of going through the preliminary stages of initiation. The social distance between "a professor" and most members of the cult will be very great. At one Caboclo terreiro I went to (admittedly in Recife), the pai-de-santo stopped the proceedings one evening to announce the sale of raffle tickets, for a bigger and better terreiro. "And the Professor", he added after a significant pause and looking in the direction of the resident anthropologist I was with, "Has already bought one." In this case the presence of the anthropologist - from a high social position - was used to reinforce the authority of the cult and its leader. This is not an isolated example.

Conversely, the role of the anthropologist can have a direct effect on the nature of the rituals. The search for 'traditional' i.e. African survivals can lead to such elements being retained or emphasized on the authority of the anthropologist. For the more 'traditional' a cult-house, the more prestige it has (though this prestige is also linked to the reputed 'powers' of the cult-leader). But instances are known of where the discovery of a 'new' survival has led to it playing a more prominent part in the cult rituals. An unusual example of the role of the anthropologist is found in Salvador, where a well-known French anthropologist has set up a cult-house with his lover. The anthropologist acts as the authentic source or fount of African "traditions" with which the cult-house aligns itself. Thus the Frenchman, having studied candomble for many years, and having been to Africa, uses his esoteric knowledge to establish a 'really' traditional cult. Apparently he and his associates intend their terreiro to become the mystical center of the Southern hemisphere.

This is an extreme case, yet it represents a tendency I noticed in most of the anthropologists I met. For in a sense they are doubly marginal people. One of the most commonly held views - by social scientists - about possession cults in Brazil is that they are a product of rapid urbanization and industrialization. According to this view, the majority of cults offer a means of social integration and psychological stability to people without either. In other words, to the marginal people ('marginais') who flock to the towns and

cities for jobs and end up living in favelas. Now this is untrue, either of Umbanda in Sao Paulo, or of candomble in Salvador. But the majority of participants are poor - they belong to what Anthony Leeds has called the masses rather than the classes. How curious then - or so it seems to me - that individuals called anthropologists should choose to define their relations and involvement with the cults in this special way. If cults are often marginal to the society - from the point of view of the classes - the anthropologist is marginal in relation to the cult. Why, one is tempted to ask, anthropology at all?

But this is a digression. We are concerned with the effect of anthropologists on cults. Not only do anthropologists interfere on a personal basis, but cult-leaders are in a position to read anthropology text-books. We are not confronted with those 'primitives' of the colonial period who had little or no access to books, let alone the learned monographs about them produced in European universities. In Brazil, on the contrary, a wide range of books about cults is on sale - though usually about Umbanda. In fact the Sao Paulo Umbandistas publish their own books, and these are sold widely. Thus what an Umbanda manual or a fairly learned book says about "African", or other rituals is a definite factor in influencing attitudes towards the cults. This influence acts both to modify rituals etc. within the cults, and also affects the sort of information people give to the anthropologists. This problem was encountered in Belem by Seth and Ruth Leacock when they did the fieldwork for their book "Spirits of the Deep" (1972) on Batuque, the Belem equivalent of Umbanda. I quote from page vii of the introduction:

"Most of the leaders of the Batuque were literate. They were aware that a number of books had been written about the Afro-Brazilian sects in other cities, and they were extremely interested in co-operating in the production of a book about their own sect. Both they and their followers were eager to have photographs of themselves in trance .... We also gave our informants periodic presents of money, but never in a context suggesting that we were paying for information ...."

AND

"... The leaders of the Batuque, however, were not in all respects ideal informants, since they ... were likely to have read books about African-derived religions elsewhere in Brazil and were strongly inclined to substitute the ideal for the reality when explaining the Batuque to literate outside investigators." (p.93).

So not only have the anthropologists had an effect on the cults, but there is a feedback which closes the circle, so to speak. The Leacocks suggest that the cult-leaders may be inclined to tell the anthropologist what they think he wants to hear - as adduced from their reading of anthropology books. Thus in the terreiros of northern Brazil, Life imitates Art.

We may also remember Colin Henfrey's paper, "The Hungry Imagination", which he gave last term. He referred to the difficulty of interviewing informants in Salvador. He often suspected that, mindful of his researches, people deliberately modified their information i.e. gave him what they thought he wanted.

I have tried to suggest something of the interrelations between anthropologists and the cults they study. I would now like to place this in the broader context of the society to which both belong. I will use Salvador as my "special case."

4. Power relations and panelinhas.

By 'panelinhas'<sup>1</sup> I mean the little cliques or interest groups of anthropologists and others who operate to defend one another's interests. I am of course using the term given currency by Anthony Leeds in his article Brazilian Careers and Social Structures (1964). I don't want to get involved in a discussion about Leeds' concept of the panelinha. But what I do want to suggest is that the rival groups of anthropologists constitute panelinhas. These panelinhas, the cults, and other interest groups within Salvador are all bound together. What connects these different groups both horizontally and vertically is power. By horizontally I mean (for example) conflicts or alliances between different groups of anthropologists. By vertically I mean the connections between "levels", e.g. between cult-houses, anthropologists and central government. The notion of level should not be taken too literally. For the inter-connections of power interests cannot be easily separated. I shall not define the term 'power' or 'power relations' either. Instead I will leave them as blanket terms to cover a multitude of sins.

I've already indicated something of the rivalries that exist between the different groups of anthropologists at C \* \* \*, S \* \* \* \* \*, and others at the Federal University of Bahia. In part the deepness of the antagonism originates in the secrets of the most "traditional" Nago terreiros, which are two or three in number out of the several hundred to be found in Salvador. I was not able to get the "whole story", but the present day rivalry between the terreiros is paralleled, as far as I could judge, by antagonism between the panelinhas of anthropologists who are involved with these terreiros. It is certainly worth noting that these 2 or 3 terreiros are the most extensively studied in Salvador. The majority of cult-houses are thus relatively untouched by anthropologists.

The rivalries between the panelinhas shows itself in various ways. Accusations of idea-stealing are rife, (like witchcraft accusations). In addition the control of information about the cults is an important aspect of this war of the anthropologists. For there are no University libraries worth talking about, and the only good collections of anthropology books are private, usually owned by professors. These private libraries often contain books which are out of print, theses etc. Access to such a library is a great boon to the earnest young research worker, but such access is strictly controlled by the owner. (Perhaps there is an analogy here with the control of information in the oral tradition of the cults themselves). Furthermore the anthropologists know their cult-houses all too well, and can provide introductions which smooth one's path in. Hence a new researcher can be drawn into the orbit of one group, which excludes contacts with other groups. The introductions and contacts with a particular terreiro or so-called ritual specialists somewhat limit or predetermine one's sources. Of course you are free to go for a walk in the slums, and to go into any other terreiro. But where contacts are so personalized, and introductions so important, this latter course of action will be difficult. Thus one may be drawn into the orbit of a panelinha and flattered with promises of help and introductions. I was courted by two such groups, both at daggers drawn. To become part of the group is to be effectively neutralized. For the benefits of the panelinha - whether they eventually materialize or not - place considerable obligations on the recipient. Barb'ra, the American research student, was given a desk at C \* \* \*, and plenty of promises. Nothing came of them.

I've even found evidence of similar "channeling" in an article by Herskovits on Africanisms in Porto-Alegre, written in 1943. A careful reading of this article shows that his introductions were given to him by one professor, as a result of which he visited three cult-houses and talked at length to one (female) cult-leader. I suspect that this loquacious mae-de-santo was the one to whom all visiting anthropologists were referred.

<sup>1</sup> Panelinha - "little pot".

In the case of Salvador we can see that the inside information about the cults - information which is zealously guarded - is a source of considerable prestige and influence. In a sense the anthropologists are the guardians of the cults, and their interpreters to the outside world. By virtue of their superior knowledge they can stop "non-traditional" influences (so-called) from infiltrating the cults. They thus become the ultimate authorities on what is and is not "traditional". At the same time they can pose as the guardians and representatives of "Black culture" to the outside world. Hence the anthropologists are mediators between the cults, and society at large.<sup>1</sup> Now this position is one that gives the anthropologists concerned power, which they can manipulate to further their own careers. But their position, between the cults and society, exposes them to many pressures, not least of which are those exerted by the society as a whole. For if the anthropologists occupy a mediating position, then what passes as (say) "tradition" - representing 'true' Afro-Brazilian culture - is of some interest to the powers that be. It does not seem far fetched to me to suggest that "approved versions" of popular culture can be fed back to the people they ostensibly originated from as a form of control. Indeed certain figures come to be legitimizers of these officially approved versions. For example, while I was in Brazil, Jorge Amado's novel "Gabriela" was being shown on T.V. There was an article about him in Veja or some other glossy magazine. On the front cover was a picture of Amado, with the mae-de-santo or Gantois - one of the oldest terreiros in Salvador. Thus one had together the approved representative of "traditional" Afro-Brazilian culture, alongside one of the approved interpreters or spokesmen for that culture i.e. Amado (who also, by the way, won a Lenin prize in the twenties for a novel about peasants in the North-East).

Similarly I feel - subjectively - that the types of books available on candomble and Umbanda are also subject to such constraints. However I do not wish to overstate this part of my argument, because I don't have enough specific information about culture control and anthropologists to back it up with. But I would like to point out that at least in Salvador the position of the anthropologists does have repercussions in the wider political and economic spheres; wider, that is, than the world delineated by the cult-house and inter-departmental conflicts.

This can be seen with reference to the energy problem. Brazil has at present an insatiable need for petrol and petroleum products. It has been decided by the Federal government that the state of Bahia is going to be the centre of the Brazilian petrochemical industry. Now most of Brazil's petrol is imported, and for this reason the Federal government is eager to establish good relations with Nigeria, (a major oil producer, and nearer to Brazil than the Middle East). It is in the move to establish closer ties with Nigeria that Brazil's "Black culture" becomes important. This notion of "Black culture" is contrary to the normal official view of Brazil as a racial democracy and mestizo culture - a view which Gilberto Freyre is the best known proponent of. But in the last few years the Federal Government has encouraged cultural contacts with Nigeria. Delegations of cult-leaders and attendant anthropologists have gone to Lagos to strengthen these relations. Much scandal was generated by the competition between panelinhas to get "their" people onto the delegations. One person I met who had been excluded went to Brasilia off his own bat to see the Nigerian ambassador, and persuaded him that he should be included. Over this incident the Nigerian ambassador apparently criticized a figure in another panelinha for his stupidity. This was a personal judgement; but it circulated speedily in Salvador. The Nigerian ambassador is thus an important person in the life of the cults, particularly in the context of these relations which connect them to the outside world. He is a representative of Africa, and hence that 'tradition' from which the oldest terreiros claim descent. Yet you could search the ethnography of the last ten years in vain for any reference to the Nigerian ambassador in Brasilia; though I did notice a large portrait of him at C \* \* \*.

1. As stated above, my interest here is in the role of the anthropologist, and not in the roots of the cults in Brazilian popular culture.



Now one aspect of this policy of "cultural contact" between Brazil and Nigeria has been support for "Black Studies" in Bahia. Fidel, the head of C \* \* \* told me - surprisingly frank for a first visit - that when he took over the budget was 3000 Cruzeiros a year ... hardly enough to pay for the light bulbs. Now, four or five years later, his budget is half a million. His money comes from the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Town Council of Salvador and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (I think mainly from the latter.) The conditions under which he gets this money are complicated and I didn't altogether understand them. He can't do research off his own bat, but only if commissioned by other University departments. All the same he is somehow able to do his own research. However his main worry is that there had been a shift in government policy. The initial stage of establishing good cultural relations with Nigeria had passed. As the government made economic agreements with Nigeria over the sale of oil, the need for cultural agreements receded. Hence the need for "Black studies" also receded - as seen from this viewpoint. From his reading of the signs Fidel is afraid that sooner or later - and most probably sooner - some bureaucrat in Brazilia would decide to call a halt, and reduce (or cut off) money to C \* \* \*. He is a worried man. I'm not sure, though, how much to believe of all this. I don't know whether it was largely an attempt to win my sympathy - to appear as a 'reasonable' man beset with troubles. But his case does illustrate the different levels of "power relations" that can exist between "Black culture", central government - and the anthropologists.

Likewise Anita, setting up her rival organization, was relying on financial support from an independent American backer and the Ministry of Education and Culture. She was planning to hold a conference in Rio entitled "The Black Diaspora in the New World" - a title with political repercussions, particularly at present in Brazil. Last summer she doubted whether it would be allowed.

While the ramifications of the cults stretch up to the highest political and economic levels, they also extend down to the "lowest" ones (to pass a blatant value judgement). For the cults themselves are not neutral. They are not empty boxes which the anthropologists adroitly manipulate like expert poker players, (though they may be used in that way as well). The cults play a definite part, in that the anthropologists who use them are themselves used. They give themselves to the cult. They may gain prestige and power in the community at large, but inevitably become creatures of the cult. For power is not just about manipulation of people and interest groups within the state. In Brazil it quite blatantly includes the manipulation of supernatural power. In this respect a terreiro is quite different from, say, the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford. In both cases one is confronted with a closed society, each of which may be racked with personality and power conflicts. Indeed this aspect of terreiro life has been studied most recently by Yvonne Velho and Peter Fry. But where the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford differs from a terreiro is that - to the best of my knowledge - the personality conflicts within it do not entail the manipulation of supernatural power. Whether or not one believes specifically in the power of the orixas the cults do represent a definite type of power, which the cult-leaders can control. People are attracted to this source of power; and this includes a large proportion of the anthropologists. Now while I do not know what goes on in peoples' heads, I feel that the anthropologists are not much different here from other cult-members. Thus, in their desire for proximity to "supernatural power", the role of anthropologist becomes secondary. For, it seems to me, at a certain point you have to make a choice. You either become involved with the cult i.e. make a definite emotional commitment - or you don't. In the first case the notion of "objective" study becomes very difficult; and in the second the notion of study itself is virtually impossible. For the power which the cults represent is not something one can be neutral about, and this is quite apart from the power relations which connect the cults - and the anthropologists - to the society as a whole.

While I do not mean that the cults are effectively manipulating Salvador and the Federal government - through the use of magic - I would suggest that they form one node of power relations within a series of such nodes.



In passing I think it worth noting that this association of an interest in black magic, and the possession of power (however defined) is found in other places. Haiti is the most notorious example, for Duvalier started his career as an anthropologist - studying Voodoo with Metraux.

## 5. Conclusion

It will have already become apparent that this paper is first and foremost a product of that "education" I received in going to Brazil for the first time. It was in every sense an "unsentimental" educational, though no less enjoyable for that. It was also a shock, and for this nothing prepared me.

However I have tried to demonstrate that anthropologists are not all they seem. By looking at the case of Salvador, which admittedly has special features, we have shown that anthropologists and their monographs are not to be taken on trust. For the anthropologist is not a neutral figure; and in Brazil he is subject to constraints, controls and channeling at different levels. These largely predetermine the access he has to sources, and the circulation and approval which his work receives - particularly if he is Brazilian. To pretend that one can do fieldwork in Brazil in the manner of the famous Africanists of the past is naive. To import those Durkheimian models (as Bastide does), with their conservative and virtually timeless notions of "tradition" is misleading. But to do so without any comment about the circumstances in which the fieldwork was done, or without comment on the theoretical approach employed, is - it seems to me - highly reprehensible.

At a general level what I am saying about ideology and anthropological study has been said before. We all know that the anthropologist isn't as "objective" as he pretends to be. But in the dreary morass of Afro-Brazilian monographs this point apparently has to be made again. Yet the suspicions I voiced about the other monographs, the other books, should by rights be raised about this paper. My questionable generalizations for one thing, the constraints and controls acting on me for another - and the influence of the panelinhas I encountered. These should all be questioned. But this questioning can be widened still further. Why study Afro-Brazilian cults? What ideological factors linking England (an ex-colonial power), and Brazil (formerly colonialized), produce this spectacle of an Oxford trained anthropologist going to study candomble - an "exotic" religion - in the Tropics?

One concrete result of my visit is that I have become much more suspicious of monographs, and the circumstances in which they are produced. There is a conflict here which I have not resolved. Am I against all fieldwork - or am I saying that more information will somehow make it more 'objective'? Obviously I don't have any absolute standards to appeal to here. But with reference to initiate societies I hope I have outlined some of the perils (depending on your point of view) that confront the student. The anthropologist is exposed to intense pressure from within the cult - which he of necessity must become a part - and also from without, from the wider society. These pressures are rarely acknowledged. But whether "acknowledging" them somehow makes fieldwork "possible" again is another question. My unsureness about this reflects my present ambivalence towards fieldwork. However I am not advocating the abolition of all fieldwork. But more attention must be paid to what goes on when people think they are doing it - particularly in initiate societies. For the collaboration between the anthropologist and 'initiates' in the construction of social reality is of a far greater order of magnitude than occurs (say) in the study of working-class movements in Brazil.

In the great era of structural-functionalism, anthropologists went off into the wild to study "their" communities; those groups of primitive savages living an innocent life in forest or savannah, untouched by industrial civilization. Yet by a curious irony we can now see that the anthropologists were the true

innocents, in the seemingly unselfconscious way they produced their monographs. But given the factors which can impinge upon them, and influence their work - as described in this paper - we must conclude that anthropologists can no longer afford to be innocent.

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GLOSSARY

- Batuque: African cults in Rio Grande do Sul. Also applied by Seth and Ruth Leacock to spirit possession cults in Belem (1972).
- Caboclo: Amerindian spirit.
- Candomble:  
 1) The place where African religious ceremonies are celebrated.  
 2) The most "traditional" African cults in Brazil, in which the initiates are possessed by deities or orixas.
- Candomblé dos caboclos: Religious sects in which the adepts receive the spirits of "caboclos" or Amerindians, instead of the African deities.
- Egun or Egungun: The dead.
- Exu: Intermediary between men and the deities. Often seen as a sort of "Trickster" figure.
- Filha-de-santo: "Daughter of the saints" in Portuguese. An initiate of an African religious sect.
- Macumba: General term applied to religious practices of African origin in the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo and Sao Paulo. Often equated with black magic.
- Mae-de-santo: "Mother of the Saints" in Portuguese. Priestess in charge of candomble.
- Nago: Yoruban.
- Ogun: Influential patron and protector of candomble.
- Olourun: The Supreme God.
- Orixa: Generic name of the African divinities: the intermediaries between Olourun, the Supreme God, and human beings.
- Pai-de-santo: "Father of the Saints" in Portuguese. Priest in charge of candomble.
- Terreiro: Cult-house (lit. a place with an earthen floor).
- Umbanda: Brazil's most recent "national religion" = Macumba plus spiritism.
- Xango:  
 1) Name of the God of Thunder.  
 2) Term designating the candombles of Pernambuco and Alagoas.

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