Introduction

Culture and Objectification in the Black Rome

Salvador da Bahia,[1] once the colonial capital of Brazil, is nowadays the capital of Afro-Brazilian culture.[2] Some tourist brochures call it the 'Black Rome', 'the biggest inheritor of African traditions out of Africa',[3] and 'Cradle and home of African descendent traditions (including samba, capoeira and Candomblé)'.[4] Candomblé in particular is often presented as the heart of this Afro-Brazilian culture.

The origin of the term 'Candomblé' is unknown. It seems to have appeared in Bahia in the first half of the nineteenth century[5] in reference to parties of slaves and freed slaves (sometimes in the plural, Candomblés), and also in connection with the practice of sorcery (*feitiçaria*). Some sources presumed that these activities had an African origin; the newspapers often complained about the noise of drums at Candomblé parties, and the charlatanism of the sorcerers; but from very early on, people of all social groups, origins and races came to the parties and made use of sorcery.[6] For the editor of a newspaper in 1868, 'these absurd Candomblés are so rooted, that I do no longer admire seeing Black people involved, when White people are the more passionate devotees of the cause'.[7]

Of course, few among the white or almost white upper classes would publicly acknowledge their participation: to do so would be an embarrassment. Now and then the police disbanded the Candomblés and the sorcerers were put on trial, their instruments confiscated as 'weapons of sorcery'. Nonetheless, it seems that Candomblé was never just an exclusive, secretive and resistant African affair: the sorcerers often had powerful patrons,[8] people from across Bahian society took part in it. In fact, the sorcery of Candomblé was seen by many as the hidden force dominating the city, and writers like Marques or João do Rio affirm that 'we are all ruled by the sorcerer'.[9]

But when newspapers today talk about Candomblé, they do not denounce evil sorcery and outrageous parties. Instead, Candomblé is praised as African religion and cultural heritage.[10] The objects of Candomblé are presented in museums as works of art. Participating in Candomblé is not an indignity, but something to be proud of. Intellectuals and politicians make their attendance at and even their participation in its rituals, both public and official. Gilberto Gil, musician and Minister of Culture, is also a 'lord' (*ogan*) in a Candomblé house.

How did Candomblé go from Sorcery to National Heritage? How did Candomblé become 'Culture'? This question has not been properly addressed until now. Since its very origin, the literature on Candomblé has been obsessed with demonstrating the African origins and continuities of its rituals and myths. This tradition of studies, what I will call 'Afro-Brazilianism', has built an image of Candomblé as a 'microcosmic Africa' (Bastide 1978c), where the philosophical and artistic essences of the continent are preserved.

In recent decades Afro-Brazilianism has been severely criticised by social scientists interested in racial politics, who have argued that Afro-Brazilian culture is an 'invented tradition', and Afro-Brazilianist discourse a form of domination by the Brazilian elites over the black populations of Brazil. In transforming Candomblé into folklore, Afro-Brazilianism has imposed a 'culturalism' more concerned with the protection of an objectified cultural heritage than with racial politics. In Hanchard's terms Afro-Brazilian culture has been 'reified': 'culture becomes a thing, not a deeply political process'.[11]

This book starts from a different point: the question is not if this culture is 'authentic' or a 'fiction', but how Candomblé has *become* Afro-Brazilian culture. Encompassing these two discourses, we will see how Afro-Brazilian culture is neither a repressed essence nor an invention, but the outcome of a dialectical process of exchange between the leaders of Candomblé and a cultural elite of writers, artists and anthropologists in Bahia. In this dialectical process the cultural and artistic values of national and international anthropologists, intellectuals and artists have been synthesised with the religious values of Candomblé, generating an unprecedented objectification: 'Afro-Brazilian culture'. At the same time, the leaders of Candomblé have recognised their own practice as 'Culture', and have become the subjects of their own objectification.

The impasse between affirmative and critical views on Afro-Brazilian culture is a result of their rigid and incompatible notions of 'culture'. For the Afro-Brazilianist tradition, African culture is an original, unchanging 'system of representations' that has resisted slavery, and which is ritually

re-enacted in Candomblé. For its critics, this notion of 'culture' is a fixed image, a false projection of imperialist reason: Afro-Brazilian culture is just a masquerade that hides the racial inequalities of Brazil.

But a culture is neither a fixed 'system of representations' nor a rigid ideological projection. Cultures are always in construction: they are not immanent and self-contained, but transient and relative historical formations. And yet, this does not mean that they are just artificial and false constructions. After all, what is the problem with 'culture becoming a thing'? Cultures are indeed the result of histories of objectification – processes of recognition of identity and alterity. But processes of objectification cannot be reduced to reification. Objectification does not preclude politics, but in many ways it is the precondition of any meaningful social action: it is precisely because culture is objectified that it can be discussed, used and appropriated by social actors.

This book will describe this process neither as resistance nor masquerade, but as a historical transformation of practices, values and discourses: a cultural history. On the one hand, it is unquestionable that many African traditions are present in Candomblé; nevertheless it is also true that its ritual practices have incorporated the history of Brazil in what has been called 'syncretism'. On the other hand, intellectuals have objectified Candomblé as Afro-Brazilian culture. But this objectification is not just an ideological fixed image, a reification: it has been actively appropriated by the people of Candomblé, who have assumed the discourses and practices of Afro-Brazilian culture as their own. This process of appropriation can be understood in very similar terms to religious syncretism; in a way it has been a 'syncretism of Culture'.

Before going any further, I will explain in more detail what I mean by 'Culture' and 'objectification', and how the Afro-Brazilian case can offer a particular perspective on a more universal cultural process of our time: the appropriation of 'Culture'.

Culture and Objectification

Over twenty-five years ago, Roy Wagner (1981) pointed out that anthropology objectifies the communities it studies as 'Culture'. For Wagner, 'Culture', with a capital 'C', is what Bourdieu (1993) called 'the field of cultural production': 'High culture', the 'humanities', the institutions of the arts, literature, museums. This marked or institutional sense of 'Culture' is different from the much wider anthropological use of 'cultures' as historically formed whole ways of life. But inevitably, by

objectifying whole ways of life, anthropologists end up describing living, changing realities ('cultures') in the terms of a stable, permanent institution ('Culture').

What Wagner did not see back then is that this objectification is appropriated by its own subjects: the people defined by anthropologists as 'cultures' appropriate the term and the practices and discourses associated with 'Culture' (Turner 1993; Rowlands 2002). Culture is objectified, but then it can be appropriated. In fact, it can only be discussed, used, manipulated and transformed precisely because it has been objectified. As Almeida says in reference to Afro-Brazilian cultural politics, 'one can only work with the tools one has' (Almeida 2002: 40).

Objectification cannot be reduced to alienation, as Miller (1987) clearly argued. Models of reification and alienation look at objects merely as reflections of social values; a more thorough theory of 'objectification' implies a process of mutual construction of subjects and objects that always takes place in history. This means that values are not only projected onto them but also that objects and subjects are mutually constitutive in a dialectical process. Keane (1997) also defends objectification as a necessary moment of human action, and interaction. By objectifying the self, the subject recognises its engagement in a social universe of others: self-consciousness is predicated on the existence of the other person. It is only through the perspective of the other that I can experience myself as an object, thus as a complete self (Keane 1997: 12–13). Only in recognising ourselves as 'another' can we engage in interaction with others. This very basic, simple idea is at the foundation of an anthropological understanding of historical change and exchange.

In these terms I use 'objectification' to describe processes in which things, persons and places are recognised as bearers of specific and different forms of value or quality.[12] This notion of objectification always has to be accompanied by its complementary term: appropriation, or the process by which strange things are recognised as familiar, as parts of the self. This argument is partially inspired by Nicholas Thomas's approach to the history of colonisation in the Pacific in *Entangled Objects* (1991), in which he described how natives and European colonisers appropriated each other's culture. However, the history that I describe here is different from Thomas's Pacific: this book unravels a long-term process that did not stop at mutual appropriation, but involved the final identification between the two partners in exchange, who in many ways became one. Describing this process in terms of mutual appropriation would not be enough; we also have to understand it in terms of mutual recognition, a dialectical process of objectification and appropriation in which identity and alterity are redefined.

Thomas's emphasis on the appropriation of objects and images as a means to understanding the appropriation of culture has offered new ways to describe cultural change and exchange beyond old metaphors of 'syncretism' and 'hybridity'. Theories of hybridity (Garcia Canclini 1989; Bhabha 1994; Steiner 1994) are often based on the implicit premise that different cultures hold radically different and incompatible systems of value and exchange, such as 'gift' and 'commodity', and that objects which circulate between different cultures inevitably remain 'in-between', syncretistic or hybrid. For Garcia Canclini (1989), hybrid objects and cultures live in 'different temporalities', in a superposition of local and Western values that do not really assemble or reproduce; they just coexist without recognising each other, in a situation of disavowal or misrecognition. In these terms, an object of Candomblé could be a sacred object for its initiates, a weapon of crime for an early twentieth-century policeman, and a work of art for anthropologists or artists. All these values would be present in the same object but they would make reference to different systems of value that are mutually exclusive – and misrecognised.

However, if we look at the life histories of objects we can see these different values as not exclusive and irreducible to each other, but as mutually constitutive. The value that the objects of Candomblé had for the police as 'weapons' in the early twentieth century is not unrelated to the agency that these objects have in Candomblé; quite the contrary: the power of fetishes was very real for both – they were not hybrids. In recent decades, Candomblé objects have been valued by artists and anthropologists as works of art and monuments, and this valorisation has been recognised and assumed by Candomblé practitioners. This has been possible because some of the leaders of Candomblé recognised in the discourses and practices of cultural value a fundamental affinity to their own discourses and practices on the value of their sacred objects. This is not a history of hybridity and misrecognition, but of recognition and appropriation.

'Syncretism' and 'hybridity' seem to describe exotic phenomena in a frontier land; in reality they point rather clumsily towards the processes of objectification and appropriation that constitute human history at all places and all times. When I write about the 'syncretism of Culture' in this book, this is an ironic metaphor more than a concept: what I am actually addressing is the appropriation of Culture. But the metaphor of 'syncretism' shows more clearly the irony of this process, understood by its agents as a 'return to origins' or a 're-Africanisation', when in reality it is producing a profound transformation.

By going back to the origins, everything is transformed. The more it stays the same, the more it changes, as Marshall Sahlins would say;

these are processes of 'integration of the foreign into categories and relations of the familiar, a shift in the cultural contexts of internal forms and forces which also changes their values' (Sahlins 1994: 52). These 'structures of the conjuncture' (Sahlins 1981) do not generate 'hybrids', indeterminate superpositions of values, but they effectively create new values, in historical processes of structural change and exchange. These processes, of course, are not exempt from contradictions and conflicts, but these contradictions and conflicts are precisely a part of the process; they are not signs of the impossibility of cultural exchange, but of the dynamism of history.

On what grounds did this process of recognition and appropriation operate? Which were these 'fundamental affinities' between Culture and Candomblé? Which contradictions and conflicts were raised? To address these questions we should go back to discuss in more general terms the constitution of 'cultural' value.

Cultural Value and Inalienable Possessions

In one of the first anthropological works dedicated to the study of what I here call the 'Objectification of Culture', Handler defined the modern construction of the nation as a 'collective individual'. For Handler, in modern society, the individual is completed, or made whole, by property. Cultural heritage would be the property of a collective individual, the nation: 'the collective individual of nationalist ideology is defined by its possessions or, phrased somewhat differently; its existence is taken to be demonstrated by the existence of cultural property' (Handler 1988: 192).

Do we really need to reduce the objectification of culture in the modern world to a discourse on the bourgeois individual and property? Does that imply that 'other cultures' necessarily have a totally different system of relations with objects, a 'gift economy'? That anybody in the world who adopts the discourse of 'Culture' is inevitably bound to the chains of bourgeois ideology? Is it really possible, or relevant, to take an either/or position (Rowlands 2002), West against the Rest? Are we not taking for granted a caricature of a model, call it the 'West', that contains many contradictions and dissonant voices in its history – including anthropology?

Maybe the ideology of the individual and private property is not the only form of relation of objects and subjects available in the 'West'. There are relationships of people and things that cannot be explained exclusively in terms of bourgeois property, but which may be better understood in terms of inalienable value. In *Inalienable Possessions*

(1992), Weiner focused her attention on the objects that are kept away from exchange as long as possible, precisely because they constitute the essential value of a group, lineage or person. These inalienable possessions are not objectified as property, instruments or capital, but are personified, in Strathern's terms: 'objects are created not in contradistinction to persons but out of persons' (Strathern 1988: 172). Furthermore, a 'person' is not necessarily limited to a single individual, a single mind-body. The social person, as a social actor, may be composed of corporate groups of people, like families, and other elements, like names, titles, dresses, objects that relate this identity to others. These ensembles of elements and people are not only *instruments* of social exchange, or a 'working force', through which the 'individual' relates with 'society'; they are *properties* of the person, or 'objects' in the sense of 'capital' that people can 'invest' to increase their social power. These ensembles are constitutive of the identity of the person, and they remain as such even when they are detached from the rest of the constitutive elements of the person in space and time. Alfred Gell (1998) developed these insights even further in his theory of the art nexus, in which he describes the 'agency' of things – essentially, works of art – as an extension of the 'distributed personhood' of humans. In these terms we could also describe forms of appropriation that are not reducible to a bourgeois logic of property or the accumulation of capital. Some forms of appropriation can be personified – when objects are not instruments for, but parts of persons, 'extended agents'.

Strathern describes this logic of the extended or distributed person as typically Melanesian, ordered in the terms of what Gregory (1982) called an 'economy of the gift', as opposed to the commodity economy of the West. As we have seen, Thomas (1991) vigorously criticised this exoticism, arguing that a temporal and historical approach dissolved these distinctions between cultures as radically opposite economies.[13] Inalienability, for example, is not an exclusive characteristic of Melanesian systems of value: Weiner herself recognises that there are spheres of value and forms of relation of things and people in our society that may also be described in these terms. One of these spheres of value, as Myers (2001) pointed out, is 'Culture' and the arts. An ensemble of objects, spaces and people deemed to be bearers of a common and irredeemable collective essence.

Precisely the field of Culture has been historically constructed in opposition to the field of market exchange in the modern world (Bourdieu 1992, 1993).[14] Objects with a 'cultural' value can be easily identified as inalienable possessions – objects that *should* remain excluded from the market become public property, if not National or World Heritage – and be publicly displayed in museums, since they

embody a collective identity, the nation or even Humanity. In fact, we could argue that the discourse of inalienable possessions as a form of value irreducible to commodity value was originally formulated within the institution of 'Culture'. From there, the autonomy of cultural value has also been extended to other kinds of social values, either political or religious. Thus, an image of a saint or a Candomblé object in a museum is not only excluded from the market but also from religious or political disputes, since its value is 'transcendent' (Myers 2001).

Of course the construction of the autonomy of this cultural value has a very specific and recent history (Bourdieu 1993), and is constantly subject to contestation – as we will see in the latter chapters of this book. But it is interesting that this particular form of value, because of its transcendent quality, has been used for classifying valuable objects from other cultures to define these 'cultures' as such – as 'Culture'. The values of culture and the arts, deemed to be universal, have been systematically applied to exotic objects of non-Western origin at least since the beginning of this century (Clifford 1988; Marcus and Myers 1995; Myers 2001). How has this extension of the values of Culture operated?

We could describe the constitution of cultural value at two levels. On one level, cultural valuables are objects that *come* directly from history: churches that were *built* in the Middle Ages, the crown worn by a king, the canvas painted by an artist, the sceptre of a Candomblé priest, and so on. In this sense, they are valued as relics, or indexes of the past – they hold a cause–effect relationship to this past, are a part of the distributed agency of its producers, who are in turn embodiments of a collective identity. This is precisely what Weiner defined as inalienable possessions.

These inalienable possessions are chosen according to hierarchies of value. By focusing on inalienable possessions, 'masterpieces', and works that demonstrate the quality of the material culture of a 'high civilisation', the objects of cultural value are chosen according to hierarchy, normally transposing local aristocracies into universal cultural ones. It is not strange that the artworks associated with royal lineages, chieftains or a priestly elite are more easily identified with the historical cultural values of the West: these artworks are, after all, the leftovers of the Catholic Church, feudal lords and absolute kings. We will see that in the case of Candomblé, this hierarchical factor has resulted in the privileging of certain houses of cult with certain traditions, and certain priests and priestesses, as 'paradigms' of the 'purity' of Afro-Brazilian culture, to the detriment of others that lack the 'fame', the recognition, and are described as 'mixed' or 'syncretistic'.

The rejection of 'mixed' or 'syncretistic' practices, objects and persons is often connected to the rejection of sorcery. Being a form of

interested exchange, sorcery stands in radical opposition to inalienable value, which is based on the hierarchical ideals of preservation of transcendent values that cannot be exchanged.

At another level, objects of cultural value have to be visible (Pomian 1990). They have to be shown, accessible to the public in museums and heritage sites. Their images are widely reproduced in postcards, books and films – and this does not diminish their aura, as Benjamin (1968) had foreseen, but multiplies it.

At this point, the discourses of inalienability and culture do not necessarily go together. In many cases inalienable objects do not meet this requirement of cultural value: precisely because they are inalienable they are kept apart, in sacred places, as hidden treasures. They may be shown on special occasions but normally they are protected and access to them is restricted. And certainly, one cannot take pictures of them. This is the case in Candomblé, where the inalienable values of religious practice are strictly secret, and not even initiates can look at them. How to transform these secret values into cultural values, if they have to become public? This is one of the central questions to keep in mind as we describe the objectification of Afro-Brazilian culture.[15]

An Atlantic Modernity?

It is important to understand that this process of objectification of other cultures as 'Culture' has not been a unidirectional movement in which the West has produced 'Culture' and it has exported it to the Rest. This Rest has been constitutive of the historical formation of the West since the age of discoveries. Europe has been constituted in the last centuries in the long trajectory of colonialism. We should abandon visions of Europe as a 'centre' that produces and then exports its values and institutions (Dussel 1998). We probably need to stretch the notion of the 'world-system' beyond its original determinisms and shortfalls, in Wallerstein's (1976) formulation, to describe not only how the economic system of the West was configured by colonialism but also how other forms of value and institutions, like the institutions of religion, politics and culture, were objectified through this long colonial passage. We could talk of a 'world system of Culture, 'A Culture of Cultures' (Sahlins 2000:493).

In this world-system of Culture, the routes of the Atlantic have been particularly relevant. The influence of African, Latin American and African-American art in twentieth-century modernism were determinant. American modernism after the First World War flowered in

a 'mongrel' Manhattan (Douglas 1995) where for the first time American writers, musicians and artists would not look at Europe, but to its own, original, American and African-American background to produce a radically modern culture and art. At the same time, in Brazil, modernism and 'Anthropophagy' were re-appropriating an indigenous and Afro-Brazilian heritage to produce a modern and at the same time radically national culture. Throughout the Americas, in fact, modernity took pride in its transcultural (Ortiz 1995), 'Cosmic races' (Vasconcelos 1997) as a banner of radical modernity. The influence of these movements across the Atlantic after the 1920s changed the course of modern art. Defining this space as a 'Black Atlantic' still forecloses the boundaries of its influence with rigid racial categories.[16] Maybe a muddy, earth–coloured 'Brown Atlantic' (Almeida 2002: 114) would be more appropriate. Or we could simply talk about an 'Atlantic modernity' after Stephan Palmié: Western Modernity and Afro-American traditions would be 'perspectival refractions of a single encompassing historical formation' (Palmié 2002: 15). For Palmié, there is little reason not to view them as constitutive of each other on an even more viscerally 'embedded' level of description (Palmié 2002: 61).

In the same vein, the objective of this book is to present the relevance of the historical formation of Afro-Brazilian culture in Salvador da Bahia in the twentieth century, not as an alternative modernisation, a hybrid or an exception, but at the very centre of this process of Atlantic modernity.

The Historical Context: Slavery, Race and National Identity in Bahia and Brazil

Before I start, I shall give an outline of the general history of Bahia and Brazil, introducing some of the historical characters and names that will appear often in the following chapters.

Salvador da Bahia was one of the first Portuguese settlements in Brazil, and the colony's capital until 1763. On the shore of the bay of All Saints, during this period, Salvador was perhaps the biggest city in South America, and an important centre for the international commerce of the Portuguese empire linking Europe, Africa and the East Indies.

During the sixteenth century, wars and epidemics virtually exterminated the native population, expelling its remnants to the backlands. African slaves were used as a workforce in the sugar plantations on the coast of Brazil. Gilberto Freyre's (1933) vision of the plantation system as a relatively benevolent patriarchal social system

has constituted a foundation myth of Brazil for decades, but it is hardly tenable. The plantation system was as brutal in Brazil as anywhere else (Russell-Wood 1982; Mattoso 1986; Andrade 1988). The slaves had an extremely short lifespan, high rates of suicide, and a low birth rate, which obliged the plantations to replace the workforce continuously with Africans until the mid-nineteenth century. But, on the other hand, Brazil was not just a plantation society divided between masters and slaves. Aside from the African slaves and the elite of plantation owners, the cities and villages were inhabited by people with different degrees of freedom, economic independence and colour: creole slaves, African freedmen, white farmers, mestizo cowboys, mulatto craftsmen (Oliveira 1988; Schwartz 1988; Mattoso 1992). Right before the abolition of slavery, about 80 per cent of the free population of Bahia were either freed slaves or descended from slaves (Kraay 1998); some of these slave-descendants were slave traders and plantation owners. Bahian society was never exactly Black and White.

Independence from Portugal in 1823 did not introduce radical social change: under Pedro II, Brazil became an empire still based on slavery. In 1808, the slaves in Bahia constituted one third of the population, up to 140,000 in the entire state (Kraay 1998). Africans were always seen as 'foreigners' and a potential danger. After a revolt in 1935, several former slaves were deported (Reis 1986), and the return of freedmen to Africa was frankly encouraged (Cunha 1985). Due to the pressure of the English navy, the slave trade became officially illegal after 1831 (Bethell 1970). But it continued, clandestinely, until 1857.

The first schools of medicine and law, and historical and geographical institutes, began to appear during the mid-nineteenth century, encouraged by the enlightened despotism of the Emperor (Mortiz-Schwartz 1993). According to Sergio Buarque de Hollanda, in this period, the *bacharéis*, the 'baccalaureates' or graduates, formed an intellectual aristocracy, which progressively substituted the landed aristocracies of the past (Hollanda 1988 [1936]: 164). Abolitionism, influenced by European liberalism, started to take hold among these Europeanised *bacharéis*. In 1871 the Law of the Free Womb (*Lei do Ventre livre*) gave freedom to children born to slave women (Chalhoub 1990). Many slaves were freed anyway: by 1872, the slave population of Bahia had been reduced to 12 per cent. Slavery was slowly being substituted by a more generic form of servitude, through relations of patronage (Russell-Wood 1982; Cunha 1985; Naro 2000).

In 1888, finally, the *Lei Aurea*, the 'Golden Law', declared the abolition of slavery. Afraid of the consequences of abolition, the military took power and ended the Empire with a coup, proclaiming the Republic. The Brazilian

Republic was an authoritarian and oligarchic regime. The freed slaves, without property, profession, education or benefit, could potentially become a challenge to the constituency of the nation, and therefore had to be controlled. The same elite that, following European liberal ideals, had demanded abolition now became influenced by the scientific racism and evolutionism fashionable in imperialist Europe (Borges 1993; Moritz-Schwartz 1993). Now it seemed that to achieve 'progress' it was not only necessary to be 'free' but also to be a White, superior, nation. The African problem of the former generation became the 'Negro problem'.

The solution to the 'Negro problem' for this elite was the 'whitening' of Brazil (Skidmore 1995). Deploying in a very particular way the eugenic theories of their time, they thought that by increasing European immigration Brazil would progressively eliminate its majority of Black people (Moritz-Schwartz 1993). Blacks and mulattos, as degenerate races, would inevitably die out, unless they improved their 'weak' blood with the powerful new 'stocks' of Europeans that were arriving en masse in Brazil. But in Bahia there was no significant influx of European immigrants. There was no work for them: flourishing agriculture, and later industry, were concentrated in the south, around São Paulo. Bahia remained poor and Black, lost in its past, with a dormant economy, a provincial life and a small population until the 1940s. This is the period that Gil and Risério (1988) have called a 'hundred years of solitude', beginning with the end of the slave trade. In this 'decadent' context, after three brilliant centuries of international exchange of people and things, Bahians were left to themselves: there was no substantial immigration or change in Bahia's population, and a very specific local culture progressively took hold. Bahian society was extremely traditional, and marked by the cultural history of its overwhelming majority of African descendants.

The way of life of most African descendants in Bahia was not too different from that of their slave ancestors. They were either servants in the houses of the quasi-white elite, street vendors or artisans in small workshops. The close relations between different classes and races were not only mediated by money but also by personal relationships: servants were not treated only as a workforce, but also as an extension of the family through patronage (Pierson 1942). This meant that poor Black families were in many ways associated with richer, whiter families, for better or for worse: they worked for them for minimal wages, they were often physically abused, in the hope of achieving some sort of familiarity or recognition, some sort of help when they were in trouble, sometimes education for their children – which were often the children of their masters too; in sum, the entire range of meagre charitable bonds that a paternalist system can provide. This patronage system was

organised on the basis of a totally unequal exchange between social groups; but this was an exchange, nonetheless, in the context of a 'familiarity' that allowed the formation of a certain common horizon of experience through the private sphere, through the kitchen, the backyard, and so on.

The persistence of African traditions in Bahia must be understood within this context of patronage and 'familiarity' between classes, races, cultures and people. In private, African traditions of cooking, music and dance were not only reproduced by descendants of Africans but were also appropriated by their masters. This was also true for African magical and religious traditions, like Candomblé.

The Revolution of 1930 marked the end of the First Republic. The south of Brazil had changed enormously: massive European immigration fuelled the growth, first, of export agriculture, and then of a growing industrialisation process. The new emergent urban middle classes had social and political aspirations that the oligarchic Republic could not satisfy, being, as it was, tailored to the benefit of the small cluster of the traditional elite. Under the leadership of Getúlio Vargas (Levine 1998), the new Brazilian Republic (the Estado Novo) managed to control the centrifugal tendencies of some regions in order to build a strong centralised Federal state, which offered a populist protection to the working classes, stimulated the development of a national industry and encouraged a new modernist, nationalist discourse.

This new national discourse on Brazil was built in radical opposition to the previous racist and evolutionist models. The new generations of intellectuals, artists, writers, social scientists and anthropologists, like Gilberto Freyre and Jorge Amado, praised what the racists detested: the racial mixture of Brazil, the contribution of Indians and Africans to the nation.

The most significant change that has come about in Bahia since the 1930s and 1940s is precisely the rendering public of local cultural forms of religion, of food, of feasting that had previously been kept in the private sphere – becoming symbols of regional identity and pride, becoming 'popular' and 'Afro-Brazilian culture' (Borges 1995). These symbols were displayed in literature, music, the visual arts and the social sciences, making them legitimate and culturally valued both for the local elite and for an international public. In fact, Bahia was living through a time of intense cultural life, a time of avant-garde (Risério 1995), with the creation of new cultural and educational institutions, and a cultural world of intense exchanges between popular and contemporary art, local and international artists. A new elite of artists, writers and anthropologists was imposing a new cultural model over the racist paradigm of the previous intellectual elites of doctors and *bacharéis*.

But this cultural movement was truncated by the military dictatorship of 1964, which imposed much more conservative policies. In the case of Salvador, 'Afro-Brazilian culture' was quickly identified as a tourist product, and a tourist-oriented market of Afro-Brazilian cultural products sprang up. At the same time an extremely powerful political leader emerged: Antonio Carlos Magalhães (popularly referred to by his initials, ACM), who has successfully articulated the traditional political culture of patronage politics or '*coronelismo*' with populism.[17] ACM has often manipulated 'Afro-Brazilian culture', as we will see throughout this book.

At the same time that 'Afro-Brazilian culture' was rendered public and descendants of the African community were gaining public presence in the sphere of cultural production, society started to change. Particularly from the 1960s onwards, the city started to grow, thanks to better communications, tourism and the development of a small industrial sector. From 1940 to the 1990s, massive migrations from the interior multiplied by five the inhabitants of the city (from 400,000 to 2,000,000). This growth marked an enormous change, not only in urbanism or consumption habits but also in the social structure of the city. By the 1970s, Salvador was no longer a colonial city anchored in the past; it was finally becoming a modern town.

First, economic development provoked the emergence of new social groups: an educated middle class fulfilled the needs of the new service economy, and a growing working class was employed in new factories. These new classes were increasingly independent of the traditional system of familial patronage of Bahia. Sectors of the working classes more forcefully assumed a Black identity (Kraay 1998; Agier 2000). This new consciousness was also influenced by social movements in other parts of the world, like the American Black Power movement. Thus, from the 1970s on, we see a strong resistance among Afro-Brazilian intellectuals and artists against identifying their culture with popular culture or folklore, and a vindication of the autonomy and dignity of Afro-Brazilian culture, rejecting the tourist manipulation of the political elite of the dictatorship.

However, the expectations of the lower middle classes and the elite of the working classes in the 1960s and 1970s were seriously damaged by the economic crisis of the 1980s, when the differences between the new rich and the new poor grew. The new poor became a lumpen proletariat. The 'Black elite' maintained their discourse and their pride, but did not keep their economic or political independence – if they ever had it (Sansone 2003). Thus, traditional political groups and leaders patronised the new Afro-Brazilian cultural groups, like Carnival groups. The old

paternalist system reinvented through ACM maintained its power until the end of the twentieth century, and 'Afro-Brazilian culture' seemed to be tied to its apron strings.

Afro-Brazilian Culture and Art: From Fetishes to Monuments

This book is organised around a historical narrative, but I start by addressing an ethnographic case. In Chapter 1, '"Making the Saint": Spirits, Shrines and Syncretism in Candomblé', I describe the practices of Candomblé and stay away from models of African 'purity', also avoiding simplistic affirmations about syncretism. I propose an alternative understanding of the articulation of new entities in Candomblé as a process of appropriation of history. The precedence of this ritual process of appropriation is essential in understanding the appropriation of 'Culture' in later chapters.

Chapter 2, 'From Sorcery to Civilisation: The Objectification of Afro-Brazilian Culture', addresses the intellectual tradition of Afro-Brazilianism, which is based on the notion that Candomblé is a 'pure' African culture, autonomous from Brazilian culture. This belief has remained central in its various incarnations, from scientific racism to post-colonial criticism. Candomblé in Bahia has been objectified as an African 'High Culture', a 'Civilisation'. And this objectification has been appropriated by the elites of some houses of Candomblé in Salvador da Bahia, as I explain in Chapter 3, 'From Informants to Scholars: Appropriating Afro-Brazilian Culture'. These houses learned to use the discourse of the Afro-Brazilianist tradition for their own ends, presenting themselves as the true and only heirs of African Civilisation. In this process, the former 'sorcerers' have become artists, philosophers and anthropologists.

The chapters which follow describe this process of objectification and appropriation in different spaces and through different objects. Chapter 4, 'From Weapons of Crime to Jewels of the Crown: Candomblé in Museums', explains how 'fetishes' have become 'artworks' in museums in Bahia: from the collections of police trophies in the early twentieth century, through the anthropological displays of the Afro-Brazilian Museum, to the museums in the Candomblé temples, which appropriate the discourse on cultural values in their own terms. Chapter 5, 'From the Shanties to the Mansions: Candomblé as National Heritage', discusses the designation of certain houses as heritage sites, and its implications for notions of 'material' and 'immaterial' heritage in Brazil. At this point there is a general discussion of the logic of inalienable possessions and the problems that its hierarchical values imply.

The next three chapters focus more explicitly on artistic production. Chapter 6, 'Modern Art and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Bahia', introduces the close relation of the modern arts, nationalism and the state in twentieth-century Brazil, and how the modernists appropriated symbols of Afro-Brazilian and popular culture as a sign of modernity. However, the alliance of the modern and the popular came to a standstill with the dictatorship of the 1960s. A more defined, autonomous discourse on Afro-Brazilian art was formed in the following decades, as I explain in Chapter 7, 'Authenticity and Commodification in Afro-Brazilian Art'. The emergence of this discourse on Afro-Brazilian art is a result of the national and international cultural policies of the Brazilian state. But this situation has produced contradictions in the ambiguous relation between the art officially recognised as Afro-Brazilian and the myriad of popular artists that supply the tourist market with Afro-Brazilian iconographies, and who are despised by the artistic elites because of their commodification.

The contradictions between artistic production and cultural policy are more thoroughly addressed in Chapter 8, 'Candomblé as Public Art: The Orixás of Tororó', which focuses on a specific case, the sculptures of the Orixás in the park of Tororó. These statues were involved in a heated polemic, since they were attacked by members of a Pentecostal church, the Igreja Universal do Reino de Déus.

The discussion of this case leads to the concluding chapter, 'Re-appropriations of Afro-Brazilian Culture', which questions to what extent the objectification of Afro-Brazilian culture in the recent decades has been too elitist and exclusive. In more general terms, the relative autonomy that some objectifications of Afro-Brazilian culture may have acquired will lead to consideration of the suitability of a general theory of value describing the social life of things.

Notes

1.   The city of São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos has been called 'Bahia' since colonial times. But in the last few decades, the denomination 'Salvador' has become more common, to mark a distinction from the state of which it is capital, the state of Bahia. In this book, I use the denomination Bahia quite frequently, to address a historical formation that is not restricted to the city but also common to its immediate surroundings (essentially, the region of the Recôncavo and especially Cachoeira, which will be mentioned frequently in these pages). On the other hand, I mention the city of 'Salvador' only when I make reference specifically to the city.

2. In this book I use the expression 'Afro-Brazilian culture' because it is commonly used in Brazil. 'African-Brazilian culture' is used very rarely.

3. *A Tarde*, 20/11/2005.

4. See http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/3fc4/16f10b/. The text goes on to say that 'the state of Bahia has a higher percentage of black people than all African countries except for Nigeria'.

5. Reis and Silva present the case of the 'Candomblé' of Accu, where a 'puppet' decorated with strings, cowrie shells, money and a dish in front on him was displayed, and was called Deus Vodum (1989: 128–29).

6. In some cases White people even became leaders of Candomblé. According to Reis, two of the twenty-eight cases that he has identified of 'individuals' classified by the police and newspapers as 'leaders' of Candomblé, were White. One was not even Brazilian, but Portuguese (Reis 2001).

7. *O Alabama*, 29 September 1868.

8. In the newspaper reports of police raids on Candomblé houses, we find cases of the active involvement of powerful upper-class people. For example, an attorney who was found in a Candomblé during a police raid later managed to free its leaders (Reis and Silva 1988: 57–58). In Cachoeira, local legend tells of a *Nagô* sorcerer and slave overseer, Anacleto, who saved the family of his plantation owner from the cholera epidemics of the 1850s. In return, the *fazendeiro* gave Anacleto a plot of land where he could practice his Candomblé (Wimberly 1998: 83).

9. Xavier Marques 1975 [1897], João do Rio 1951 [1904].

10. For example, one of the highlights of the newspaper *A Tarde*, 26/7/2005, is the declaration as national heritage of a house of Candomblé (*Terreiro do Aganju vira patrimônio*). An essay in the same newspaper (*Dez anos de Agadá*, 30/7/2005) makes an extensive and appraising review of a book, *Agadá*, which describes the continuity of 'the fundamental principles of African civilisation' in the Candomblé of Brazil. These are two examples at random: several others will be shown in this book.

11. 'For Afro-Brazilian activists … culturalist (as opposed to cultural) practices have also been an impediment to certain types of counterhegemonic political activities … Culturalism is defined as the equation of cultural practices with the material, expressive, artifactual elements of cultural production, and the neglect of normative and political aspects of a cultural process. Within culturalist politics, cultural practices operate as ends in themselves rather than as means to a more comprehensive, heterogeneous set of ethico-political activities. In culturalist practices, Afro/Brazilian and Afro-Diasporic symbols and artefacts become reified and commodified. Culture becomes a thing, not a deeply political process.' (Hanchard 1994: 21)

12. The term 'value' – and the necessity of an 'anthropological theory of' – has been a recurrent topic in recent anthropological debates (Graeber 2001). I agree with Thomas that there is a 'surplus of theories' of value (Thomas 1991: 30) so I will not add another one to the pyre. When I talk about the value of objects or people, very simply, I am talking about qualities that are recognised in these objects or people. A theory of value, in these terms, should be subordinate to a theory of recognition. Throughout this book, though, hopefully it will become apparent that I do not want to reduce 'the social life of things' to a theory of value. Issues of agency (after Gell 1998) and, more importantly, of materiality (after Weiner

1992 and Pietz 1985) are not reducible to value. The 'life' or 'power' of objects often does not come so much from the 'value' we give to them or their 'distributed agency', but, on the contrary, it may come from their resistance to being reduced to human values and agencies. We will come back to this point in the last chapters of this book.

13. This is an important point, to avoid falling into the teleological narrative that would see history as a process of progressive separation of objects and subjects, and which dominates the sociological tradition from Comte to Bourdieu. Sometimes it is necessary to confront this classical perspective on modernity with a populist defence of the everyday practices of appropriation that patch objectifications into extended selves. Anthropology is singularly endowed with the ability to unravel these little unmodernising practices, revealing that in many ways we have never been modern (Latour 1993).

14. I will not apply Bourdieu's model of the Cultural Field with all its consequences. At one level, I agree with Bourdieu that the values of Culture are built in opposition to the values of the market. But I do not think that we can describe the 'dynamics' of the field in terms of 'cultural capital'. I think that artistic or cultural value is better described in terms of 'recognition' – which is not the same as 'cultural capital'. The accumulation of capital is a movement of objectification and introspection, in which the strategist seizes the time of others. Recognition, on the other hand, is an expansive movement, in which the artist creates relations and becomes a part of the life of others – and is appropriated by them. The movement of accumulation of capital would be the opposite of recognition. Capital is based on a notion of the person as an individual who accumulates power by objectifying people. Recognition is based on another model of the person that allows for the expansion and distribution of the self being 'appropriated' by other people. In this sense, Gell's (1998) theory of extended agency of the artist is more pertinent in explaining the production of artistic value.

15. One of the more original recent books about Candomblé is Christopher Johnson's *Secrets, Gossip and the Gods* (2003), on the process by which Candomblé has gone 'public' in Brazil. His argument is that Candomblé is becoming more public and individualistic; more 'Protestant' in his terms. My argument in this book is more general and encompassing than Johnson's, since I am not trying to understand Candomblé exclusively as a religious practice, but in the context of the emergence of the values and institutions of 'Culture' in modern Brazil.

16. In this sense, I would not follow Gilroy in trying to delimit a 'Black Atlantic' defined by him as 'an expressive counterculture not simply as a succession of literary tropes and genres but as a philosophical discourse which refuses the modern, occidental separation of ethics and aesthetics, culture, and politics' (Gilroy 1993: 38). Describing a 'Black Atlantic' culture as a counterculture, in fact, Gilroy is recognising that the formation of this 'Black Culture' is always restricted to a larger, modernist discourse on 'Culture'. Since its very origin, since Romanticism, modern Culture has tried to overcome the separation of 'ethics and aesthetics'. If we read any modernist manifesto of the early twentieth century, we are likely to find at least one allusion to the need to abolish such distinctions (including theory and practice, the erudite and the popular, and so on). In order to do so, modernists have always not only sought inspiration but

actively appropriated what they saw as the Other – the faraway past of classical antiquity in the Renaissance, the authentic and naïve popular cultures of Europe in Romanticism, or the exotic and 'primitive' cultures of Africa and its American descendants in twentieth-century modernism. Modernism is nothing else than that: taking a position against the immediate in place and time and finding a new point of reference in a distant place or time.

17. 'Coronelismo' is a particular form of political organisation of the nineteenth century, in which a non-official authority (a 'coronel') imposes his will, particularly in the elections, through his control of personal relations, economic power and the fear of the population. Populism, on the other hand, is used to make reference to the political movement with social concerns but without any specific leftist or socialist framework, which intensively uses the image of its leader in the mass media, in order to create the illusion of a personal (patronage) relationship between voter and leader. ACM is a right-wing populist: he has used the mass media wisely, identifying political authority with himself, as a sort of big coronel who controls both the formal and informal circuits of power. On the other hand, he proclaims that he uses his power to serve his people, the people of Bahia, against the Federal government.