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Farfan, Elizabeth

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**(Re)membering the Quilombo: Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Recognition in Brazil**

By:

Elizabeth Farfán

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

Joint Doctorate of Philosophy  
with the University of California San Francisco

in  
Medical Anthropology  
in the  
Graduate Division  
of the  
University of California Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Chair

Professor Charles Briggs

Professor Sharon Kaufman

Professor Teresa Caldeira

Fall 2011



## Abstract

by

Elizabeth Farfán

Joint Doctorate of Philosophy in Medical Anthropology

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University of California Berkeley

Professor Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Chair

African ancestry and collective resistance to slavery play a central role in access to constitutional rights for Brazilians living in rural black communities denominated *comunidades remanescentes de quilombos*. In the effort to repatriate lands to the descendants of *quilombolas* or fugitive slaves, the Brazilian government, together with the Brazilian Anthropological Association, and Black Movement activists, turned rural black communities into national patrimony through a series of public policies that emphasize their ethnic and cultural difference by connecting them to quilombo ancestors.

Article 68 of the 1988 Brazilian constitution declared that any descendants of quilombos who were still occupying their ancestor's lands should be recognized as owners and granted land titles by the federal government. With the help of NGOs, rural black communities are re-learning their identity and becoming quilombos in order to obtain the land and social rights they need to continue surviving. While the quilombo clause may seem like an important historical change in the ability of black Brazilians to use the constitution to their advantage, it is important to ask what the stakes are of becoming a quilombo for the residents of a community. Here I explore the ways in the quilombo recognition process has significantly impacted the lives of a community in São Francisco do Paraguaçu in the Recôncavo of Bahia.

Engaging with scholarship that questions multiculturalist policies, new forms of citizenship, and the re-construction of colonial subjectivities into modern political identities, I argue that the quilombo clause, and the bureaucratic system built to support it, recycles a romanticized and nostalgic story of slavery and resistance in colonial Brazil through a process I call *(re)membering*. Here, I illustrate the ways in which the once colonial "quilombo" has been re-imagined into a new differentiated community (the *comunidade remanescente de quilombo*) rooted in ethnic and cultural difference for the purpose of distributing collective rights to black citizens. I contend that by focusing on the *cultural* difference of rural black communities, the quilombo clause ignores the *racialized* political and social discrimination that these communities

have faced historically and continue to face. Although the quilombo clause was meant to address the history of discrimination and exclusion of black communities, it has actually led to social confusion and conflict surrounding the validity and *authenticity* of a differentiated identity for quilombo descendants.

## **(Re)membering the Quilombo: Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Recognition in Brazil**



The façade of a quilombola home. From left to right, the signs read: “We are quilombolas with a lot of pride” and “I know what it is, that is why I am a quilombola.” Photo taken by Elizabeth Farfan.

*For my family who has waited so long*

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### **List of Government Organizations**

**FCP** *Fundação Cultural Palmares*: Palmares Cultural Foundation

**INCRA** *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agraria*: National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform

**SEPPIR** *Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial*: Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality

**SEPROMI** *Secretaria de Promoção da Igualdade do Estado da Bahia*: Office for the Promotion of Equality

### **Non-Governmental Organizations**

**CPP** *Comissão Pastoral de Pescadores*: Pastoral Commission of Fishermen in Bahia

**AATR** *Associação de Advogados de Trabalhadores Rurais*: Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers

**Koinonia** *Observatório Quilombola* (Quilombo Observatory): Koinonia's Quilombo Observatory is both a "watch-dog" program and a series of civic empowerment workshops for quilombos. Currently, the Observatory is working in more than fifty quilombos throughout Rio de Janeiro and Bahia to teach the residents about the bureaucratic steps to becoming a quilombo: learning their quilombo history, how to obtain their certification and land title, and how to teach others about quilombo culture.

### **University-based Research**

**GeografAR**: UFBA research group initiated in 1996 working on the mapping of different living situations and communities in the rural areas of Bahia, including *assentamentos*, quilombos, and land occupations (the Landless Movement).

### **Other Acronyms**

**ABA** *Associação Brasileira de Antropologia*: Brazilian Anthropological Association

**CPI-SP** *Comissão Pró-Índio São Paulo*

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## Chapter I Introduction

*It is incorrect to state, as so many Brazilian historians and sociologists have done, that the Negro in Brazil, in contrast to the Indian, was a passive social force, quite resigned to the system of slavery (Ramos 1980, 24).*

*Creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this...activity, in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity (Taussig 1993, 129).*

The institution of slavery is the foundation on which the modern world is economically, politically, socially, and even culturally constructed. Although the politics of remembering the history of slavery often ask for acts of forgetting, the way in which that history is reconstructed and reconceived is a central issue of the black experience throughout the African Diaspora. Without reducing all of the Afro-American experience to enslavement, it is important to think about how slavery, and more importantly the colonial black experience, have been remembered and integrated into modern social, political, and cultural life. The memory of slavery may represent a violent and painful past for some, but Brazilians have held on to this memory in their vindication of the many blacks that fought and resisted enslavement throughout the entire colonial period.

This dissertation focuses on the *comunidade remanescente de quilombo* or quilombo descendant as a modern political and social identity that has emerged from the colonial black experience in Brazil, particularly in the northeastern state of Bahia. Along with the United States, Brazil was among the largest importers of African slaves in the world and Bahia was one of the primary slave markets in the country. The sheer intensity of the slave trade helped determine the predominance of black residents and African cultural practices in the state and nation. But if enslavement was the violent reality of many Africans in the New World, so too was resistance and the quest for freedom. Rebellion in the Americas was as intensive as the slave trade and was both individual and collective (Reis & Gomes 1996). Throughout the Diaspora, enslaved Africans committed suicide, feigned illnesses, sabotaged work equipment, fled into dense forests and crowded cities, and saved small amounts of money to purchase their freedom (Reis & Gomes 1996).

Still the most well known symbols of resistance were the blacks that fled from enslavement to live in freedom. During the colonial period, groups of these fugitive slaves in Brazil were called *quilombos* and *mocambos*<sup>1</sup>. Interest in what the life of quilombos may have been like gained most ground in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly with the works of Edison Carneiro, *O Quilombo dos Palmares* (1947), Clóvis Moura, *Os Quilombos e a Rebelião Negra* (1981), Décio Freitas, *Palmares: A Guerra dos Escravos* (1971), and Abdias do Nascimento,

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<sup>1</sup> The official colonial definition of “quilombo” was believed to be established in 1740 by the colonial Conselho Ultramarino (Marine Council) as any habitation of five or more black fugitives residing on any land that was in part uninhabited (*em parte despovoada*) and uncultivated (Schmitt, Turatti, Carvalho 2002).

“Quilombolismo” (1980). All of these authors helped reinterpret the memory of slavery in Brazil by illustrating slave resistance as a brave war that was waged on the Portuguese crown in the effort to create separate black republics symbolized by the quilombo Palmares. The vision of quilombolas as warriors and of Palmares as an independent African community was especially popularized in the 1986 film *Quilombo* by Carlos Diegues. The romantic and idealized quilombo of these works sharply contrasted the image of quilombos as criminals and enemies of the state that was promoted during the colonial period when the only policy toward quilombos was their destruction. Because colonial quilombos were illegal, there is a paucity of primary documents on their structure, culture, and everyday life. The majority of information we have today comes from what was left by the very people who sought to capture and destroy these groups (Price 1996). Although the revisionist works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shine little light on the actual lived experience of the majority of quilombos during the colonial period, they have fundamentally contributed to the re-creation of the memory of slavery and resistance in contemporary Brazil. Unfortunately, their view of quilombos, which became the prevalent national myth, gave Brazil a faulty foundation for public policy that has produced outcomes which subvert legislative intentions.

#### *A New Constitution, A New “Quilombo”*

In 1988, one hundred years after abolition, the Brazilian government enacted the nation’s seventh constitution. Following two decades of military dictatorship (1964-1985), the constitution’s fundamental objectives included the “promotion of well-being for all without prejudice as to origin, race, sex, color, age, and any other forms of discrimination” (Title I, Brazilian 1988 Constitution). Most ground breaking, however, was the transitory Article 68 of the constitution that conceded land rights to the descendants of *quilombos* or *comunidades remanescentes de quilombos*. In less than three lines, the article stated:

The definitive property rights are here recognized for the descendants of quilombo communities who are still occupying their lands, and the state should grant them land titles.<sup>2</sup>

Article 68 was included as a form of reparations for the violent exclusion of blacks during and after slavery, but it was only the bare bones of what would follow. A series of subsequent laws and processes came to redefine the core concepts of the quilombo. Article 68 has been hailed as a success for black rights, particularly the right to cultural difference and access to differentiated (i.e. exceptional) rights for rural black quilombo communities. The article follows a trend beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century for the national recognition of different ethnic groups and their access to cultural rights under multicultural statutes and policies. Article 68 was founded on a spirit of liberalism and multicultural rights, and while this has, on the surface, a progressive appeal for those opposed to racism and discrimination, in fact, its focus on differentiated rights for *ethnically* distinct *quilombo* groups still overlooks the problem of racial discrimination and unequal access to land for most Brazilians. This dissertation analyzes the social, cultural, and individual effects of Article 68 and the bureaucratic structure that supports it (hereafter referred to as the “quilombo clause”).

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<sup>2</sup>Aos remanescentes das comunidades dos quilombos que estejam ocupando suas terras é reconhecida a propriedade definitiva, devendo o Estado emitir-lhes os títulos.

In looking at theory and experience, both past and present, gathering the stories of the many stakeholders involved in this issue, and compiling the available data on the implementation of Article 68, I make three central arguments about the social and individual effects of the quilombo clause that are developed throughout eight chapters. First, I contend that since the 1988 constitution recognized the land rights of the descendants of quilombos, **these communities have been re-defined and re-imagined by the state through a nostalgic memory of slavery, resistance, and African tradition that contradicts their lived reality. I call this process of redefinition, “(re)membering” the quilombo.** Although they won the right to self identify in 2003, quilombo descendants are still authenticated based on how closely they resemble the national memory of the colonial quilombo, exemplified through Palmares, the largest quilombo in Brazilian history. The need to connect quilombo descendants to a specific origin of African ancestors for the purpose of distributing collective rights, has led to the emphasis of *quilombo descendants* as a separate ethnic community with different social and cultural practices from the rest of society.

Therefore, my second argument is that in order to justify the collective rights of rural black quilombo communities, anthropologists have had to re-define the “quilombo” category as an ethnic and cultural identity and erase its connection to slavery and the racial discrimination in which it (and the eugenic, whitening practices that followed it) was rooted. **Although the emphasis on quilombo descendants is their ethnic difference, I introduce *race* as a social and ideological problem of anthropology and the Brazilian national identity. I find it problematic that quilombo descendants are assigned *blackness* without *race* and I argue that this only ignores the racial discrimination that these communities continue to experience, especially when it comes to land ownership.**

Finally, the ideological redefinition of the “quilombo “ category necessitated a new bureaucratic structure of policies and procedures charged with determining who is and is not an authentic descendant of quilombos. It takes several years to authenticate a quilombo community and in the process people have to be educated on the new definition of “quilombo” and the parameters of the new laws. Unfortunately, there is still a lot of social confusion surrounding the new definition of “quilombo.” **My final contention is that there is ample evidence to show that the policies that were erected to make the quilombo clause feasible have only instigated land conflicts and regional and racial discrimination of Afro-descendants in Brazil.** As private landowners are threatened with having their lands taken away, quilombo descendants are forced to fight to stay on their lands until they obtain rights. Marked as *black* and culturally different, they must struggle through a system of “differentiated citizenship” (Holston 2008) that still does not recognize the history of racial discrimination that has determined much of their social and political lives.

In order to begin to understand the implications of quilombo recognition for rural black communities, it is necessary to look at the entire bureaucratic structure, not just the quilombo community itself. Thus, this research required several methodologies that adapted to the diverse environments I studied which are detailed in Chapter II. Quilombos are recognized and granted rights based on a rigid set of laws and procedures carried out at the federal and state level. The procedures are then taught and made accessible by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in



collaboration with Black Movement (MNU) activists. The first part of my research includes interviews with government bureaucrats, NGO leaders, and MNU activists. These interviews are integral to understanding the quilombo recognition and rights acquisition process. Moreover, they are important in piecing together the official definition of “quilombo” that the government works with when deciding whether or not to grant rights. Government organizations and NGOs are a central part of the quilombo process and of making sure communities understand the quilombo clause before deciding to identify.

The second part of this research focuses in on a quilombo community called *São Francisco do Paraguaçu*, located in the Bahian Recôncavo within the municipal district of Cachoeira. While my interviews with bureaucrats and other stakeholders are aimed at learning the political process of recognition and rights acquisition, my interviews in São Francisco focus on the cultural process of *becoming* a quilombo, and the individual effects of the process on the people who identify as quilombolas. By focusing on the example of São Francisco, I illustrate how the process of political recognition as a quilombo is also a permanent process of identity formation or re-formation. I argue that while the quilombo process may begin with the immediate need for land and social services, it quickly turns into one of “(re)membering” the community’s past through a specific narrative of slave resistance and African tradition that has come to define the rural black quilombo descendant community in Brazil. By focusing legislatively on the differentiation and re-integration of rural black communities as quilombo descendants, I contend that the quilombo clause offers black Brazilians very little in terms of social rights and recognition. More specifically, I argue that the quilombo clause is more regressive than progressive in its recognition of the racism and marginalization that has impacted black Brazilians since the colonial period.

São Francisco presents an interesting but common case. The community was spiraled into violent land conflict shortly after it was recognized by the Palmares Cultural Foundation as an official *comunidade remanescente de quilombo*. Although they obtained quilombo certification in 2005, in 2009 they still had not been granted a land title. I was introduced to São Francisco and the quilombo issue through a serious media accusation of fraud in the community. Although São Francisco has been determined to be the site of a colonial quilombo, their identity has been questioned by private landowners and other authorities leaving them in the difficult position of having to prove their authenticity throughout several years. Doing research in São Francisco was complicated. The quilombolas are not only warring with private landowners but also with other members of their community. There is a large group of people denominated *não quilombolas* or non-quilombolas in São Francisco that refuse the quilombo title and pledge allegiance to the landowners they have worked with for decades. These non-quilombolas are friends, *compadres*, and family members that have been divided along ethnic lines and political loyalties. My work in São Francisco attempts to bring forth the many intimate and social experiences of the *quilombolas* in their fight for authenticity and the rights they know are guaranteed by the constitution. Chapter II further describes my methodologies in the various terrains of the quilombo issue, the political and the social, and the difficulty of doing anthropological research in an emotionally and politically divided field.

Before initiating a specific discussion on the quilombo clause and its impact on São Francisco, in Chapter III, I connect the birth of the contemporary race problem in Brazil to its

roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Slavery, resistance (or rebellion), and abolition preoccupied the scholars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as they worked to explain the impact of miscegenation and race mixture on the future of the nation. In this chapter, I set the historical and ideological roots of the colonial quilombo within the context of the slave trade as well as the racist ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is important to understand how race became a physiological and social problem of the nation-- and how that problem was ‘resolved’—in order to appreciate the extraordinary problems presented by the quilombo clause and new identity. Although Brazil has successfully portrayed itself as a *racial democracy* for many years, like all of the American nations, it too has a history of eugenics, whitening, and black repression that have contributed to the complex landscape of racial politics in the nation. While I describe the quilombola identity as a new political identity, it is one that is created out of the long history of black life and racial ideologies in Brazil.

### *(Re)membering a History and Forming an Identity*

As I learned more and more about the quilombo issue, I came to see the process of quilombo recognition as one of piecing together and re-thinking different aspects of colonial history. I realized that the social memory of slavery and resistance was made be more powerful than “fact” or material proof. Quilombo descendants were granted the right to self-identification, but there needed to be a way to make the quilombo clause relevant to rural black communities (both ideologically and socially) that fit the objectives of the law but that knew little to nothing about quilombo identity and rights. In this objective, anthropologists were central to re-imaging the historical definition of “quilombo” as well as to the creation of a new bureaucratic system of policies and procedures that made quilombo clause more functional.

I use the idea of “(re)membering the quilombo” to symbolize a series of ideological and bureaucratic practices that have redefined the image of the colonial quilombo to integrate the rural black communities that have been identified as their descendants. Primarily, I engage with the Brazilian Anthropological Association’s (ABA) discussion on the definition of “quilombo” published in a statement to the Ministry of Culture by the *Grupo de Trabalhos* (working group) on rural black communities in 1994. In their statement, the ABA GT defines quilombo descendants as *ethnic communities*, using Frederick Barth’s notion of “ethnic groups and boundaries” (1969), that may or may not identify with slave ancestors, but who share a communal connection to the land and a commitment to African cultural practices and traditions. The ABA emphasized to the Ministry of Culture that connecting quilombo descendants purely to fugitive slaves ignored all of the different ways in which blacks resisted during the colonial period. With support from the Unified Black Movement (MNU), Brazilian anthropologists re-directed the emphasis of the “quilombo” category from slavery and racial discrimination to resistance and African culture. In using Frederick Barth’s theories, the ABA helped established the “quilombo community” as a separate and *differentiated* ethnic group. Along with this came the understanding that quilombo descendants have “a membership which identifies [them], and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order.” In other words, quilombo descendants have specific cultural traits that visibly distinguish them from other social groups, especially urban blacks. As differentiated ethnic groups, quilombos needed to demonstrate their difference by approximating their “ancestors” as closely

as possible. The problem is that their authenticity has come to depend on a specific choice of ancestors and the ability to prove their connection to the land.

The re-conceptualization of “quilombo” as an ethnic category and symbol of African tradition was further cemented by Brazil’s ratification of the International Labor Organization’s Convention 169 for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. In 2003, the Lula administration adopted Convention 169 as a model for quilombo policies and made it the basis for Decree 4.887, which officially granted quilombos the right to self-identification and to a separate culture without persecution from the state. The convention specifically addresses:

(T)ribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations... (ILO Convention 169).

With its adoption, the ILO convention helped re-imagine quilombo descendants within the categories of *indigenous* and *tribal* communities and further propelled new policies that would continue to differentiate these citizens as separate ethnic groups for the purpose of distributing collective rights. I analyze the policies that support the quilombo clause and the role of anthropologists in the process of “(re)membering the quilombo,” or what can hereafter be seen as piecing together the historical memory of slave resistance with a politics of multiculturalism and “right to difference.”

Chapter IV moves from the politics of racial democracy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the growing recognition of discrimination and multicultural rights in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This chapter situates my argument within studies of multiculturalism, differentiated citizenship in Brazil, and new forms of cultural citizenship for Afro-descendants in Latin America. Here, I argue that because of the history and politics of race and the prominence of the theory of racial democracy in Brazil, ethnicity and culture became stronger variables of citizenship rights and inclusion than did racial identity. This chapter is central to building a connection between multiculturalist policies and the quilombo clause. It is also important to understanding why the quilombo identity was molded into an ethnic category and not a racial one. I argue that because of its ideological and political foundation in multiculturalism, the quilombo clause ignores the history and extant social problem of racial discrimination.

Through my focus on the construction of new racialized subjectivities, memories, and historical narratives, my work engages race as an unresolved actor in the anthropological study of culture. Ever since Boas determined that culture was more important than race, issues of racism and racial inequalities have largely been made secondary to those of ethnicity, class, and even gender in anthropology. **This research introduces the race question as a problem of anthropology and culture. In the case of Brazil, I illustrate that blackness is largely rooted in anthropological ideology and that this ideology has determined the interpretation of historical and present quilombo subjectivities. Who is and is not a quilombo descendant and what criteria can be used to determine that is the fundamental question of the quilombo clause and therefore of this work.** It is important to emphasize that while I see the present quilombo category as a product of a series of ideological constructions and

interpretations, I include my own work in that process. My methodology and analytical conclusions diverge from the dominant research on quilombos. While most anthropologists, NGOs, and MNU activists are hailing the quilombo clause as a progressive government move in recognizing black rights, I focus on the problems of a clause that assigns blackness but ignores race and the extant racial discrimination that continues to affect the experience of black Brazilians.

### *The Problem of Authenticity in a Process of (Re)membering*

As I will detail in the chapters ahead, political recognition as a quilombo is a continuous process of identity formation and re-formation. It is a process of adapting to a differentiated identity while seeking inclusion as equal citizens of the nation-state. Regardless of its definition as a culturally differentiated ethnic group, quilombo descendants do not live outside of Brazilian society (cultural, racial, political, or economic structures) any more than their ancestors did. While I argue that the quilombo *identity* is rightfully a dialectical one that is formed in the process of dialogue (and workshops) between governmental and non-governmental organizations and communities, the quilombo *clause* is complicated by the problem of authenticity. Legislation meant to implement Article 68 gives quilombo descendants the right to self-identify, but they must do so within very strict parameters established by the federal government and carried out by state organizations and NGOs.

My interviews with bureaucrats were central to understanding the political process of quilombo recognition, but before I could fully grasp the process, I needed to see it in the specific context of São Francisco. In Chapter V, I describe the landscape and everyday life of São Francisco do Paraguaçu. I focus mostly on various forms of labor and represent them as the foundation of cultural life and the basis for remembering quilombo ancestry. Even before their formal recognition as a quilombo, the quilombolas of São Francisco argued that they had maintained the traditions of their ancestors in their connection with the land. While the origin of ancestry differs for all quilombos, the quilombolas of São Francisco identify with slaves who fled into the dense Atlantic forest that surrounds the town. I am careful to refer specifically to the *quilombolas of São Francisco* because not everyone who lives in the town identifies as a quilombola. Before quilombo recognition, the town lived and worked as one unified community. Being that nearly everyone in the town shared some form of familial relationship, it was easy for them to collaborate, particularly when it came to labor rights and recognition. When the quilombo process began and the town was violently split between those who identified as quilombolas and those who refused to accept the title, the community life was dramatically changed. In 2009, when I arrived, the town was littered with opposing signs, pictured on the cover of this work, that either denied the quilombo identity or accepted it. This chapter lays out the geographical, cultural, and social make-up of São Francisco do Paraguaçu in order to understand the day-to-day life of the people and how the quilombo *community* came to be formed. While there are specific parameters to the definition of quilombo established by the bureaucratic structure that supports the clause, quilombo descendants also play a central role in (re)membering their own history and ancestors as they work to fit within these parameters.

The limits of authenticity, as will be seen in chapters VI and VII, were established by the many bureaucratic labels and documents supporting the quilombo process. These include the

ABA definition of “ethnic group,” the ILO convention’s categories of “indigenous” and “tribal,” and the subsequent label of “*comunidades e povos tradicionais*” (traditional communities) ascribed to legally recognized quilombo descendants. These labels have corralled the modern quilombo category within a rigid structure of ethnic and cultural difference that forces rural black communities seeking land and social services to learn to be the authentic quilombo descendant the nation expects and demands. I will illustrate the many ways in which quilombo authenticity is rooted in a community’s ability to prove a historical and cultural connection to the land. Although they were intended to do the exact opposite, all of these parameters have come together to re-create quilombo descendants as the inheritors of the social and cultural life of the historically imagined colonial quilombo, particularly Palmares.

Charles Taylor argues that authenticity cannot be socially derived but rather must come from within. He further argues that human beings are fundamentally dialogical and become “fully human agents” through their ability to define their identity through language and lived experience (1994, 32). Following Taylor, I hold that while the quilombo identity is socially dialogical, it is politically stagnant and buried in the memory of “fugitive slaves” hidden in dense forests living “traditional” African lives. Although ABA’s reformulation of the definition of “quilombo” was meant to open the identity to the emic definitions of the community, the political process of quilombo recognition and authentication made this effort contradictory. The ABA definition allowed quilombo descendants to choose from several possible origin stories (to choose their ancestors). However, the need to demonstrate proof of ancestry and land use often forces quilombo descendants to emphasize their identification with “slave” or “fugitive slave” ancestors. How this causes modern day quilombos to tell their story will be seen in chapters VI and VII.

Chapter VI reconstructs the process by which São Francisco became a *comunidade remanescente de quilombo* and a politically differentiated community. I write this chapter through the stories of quilombo leaders, men and women whose identity and lives have changed as a result of quilombo recognition. This chapter describes the process and politics of (re)membering the quilombo. Here, I illustrate my argument that the process of becoming a quilombo descendant is actually one of piecing together memories, or stories, that the people of São Francisco have been told, and have told themselves, about their cultural identity, history, and ancestry. Most of the chapter is written through the words of the people I interviewed. I do this so as to include all of the nuances and natural instances of contradiction and forgetting that take place in the process of remembering. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that the new category of the *quilombo descendant* is socially and politically constructed in a way that is reminiscent of the colonial quilombo, and productive for the ideological goals of the multicultural state.

I do not think it is necessary (or even accurate) to debate the authenticity of quilombo descendants in terms of what is “true” or “false.” In other words, the problem of authenticity is not whether quilombo descendants can actually, and successfully, trace their ancestors to their land. Nor is it a question of whether quilombo descendants have a false or “double” consciousness, as defined by Dubois (1961), in the sense that they imagine their identity through the eyes of the oppressive ‘other’ in the desire to be both African and Brazilian. While this position could be ideologically defended, it is not useful to the purpose of this research. The problem of authenticity stems from the political requirement that the quilombo descendant be the

(impossible) ‘traditional’ subject that reflects the African cultural patrimony of the nation and that still fits neatly within the national *mestiço* rhetoric. Thus a central part of my notion of “(re)membering the quilombo” is the problem of differentiated citizenship. Here I follow the work of James Holston (2008), but also Teresa Caldeira (2001), as they analyze the different social and political hierarchies that distinguish citizens for the purpose of differentiated treatment and rights. Within this line of research, I describe a bureaucratic structure that creates quilombo descendants as separate and different ethnic groups and unintentionally perpetuates conflict and violence due to the unequal distribution of land rights.

What is most important to remember is that the quilombo identity is in formation and is not yet accepted by all of society or even all black Brazilians (if we can group them together for ideological purposes). I chose not root my analysis in social movements theories because it is not yet possible to characterize quilombo descendants in Bahia as organized within a mass social movement in the way indigenous communities have been since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because I saw the beginnings of a social movement in my fieldwork, I hope that this research will contribute to an understanding of why the growing number of quilombo descendants in Bahia are beginning to unify and join forces in their *fight* for collective rights and authenticity. In her extensive work on citizenship, democracy, and violence, Calderia writes that the 1988 constitution did more than just expand the distribution of rights to different groups. She argues, that, in fact, the constitution changed the entire Brazilian frame of thinking about rights.

Brasileiros e brasileiras aprenderam a invocar seus direitos tanto nas filas de bancos e serviços públicos, quanto nos tribunais em que reivindicam seu direito à propriedade urbana e nos serviços em que afirmam seus direitos de consumidores (Caldeira 2002).

[Brazilian men and women learned to invoke their rights in public spaces as well as in the political spaces of the justice system where they could demand their right to urban property and to the services that affirm their rights as consumers.]

Caldeira’s description of the way Brazilians came to think about rights as something they could demand, publically and politically, is important to understanding the change that rural black communities experienced when they learned that they could demand rights based on their cultural and ancestral connection to the land. But this change did not happen on its own. It has taken the careful work of government organizations and NGOs to get rural black communities to re-imagine themselves as quilombo descendants and demand (and even fight for) collective rights on that basis. The quilombo process began with a brief phrase in the 1988 constitution that granted land rights to quilombo descendants who were still occupying the lands of their ancestors. The authors of the constitution would probably never have imagined that over two decades later INCRA would be faced with nearly 1,000 petitions for land regularization (INCRA “Relação de Processos Abertos 2009), that there would be 96 communities with quilombo land titles benefiting over 2,000 families around the nation (Fundação Cultural Palmares “Comunidades Tituladas” 2009), and that 1,342 communities would be certified by the Palmares Cultural Foundation (Bennett, Fundação Cultural Palmares, *Exibição Notícia* 2009). Documents indicate that as long as the quilombo clause continues to be politically supported, these numbers will grow exponentially each year.

Chapters VII and VIII deal specifically with the bureaucratic processes of quilombo recognition and land acquisition. These chapters illustrate the ways in which government policies, and the bureaucrats in charge of implementing them, are as much a part of redefining and (re)membering the quilombo as the communities involved. Furthermore, I reveal that although the legal process is highly organized and systematic, it does not always have the resources to function properly, a devastating reality that leaves communities to fight for their own rights with the help and guidance of NGOs.

The two primary government organizations in the quilombo process are the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). These organizations bear the responsibility for quilombo authentication and the distribution of rights. I argue that government organizations, and NGOs alike are bound by three essential documents that define the parameters of quilombo recognition and authenticity: Article 68 of the constitution, decree 4.887 founded on ILO Convention 169, and the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform's (INCRA) Normative 56 (N56). The ILO convention affirms that "self-identification" should be the legal criterion for granting recognition and rights to indigenous and tribal communities. As noted above, the convention newly imagined quilombo descendants through the categories of *indigeneity* and *tribal* peoples making their ethnic identity and authenticity dependent on their ability to prove their cultural and historical connection to the land. The FCP grants quilombo descendants cultural certification based on the contradictory acceptance of self-identification and the requirement of presenting a series of documents that illustrate and explain the community's *quilombo* ancestry.

Normative 56 is an instructional document that outlines the bureaucratic process that INCRA must follow in determining quilombo land rights. N56 defines quilombos as *ethno-racial groups, according to the community's own criteria of self-identification, that have their own historical trajectory, a specific relationship to a particular territory, and black ancestry that suffered and resisted historical oppression (INCRA Normative 56, 2009)*. The lands occupied by quilombo descendants are defined as those *used to guarantee the land's physical, social, economic, and cultural reproduction*. I illustrate the important role of these documents in regulating what is and is not determined an authentic "quilombo descendent" deserving of rights. Here I reinforce my argument that even though rural black communities have the right to self-identify, they must do so within a limited and limiting set of criteria established within a bureaucratic system that determines their authenticity.

Furthermore, in Chapter VII, I discuss the many bureaucratic problems that plague the legal process of recognition. On the one hand, quilombolas argue that the state and federal governments are not fulfilling the words of the constitution and granting them land rights. On the other hand, bureaucrats complain about the absolute lack of resources to carry out all of the procedures required for quilombo recognition and land acquisition. These institutional problems have left communities such as São Francisco in a state of limbo; while they obtained cultural recognition from the FCP, they have yet to see any sign of a land title.

Chapter VIII moves from government organizations to the important role of NGOs in helping quilombos navigate the legal process and protect their rights. I argue that while NGOs help empower rural black communities in many ways, they also participate in the productive

processes of (re)membering the quilombo identity to fit the lives of rural black communities. NGOs are key actors in teaching the ABA interpretation of “quilombo” and in ensuring that communities know exactly how the *quilombo descendente* is imaged by the state. While NGOs are strong supporters of community rights, I will also show that their goals and procedures have the negative result of perpetuating the erroneous idea that if quilombolas work to prepare themselves properly, particularly through their participation in NGO-led workshops, then they will successfully obtain recognition and rights.

Because of all of the work they put into learning and teaching history and culture within their own communities, quilombolas are often devastated and angered when faced with the realities of a quilombo clause that is institutionally dysfunctional. Much of the process of quilombo recognition is based on how quilombolas are able to represent themselves to the authorities. If their process is not successful, the blame tends to be placed on the community’s inability to appropriately represent their quilombo culture, on their failure to properly remember their own history, and on their ignorance of quilombolismo. While this blame comes mostly from opponents of the quilombo clause, it also comes from the people most invested in the process, government organizations, NGOs, and community leaders themselves. This final chapter describes how NGOs have come to fight the accusations of *fraud* like the one waged on São Francisco by teaching quilombo descendants to properly describe their quilombo identity within the parameters of the law. NGOs are central to the entire quilombo process. Their work has contributed to the exponential growth in rural (and urban) communities demanding quilombo identity and rights throughout Bahia and Brazil.

It is not the intention of this dissertation to discuss the correctness of the quilombo clause. Article 68 has been a matter of Brazilian public policy since 1988. To ask whether one should be for or against the quilombo clause puts us in the wrong frame of mind. What is important is to think about whether the quilombo clause does what it says and how it impacts people’s lives in the process. Quilombolas support the clause, but their lived experiences reflect its contradictory and weakly established parameters as well as its violent social effects. The quilombo clause promises land and rights that few recognized quilombos ever see. What is more, in order to get those rights, quilombolas have to go through a long and grueling process of anthropological authentication and research while simultaneously dealing with the wrath of opposing landowners and their supporters. This research highlights the effects of the quilombo clause on rural black populations. By necessity, the methodology reflects several conflictive terrains which I had to maneuver and integrate. Ultimately, the direction and results of my research reflect as much my intellectual interests in race relations and cultural rights for Afro Latinos throughout the diaspora as they do the limits of the field of anthropology in quilombo research. I have not gone beyond the supportable work of this dissertation to explore what might be done to correct the harmful and/or inequitable consequences that have unfolded over the decades. But certainly, my work opens the door to explore whether there are legislative and bureaucratic adjustments that would ameliorate the current difficulties.

In discussing the disputes over who gets to be a quilombo in predominantly black Bahia, a sociologist and member of the black movement explained:



History books only want to teach that blacks were slaves but ignore everything else we were and accomplished. We also resisted slavery and formed striving communities like Palmares. The term quilombo remembers Palmares and a history of resistance which is why it cannot just be replaced by another term like “negro.”

Wanting to understand his thinking more deeply, I asked: “That means that theoretically anyone who identifies as black can also identify as a quilombola, right?” Annoyed, he responded:

Yes, we can pass through a moment where everyone wants to identify as quilombola, just like we can pass through one where the term is forgotten and replaced with another. In the meantime, we use it because it is already in the language of the constitution” (Ramiro 2009).

Ramiro is currently writing a master’s thesis on his research in Rio das Rãs, the first quilombo to be recognized in Bahia. Ramiro’s response to my question about how to determine the parameters of the quilombo identity so that they were not so broad that *anyone* could identify as a quilombo descendent was to say that in fact it did not matter. For him *quilombola* was more than just *black* or *negro*. The word was significant because it highlighted black culture and resistance and not just enslavement. To be a quilombola was to be more than just *black*, it meant to be part of a historical struggle for liberty and autonomy. Much like Abdias do Nascimento’s *quilombolismo*, the quilombo clause fed the ideal of a romantic, black utopia for some social activists like Ramiro. However, the problem remains that while thousands of communities are being certified as quilombos, only a handful are actually getting land rights. What is worse, many of these certified communities find themselves in the middle of violent land conflicts with little hope for resolution.

As I write this dissertation, I attempt to reconcile several complexities and contradictions, especially those that come out of any anthropological study that sets out to (re) present an “other” to a Western audience that has little or no knowledge of the subject. In the preface of *Translated Woman*, Ruth Behar writes:

Anthropology allowed our lives to intersect and gave me permission to reflect on the meaning of that intersection. And yet I am often at odds with anthropology. This means I am often at odds with myself. This means I will probably always be a critic of my profession even as I continue to try to practice it. ...all my work is seeped in that paradox (Behar 1993: xvii).

As a Mexican, American, Indigenous, and Chicana anthropologist, I am shaped by identity politics and by our capacity as human beings and national citizens to navigate between different forms of representation and belonging. Having often “seen” myself reflected and “othered” in anthropological texts (especially, Oscar Lewis 1959, 1961), I write from the position and sentiment of object of study as much as one of researcher.

While the quilombo issue comes out of a political structure of differentiated rights, it is also rooted in a long history of racial politics that still recalls the colonial experience of slavery in Brazil. Resistance and the survival of African culture are wrapped up in the idea of a modern

*quilombo descendent*. As Ramiro stated, the term *quilombo* remembers more than just slavery and that is significant even if slavery is still a part of the memory. I critique the bureaucratic structure that leaves rural black communities in a contradictory position of fighting for rights guaranteed by the constitution and for an authenticity pre-established by the right to self-identification. In doing so, I take seriously the narratives and intimate experiences of the quilombo descendants that gave me access to their community and lives. While I cannot know whether this dissertation will help the quilombolas of São Francisco obtain land rights, I hope to contribute to new research directions on quilombos within Brazilian academia that represents the lived reality and everyday struggles of the quilombo process for a community. Following its publication, this dissertation will be translated into Portuguese and distributed to the leaders of the quilombo, as well as to the Palmares Cultural Foundation, and the NGOs I worked with in Bahia. My hope is that this work will move readers beyond the limits of authenticity and of what is real or fraudulent to a larger discussion of racial discrimination and access to essential rights for black Brazilians.

*Chapter II*  
**Methodology and the Challenges of doing a Critical Anthropologic Study  
of the Quilombo**

*The minute we walked in, I lost myself. My steps were weak as the ground under me grew softer and seemed to give with each clumsy step. “Walk on the branches but be careful because they are slippery” yelled Marisa from deep in the manguezal. My feet and legs were sucked into the ground with force each step. I struggled to find and walk on the roots of the mangue trees. The roots signaled firm ground, but they were so slippery, it was no easier than dragging my legs through the viscous mud. I felt helpless because I could not even hold myself up for more than a few minutes to see where Marisa and the other women had gone. I moved slowly, my eyes glued to the ground, terrified of falling into one of the crab holes Marisa warned me about. “If you fall into a crab hole, you will be buried up to your chin. It happens to us all the time and then someone has to pull you out.” I lost both of my shoes to the unforgiving mud, and my attempts to film Marisa and the others working felt absurd. Marisa was right about my not handling the distance. I would never have been able to “walk” out for miles in the mangue, slipping and sinking into crab holes for hours, like they did on a normal workday. If I had ever been lost in the mangue, like Dona Antonia last year, I would have probably just curled up on a branch and waited to die. I was only out for an hour and I was already exhausted, frustrated, and covered in mud. I had never lived such a challenging field experience, and I secretly felt sorry for myself. I thought someone had to feel sorry for the clumsy anthropologist buried up to her hips in mud, wearing white clothing, carrying a heavy camera, and surrounded by giant crabs of various species running laps over her feet and above her head. “Coitada,” laughed Marisa as she helped me out of a crab hole and took my camera.*

This chapter outlines the methodological foundation of this research and its contribution to the wider field of anthropology. My methodology is rooted in the conviction that an understanding the many complexities of the quilombo recognition process can only be approached by investigating all of the aspects of the process. This includes the governmental and non-governmental organizations involved, the communities seeking recognition, and those who oppose quilombo policies as well as academic and social observers. I brought to the research my graduate training in theory but I continued to review what I had learned in light of my ongoing research and developing conclusions. It was critical for me to look as well at the findings in the context of those who explored this and related issues before me. This research had the special unexpected benefit of bringing me to an intimate understanding of the role anthropologists can play in creating public policy. What is more it reminded me to the effects of our own biases and made me more appreciative of the responsibilities I hold as an anthropologist interested in community movements.

My introduction to the quilombo issue took place within different field spaces requiring different methods and commitments. The bureaucratic apparatus and the quilombo community each demanded rapport and made their needs clear upfront. Here I illustrate how I came to discover the conflictive field of quilombo studies and how I found my own ground in the issue. Because I critique the work of Brazilian anthropologists in their reconstruction of the quilombo category, I also think it honest to discuss my own problematic place as a researcher and foreigner

in the quilombo, making clear the limits of my access and perspective. Let me begin at the critical inflection point of this research with my accidental introduction to the particular town of São Francisco do Paraguaçu, first through the media and then through an early exploration that pointed up the challenge of maintaining political neutrality but caught my complete interest as an anthropologist and then, in time, my heart.

*Getting Acquainted to São Francisco do Paraguaçu through the Media*

In 2007, while I was researching developments in quilombo policy, I stumbled upon a video on-line provocatively titled, *Fraud in False Quilombo of Cachoeira Bahia*. The video was uploaded by an indignant young Brazilian who wanted to stimulate a discussion on a recent report aired by the *Jornal Nacional*, a primetime news program on the major Brazilian station, *Rede Globo*. São Francisco do Paraguaçu became a certified quilombo in 2005. This community has been plagued by violent conflict ever since the quilombolas submitted their paperwork for land rights. The *Jornal Nacional* was called to investigate São Francisco by an unsatisfied landowner, the largest private landowner in the region, who could not accept the fact that the very people who had worked his land for decades were now challenging his land rights. The title of the report clearly announced that the *Jornal's* intentions in the quilombo were to reveal to the Brazilian public the fraudulent and criminal acts of the community and to denounce the government institutions that knowingly supported their lies.

There were two major points of contention in the *Jornal Nacional* story that compelled me to investigate the issue further. The first was their startling claim that not only were the people of São Francisco do Paraguaçu not the descendants of fugitive slaves but that there were never slaves in that area. The second was that the people of São Francisco could not possibly be the descendants of quilombolas because they had never even heard of the word “quilombo.” The strong claims of the story as well as the maliciousness that seeped from the reporter’s sensationalist tone captured my attention. São Francisco do Paraguaçu is listed as a municipal district of Cachoeira. Cachoeira earned the title of “Cidade Monumento Nacional” (National Monument City) and “Cidade Heróica” (Heroic City) because it has preserved its cultural and historical identity as a place of African resistance and religion. With the bravery and blood of thousands of slaves and manumitted Africans, Cachoeira was the first city to lead Bahia into the fight for independence from the Portuguese Crown (Reis 1991). Political historian, Fayette Wimberly writes:

Cachoeira and São Félix [the two cities sit opposite each other across the Paraguaçu River] were centers of slave plantation agriculture and the ethnic composition of their large slave populations reflected the longstanding links between Bahia and West Africa, especially the Mina Coast and the Bight of Benin (Wimberly 1998, 74).

What was most astonishing, however, was that the reporter was talking about a community in Bahia that is one of the most uniquely African states of Brazil due to the huge volume of slaves that were imported through Salvador, a prime port city from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries (Kray 1998). How, then, could a major news station claim that a district (a neighborhood) of Cachoeira never had slaves? And if self-identification was the social and legal

rule, how could a self-proclaimed and legally certified ethnic group be a fraud? I wanted to know more.

The story, I later came to appreciate, was steeped with trickery. The Jornal reporter approached random people in the streets of São Francisco do Paraguaçu and asked them about obscure details regarding the written history of the community. One woman that was interviewed, Arinda Felipa, was the town *parteira* (midwife). When I went to visit her in 2009, she had a placard hung proudly in her home that was given to her by one of the town's doctors recognizing her for having delivered 1088 babies in her lifetime. She was a quiet woman who also happened to be the mother of one of the most involved quilombo leaders in São Francisco. If the reporter had asked Dona Arinda if her community was once a quilombo, she would have responded in great detail about the slavery and resistance her family had witnessed in the area. However, identifying her as simply an *aposentada* (a retired woman), the reporter chose only to ask this key informant if she knew that her town was once called "*Freguesia do Iguape*." When Dona Arinda said no, he cut her off and used that response as an example of the community's lack of knowledge of their supposed quilombola history.

Other interviewees were approached without introduction or explanation of what the reporter was exploring. A group of young men were stopped in the middle of the street as the reporter asked, "Do you know how to dance maculele<sup>3</sup>?" "Maculele, I do not even know what that is," one of the men murmured. And once again their response was taken to prove that the residents of São Francisco do Paraguaçu were lying about their identity. With this approach, the report draws attention to the extant conflict between how Brazilian society believes a quilombo community should look and behave and their actual every-day lives.

The performance that was expected by the Jornal Nacional was that any randomly picked resident of São Francisco do Paraguaçu could recite the history of the community exactly as it might be written in a history book. The expectation is that a resident know his or her own history in the same way that the journalist knows it and, as well, that he or she be able to demonstrate that knowledge with concrete practices associated with the colonial quilombos, hence the reporter's question regarding maculele. For the reporter, and the television audience watching the report with little knowledge of the quilombo conflict, the fact that three young men in the community did not have any knowledge of maculele, a cultural practice used as an example of São Francisco's African ancestry, was an example of quilombolas as frauds and common land thieves. I later came to appreciate that this misrecognition or nonrecognition (Taylor 1994) of quilombo descendants by society was a common problem.

As I watched the Jornal report, I wondered why the station was so interested in discrediting this particular community and what social conditions allowed for their success. I saw that in order to obtain a clear understanding of the quilombo conflict, I would need to understand what exactly it meant to be a "quilombo" both within public rhetoric and for black communities.

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<sup>3</sup> An Afro-Brazilian dance and martial art performed using sticks made out of *biriba* wood.

*In the Shadows of Ruth Landes: Another North American Studying Blacks in Brazil*

I drove into São Francisco do Paraguaçu by taxi on a Saturday afternoon accompanied by my Brazilian partner, Ibraim do Nascimento Santos. The taxi charged us seventy-five dollars for the less than one-hour trip into the town. When we complained to the driver about the high fare, he told us no taxi driver would risk damaging his car driving us through the long, winding dirt road into the town for any less. "I'm actually giving you a good price," he boasted. "Most taxis around here will charge you one hundred dollars. But I know your family," -- he smiled at Ibraim--"so I'm giving you a lower fare".

We were not sure exactly where we were going so when we arrived in the town we asked people standing nearby where we could find the quilombolas. They told us that they were all in a meeting at the local elementary school. A little nervous and unsure of how I would begin to introduce myself, we left the taxi driver, who had no interest in joining a quilombo meeting, and walked into the school. When we walked in a young woman in her mid-twenties immediately welcomed us and asked us to introduce ourselves to the group. We stood there in the middle of a circle of about fifty quilombolas of all ages, men, women, and children. They were silent as they waited to hear who we were and why we had interrupted their meeting.

My name is Elizabeth, and I'm an anthropologist from the United States, I whispered. This is my husband, Ibraim, a Brazilian from Cachoeira. We are here because we are doing research on the quilombos in Bahia. We have heard a lot about São Francisco in the news and we wanted to visit the community for ourselves to learn about the current situation. Do you mind if we sit in on your meeting?

Eleide, the presenter and organizer, turned to the circle and said: "Will you allow them to sit in on your meeting?" She asked in a firm voice, assuring the community that they could choose to say no if they felt uncomfortable or unsafe. Later I learned that Eleide was a geography student from the Federal University of Bahia. She was conducting a series of workshops aimed at teaching the quilombolas the many ways in which space and identity are mutually constructed. One man spoke up first saying that this meeting and their fight was very serious and that we should not stay unless we believed in the movement and were there to support them, and not to steal information that we would later use against them. Another man immediately responded in our defense. He explained that we were students and that we were obviously interested in learning about them and their cause. "Se eles estão aqui, é por que eles acreditam em nós e apoiam os quilombolas!" ("If they are here, it is because they believe in us, and because they support the quilombolas!") Others spoke up too and pretty soon everyone was speaking at once. When the noise calmed down, Eleide asked the group to take a vote and to raise their hands if they agreed to allow us to participate in the meeting. It was unanimous, and we were allowed to stay. Before we could thank everyone and sit down, the man who spoke in our favor announced that he, and everyone there, was sorry for being so mistrusting and suspicious.

A lot of people come into our town, especially reporters and researchers, claiming to want to learn about our movement when really they are just gathering information for the landowners. Or they turn around and write news reports calling us frauds and liars. That is why we have become so suspicious of outsiders. But do not worry, we trust you now and we know you are here to support our cause (Quilombola, São Francisco 2009).

Although I was grateful for the community's acceptance, their statement of trust made me nervous. I was just getting started in my fieldwork and did not know if I was there to "support their cause." I had not formed any opinions or strong beliefs about the quilombo movement. I was not there to betray the community, to spy on them for landowners, or to publish slanderous news reports, but I also could not say if I was there to join in their fight for justice. That day, I was there because I was curious.

I found myself in this difficult position of deciding (or not knowing) where my anthropological and even moral allegiance should fall. As an anthropologist and ethnographer in Brazil, I automatically became part of a tradition of anthropologists that worked closely with the government as mediators and "go-betweens" (Metcalf 2005), representing bureaucratic structure and fitting the needs of communities into extant policies. The fact that I did not actually work for the government or even maintain any formal relations with it was often overlooked or forgotten when I was conducting research in the field. My presence, my constant note taking and interest in people's histories and narratives, was always perceived as having a purpose beyond just a dissertation project. No quilombola could believe or accept the fact that I would be so involved in a research project that would not be applied to a greater social and political purpose, namely helping them obtain land rights. This idea was solidified by the fact that the only anthropologists that ever visited quilombos were those that worked for INCRA. Thus, not only did I have to reconcile my theoretical purpose in the field with the political action demanded of me by the community, but I also had to constantly carve out my research position as separate from the government and bureaucratic structure.

In the 1940s, Ruth Landes was roaming the streets of Bahia on a mission to study the culture of blacks in Brazil. A white, middle-class woman, Landes knew little about Brazil and even less about Bahia when she arrived. Landes' ethnography, *City of Women*, tells of her difficulties finding her place in Bahia, particularly as a woman and North American. On the one hand, Landes was discovering her place as an anthropologist. She was a student of Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, working hard to impress and emulate her teachers (Cole 2003). On the other hand, she was trying desperately to do research in a strange place where it seemed that everything about her made her strange and untrustworthy (Landes 1947, 10).

I knew I could not study Bahia as I would an art gallery, nor as I would study certain Indian tribes on our reservations where it is possible to hire individuals to sit in a chair for months and tell about themselves. I should have to persuade the Bahians to take me into their life. I should have to force my way into the flow and become a part of it. To study the people I should have to live with them, to like them, and I should have to try assiduously to have them like me (1947, 16)

Unfortunately, Landes did not realize or understand that it was not only her anthropological subjects to whom she would have to endear herself but also her anthropological colleagues in Brazil. Influenced by her own gender awareness, Landes was most drawn to the roles and work of women in Bahia. *City of Women* became an exposé on what she saw as a matriarchal society within the Afro-Brazilian spirit-possession religion, *candomblé*. Her work was one of the first feminist perspectives on Afro-Brazilian life written by an outsider in that

time period, and she suffered for it. Going against all of the research on race produced at the time, the whitening ideals and mestizo constructions of the intellectual elite, Landes wrote about the dominant power of black women, and the acceptance of homosexuals in *candomblé*.

In her biography, Sally Cole writes that Landes' work threatened the life work of Arthur Ramos who was considered the father and authority of Afro-Brazilian studies in the 1940s. Although Landes met with Ramos early in her fieldwork, she soon cut her ties with him. Instead, she allied herself with the more junior and non-white Edison Carneiro, as well as the female-directed Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, something Ramos would resent (Cole 2003, 169). Without the support of the most important authority on Afro-Brazilian research, Landes was alienated and dismissed.

[Landes'] portrait of women and passive homosexuals as ritual leaders and culture builders in Afro-Brazilian Bahia threatened to emasculate the larger project in which Ramos was engaged: the construction of Afro-Brazilian culture as integral to Brazil's vision of itself as a modern nation (169).

But Landes' work was not just alienating in Brazil. It was also ignored within North American anthropology. Cole describes how Landes' groundbreaking work and her career suffered due to the neglect of her thesis advisor, Ruth Benedict. Benedict wanted Landes to focus more on indigenous peoples in Brazil. She rarely responded to Landes' many pleas for comments and critique of her notes (2003). Landes' methodology was also ahead of her time. *City of Women* illustrates Landes' sensitivity to gender and the impact it had on her work and perspective. Landes wrote reflectively. This type of reflective writing did not really begin until the 1970s when anthropological authority was questioned by increasingly politicized and educated "third-world" subjects who connected anthropologists to colonial projects and oppressors. Unlike Levi-Strauss (1974), Maybury-Lewis (1979), and Donald Pierson (1967), Landes' research in Brazil would never receive the fame and respect it deserved for its pioneering focus on race, sexuality and gender in *candomblé*.

With an acute awareness of my predecessors and of the dominant ideas on quilombos in Brazil, I knew that I had to be careful how I situated myself and my research. My introduction to the quilombo community of São Francisco was important in forcing me to decide with what positions I might align myself. Like Landes, I learned quickly that I could not stand on the sidelines and simply observe "quilombo culture". Not only did "quilombo culture" not exist as one unchanging object that could be observed, but it was also a highly politicized and constantly debated issue. The problem of who was and was not a quilombo descendant and who deserved land based on that category involved hundreds of people in different places and with different commitments. If I wanted to fully understand the quilombo issue, I would need to gain the trust of quilombolas, non-quilombolas<sup>4</sup>, private landowners, government officials, non-governmental

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<sup>4</sup> I will use the term "non-quilombola" to describe the residents of São Francisco who refuse the quilombo title. I chose this term because in São Francisco opponents formed an oppositional group against the quilombo community. While they do not call themselves "non-quilombolas," they have dedicated their lives to protesting the quilombo movement in their town, and thus define themselves in opposition to the quilombolas. The term is also used by the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).



organization leaders, MNU activists, and anthropologists. While some of these different groups often worked together, they also often criticized and protested each other. The quilombo issue was an intellectual, political, social, and intimate one, and I needed to be involved in all of those discussions.

Unfortunately, from the very beginning it was challenging for me to gain rapport with two essential groups, the non-quilombolas and the key private landowners in São Francisco. My “side” was chosen for me the moment I chose to attend a quilombo meeting in São Francisco as my first introduction into the community. Afterwards, my ability to interview other “sides”—namely residents of São Francisco who denied the quilombo identity and large, private landowners—was significantly limited. If I was caught visiting the home of a non-quilombola or a landowner, I could have lost my rapport with the quilombolas and even been asked to leave the community. In the middle of my fieldwork, I witnessed the quilombola leaders protest and remove a Brazilian researcher and filmmaker from their meetinghouse during an important community event. The young researcher was a film student from Cachoeira who was known for doing several video projects for the very landowners that were opposing the quilombo process. Although he protested his innocence and academic neutrality in the issue, the quilombolas were upset that he had not approached them first. He was pegged as an opponent and his camera made him a spy. Similarly, after living with the quilombolas for several months and making my presence known throughout the town, I was labeled as a quilombo supporter. I discovered this while filming a quilombo procession. Several of the non-quilombolas came out to protest and nearly tore the camera out of my hands, yelling at me to get out of their town and stop supporting land thieves.

This thesis then is most deeply informed by the perspectives and experiences of the quilombolas of São Francisco do Paraguaçu in their struggle for recognition and rights. I lived and researched in São Francisco for several months at a time conducting interviews, organizing meetings, and participating in every aspect of the life and work of the quilombo. I did try to understand opposing points of view and listened with respect when I could. Before visiting the quilombo, I set up an interview in Cachoeira with the primary landowner of São Francisco, Dr. Iverio. When I arrived at his home, I was greeted by one of his daughters. She entertained a short conversation with me but neither allowed me to record our conversation nor to speak with her father. She told me that the quilombo issue had taken a toll on his heart and that he had grown quiet and reserved since it began. Dr. Iverio rarely left his room and spoke with few people. She claimed that he felt betrayed by the community and had grown depressed throughout the years. His lands had been passed on to his children and they were the ones involved in the legal dispute with the quilombolas. After my research in the quilombo was discovered, I was cut off from the rest of the landowners. It is not hard to appreciate why landowners wish to resist the taking of their lands, but the state has formulated a policy that provides a process for land reparation. It was my intention always to focus on the unfolding of the policy, not on reviewing the correctness of that policy.

Information on the legal and political process of quilombo recognition comes from structured interviews with government officials in INCRA, the FCP, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Health, the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, and other

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Normative 56 requires that “não-quilombolas” be interviewed and registered by the INCRA anthropologist completing the report for any community seeking quilombo rights (INCRA N56 2009).

government organizations involved in the quilombo process. Information regarding issues of social justice and injustice, land abuses, workshops, and community empowerment comes from conversations and structured interviews with NGOs, such as Koinonia, the Pastoral Commission of Fishermen and women (CPP), the Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers (AATR), and other social groups throughout Bahia.

While I do not pretend that I was able to maintain pure objectivity and neutrality in my work, I do attempt to describe my experience and relationships in the field as accurately and honestly as possible. I am mindful of Roberto Da Matta's warning:

For generations, Latin America has had its share of observers who like to prove that the continent is a true logical disaster... The problem is that these observers rarely question their own starting point. They assume their position to be logical and precise...(1995, 270).

Throughout this dissertation, I include several full transcripts of conversations, debates, and reflections of personal moments of ignorance and/or "clumsiness" that I believe "give the reader a deeper appreciation of the way ethnographic 'facts' are built up" (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 25). I differentiate these transcripts by following a writing technique used by Richard Price in *First-Time* (2002). Field notes that I believe illustrate more naturally the relationships I formed in the field are *italicized* in order to distinguish them from my analysis. While many interviews are simply integrated into my analysis, others are included in full. Full interview responses are inserted in places where I want the reader to focus on the process by which people are constructing and reconstructing memories. Price accentuates his analysis of historical memory and narrative construction by using different fonts to illustrate the oral testimonies of the Saramankas in Suriname. In doing so, Price offers several layers of critique of historiography and the way the past is re-imagined and remembered by a maroon community. Like Price, I hope to demonstrate recursively the many voices that contribute to the production of the quilombo, voices which cannot always be neatly synthesized within my own theoretical critique. I aim to reflect "self-conscious and serious partiality" in my writing (Clifford 1986, 7), while at the same time demonstrating how the quilombo process actually takes place.

Several of the transcripts I use from the quilombolas of São Francisco recount the way different people in the community remember the story of how the quilombo process began. I pay special attention to these stories because through their selection of events and contradictions, they illustrate the different meanings of quilombolismo within the community. For a process that is complicated by a lack of understanding and acceptance of the contemporary definitions of the quilombo, these narratives also tell a more personal story of the social impact of the quilombo process. Because of São Francisco do Paraguaçu's place in the media as a polemic quilombo as well as Institutional Review Board requirements, all of the people I interviewed are protected by pseudonyms. Although their names are not real, their stories are represented the way they were told to me.

*Finding My Own Ground in the Anthropology of the Quilombo*

As a critical anthropologist (Scheper-Hughes 1990), my ethnographic method evolved and adapted depending on the “field” I was in. Interviewing and observing bureaucrats required an anthropological face distinct from the more grounded participation demanded of me in the quilombo. In *Writing Culture*, James Clifford wrote that all ethnographic truths are partial (1986, 7), and to that I add that not only are they partial but also pieced together. Not only do different fields require different methods, but also data from fieldwork does not always flow logically or coherently. As anthropologists, we have to render data rational and consistent in the construction of a text (Marcus and Cusman 1982). Throughout this dissertation, I weave together social narratives of the quilombo with legal and bureaucratic processes of recognition and representation. I use the story of São Francisco as an example of the ways in which memories of African ancestry, slavery, and colonial oppression get reinterpreted within a lived experience of racial discrimination, political exclusion, and poverty. While my work is critical of nostalgic representations of blackness and African ancestry, I am most committed to illustrating the ways in which the quilombolas of São Francisco represent themselves to each other, to society, to NGOs, and to the state. In the end, my goal is to illustrate a process of identity re-construction and (re)membering through which black communities not only make demands on the state but also reveal their lived experiences as global citizens, exercising their right to self-identify along multiple and diverse lines of ethno-racial identities (Gilroy 1993).

Unlike Landes, my brown skin, indigenous facial features, fluent Portuguese, and years of preliminary fieldwork helped me better integrate into the landscape and social life of Bahia. Although I was less self-conscious about my body in the field, I still had to reconcile my North American and outsider identity as an anthropologist. Interviews with bureaucrats (both government and non-government) always began with a long discussion of my intentions in the field followed by critiques of my “American formality.” Interviews with quilombolas were probing in the beginning and then became more trusting, but it took a great deal of effort and commitment. With bureaucrats, I had to be very careful when I was expressing my own opinions about the quilombo clause. Bureaucrats were critical of the clause, but they supported it wholeheartedly. If they sensed that I was critical of it, they would politely engage my discussion but would not see me again for another interview. The following section illustrates how I came to discover that my own anthropological position in the quilombo issue was also politicized and pre-determined by the limits of the field.

*Political Warnings: Anita’s Dangerous Attempt to Help São Francisco do Paraguaçu*

My second introduction to São Francisco came as a warning to avoid any activist or politically motivated ideas in my research. The INCRA report for São Francisco was assigned to Anita Souza, the Bahian INCRA anthropologist up until 2009. Anita was a twenty-six year old who was born and raised in Brasília. She moved to Bahia when she was awarded the INCRA job in Salvador. When I first met her, she seemed tired and untrusting of my intentions. She asked many questions about my work and my project before I could begin the interview. Our second interview was during a visit to the quilombo Olho d’Água do Basílio in the mining city of Seabra, in northern Bahia. As we sat in the cold reception area of a small motel waiting to see if any of our interviews would actually take place, Anita told me the story of why she was leaving

INCRA. In a serious and melancholic tone, she lamented that her job had gone in a violent direction.

São Francisco do Paraguaçu was my first job at INCRA. The state opened a slot for an anthropologist in Bahia, and I took the exam and passed. Like anyone who passes in a state competition for a federal job, I was very excited to have secure employment. All I knew was that I would be working with land regularization for quilombos; I did not have any expectations or militant ideals going into the job. I had never worked officially as an anthropologist so I was new to everything.

Before working at INCRA, Anita had always supported and been a part of the Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement) and other militant movements like the Zapatistas; however, she claimed that she had not gone into her INCRA job with activist motivations. “It was just a job, a good job”, she added. When she started, Anita got very involved in her work with the community and even made a short documentary about Dona Maria, one of the quilombo leaders. When she was finished collecting data, Anita went to Brasilia to visit her family and to write up her report for INCRA. “While I was in Brasilia, I saw a news broadcast by the Jornal Nacional calling São Francisco do Paraguaçu a fraud.” The reporter showed residents of São Francisco who were old employees of one of main private landowners saying that there had never been a quilombo in the region and that there were no slave descendants there. The report also accused those who claimed to be quilombolas of deforestation in the attempt to take over the whole area. “It was absurd! I was so angry because I knew the report had been paid for by a landowner, and because I knew that the ones doing the deforesting were the landowners and not the quilombolas.” Anita began to get agitated as she continued the story.

The next day I received a phone call from my supervisor saying that the president of INCRA in Brasilia was being interviewed by the media and needed me to send him a statement of my work on the community. I stopped working and began to write a letter to the president of INCRA. This was my first job so I was writing from my own gut and nothing I had prior experience with. I stayed up all night writing a six-page letter that explained to the president the quilombo history and present reality in São Francisco. I denounced the landowners as the real deforesters and land violators. I stated that the landowners were intimidating the residents and using the media as a way of criminalizing the population. I really put a lot into the letter because I was so angry at the news report.

Anita was so incensed by the Jornal accusation that she decided also to send the letter to her colleagues involved with the social justice of quilombos in Bahia. One of the colleagues she included was a lawyer and member of the NGO, Associação de Advogados de Trabalhadores Rurais (Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers, AATR). This lawyer had deep connections in São Francisco and had worked to resolve these types of disputes in the past. Without informing Anita, he sent her emailed letter to a list serve he had created from dozens of public emails subscribed to the AATR. It turned out that the particular landowner Anita was accusing was on that list serve and also received her letter. “The next thing I knew, I was being sued for libel! I found myself in the frightening situation of being sued by a powerful landowner and with no idea what to do.” According to Anita, INCRA immediately disassociated itself with her, making an official statement that since she sent the email from her personal account, she had acted

independently and without their consent. Anita had to find and pay for her own lawyer.

I was so paranoid during that time, because the landowner's wife would call me and make a ticking sound on the phone insinuating that my time was running out. I was so scared of everyone around me! I thought I was being followed and that my phones and Internet were tapped. It took me a long time to calm down and live normally.

It was such an awful time. I remember that a friend of mine told me to make a list of all the people that I thought could help me. At the very top of the list I put the anthropologist of the Ministério Público (Public Ministry); she worked with us a lot and I admired her greatly. Ironically, she was the first to betray me. She wrote a letter to the president of INCRA saying that my report on São Francisco was too politicized and thus not adequately executed. It was incredible! Here I was being sued, and there was the community being wrongly accused of fraud and at risk of losing their claims to their lands, and this top anthropologist writes this letter that just makes all of our lives that much more fragile! I was heartbroken. The worst part is that this landowner is not just suing me for a fine, no; he wants to put me in jail!

At this point Anita stopped because she was so upset she could barely continue speaking. I did not ask her any more questions because I could see that the situation was still affecting her deeply. The case had not ended yet and would remain open for four years unless the landowner took more aggressive action, in which case she risked imprisonment. Even without their support, Anita did not quit her job at INCRA. It was a stable federal job that allowed her to support herself on a comfortable income. Those types of jobs were not easy to come by in Brazil.

It was a horrible period of my life that made me rethink a lot of things, especially my work as an anthropologist in quilombo communities. I have asked to be transferred from Salvador to an INCRA office in another place. If I do not get transferred, I will surely quit. I need to move on with my life. I am not a militant person, and I just do not think it is worth it to keep working in an area that is so problematic. I want to do film. That is what I am more passionate about. I want to go back to school and get my master's degree. I just want to move on with my life (Anita 2009).

Although Anita was shaken by the landowner's threats to put her in jail and by his wife's intimidating phone calls, she was also worried about the quilombolas. She did not want to quit her stable job, but she also did not want to abandon the community's case. She knew that if she left, the case would lose even more credibility and might even be thrown out altogether. She made it very clear that she was not "militant" or "activist," but it would not be fair to betray a community that had put so much trust in her throughout so many years.

Anthropologists are an important factor in the conceptualization of the "quilombo" as ethnic category; however, the work of putting this concept into practice is not easy. Anita tried to use her bureaucratic status to undue the slanderous damage of the *Jornal Nacional*, which only perpetuated social misunderstandings and irrational fears of quilombo land grabbing. Although Anita's INCRA report had produced the historical and cultural proof the government needed to grant land rights to the quilombo of São Francisco, it was not enough to prevent private

landowners from retaliating. In her letter, Anita alluded to the racial and social discrimination of quilombolas by rich, white, landowners. She addressed the issues that the quilombo clause did not and tried to use her own authority to defend the community. Anita was derailed by the reality of a system still rooted in the social hierarchies of the colonial period. Not only were poor blacks still not allowed to own land, but they were especially not allowed to take land away from wealthy, politically-connected whites.

After being sued, Anita only returned to São Francisco a couple of times to re-investigate some parts of the INCRA report that needed to be changed. Everyone in the community knew about Anita's situation so they were not upset by her apparent abandon. People were angrier at the fact that even after seven years of struggle, their identity and rights were still contested. They were stalled in a bureaucratic system they did not understand. The *Jornal Nacional* report and Anita's defense illustrate the tangled and conflictive ground of the quilombo recognition process. While anthropologists have attempted, at least theoretically, to free the "quilombo" concept from a colonial category that does not match the lived reality of rural black communities, their work is only a small seed in a process that is still determined by colonial structures and deep social inequalities.

To balance the personal experiences of interviews, I worked throughout my field research to become grounded in the work of those who had already explored the role of race in Brazil and who had delved into the quilombo ethos. Their stories are told from many viewpoints, some of which became embodied as "truth." My appreciation for their work is woven throughout the coming chapters which begin with a general understanding of Brazilian history and then contemporary politics and culture before moving on to particular effects of these on the lives of quilombos today.

### Chapter III

#### A Selective Memory of the Past: The Historical Context of Quilombos

*“Race” acts as a shuttle between socially constructed meanings and practices, between subjective interpretation and lived, material reality. It has a paradoxical, simultaneous importance, for it is and is not about skin color (Wade 1994, 4).*

Throughout the twentieth century, the world held Brazil as a model for miscegenation and benevolent race relations. At the end of World War II, while the world was attempting to redefine race in the face of vicious racial hate and violence and the United States was still segregated by Jim Crow laws, Brazil seemed to be a ray of hope. Even African Americans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century affirmed the progressive face of race relations in Brazil. In 1916, the *Baltimore Afro-American* published a short commentary titled: “Opportunities in Brazil: South American Country Offers First Hand Knowledge of Solving the Race Question” (Hellwig 1992, 35). The commentary boasted of the richness of the Brazilian mixed race, which “indiscriminately included Negroes” (1992, 35).

Foreign interest in Brazilian race relations has a long history. In 1938, Colombia University sent Ruth Landes to Brazil because they had “heard that the Negro population lived with ease and freedom among the general population” (1947, 1). After Landes, several other North America researchers, including Marvin Harris (1952), Charles Wagley (1952), and Carl Degler (1986) went to the largest nation in the Southern hemisphere drawn by the promise of peaceful miscegenation which was notably represented by the writings of Gilberto Freyre.

Freyre was a Brazilian social theorist and historian who helped develop the image of Brazil as a racial democracy in the 1930s following the works of 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionists. Although he was a significant proponent of the idea that slavery in Brazil was much less violent than it was in the United States, this idea was first proposed by abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco in 1888 (Degler 1971, 5). Shortly before abolition, Nabuco contrasted the two major slave societies, claiming that in the U.S., a rigid color line had been drawn between the races while in Brazil the opposite took place (1971, 6). Thus several decades before Freyre, abolitionists were already setting the stage for Brazil’s image as a racial democracy. Still, Freyre is one of the most discussed and debated Brazilian writers by North American intellectuals; his ideas will be taken up more specifically at the end of this chapter. While the idea of racial democracy maintained strong support throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it did not go unchallenged. In 1950, largely in response to the racism that fueled WWII, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sent a special commission to study race relations in Brazil. The study, led by Brazilian sociologist Florestan Fernandes, would prove disastrous for Brazil’s image as a racial utopia as it revealed the pervasiveness of racial discrimination throughout the nation (Telles 2004, 7). Fernandes became one of Freyre’s primary opponents, declaring that racial democracy was a myth and that racism was prevalent throughout Brazilian society (2004,7).

Although Brazil was characterized by a *mestiçagem* (or miscegenation) that was uncommon in the United States and Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil too was concerned with how to deal with its diverse population, particularly in relation to blacks. Brazil’s long history of

miscegenation is embedded in slavery, a history no less violent than that of Europe or the United States. Like all of the Americas (Wade 1997), Brazil tried to make sense of its mixed population through ideologies of scientific racism, eugenics, and whitening.

This chapter sets out the historical, social, and ideological ground of the colonial quilombo by placing it within the context of the Brazilian slave trade as well as the racist ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. I argue that in order to understand the complexity of race as a social construct, and how the quilombo fits into this construct, one must first understand how race became a physiological and social problem of the nation and Brazilian national identity.

The first part of the chapter describes the intensity of the Brazilian slave trade, demonstrating how quilombos emerged out of the violent and intolerable conditions of slavery and quickly became symbols of everything the colonial government stood against: freedom, resistance, and African values. The second part examines the ideologies of scientific racism and eugenics as applied by Brazilian intellectuals to create a post-abolition Brazilian identity that was a whiter, mixed race. Here I argue that if the 20<sup>th</sup> century successfully displayed Brazil as a racial utopia, it was because of the dedicated study of miscegenation as a process of *branqueamento* or whitening that began in the late nineteenth century. Finally, the third part of this chapter moves into the rise of the “cosmic” mestiço as the symbol of Brazilian national identity that would dominate the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. African elements of the mestiço gained more positive recognition toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially following the Constitution of 1988. However, African culture was integrated into the national identity in a way that disconnected it from the histories and lived experience of black communities. Samba, and capoeira, for example, became part of the national white culture while their history as forms of resistance and survival during slavery were washed away. The history of slavery, resistance, and race thinking is the backdrop to current quilombo politics and will help us understand the complexity of quilombo recognition in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### *History of Slavery and Resistance*

During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese Empire had succeeded in turning Brazil, especially the Northeast, into one of the largest sugar economies of the world. It was during this period that the Portuguese heavily imported enslaved Africans to work the sugar plantations. Indigenous peoples were the first source of forced labor for the Portuguese but quickly became ‘unreliable’ as they saw their populations abused and killed off, especially through disease.

In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Negro slaves entered Brazil to take the place of Indians whose wellbeing was defined by zealous partisans of the protection of the native race. The enslavement of Moors and Negroes, [however] was sanctioned in the mother country by Portuguese legislation... (Ramos 1980, 3).

Almost half of all the Africans brought to the New World between 1502 and 1867 went to Brazil (Reis & Gomes 1996). Over three million enslaved Africans were taken to Brazil to work on the sugar plantations; the majority remained in the main port city and first capital of Brazil, Salvador, Bahia. One reason for this was that the Portuguese owned most of the ports along the



entire West African coast (Ramos 1980), but more important was Brazil's proximity to Africa. Portuguese slave traders had much easier, and thus cheaper, access to Africa, which resulted in a very intense slave trade in Brazil. Because slaves could be easily and cheaply replaced, it also resulted in brutal conditions for enslaved Africans. João Reis argues that the slave trade was more violent in Brazil than in other places because of its sheer intensity (Reis & Gomes 1996).

It is significant to detail the particular face of the African slave trade in Brazil in order to fully grasp the way in which the social body of the country came to be formed. Unlike other Latin American nations, blackness or Africanness is a major part of the Brazilian national identity and the mestiço identity due to the massive and continuous importation of Africans during the colonial period and throughout the twentieth century.

Arthur Ramos, a twentieth century Brazilian anthropologist and psychiatrist, devoted his research to the study of blacks in Brazil. He documented that in 1585, there were more than 14,000 African slaves in a colonial population of 57,000, spread throughout the agricultural regions of Pernambuco, Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro (1980, 3). In the 1930s, Ramos argued that there were two interesting questions about the history of slavery: the number of Africans actually taken to Brazil, and "the place of origin of the slave population that was settled in the colony" (1980, 5). However, these questions were, and continue to be, the most difficult to document accurately.

When the Decree of 1890, signed by Ruy Barbosa then Minister of Finance, demanded that all documents related to the institution of slavery be burned, much of the day to day details of slavery as well as detailed records of slave shipments were lost (5). Ramos commented that it was a "noble" act of trying to erase the "stain" of slavery on the nation, following the Lei Aurea, or the Golden Law of 1888 that abolished slavery; nonetheless it was a major historical loss. While there is little consensus on the exact number of African slaves taken to Brazil, Ramos used customs statistics that documented between 30,000 and 2.5 million for each century of the slave trade. There is agreement that the number was very large (6), and that this large number was disproportionately distributed throughout the northern regions. Bahia and Pernambuco were two of the four "great slave markets" (16) of the country and where slave ships landed to sell and distribute Africans to other regions. Even more interesting was the ratio of slaves to the overall population throughout the northeast. According to Stuart Schwartz, in the first half of the nineteenth century Salvador had an estimated population of more than 50 million people, about 40% of which were enslaved blacks, with anywhere from 8 to 10 thousand Africans arriving in Salvador each year (Schwartz 1996, 374-375). With thousands of new Africans arriving in Brazil continuously throughout the duration of the slave trade, the impact of African cultural practices, especially West African traditions from Angola, Congo, Guinea, Benin, and Nigeria, permanently marked the racial and cultural landscape of Brazil.

...three great Negro peoples entered Brazil. In the first group were the Sudanese Negroes—the Yorubas and Dahomans together with the Ashanti. In the Second group were the Moslem Negroes—the Hausas, Tapas, Mandingos, and Fulahs. The third group comprised the Bantu family—the Angolas, Congos, Mozambiques, and several lesser tribes. Negroes belonging to the first and second group predominated in Bahia (Ramos 1980, 12).

In 1822, Brazil gained political independence from Portugal. This was only a partial independence as Brazil remained under the monarchical rule of Dom Pedro I until 1831. Dom Pedro I was forced to abdicate his position to his five-year-old son, Dom Pedro II, who officially ruled from 1841-1889 when Brazil became a republic (Schwarcz 1999). While the Brazilian monarchy was stable and maintained general support throughout the colony, especially in the economically successful years of the 1850s due largely to the booming coffee market (1999), the latter part of the nineteenth century was a much more tumultuous time for the crown. In 1850 the slave trade officially ended, and in 1871 the first abolitionist law was passed. The *Lei do Ventre Livre* (The Free Womb Law) freed any child born to a slave. However, because the child's parents were still enslaved, most remained with the slave owner; for many others, slaveholders simply chose to retain their slaves until they turned twenty-one (1999, 7) after which, these freedmen were thrown into a slave society that did not recognize them as full citizens, and offered little if any opportunities for paid labor.

During the breakdown of the seigniorial and slaveholding order in Brazil, no support or social guarantees of any kind were provided for the former slaves to help them enter the free labor system following their release (Fernandes 1969, 1).

Furthermore, by the end of the nineteenth century the number and intensity of slave revolts began to seriously challenge colonial rule, although escapes were frequent from the very beginning of slavery (Ramos 1980). “Onde houve escravidão houve resistência. E de vários tipos” (“Where there was slavery, there was resistance. And of various forms”), writes historian João Reis (Reis & Santos Gomes 1996, 9). In much of his life's work on slave revolts in Brazil, Reis writes that during the colonial period, the severity of rule in slavery was influenced by the enormous fear that the Portuguese had of rebellious slaves, especially in their relationship with *libertos* (free blacks), Indigenous peoples, and black Muslims (Reis 1988), who often joined together to oppose the colonial order. Escaped slaves were termed *quilombolas*, and groups of three or more “fugitives” were called *quilombos* as well as *mocambos*. In fact, escapes were so common during the colonial period that plantation owners maintained a fund to hire *capitães do mato* (bush captains), who like bounty hunters offered their services to plantation owners to capture their fugitive slaves (Ramos 1980, 22). Slave revolts were at their highest in the seventeenth century when the great quilombo Palmares was formed.

The Republic of Palmares was the largest and most successful quilombo in colonial Brazil (Ramos 1980; Reis & 1996). Located in what is now the northeastern state of Pernambuco, Palmares was a fully functioning community with its own economy, socio-cultural guidelines, norms, and even its own military. It is said to have had a population of over 10,000 escaped slaves, Indians, and poor whites, especially Portuguese soldiers fleeing military service (Schwartz 1996). Palmares resisted from 1605-1694 largely because of its organization and popularity. The quilombolas of Palmares constantly raided plantations and recruited new slaves; their success influenced slave revolts around the nation, giving slaves the courage they needed to disobey, rebel, and seek freedom.

Palmares foi, com efeito, a maior rebelião e a manifestação mais emblemática...dos quilombos coloniais. Resistiu por cerca de cem anos as expedições repressivas, promoveu

assaltos aos engenhos e povoações colonias e estimulou fugas em massa de escravos na capitania. ...Os agents do colonialismo português por várias vezes não souberam mesmo o que fazer, apavorados como cotidiano da rebelião palmarina, frustrados com as sucessivas derrotas que os *calhambolas* impunham a seus terços (Vainifas 1996, 63).

The feats of that cluster of *quilombos* (military communities) called Palmares were heroic to the point of mingling with legend, and catapulted the republic into history as the Black Troy (Nascimento 1985).

Although Palmares was, in part, maintained by its fame, it was its popularity that ultimately led to its defeat. According to Funari, Palmares was the most threatening and threatened quilombo of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Funari 1996, 26-51); so much so that there were expeditions dedicated to its destruction every year beginning in 1654 (1996, 31). Finally, in 1685 the governor of Pernambuco hired the *bandeirante*, Domingos Jorge Velho, who had led the fall of Macaco, the capital of Palmares, in 1694 (33). In 1695, Ganga Zumba, the king of Palmares was captured and decapitated; his head was displayed in public as a reminder that “slaves should obey the slave system and not defy it” (34).

While much of what was written on Palmares focused on its grandeur, resistance, and *Africannes*, historians actually know very little of the day to day life of Palmarinos. The edited volume by historian João Reis and archeologist Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *Liberdade por Um Fio*, is, in fact, dedicated to leveling the ground on the study of quilombos (particularly Palmares) in order to move past the “reconstructionist” vision of twentieth century scholars. Reis and Gomes argue that these scholars had a vision of quilombolas as the creators of Africa in the Americas and thus “unwittingly inspired the popular belief of the quilombo as an isolated and isolationist society whose sole purpose was to reconstruct a pure Africa in the Americas (1996, 11). For these authors, quilombos were alternative societies where, unlike the slave-holding colonial society, everyone was free and presumably equal, as they would have been in Africa, “a considerably romanticized Africa” (11). This text is central to my own research on *comunidades remanescentes de quilombos* because it provides a critical perspective on colonial quilombos and how they were conceptually constructed out of the documents available and the interests of the scholars of the time.

Pedro Paulo de Abreu Funari, a Brazilian archeologist and contributor to *Liberdade por Um Fio*, explains that Palmares was called a republic mostly because the *lingua franca* of the time was Latin and it was a natural term to describe the large encampments of fugitives; the term was later translated and used to reinforce the idea of Palmares as an alternative society—a true republic in the modern sense (1996, 28). Funari also notes that terms such as *quilombo*, *mocambo*, *maroon*, and *Palenque* commonly had a negative connotation. “Many historical documents in Portuguese referred to Palmares as a *mocambo*, from the ambundu term *mukambo*, or hideout. Similarly the English term *maroon* comes from the Castellano, *cimarron*, and was initially used for fugitive animals” (28).

Because everything we know about quilombos was written through the perspective of colonial oppressors (Price 1996, 53), it is difficult to recreate an “authentic” story of what life may have been like inside the quilombo. In fact, there is only one photo of the inside of

Palmares, a sketch of 1647<sup>5</sup>. Funari's work is especially interesting because it entails an archeological investigation in Palmares in order to uncover more information of what life might have actually been like within the community. Archeological research in Palmares only began in 1990; as a result much of what is written of the social and cultural life in the quilombo is speculation. "The common practice has been to affirm that the fugitives lived in the same way they lived in Angola" (Funari 1996, 36). However, Funari argues, if it is widely believed that indigenous peoples, Europeans, and Africans inhabited Palmares, then its description should be more of a multiethnic society, even if it did have more blacks and mestiços (36).

In the first part of the archeological investigation (1992-1993), the research team uncovered over two thousand artifacts of which 91% were ceramics that could be traced back to indigenous origins (46). In fact, it was unclear for the researchers whether the origins were indigenous or mixed; i.e. whether the ceramics represented a new strategy or artisan method developed by the mixed members of the community. Although the findings suggested significant ethnic mixture, Funari makes it clear that the social and emotional significance of Palmares is just as important, if not more so, than the objects themselves. He argues that the archeological investigation cannot ignore,

...the difficulty of interpreting material culture of the quilombo and its appropriation by social groups. The issue of the *negritude* of Palmares is a passionate one, and as we study quilombos, we are dealing first a foremost with the symbolism of the *mocambo*... 'Land of Heroes'... is a common expression used to describe Palmares. But digging for heroes is a particularly difficult task (Funari 1996, 47).

Indeed the quilombo as the symbol of an African republic in Brazil has been cemented in the social and political imaginary of the nation. Funari's work highlights the problem of *truth* and *authenticity* and who is empowered to define the history of black ancestors. For Afro-Brazilians, Palmares and its leaders Ganga Zumba and Zumbí make up a more tolerable and empowering memory of slavery. The fact that blacks resisted was not only proof that they were capable of fighting for freedom but also that they could establish their own social and cultural structures. This becomes a significant foundation for the ways in which the modern descendants of quilombos define themselves and their communities as well as the basis of their claims to cultural and constitutional rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Subsequent chapters will deal more with the memory of colonial quilombos, especially Palmares, as the model for their modern descendants.

#### *Eugenics and the Scientific Solution to the New Race Problem*

As the slave trade ended, the Brazilian elite began to look to Europe to supplement their decreasing slave labor in the coffee and sugar plantations. European immigrants, especially Italians, were lured by promises of subsidized living and eventual land ownership, particularly in the southern regions of the country (Schwarcz 1999). In 1908, Japanese farmers also began migrating to Brazil, primarily São Paulo, in search of a better life. Although slavery was abolished on May 13, 1888, and the new Republic was established in 1889, for black Brazilians freedom was a lived contradiction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. European and Japanese immigrants were

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<sup>5</sup> (See Funari 1996, 33)

being imported and paid, albeit miserably, to do the work that had been done by slaves, whose options for education or employment were practically nonexistent.

Suddenly and abruptly the freedman was made his own master, responsible for himself and his dependents even though he lacked both the material and psychological equipment to handle such responsibility in a competitive economy (Fernandes 1969, 1).

Fernandes argued that Brazilian abolition was almost as cruel as the institution of slavery because blacks were thrown into society unprepared to participate in the labor market. I would add that the problem was not so much the freedman's ability to take care of him or herself in a competitive economy as it was to live in a racist society that still did not consider him or her a full citizen with equal rights. While the new republic was based on a platform of liberalism and the ability for citizens to participate in the government, during the same period, scientific theories and models that described races as essentially different and unequal were gaining ground throughout Brazil. The freedom of blacks ignited a concern among the white upper classes about how race would affect Brazil's future and development, a concern that swept through all of the Americas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Telles 2004, 27).

The science of Eugenics, meaning "wellborn", was imagined in 1883 by Sir Francis Galton (Stepan 1991). Concerned with heredity and better breeding, Galton believed that people with desirable traits should be encouraged to breed, while those with 'undesirable' traits should be discouraged and even sterilized. Eugenics was a scientific and social movement to "improve the human race" or maintain the "purity" of certain groups (1991, 1). For eugenicists, blacks were an inferior race and mulattos were degenerate (Schwarcz 1999, 5). They believed that "tropical climates like Brazil's weakened human biological and mental integrity, and therefore the Brazilian population exemplified biological degeneracy" (Telles 2004, 26). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a series of theories that focused on the racial make-up of populations as a way of determining a nation's future were making an impression around the world (Schwarcz 1993, 10).

Renato Kehl, the father of the Brazilian eugenics movement and the creator of the São Paulo Eugenics Society (Caulfield 2003, 164), was the first to take up Galton's ideas of eugenics and link them to marriage practices in Brazil. Kehl proposed revisions to the nation's civil marriage code so as to allow consanguineous marriages early in 1917 (Stepan 1991, 47). Perhaps, the most well known Brazilian eugenicist was the psychologist and anthropologist, Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. Rodrigues conducted his research among the black population in Bahia through the School of Medicine. Some of his most famous works were: *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* (1894), *As raças humanas* (1957), and *Os africanos no Brasil* (1932). Like his European contemporaries, Rodrigues believed that miscegenation would eventually lead to a degenerate Brazilian race. He predicted that the Brazilian identity would become predominately black or mestizo, especially in the northern regions (Telles 2004, 26). Rodrigues, a student of Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, believed that blacks were inferior and advocated for separate criminal laws by race; it was the closest Brazil would come to segregationist ideas (27). Rodrigues' legacy is complicated because while he was a eugenicist, he was also a major contributor to Afro-Brazilian research, and a key figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian medicine and anthropology (Corrêa 1982). For example, Rodrigues' correlation

between disease prevention and miscegenation was so popular that he and his followers were referred to as the “Nina Rodrigues School”, a key medical group in the Bahia School of Medicine (Schwarcz 1999). Schwarcz describes the role of Bahian physicians in the formation of Brazilian medicine by comparing them to the Rio de Janeiro school.

Bahian physicians would [prove their originality] when they came to the conclusion that the mixing of races was the nation’s greatest source of trouble, but at the same time its towering uniqueness. ...[W]hile the Carioca physicians dealt in *diseases*, the Bahians turned their eye to the *diseased*, the ailing population as a whole. They would foretell insanity and anticipate criminality as the fruits of miscegenation, and in the 1920s their programs gave rise to “purification eugenics” (1999, 235).

Eugenicist theories eventually had to be molded to fit the demographic reality of Brazil. Although European eugenicists believed that mulattos were degenerate, many of the ruling elites and leading eugenicists in Brazil were mulattos. In fact, one of the most complex areas of Rodrigues’ work was his classification of mulattos. Uncertain of where to place them in his social scheme, “he divided the mulatto population into superior, ordinary, and degenerate or socially unstable types” (Telles 2004, 27). The division was most likely due to Rodrigues’ own mixed identity, but it also reflected the inability to ignore the pervasiveness of miscegenation even among the Brazilian elite. I agree with Telles that Rodrigues’ uncertainty and difficulty in driving a deep division between mulattos and whites may have been what kept Brazilian elites from promoting absolute segregation, like that seen in the United States and South Africa. What is more, even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it would have been difficult to determine who was purely white in Brazil, not to mention that any strict definition would have excluded much of the ruling elite. Still, there was a clear understanding that the mulatto was distinct from the African and the Indian, and although not “purely” white, certainly “whiter.”

Eventually, Brazilian social scientists were able to combine ideals of white supremacy with the reality of racial miscegenation by promoting the process whitening or *branqueamento*. *Branqueamento* was the belief that miscegenation between whites and nonwhites would solve the problem of black and Indian inferiority. It followed a neo-Lamarckian strand of eugenics used by the French, which argued that genetic deficiencies could be overcome in one generation (Telles 2004, 28; Stepan 1991, 8). Brazilian scholars believed that since whites had dominant genes, race mixture would eventually eliminate the black and Indian populations, leaving a dominant white(r) Brazilian race (2004, 28).

In interpreting the role that eugenics played in 20<sup>th</sup> century race relations, I take up Lilia M. Schwarcz’s argument that not only was eugenics a significant social movement in Brazil but it also had a profound impact on liberal political models and the notion of the state. In her first book, *The Spectacle of the Races* (1999), Schwarcz writes that although liberalism and racism were rooted in contradictory ideals, the former in the idea of individual rights and responsibilities and the latter in the biological determinism of the group, both “enjoyed equal levels of acceptance in Brazil” (11). Schwarcz contends that researchers have not taken seriously enough the impact of racist theories on the scientific and cultural production of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She reiterates the fact that Brazilian scholars did not simply replicate European eugenics but rather created a different racist model to fit the needs of the nation state. The

whitening thesis was subsequently attached to Brazilian immigration policy and became the primary reason that Brazil looked to Europe to fill the labor void left by the abolition of slavery (Skidmore 1972). The Brazilian government, like other Latin American nations, subsidized white European immigrants to “improve the quality of the work force” (Telles 2004, 29) and the demographics of the nation. The eugenicist and sociologist Francisco de Oliveira Vianna, a juridical consultant of the Getulio Vargas regime, was central to the installation of immigration policies that would increase the entry of white Europeans and diminish all other races (Caulfield 2003, 166). Unable to avoid racial mixing and create a homogenous nation, the whitening thesis, and the notion that racial mixing could be positive gained popularity as early as 1912. In 1912, in a paper prepared for the First Universal Races Congress in London, João Batista Lacerda, the director of the National Museum, predicted that “by the year 2012 the Negro population would be reduced to zero and the mulatto to only 3 percent of the total” (Stepan 1991, 155).

Even abolitionist arguments against slavery were framed in these terms; slavery and blackness were both associated with backward social conditions that had to be overcome to ensure national progress (Applebaum, Macpherson, & Roseblatt 2003, 7).

In his book, *Meridian Populations of Brazil* (1922), Vianna reiterated Lacerda’s prediction, arguing that through the mixing of mulattos and whites, over time “the mulatto strain would be filtered out and whites would develop a clear biological predominance over Negroes and mestizos” (Stepan 1991, 155). São Paulo was probably the most successful state in creating a dominant “white” population (Weinstein 2003). Bahia, on the other hand, followed Rodrigues’ prediction. Its black population, long formed by the intensity of the slave trade in the state, remained predominantly black and increasingly African in its cultural practices. I argue, following Skidmore, Schwarcz, and Stepan, that the greatest success of the whitening ideal was the effect it had of leading the nation into a “cult of the mestiço” (Applebaum, et. al. 2003) as the ideal Brazilian identity. Not only was whitening the solution to the ecological determinism levied by European eugenicists, it also helped Brazilian scholars defend themselves against a developmental determinism that condemned them to a “third-world” status because of their racial demographics.

To counter the negative assessment of Brazil’s identity as a mulatto and black nation made by European and North American scientists, Brazilians claimed that their country was in the process of racial transformation and improvement (Stepan 1991, 154)

The whitening thesis was a reflection of the race problem as imagined (and created) by Brazilian elites in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. More importantly it reflected the contradictory terrain in which racist theories took root. Even in a nation that was predominantly black and Indigenous, eugenicist ideas of white superiority were adopted and integrated into the social fabric. It is important to emphasize the roots of eugenics and whitening in the formation of the mestiço identity, and the later notion of racial democracy, in order to fully understand the development of the race issue in Brazil. While the whitening ideology led to a more positive view of miscegenation, it still depended on the idealization of whiteness, (Stepan 1991) and the ability of the elite to control the face of a multiracial society.

*The Rise of the “Cosmic” Mestiço and the National Integration of Afro-Brazilian Culture*

While the 1920s saw the popularization of the whitening ideal, it was also a time when Brazil and Latin America began to diverge more and more from European and North American eugenics. By the 1930s, Brazilian researchers were using Mendelian science to contest Lamarckianism and racist uses of eugenics. Anthropologists Edgar Roquette-Pinto and Froés de Andrade, as well the medics Fernando Magalhães and Miguel de Osorio, played an important role in opposing racist immigration policies, declaring that the Mendelian hybridization between whites and blacks was normal and healthy (Stepan 1991, 161).

The First Republic of Brazil was overthrown by the Revolution of 1930, which placed Getulio Vargas as the new leader. Although the Vargas regime is remembered as a somewhat paradoxical period of both progressive and regressive politics (1991), it was clearly anti-oligarchic elite, nationalistic, corporatist, and ethnically and morally homogenizing (Caulfield 2003). Vargas' Estado Novo lasted from 1937-1945, during which new social groups were incorporated into the state, particularly the urban, industrial working class and previously marginalized ethnic and racial groups. Florestan Fernandes recounts the sentiment of a white matron during the time period who indignantly expressed how “Negroes’ insolence had grown slowly and had become habitual and intolerable only after the enactment of Getulio Vargas’ Labor Laws (1969, 154). The Vargas regime encouraged the study of Brazil’s African and Indian heritage “as nationalist folklore” (Caulfield 2003, 166) while at the same time “encouraging whitening and repressing ethnic diversity through immigration and educational policies” (166). Stepan describes how new state apparatuses were designed to create a “homogenous consciousness of nationhood,” “mobilize patriotism”, and to “level ethnic disparities” (1991, 164). Under the ideology of the time, explicit racist language and exclusion were to be avoided, especially after Brazil joined the Allied troops in the war against Nazi Germany in 1943 (164). Thus it seemed that, although whitening was still the national goal, the mass numbers of Africans, African descendants, and indigenous peoples in Brazil had to be reckoned with. By the 1930s, the solution to Brazil’s race problem was racial and cultural miscegenation. The belief in the *mestiço* as the ideal and “cosmic race” became the dominant academic and political ideology; the *mestiço* would eventually erase the blackness of the country and form a homogenous national identity.

While Vargas was working to nationalize Brazil through immigration policies, restrictions on foreign owned land and business, and a requirement that Portuguese be the only language of instruction in schools (Stepan 1991), the historian and social theorist Gilberto Freyre was re-creating the intellectual memory of slavery in his seminal work, *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933). Gilberto Freyre’s work gained almost immediate popularity in the 1930s. Freyre, who was a student of Franz Boas, wrote of the impact of slavery on the Brazilian plantation family and on Brazilian society as a whole. *Casa Grande* gave a positivistic and harmonious account of plantation life and master /slave relations in colonial Brazil. For Freyre, the plantation was like a unified family where Africans, Indians, and Portuguese all interacted amiably and intimately (Freyre 1933). Freyre was a proponent of miscegenation as a positive social phenomenon. Unlike eugenicists, he believed that the Indigenous and black races were the most crucial components of the *mestiço*; he claimed that they were the ones that made possible the adaptation and survival of Europeans in the tropics (Caulfield 2003). Furthermore, Freyre opposed Vianna on who was to



blame for racial degradation. While Vianna argued that blacks and Indians had physical and morally weakened the Brazilian population, Freyre argued that it was conquest, slavery, and disease brought by Europeans that “had resulted in the moral degeneracy and indolence of colonial society” (2003, 165). Freyre’s ideas about benevolent race relations during the colonial period and the positive (and even amorous) process of miscegenation were eventually interpreted into a dominant ideology termed “racial democracy”, a belief that all of the races lived freely and equally in Brazil.

For Freyre, it was precisely the sexual relations between masters and slaves that were “key to the Brazilian character and the nation’s organic social and cultural structures” (165). However, while Freyre wrote of racial harmony he was not necessarily defending diversity or difference. In his defense of a whiter, mixed race, Freyre’s theories actually had the same impact as Vianna’s in homogenizing the Brazilian national identity. Some of the critiques of Freyre have been his positivistic and elitist view of slave relations with little regard for the violent, often coercive, power relations in which Africans were held in Brazil (Fernandes 1969, Reis 1988; Goldstein 2003; Sansone 2003). Florestan Fernandes argued that while there were never any legal barriers created to block the upward mobility or integration of blacks, the “patterns of race relations developed under slavery” were maintained as the status quo (1969, 136). He writes that racial democracy was a myth that served the purposes of holding blacks responsible for their own social, political, and economic backwardness, as well as in exempting whites from their responsibility in the social development of blacks (1969, 139); moreover, Fernandes wrote that the myth of racial democracy cemented the image that:

‘the Negro has no problems in Brazil’; that because of the very nature of the Brazilian people, ‘there is no racial discrimination among us’; ...and that the Negro is satisfied with his social situation in São Paulo’ (1969, 139).

Although Fernandes was writing specifically about race relations in São Paulo, his ideas are useful in understanding the myth of racial democracy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as its lasting social effects. Eugenicist and whitening policies were taking place prior to Freyre’s *Casa Grande*, but Freyre’s ideas were significant in recreating Brazil’s colonial past in a way that turned the history of miscegenation into something that was positive even under the violent conditions of slavery. Freyre may not have been the sole progenitor of the racial democracy ideology, however, his work and ideas have remained the most discussed and debated among North American Brazilianists well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They stand today as an important testament of the impact of the racial democracy ideal in the United States.

#### Chapter IV

### **Making Race and Nation: The Formation of a Multicultural State in Brazil**

*In addition to their technical and cultural superiority, the Negroes were possessed of something like a biological and psychic predisposition to life in the tropics. There was their greater fertility in hot regions. Their taste for the sun. Their energy, always fresh and new when in contact with the tropical jungle (Freyre 1956, 282).*

*Four centuries of uninterrupted toil, accompanied by misery, poverty, and strife constitute the long and painful history of the slave in Brazil... (Ramos 1980, 15).*

The transition from the ideology of scientific racism to that of racial democracy was central to the formation of the Brazilian national identity. Out of this transition emerged the notion of the ideal *mestiço*, which claimed to be the best of the three races dominant in Brazil: Portuguese, African, and Indigenous. By 1950, explicit racism had become unacceptable in the eyes of the nation. In 1951 the Afonso Arinos law making racism illegal and punishable with jail time was passed. The law was in response to the racial discrimination experienced by the African-American dancer, Katherine Durham, who was prohibited from staying in a São Paulo hotel. This law was one of the first major examples of international influence on Brazilian race relations.

Following the historical events of the time, especially the end of WWII, the rise of the African-American Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and the impending Cuban Revolution, the Brazilian government became increasingly committed to maintaining unity and peace within its borders. While promoting racial democracy and equality, Brazil ratified several international anti-racist laws including the International Labor Organization's Discrimination Convention of 1958 (Convention 111) and the UN's International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) (Telles 2004, 38). However, just because the government ratified antiracist laws, it did not mean it saw itself as a racist nation.

This chapter details the relationship between the ratification of anti-racist and multicultural policies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of the National Black Movement, and the creation of a series of new quilombo policies and definitions. Most existing analysis assumes that legislation specifying a process for granting quilombo rights successfully addresses the goals of multiculturalism. By granting the right to difference and by speaking to the problem of social and economic exclusion of black citizens, commentators and scholars seem to have convinced themselves that the problems created by slavery and inequities can be resolved. The quilombo clause is taken to be a form of reparations which has empowered blacks, for the first time in history, to use land laws to their advantage. I believe that this perspective is incomplete and misleading. In this chapter, I want to establish the clear connection between multiculturalism and quilombo rights, and raise with readers the structural difficulties this is now producing.

When anthropologists engaged with men and women interested in establishing their right to the land they had lived on and worked on for a century or more and when Black Movement leaders organized to support this effort, the category in the constitution termed "quilombo" was

defined in ethnic terms. Brazilian anthropologists played a key role in redefining the parameters of the “quilombo” category. In the effort to make the term more applicable to contemporary rural communities, they worked to erase its colonial origins and turn the “quilombo” into an ethnic group and community. It is my strong contention that this transformation has led to the erasure of the problem of racism and racial discrimination that inspired “quilombolismo” (a word used by Abdias do Nascimento to describe the spirit of slaves seeking freedom from repression) in the colonial period. This foundation is essential to part of the thesis of this dissertation which argues that while the quilombo clause comes out of a tradition of multiculturalist policies, it, in fact, creates difference through a process I will call, “(re)membering.” Here I mean that government organizations, NGOs, and anthropologists are re-assembling and piecing together historical memory with contemporary social practices and multiculturalist ideals in order to create the new *comunidade remanescente de quilombo* as a different ethnic group. The (re)membering requires that government organizations and NGOs teach the new anthropological quilombo definition in order to make the connection between rural black communities and quilombo ancestors.

While it may seem contradictory and regressive to critique a clause that grants land rights to the ancestors of slaves, I believe that the parameters that have been established to grant quilombo recognition and rights are much more regressive and harmful to Afro-Brazilians than they are empowering. The second part of the thesis of this dissertation argues that the process of (re)membering the quilombo has created social confusion and led to violent land conflicts between quilombo descendants and private landowners. Subsequent chapters will explore this issue in greater detail. First it is essential to establish the ideological underpinnings of the quilombo clause in order to begin to understand the implications of differentiated rights based on idealizations of racial and ethnic identity.

### *The Multicultural State: Black Inclusion and Differentiated Citizenship*

The military dictatorship (1965-1985) brought a still stronger commitment to national unity and economic progress than the Vargas administration (1937-1945). During the dictatorship, the government steadfastly promoted the ideal of racial democracy, and in its 1970 report to the CERD declared that racial discrimination did not exist in Brazil (Telles 2004, 41). Studies that even hinted at the existence of racism or inequality in the nation could be seen as threatening to the state. As Freyre’s ideas were accepted by the regime, Florestan Fernandes, Abdias do Nascimento, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Octavio Ianni, all researchers of racial inequality, were forced into exile (Telles 2004, 42). At the same times, spaces of racial identification and cultural freedom were opening up socially for black Brazilians. In the 1970s, *candomblé terreiros* (Afro-religion houses of worship), *capoeira* groups, *samba* schools, and new social groups focused around black theatre, art, music, and research became havens for black social life. Abdias do Nascimento founded the Experimental Theater of the Negro (TEN) as early as 1944, and created the Institute for Research and Studies of Afro Brazilians (Ipeafro) in 1981 (Covin 2006). In Salvador Bahia, Ilê Aiyê, an all-black Carnival school, was created in response to the racial exclusion of blacks in past Carnivals.

As long as these black initiatives contributed to the nation’s image as a mixed-race, racial democracy, they were accepted and even celebrated by the dictatorship. The transition to black politics really came with the creation of the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (The Unified Black

Movement, MNU) in 1978 (Telles 2004, 46). Led by people like Abdias do Nascimento (1979), the MNU grew stronger, together with other Pan-Africanist movements throughout the Diaspora, particularly the Black Power Movement in the United States (Marx 1998, 20).

As Latin American governments began to democratize in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, they reformed their constitutions to extend citizenship rights to more groups in hopes of legitimating the democratic state (Hooker 2005; Van Cott 2000). Van Cott refers to these reforms as “multicultural constitutionalism” (2000). The term is useful in thinking about how multicultural rights and identities have been created together with the democratic state. The quilombo article emerged, in part, due to the demands for rights being made by Afro-Brazilians decades before the new constitution was ratified. But more importantly, the series of quilombo policies that were erected in the following years were directly impacted by the MNU. Concessions for land rights were also made for indigenous groups in the 1988 constitution. Unlike the quilombo clause, indigenous land rights were included as part of the permanent body of the constitution. The right to culture, language, and land for indigenous peoples was described in detail throughout several articles. These articles defined the limits of indigenous communities and laid out the specificities of their land rights. In contrast, the constitution did not say anything in respect to the culture of quilombos or the limits of their lands. Their land rights were only included in a transitory section of articles. Article 68 was meant to be transitory because, unlike indigenous land regularization, the process of granting land to quilombos was expected to be finite. The 1988 constitution recognized the existence of different ethnic and racial groups; however, the differentiated status of blacks was still not clear.

As mobilizations for democracy began to take place in the 1970s, the MNU found opportunities for expressing criticism of racial democracy. “Continued repression forced the MNU to retain a focus on culture while at the same time ‘legitimating the struggle against racism’” (Marx 1998, 257). While rooted in Marxist ideology, the focus of the MNU was specifically on race, a rather radical position given the history of race relations in Brazil (Marx 1998, 258). There was, however, a felt need to disguise race issues as cultural issues. This became the MNU’s strategy in pushing for the political and economic inclusion of blacks in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and for decades to follow. Marx accurately notes that the intellectual and cultural focus of the MNU, along with its largely middle class make-up, alienated it from the poorer, illiterate blacks of the favelas (258). Some contend that the MNU was more an organization than a social movement (Covin 2006). Regardless of its status, the MNU became a central organ for promoting black rights and denouncing racial discrimination in Brazil. MNU members permeated every level of society from the highest political seats to the educational, health, environmental, and non-governmental sectors.

When the new constitution was ratified in 1988, one hundred years after abolition, all Brazilian citizens became equal under the law without regard to race, sex, color or age (Title I, Brazilian 1988 Constitution). The Afonso Arinos Law was reconfigured as the Cao Law which added the stipulation of no bail for anyone found guilty of racism. Although all Brazilians were considered equal under the law, during this period of democratization, some Brazilians became *differentiated* citizens through new multiculturalist policies. In using the term “differentiated citizenship,” I call attention to a body of research on multiculturalism and citizenship that analyzes the politics of differentiating kinds of citizens based on their claims to cultural and

ethnic rights and on their unequal participation in the nation state. Primarily, I use James Holston's definition of differentiated citizenship as a form of "inegalitarian citizenship" and a process of legalizing

social differences that are not the bases of national membership—primarily differences of education, property, race, gender, and occupation—to distribute different treatment to different categories of citizens (Holston 2008, 7).

Following similar observations by Roberto DaMatta and Florestan Fernandes, Holston argues that Brazilian citizenship is rooted in a history of "legalized privileges and legitimated inequalities" that have persisted throughout various regimes and even "thrived under monarchy, dictatorship, and democracy" (2008, 5). In his edited volume with David Hess, *The Brazilian Puzzle*, DaMatta characterizes the paradox of differentiated citizenship claiming that in Brazilian society people "occupy differentiated but equivalent positions in [the] ideological triangle" that makes up the Brazilian citizen (Da Matta 1995, 273). While DaMatta and Fernandes focus more on the social hierarchies that continue to permeate Brazilian society even after the colonial period (DaMatta 1995; Fernandes 1969), Holston deals more specifically with the historical problem (and paradox) of "equalizing social differences for national membership [while] legalizing some as the basis for differentially distributing rights and privileges among citizens" (7). Here, for example, we can think about the issue of granting indigenous groups equality and freedom from discrimination while simultaneously legalizing them as different ethnic groups deserving of special land and cultural rights in the 1988 constitution. Still, Holston argues that inegalitarian citizenship goes as far as the colonial period when land was distributed based on royal privileges, and when the informal (or illegal) occupation of land was legalized by the law of *possé* (literally "possession" but referring to squatters rights) (2008).

In the same year that the new constitution was ratified, then president, José Sarney signed Law 7.668 creating the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) within the Ministry of Culture. The FCP was charged primarily with the "cultural, social, economic, and political integration of blacks in the social context of the nation" (Sarney 1988, Law 7.668, Art 2). It reflected what Fernandes had been saying for years: Slavery and the lack of institutional support for the development of free blacks had left the black population unable to integrate itself in Brazilian society (1969). The constitution included article 68, which granted land rights to the descendants of fugitive slaves or quilombos who were still occupying their ancestor's lands. The quilombo clause was rooted in the memory of the impact of slavery on black Brazilians and their inability to own land. It especially recalled the 'valiant' resistance of the quilombo Palmares and its leaders Ganga Zumba and Zumbi. By the time of the new constitution, the spirit of "quilombolismo" (Nascimento 1980) had become part of the MNU's rhetoric in their effort to change the dialogue of black history from a focus on enslavement to the more positive facts of cultural survival and resistance. But article 68 was not necessarily modeled on the same politics of black pride that motivated, for example, the black carnival schools and black theatre arts of Abdias do Nascimento. Instead it was modeled on the multicultural rights that were being granted to indigenous groups during the same period. In the 1990s, fifteen Latin American nations ratified ILO convention 169 for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples along with other multicultural polices. During the 1990s, indigenous fights for inclusion and citizenship rights

resonated with the desires of other repressed groups, particularly Afro-Latinos (VanCott 2000, 2).

*Indigenous and Black: Quilombos, Mocambos, Palenques, Marroons, Garifunas*

Of the fifteen nations that ratified ILO convention 169, only Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua extended rights to Afro-descendants (Hooker 2005, 286). The political struggles of quilombos are similar to those of Afro-Colombians (Wade 1993) Garifunas in Honduras (Anderson 2007), Afro-Ecuadorians, and Afro-Latinos in Nicaragua and Guatemala. Research on Afro-Latinos has been motivated by emerging multiculturalist policies throughout Latin America which began in the 1990s and gained more strength in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Juliet Hooker argues that indigenous groups have been able to obtain more collective rights from the multicultural state than Afro-Latinos. She notes that under Latin America's new multicultural policies, "ethnicity" and distinction as a separate cultural group make up the primary criteria for determining the "appropriate subjects of collective rights" (Hooker 2005: 291). While multiculturalism was supposed to address overall social exclusion, racial discrimination and "socio-economic and political marginalization" have not been the primary focus of multicultural remedies (Hooker 291). In his article, "When Afro becomes Like Indigenous," Anderson makes a similar claim about Garifuna communities in Honduras. He illustrates the ways in which these communities must emphasize their identity as ethnic and indigenous, and even ally themselves with indigenous groups, in order to make demands on the state. Hooker writes,

A long history of dominant representations of Garifuna as racially negro yet culturally similar to indigenas facilitated the production and reception of a legal equivalence between black and indigenous peoples at a moment in which indigenous rights became a key paradigm for achieving recognition from the state and transnational actors (2007, 386).

While Garifunas have been successful in obtaining collective rights, they have done so through appeals to culture and ancestry in such a way that, as Wade puts it, "blackness increasingly looks like indianness" (Wade 1997, 37; Anderson 2007). The problem of where to locate the Afro-Latino is rooted in the distinction that has been drawn between ethnicity and race within academic, popular, and political discourses (Wade 1997, 5). Peter Wade argues that the studies of blacks in Latin America have been largely relegated to studies of slavery and slave-related issues (1997, 25). His work (especially 1997 & 1993) seeks to bridge the divide between black and indigenous studies and remove the attachment of race and ethnicity to each category respectively so as to call attention to the "interesting contrasts and similarities between blacks and Indians in Latin America" (1997, 25).

*Choosing Ethnicity and Culture over Race and Skin Color*

Because the constitution did not define quilombo descendants or offer suggestions on how to identify these people, the article stood solely on the historical memory of colonial quilombos. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropological theories that stressed culture over race were a central part of the Brazilian intellectual tradition. Brazilian anthropology was most influenced by French theory, especially Levi Strauss, the father of structural anthropology, and Louis Dumont

with his comparative research on hierarchical systems. Both Strauss and Dumont contributed to a style of analysis that focused on culture and social structure as key factors of individual behavior. During the same period, Frederick Barth was advancing the analysis of ethnicity (1969) (Wade 1997). Barth argued that ethnic groups established themselves through social processes of incorporation and exclusion, maintaining themselves despite changing participation or membership (Barth 1969). He believed that focus on ethnic groups should be placed on the boundaries of the group, or rather on the characteristics of belonging that unified the group and distinguished it from the rest of society (Wade 1997, 60). The Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) would take up his theories in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) when establishing the boundaries and specific characteristics of the “quilombo” as an ethnic group.

While sociologist and past president of the nation, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, along with Octavio Ianni and Florestan Fernandes, had been writing about racial discrimination since the 1960s, they focused mostly on urban blacks and their chances at economic development and inclusion (Wade 1997, 68). Race theories were not central when it came to defining the differentiated rights that the constitution rooted in cultural life. Even though blacks were socially differentiated based on the color of their skin, their political identity was based on their African ancestry and not their color. Ultimately the goal of the constitution was to recognize and respect cultural difference while declaring every citizen equally Brazilian. To go in any other direction walked dangerously close to racial discrimination or US-style segregation. As a result of a history of racial democracy ideals and integrationist policies, Brazilian society established a fluid racial system that focused on the diverse shades of skin color that could be seen throughout nation. While the Brazilian census includes the categories white, black, *pardo* (mixed, black and white), *amarelo* (Yellow or Asian), and *índigena*, informally Brazilians place themselves all along the color wheel. Some of the colors used are *café com leite* (coffee with milk), *moreno* (light brown), *caboclo* (indigenous and black), and *negro sarará* (a person with African features, light skin, and freckles). Furthermore, several researchers have affirmed the fact that Brazilian racial identity depends so much on skin color that it often changes depending on the person’s social situation or interaction (Telles 2004, Wade 1997, Skidmore 1972). For example, a *moreno* in predominately black Bahia, might be considered black in predominantly white São Paulo or Rio Grande do Sul. Thus, it is significant to note that Brazilians do not depend on the “one-drop rule” to ascribe blackness. Blackness is socially ascribed through the appearance of skin color in relation to the rest of society. While it is not possible within the scope of this work to present a complete analysis of racial categorization in Brazil, particularly one that adequately addresses the regional differences that determine race, it is unarguable that the social fluidity of racial categories, based on a color continuum, has become the foundation of race thinking in 21<sup>st</sup> century Brazil. The quilombo clause is an interesting and controversial phenomenon in Brazilian social life because it particularly seems to grant rights based on race in a nation where skin color is fluid and socially determined.

*Forging the Ethnicity and Downplaying the Race of Quilombos in Brazil:  
The Role of the Brazilian Anthropological Association*

In reviewing this expanded emphasis on cultural attributes in Brazil’s attempts to redress previous discrimination, it is, it is especially interesting to me as an anthropologist to see the role anthropologists played in re-structuring the focus on the “quilombo” from race to ethnicity in the

effort to improve the chances of blacks in obtaining similar multicultural rights as indigenous peoples (Arruti 2005, O'Dwyer 2002, French 2009). I especially focus on quilombos reports (or *laudos antropologicos*) written by anthropologists hired by the Institute of National Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). These reports make up the knowledge base for information on quilombos used by the government in deciding questions of land recognition and distribution. Prior to 2003, anthropologists were essential in determining which communities could and could not be recognized as the descendants of quilombos. During the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration (1995-2003), quilombos could only be granted legal recognition after a detailed anthropological study was conducted by the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) to determine whether the residents had historical ties to the land (Interview, Luciana Motta 2009). When President Lula granted quilombo descendants the right to self-identify (through decree 4.887 and ILO convention 169), he restructured the quilombo process (in Normative 56) so that anthropologists would be hired through INCRA to research land use, and would no longer be responsible for determining the ethnic recognition of communities.

Leading up to Lula's restructuring of the quilombo process were a series of anthropological discussions and meetings aimed at rethinking the definition of "quilombo descendants." The goal was to make article 68 more functional and applicable to the contemporary realities of rural black communities. According to French (2009), the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) encouraged a shift from race to ethnicity when doing research on the quilombo. They did this because anthropologists had learned that rural communities based their identity on their historical ties to the land, which they had worked as sharecroppers since the 1950s, and not so much on race.

The concept of "rural black community" had been used as an object of study and a political unit of focus, since the early 1980s (French 2009). Thus, it transitioned easily into the definition of "quilombo". Presently, only rural black communities can obtain land rights under the quilombo clause<sup>6</sup>. In 1994, the ABA working group on rural black quilombo communities (GT) wrote a statement to the Ministry of Culture arguing that the "quilombo" concept had assumed a new social and academic definition, elaborated particularly within non-governmental organizations, autonomous working groups, and the Movimento Negro (MNU). According to the GT, these groups used the term "*remanescente de quilombo*" as well as "*terras de pretos*" (black lands) to designate a legacy or cultural and material inheritance that relates to a sentiment of belonging to a specific place or group (Pacheco de Oliveira 1994, 81). The ABA argued that the government should not treat quilombo descendants as though they were archeological or biological artifacts that could be visibly and materially linked to fugitive slave ancestors. Furthermore, quilombos should no longer be seen as isolated or homogenous communities

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<sup>6</sup> Quilombo rights are granted to rural communities mostly because of the infeasibility of granting collective land rights to urban blacks. Urban blacks are not always organized in "communities" and tend to be more widely distributed throughout the urban space, living in densely commercial and public areas. While there are urban black communities, for example Liberdade and Curuzu in Salvador, Bahia, which actually have cultural recognition as quilombos, these communities cannot obtain special land titles under Bahian state law. In the southeastern state of Minas Gerais there are several urban quilombos fighting for recognition and rights. Most interesting is the community of Arturos, where over 400 residents claim to be the descendants of the *liberto* or freeborn black, Arturo Camilo Silvério (CPISP 2011).



(Pacheco de Oliveira 1994, 81). The ABA reconstituted the “quilombo” for the nation-state as first and foremost an “ethnic group” using Fredrick Barth’s notion of ethnic boundaries. This was an important contribution by the ABA because they officially set the theoretical ground for the later adoption of “self-identification” as the method of official recognition. Finally, the GT added that land was used communally (and not separated in individual plots) by contemporary quilombos, and with that established the basis for the national practice of granting communal land titles to quilombos. The GT asked the Ministry of Culture to consider their recommendations in recognizing the existence of these communities, and in turn, the ABA would provide experts to produce any necessary anthropological reports in assistance of article 68 (Pacheco de Oliveira 1994, 82). Emphasizing the importance of the ethnicity, Brazilian anthropologist and quilombo researcher Elaine O’Dwyer writes:

Pode-se concluir, como no caso precedente dos direitos indígenas, que os laudos antropológicos ou relatórios de identificação sobre as comunidades negras rurais (para efeito do art. 68 do ADCT) não podem prescindir do conceito de grupo étnico, com todas as suas implicações (2002, 16).

[We may conclude that, as in the case of indigenous rights, that anthropological findings or identification reports on rural black communities (in service of article 68 of the ADCT) cannot do without the concept of “ethnic group”, with all of its implications.]

O’ Dwyer notes that anthropological efforts to re-create the quilombo category as one that is primarily ethnic and culture-based came from pressure by the Unified Black Movement (MNU) to put article 68 into practice and to begin the process of re-distributing rights to black communities in need (2002, 18). She affirms that the so-called *laudos antropológicos* should be considered “as forms of interventions outside of the academic sphere” (2002, 40).

The “ethnic group,” thus became essential to connecting the rural black community to quilombo ancestry. Securely established as “groups” and “communities,” rural blacks could demand more than just land rights. They could apply for a series of social and cultural rights that would improve everyday life in the community. For example, quilombos are given priority when it comes to infrastructural developments as running water, better energy distribution, paved roads, and building construction. They are also eligible for social services such as funding for schools, health services, and support for local job opportunities and artisan initiatives. Finally, these communities are supported, through the federal *Pontos de Cultura* (Culture Points)<sup>7</sup> initiative, in their efforts to maintain certain African cultural traditions such as *capoeira* classes and *candomblé terreiros*. Although they are still characterized as “black” communities and defined by their African cultural traditions, the policies that were established to identify quilombo descendants downplay their race (or skin color) while reconstituting them as ethnic groups; in the process, the memory of the colonial quilombo also gets refashioned.

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<sup>7</sup> Pontos de Cultura are part of the Cultura Viva initiative created by ex-president Lula to financially support projects that contribute to the cultural life within their communities, including art, dance, artisan crafts, etc. <http://www.cultura.gov.br/culturaviva/ponto-de-cultura/>.

While the expression “*remanescente de quilombo*” first appears in the 1988 Constitution, the term “quilombo” goes much farther back. “Quilombo” has several origin stories. According to Kagengele Mungana, the term is Bantu in origin, spelled *kilombo*, and means war camp located in the forest. Mungana claims that the quilombos of Brazil are recreations of the African kilombos, which were made up of Bantu tribes that were “betrayed and enslaved” on their own lands (Mungana 1996). In fact, ideals regarding the valiance of quilombolas during the colonial period, especially Palmares, become a strong aspect of re-interpreting the term to mean more than just “fugitive slave” as was used by the Portuguese crown (Leite & Oliven 1996). According to the ABA, even manumitted and freeborn blacks participated in forms of *quilombolismo* through their resistance to social and institutional oppression.

In addition to their re-conceptualization of the “quilombo” as an ethnic group, anthropologists and MNU activists infused the identity with a spirit of resistance and struggle rooted in the history of the quilombo Palmares (Nascimento 1978). Even though the ABA expanded the definition of “quilombo” to include diverse acts of resistance and survival, the political need to define the descendants of quilombos as groups or communities led to the dominate use of Palmares as the model for authentication. Abdias do Nascimento wrote that quilombos were the “vital exigency for enslaved Africans to recover their liberty and human dignity through escape from captivity, organizing viable free societies in Brazilian territory” (Nascimento 1978, 182). It was this “spirit of quilombolismo”, coupled with the image of the quilombo as an African community refuge, that came to dominate the institutional and community-based imaginary of the quilombo. Together with MNU activists, anthropologists worked to make the term “quilombo” that is used in the 1988 Constitution translatable to the socio-cultural reality of 21<sup>st</sup> century communities. Because this idea of the ethnic quilombo fit neatly within the multiculturalist rhetoric that had begun to dominate Brazilian politics since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, new policies for the recognition of the descendants of quilombos became more viable.

While the ABA may have helped make article 68 more politically feasible, it has also contributed to the erasure of race and racial exclusion that has made up Brazilian history since the colonial period. The role of tradition and historical memory, especially slavery and resistance, in black political discourse is essential to the subjectivity of blacks throughout the Diaspora. In this respect, Gilroy writes:

When the emphasis shifts towards the elements of invariant tradition that heroically survive slavery, any desire to remember slavery itself becomes something of an obstacle. It seems as if the complexity of slavery and its location within modernity has to be actively forgotten if a clear orientation to tradition and thus the present circumstances of blacks is to be acquired (1993, 189).

The point here is that by redefining blackness through ethnicity, in order to redistribute rights that were prohibited to an entire group of people based solely on the color of their skin, the ABA has attempted to erase the violent fact of slavery and the decades of racism that followed. My research illustrated that despite the attempt to define quilombo through ethnicity, the problem of race reemerges in the public sphere and places the descendants of quilombos in the difficult position of authenticating their own blackness. The narrative that society believes, upholds, and

demands is that blacks, whites, and indigenous peoples participate equally in the national mestiço identity and in the racial democracy that is still associated with Brazil (Da Matta 1995). While each group is recognized as contributing in an abstract way to the culture and tradition of the nation, these groups must prove their historical and ethnic origins before they can be politically, and socially, recognized as different. A great deal of conflict and violence has emerged out of the quilombo recognition process. It is, in part, due to society's refusal to accept special rights for these groups, which opponents do not see as any different from themselves and other Brazilians. In most cases, if members of a given community are not able to represent themselves as the authentic descendants of a quilombo by imitating the imagined colonial African, then they run the risk of being accused of fraud and marked as land thieves. The descendants of quilombos find themselves in the difficult situation of fighting to prove an identity that has become so essentialized (and romanticized in its connection to traditional African and quilombo "culture") to fit the rhetoric of multiculturalism, that it is no longer possible for them to represent themselves without the help of government organizations and NGOs.

Brazilian activist, professor, and first Afro-Brazilian congressman Abdias do Nascimento, credited with coining the term "quilombolismo," wrote that "black masses in Brazil have only one option: to disappear. Whether it be through compulsory miscegenation, assimilation or, when they escape from this, through direct elimination-- death pure and simple" (Nascimento 1979, 7). Nascimento frequently wrote with anger and frustration at the racism and discrimination that he thought was all too often ignored in Brazil. In his book, *O Quilombolismo*, he defined the quilombo as a model of the type of separate society he believed blacks were capable of forming in post-abolition Brazil: an Afro-Brazilian nationalist liberation movement and a political alternative (155, 1980). In fact, Nascimento was the first to re-define quilombo as a socio-political frame of black thinking, a concept that could implement the Black Movement's fight for equality by invoking the memory of Zumbi. In his book, Nascimento even proposed ways of effectively enacting a quilombo movement and separate quilombo society in Brazil (1980, 168). He even goes as far as outlining the governing tenants of this new society. Nascimento's call for the quilombo as a black society took a very different turn in the political establishment of quilombo descendants. In this respect, Anthony Marx asks an important question:

If legal racial domination elsewhere reinforced racial identity and provoked protest among blacks, then did the relative absence of such official domination in Brazil reduce the salience of racial identification and restrain mobilization there (1996, 250)?

Was the ABA accurate when they completely dismissed race for ethnicity based on the claim that rural black communities identified more with land than they did with race? Or was this conclusion made under the same myth of racial democracy that has been rooted in Brazilian intellectual and social life for decades? What is it that makes ethnicity a better variable than race in the Brazilian context, and how do we understand the complex new identities emerging under the title of quilombo descendant? O'Dwyer provides a simple answer to the question of why race gets ignored in the quilombo political process:

Cabe ressaltar que [as comunidades negras rurais remanescentes de quilombos] são frequentemente consideradas de exclusividade negra, o que evoca diretamente a noção de raça há muito tempo banida das ciências sociais pela associação entre características morfológicas...(2002, 17).

[It is useful to highlight that rural black communities descendants of quilombos are frequently considered exclusively black. This directly evokes the notion of race, which has long been banned from the social sciences by the association [ABA] along with morphological characteristics...]

The ABA does not want to focus on race because it invokes the racist, eugenic thinking of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the choice to deemphasize race also comes from the historical fact that colonial quilombos were often composed of different racial and ethnic groups. O'Dwyer's report goes on to explain that the role of the ABA was to find the conceptual place of the past in the present for the purpose of facilitating quilombo recognition. The past that gets recycled is the same imagined utopia of racial harmony and miscegenation that was promoted by Freyre and the state throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus society is left with the paradoxical and confusing definition of *comunidades remanescentes de quilombos*, also known as *terras de pretos*, as rural communities that have cultural ties to their lands and that may also identify with slave ancestors but that are not exclusively black. Although anthropologists were invited to redefine and clarify the "quilombo" of the constitution, they actually ended up doing the exact opposite. The question of who is and is not a quilombo, and under what criteria is just as confusing and misunderstood today as it was in 1988. Race may be an unpleasant reality within a preferred multiculturalist society like Brazil, but it is a social reality that cannot be denied. It continues to demand recognition as Afro-Brazilians fight for their place as full-citizens of society. It may be that only when the unspoken is allowed to be named and explored that we will find a way out of a morass that was borne of good intentions but overwhelmed by pretenses.

*Chapter V*  
**São Francisco do Paraguaçu Boqueirão:  
Land, Community, Environment, and Work**

*About eleven o'clock we entered the Bay of All Saints, on the northern side of which is situated the town of Bahia or San Salvador. It would be difficult [to] imagine before seeing this view anything so magnificent. It requires, however, the reality of nature to make it so. If faithfully represented in a picture, a feeling of distrust would be raised in the mind (Charles Darwin 1832) (Schwartz 1985, 75).*

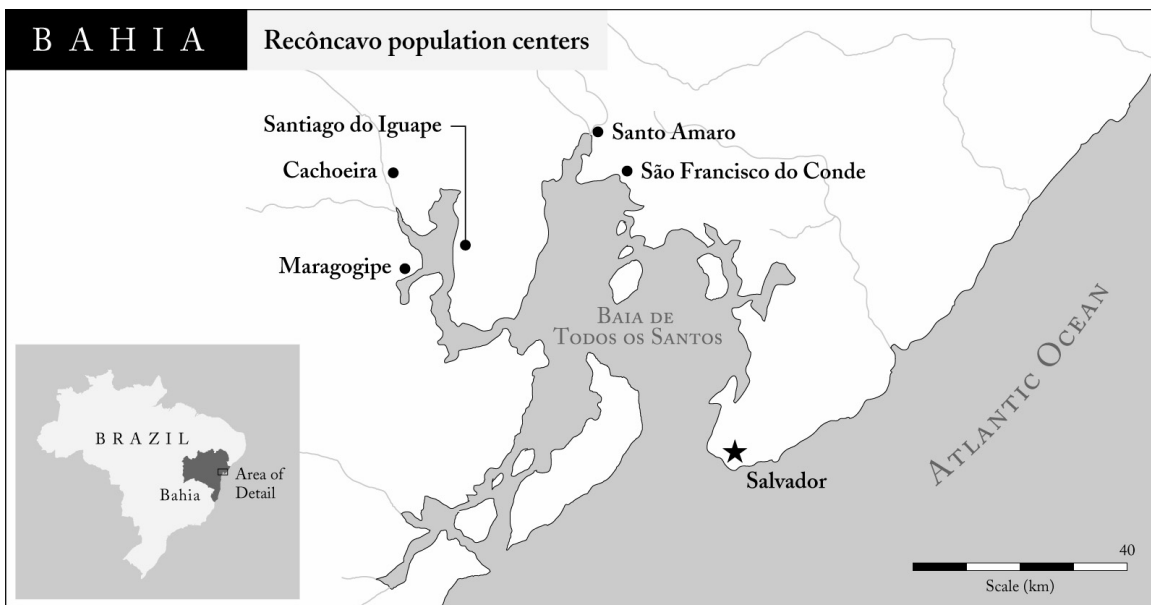
*The frightened citizens wrote that they were surrounded by a sea of blacks, more than 40,000 in the Recôncavo...and these blacks were a barbarous people used to hardship and used to killing at whim (Schwartz 1985, 485).*

We move now from the general history of Brazil to the specific history of São Francisco do Paraguaçu, as rooted in the unfolding of the Bahian Recôncavo. We will see how the intensity of the sugar economy and the slave trade in the Recôncavo led to the creation of the region as primarily black and African in cultural practices. Here, I argue that the quilombolas of São Francisco not only identify with fugitive slaves from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but have also come to identify the land as a significant part of their cultural ancestry and present identity.

A section on the work and cultural life of São Francisco details the many forms of labor in which the quilombolas now engage and the importance of this labor as a symbol of their ancestry and physical connection to the land. I include a story told by one of the eldest members of the quilombo about the time she got lost in the mangroves. The story is a symbol of how the lives of quilombolas are intertwined with, and quite literally rooted in, the lands they work and cultivate. It is important to emphasize, however, that the relationship between land and identity is not natural, but rather socially and politically constructed through a series of interactions between quilombo communities, government organizations, and NGOs. Here I lay the ground for understanding some of the historical factors that make up the current quilombo identity and the importance of rooting that identity in the history of the land.



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<sup>8</sup> Barra do Paraguaçu: Baía do Iguape. Photo by Luis Perriera, Comissão Pró-Iguape, an environmental NGO, that includes activists and quilombo leaders from several of the quilombos of the Iguape region, and that deals specifically with protecting the rich environment of the region from large development projects and exploration.

<sup>9</sup> Frank, Jason, <http://www.mappingbahia.org/project/bahian-reconcavo/>, acquired June 28, 2011.

### *The History and Culture of the Bahian Recôncavo*

Situated in the Iguape district, São Francisco do Paraguaçu sits on the Bahian coast at a point where salt water from the Bay of All Saints (*Bahia de Todos os Santos*) mixes with sweet water from the Paraguaçu River. São Francisco is located in the heart of the Bahian recôncavo, a region of the Northeast that has been romanticized for its beautiful landscape and visibly dominant black presence. Historically the slave trade brought hundreds of Bantu Africans from the Congo, Zaire, Cabinda, Angola, Mozambique and Zanzibar who spread out throughout the sugar and tobacco plantations of the region (Carneiro 1991).

Originally inhabited by indigenous tribes, particularly Maracás, the Vale do Iguape, the region of the Recôncavo that includes Santiago do Iguape, Cachoeira, and Maragogipe, was significantly transformed by the arrival of the Portuguese. The region provided rich land for agriculture and was an important entryway, through the Paraguaçu River, into the interior of Bahia. Thus, indigenous groups were systematically removed from their lands, and were replaced by massive *engenhos* and enslaved Africans.

In 1531, Martim Afonso de Souza's expedition, charged with stimulating the cultivation of sugar cane in the area, settled along the Paraguaçu River and established what later became the city of Cachoeira. Santiago do Iguape, first called Santiago on the Paraguaçu, was formed as a parish town of the Catholic church in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century (Schwartz 1985, 80). Rule over the lands of the Recôncavo were donated as *sesmarias* to Dom Alvaro da Costa, son of the second Governor General, as a prize for the war that he led against the indigenous tribes of the region (Tavares 2001). Since the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese Crown used a system of royal land grants called *sesmarias*, as a strategy for controlling the distribution of lands and promoting the cultivation of so-called "un-occupied" lands (Holston 2008, 118). The Law of *Sesmarias* required the productive use of land. After a certain period, lands that were not successfully cultivated would have to be returned to the Crown and became reassigned as *terras devolutas* (devolved lands) (118).

The *sesmaria* system was riddled with problems that had lasting effects on land ownership in Brazil. The Crown awarded many land grants, often with little knowledge of what lands were legally occupied and whether they were actually productive. Authorities frequently duplicated grants causing violent conflicts between people claiming rights to the same lands (120). The impact of the *sesmaria* system will become more important as we move into the land conflicts involved in the quilombo process of São Francisco. The majority of the land in the Recôncavo was privately owned. Due in part to protections from the Law of *Sesmarias*, sugar mills were maintained within the same family through inheritance (Schwartz 1985, 96). It was not uncommon for an heir of a deceased owner to temporarily administer his *engenho* or for planters to claim multiple ownerships (96).

Strategically located on the Atlantic coast, the Bahian recôncavo was the nucleus of the sugar economy, contributing significantly to the economic growth of the state. Cachoeira became the second most important, and wealthiest, city, after Salvador, to the economic success of Bahia for over three centuries (Schwartz 1985, 81). Remnants of the hundreds of *engenhos* (sugar mills), *senzalas* (slave quarters), and churches that defined the colonial period are still a visual part of the cultural landscape of the Recôncavo. The major economic success of the Recôncavo,

like the rest of Brazil, is due to the forced labor of enslaved blacks. Stuart Schwartz indicates that over half of the population of the Recôncavo was made up of enslaved blacks in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The proportion of slaves in the Recôncavo exceeded 60 percent of the captaincy, and in parishes like Matoim, Santiago do Iguape, and Santo Amaro da Purificação slaves were more than 70 percent of the residents (Schwartz 1985, 87).

In 1563, Santiago do Iguape had an estimated 792 free men and women, and an estimated 2,212 slaves (1985, 88). While the Recôncavo is known for its large landed elites, *engenho* families that owned large stretches of agricultural plots in the region, blacks made up a significant part of the social life and landscape. They worked the sugarcane fields, fished, learned the forests, and developed their own social and cultural life alongside the white elite.

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century a letter sent by the Câmara da Vila de Nossa Senhora do Rosário do Porto de Cachoeira, announced the existence of a quilombo in the fields of Cachoeira. The letter was given to the then governor of Bahia, Dom Rodrigo da Costa, who ordered the immediate destruction of the quilombo (Pedreira 1973). Slave escapes and rebellions were common in the area and instilled panic among the *senhores de engenhos* (plantation owners) and other authorities of the Crown. The fear of fugitive slaves meant severe punishments for those that were captured. Paradoxically, as the punishments worsened so too did the incidence of quilombos and rebellious slaves (Schwartz 1985). Historical documentation indicates that resistance was continuous and not episodic throughout the entire region of the Recôncavo (Reis 1988). “Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the union of fugitive blacks in regimes of *mocambos* multiplied and spread throughout the exuberant forest of the area” (Goulart, Cysneiros, & Reis 1972, 259). The proximity of the capital intensified the insurgency of fugitive slaves in the Recôncavo. Hausas and Nagôs (a Bahian term for Yoruba) from the *engenhos* of the Recôncavo fled into the Atlantic forest and waited there for blacks from the capital (Goulart et. Al 1972). The significant concentration of slaves in the Recôncavo made the region highly susceptible to rebellions (Albuquerque 2006).

It is important to emphasize that slave resistance in the Bahian Recôncavo was neither isolated nor episodic but rather was systematic and even organized with blacks in the city of Salvador. João Reis argues extensively in his lifetime research on slave rebellions that fugitive slaves maintained complex relationships between various members of society, a survival strategy that provided quilombos with security and power (1988).

The large numbers of enslaved blacks in the Recôncavo, particularly Yoruba and Fon/Ewe from West Africa (Wimberly 1998), also influenced the cultural life of the region. By the time of abolition, the majority of slaves in the Recôncavo had been freed, and the African population began to decline significantly. Still, the large sugar plantations of the region took advantage of the limited opportunities for blacks in the labor market, and maintained their captive labor for many years to follow. Quilombolas often found refuge in *candomblé terreiros* that had multiplied throughout the region. Candomblé houses provided more than just spiritual support for blacks; they also provided social services, refuge, and community (Wimberly 1998, 78). The candomblé of the region combined the practices and deities of various African cultures and thus



attracted many devotees. Ceremonies persisted and grew regardless of the police persecution that endangered the lives of those practicing *candomblé* during and after abolition (1998, 79). Blacks had to develop various strategies for practicing *candomblé* safely. One of these strategies was to include catholic elements in their ceremonies so as to distract attention of authorities. These included decorating *terreiros* with images of saints and disguising the names of African deities with the names of catholic saints. Although these practices began as a form of survival and resistance, they later led to the syncretism of the two religions which came to define the face of much of the Bahian *candomblé* of the following centuries.

According to Carneiro (2005), Bantus, from the present regions of Angola, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, introduced *capoeira* and *samba* to the Bahian Recôncavo. Now a popular martial art, *capoeira*, was as much a pastime as it was a form of defense for blacks in the colonial period. Much of the repression that blacks experienced for practicing *capoeira*, even after abolition, was erased as the practice was assimilated into Brazilian high-culture. In 1973, Mestre Bimba described this repression:

The police pursued *capoeiristas* like they hunted rabid dogs. Believe it or not, the punishment that they inflicted on two *capoeiristas* who were arrested while fighting was to tie one wrist to the tail of one horse and the other to a second horse parallel to the first. The two horses were then let go and made to gallop to the police station (Teles dos Santos 1998, 125).

Presently what are called Angolan *capoeira* and regional *capoeira* (the latter is a form of *capoeira* that developed in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and that combined other cultural influences such as Eastern martial arts) make up a significant part of the culture of the Recôncavo. Like *candomblé terreiros*, *capoeira* groups also served the important role of providing community, refuge, and cultural survival. In the process of teaching *capoeira*, *mestres* or masters also perpetuated the use of African instruments and the survival of African history.

There was a strong belief that quilombos grew and gained support from *candomblé terreiros*, *capoeira* groups, and *samba* groups (or *Samba de Roda*, a more traditional form of *samba* practiced primarily, but not exclusively, in *candomblé* ceremonies). These cultural forms are described as part of the many forms of resistance that enslaved Africans demonstrated during the colonial period. While the lived reality of quilombos is only approximated through documents written by the colonists that feared and sought to destroy them, historians speculate that the predominance of slaves and fugitive slaves in the Recôncavo helped to shape the social, religious, family, dietary, and musical life of the region (Reis & Gomes 1988).

In Bahian history, the Recôncavo stood out as the great center of sugar and tobacco production, an economy created on the backs of enslaved Africans.

The Recôncavo gave Salvador its economic life, it stimulated the settlement and development of the Sertão, and its planters dominated the political and social life of the captaincy throughout its history. To say “Bahia” was to say “the Recôncavo,” and the Recôncavo was always *engenhos*, sugar, and slaves (Schwartz 1985, 97).

With the abolition of slavery also came modernization and industrial growth that only intensified the hierarchical systems of the region. With the law of the land favoring the expansion and growth of major *latifundios* or landed estates, discrimination and poverty were exacerbated among black populations especially in the rural interiors of the Recôncavo (Schwartz 1985).



### *Convento Santo Antônio do Paraguaçu*

The origin of São Francisco for many of its residents is rooted in the history of the Convento de Santo Antônio do Paraguaçu, a Franciscan monastery that sits on the edge of the town overlooking the Paraguaçu River. Although the Convento was built in 1686, the occupation of land in the Iguape dates back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century with the installation of the first sugar mills. The land on which the Convento was built was donated as two *sesmarias* to the Franciscan monks by the family of Pedro Garcia, owner of the still extant Engenho Velho (Fonseca 1973). Engenho Velho was one of the first sugar mills in the Recôncavo to initiate the exportation of sugar to Europe and is one of the areas where the quilombos of São Francisco are disputing land rights. The quilombolas of São Francisco claimed that together with the Convento, the Franciscans (through the use of slave labor), also constructed the *salão do mar*, a prison for insubordinate slaves. The skeletons of these victims were found with chains around their necks and feet. Because the prison was built in the water, when the water from the river would rise, prisoners would slowly drown to death.

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<sup>10</sup>Image of the Convento de Santo Antônio by Elizabeth Farfan-Santos

The quilombolas tell this story as an example of their historical connection to the land and the suffering that makes them deserving of reparations. I have not been able to find sources to support the story of the *salão do mar*, but it is, nonetheless, reflective of the popular memory of the history of slavery in the region. Speaking about the *salão do mar*, Seu Evandro declared,

Teve muita gente que enriqueceu com esse convento, e isso é obra de escravo. Eu ouvia os mais velhos dizerem que o salão do mar era prisão dos escravos (São Francisco do Paraguaçu 2009).

[A lot of people grew rich from the construction of the Convento, and that is work of slaves. I heard the elders say that the *salão do mar* was a prison for slaves.]

The quilombolas of São Francisco trace their ancestors to slaves that built the Convento. They claim that during the construction of the Convento, many blacks fled into the surrounding forest. There they formed the quilombo of Boqueirão and occupied areas named Boqueirão, Alamão, and Caibongo Velho, chosen for their prime locations near water. They planted potatoes, beans, and manioc root. After abolition, these quilombolas returned to the town center where only the white owners of the engenho lived.

#### São Francisco do Paraguaçu Boqueirão<sup>11</sup>

São Francisco sits at the mouth of the *Mata Atlântica* (Atlantic forest), making its location ideal for environmental preservation. There are over three hundred families in São Francisco that subsist on agriculture, fishing, the collection of small mollusks (clams, crabs, oysters, and mussels), and the extraction of *piçava*, *estopa*<sup>12</sup>, *dendê*<sup>13</sup>, *licuri*<sup>14</sup> and *castanha*<sup>15</sup>. *Piçava* is a Tupí name for a palm tree native to Bahia and other northeastern states. Because it is a fibrous tree, the trunk was peeled and stripped manually to make artisan brooms, baskets, and brushes that are still commonly used throughout Brazil. Describing the coastal life of the Recôncavo, Schwartz writes,

Lands along the coast were often *mangues* or saltwater swamps, a problem for the planters anxious to appropriate every inch of possible canelands, but salvation for the slaves who depended on the crabs, the *siri*, the blue *guaiamu*, and other crustaceans (1985, 77).

Situated in the historical life of the region, the quilombolas of São Francisco depend on the mangroves for a great portion of their diet. Furthermore the mangroves made up a significant part of their social and cultural life.

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<sup>11</sup> I will be using the “ethnographic present” tense throughout this dissertation to refer to events that took place during my field research in 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Cotton-like fiber

<sup>13</sup> Palm oil

<sup>14</sup> A species of palm tree

<sup>15</sup> Cashew fruit

As I mentioned earlier, the town of São Francisco is divided by groups of residents that identify as quilombolas or descendants of colonial quilombos and those who do not. Before the initiation of their legal process in 2005, the quilombolas of São Francisco formed an organization in order to officially establish themselves as an “ethnic community” as ordained by the Palmares Cultural Foundation’s requirements for official quilombo recognition. In addition to participating in the *Conselho Quilombola do Vale e Bacia do Iguape*, the quilombolas are also organized as the *Associação dos Remanescentes do Quilombo São Francisco do Paraguaçu-Boqueirão, Amantes da Terra* (Association of Quilombo Descendants of São Francisco do Paraguaçu-Boqueirão, Lovers of the Land). Once the quilombolas obtained official recognition from the Palmares Cultural Foundation, they became a legally and socially differentiated quilombo community. The remaining description of São Francisco pertains to the social and cultural life of the quilombo community, unless otherwise specified. It describes what I found when I lived in the community in 2009.

Education in São Francisco is difficult and only goes through elementary school. There are only three schools in the town, Maria da Hora, Escola Estadual de São Francisco do Paraguaçu, and *crèche* (daycare) Tia Angélica for younger children. Older children have to take an early morning bus to one of the larger neighboring cities, such as Cachoeira and Santiago do Iguape, in order to complete their *segundo grau* (approximately junior high school through high school).

There is only one land route, a long, winding, dirt road leading into São Francisco<sup>16</sup>. The only other access is by boat along the Paraguaçu River. While most of the community has electricity and running water, several quilombo homes still do not have running water. However, the community is hopeful that running water will be distributed throughout. They depend on Lula’s program, *Água para Todos*, “Water for All,” aimed at distributing running water to all urban favelas and rural communities without access.

There is only one health post in the community with two nurses who live in Cachoeira and drive into São Francisco Monday through Friday from 9AM to 4PM. This was a recent improvement in the community that came about in response to the community’s official recognition as a quilombo. According to residents, prior to its certification, the nurses visited the community sporadically and for only a few hours at any time.

Many of the quilombo families in the community receive a *cesta básica*, a bag of basic staple foods such as rice, beans, sugar, salt, powdered milk, dried meat, oil, margarine, and spaghetti that is given to low-income families as part of Lula’s *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) program initiated at the beginning of his first term. Because there are not any grocery stores in the community, the *cesta básica* provides a necessary supplement to the community’s diet of manioc root, seafood, and other vegetables grown locally. Residents would also take one of the two buses that went to and from Cachoeira to buy groceries in the city.

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<sup>16</sup> When I left the field at the end of 2009, there were plans to pave the dirt road.

### *Connecting Land and Culture*

In 2004, the Bahia INCRA office contracted *Projeto GeografAR*, an UFBA research group working on mapping different living situations and communities in the rural areas of Bahia, including *assentamentos*, quilombos, and land occupations (the Landless Movement). GeografAR was hired to research the quilombo Jatobá in the *Muquem de São Francisco*. Jatobá is a fishing and agricultural town like São Francisco do Paraguaçu located a few miles north of the town. With the help of university students, specifically those taking courses in geography, GeografAR provided one of the most detailed reports on any quilombo completed by the Bahian INCRA office. They documented each form of labor, all of the different species of fish collected, crops cultivated, animals domesticated, and medicinal plants grown (INCRA *Relatório Técnico de Identificação, Delimitação e Demarcação da Comunidade Quilombola Jatobá* 2005). Because of their theoretical interests in the social construction of space, GeografAR focused a great deal of their report on the productive use of land and space. They noted in a section on the characterization of property that among the residents of Jatobá, there was not a sense of property ownership or of being property owners (2005, 76). They suggested that the quilombolas might carry this sense of “*não propriedade*” (non-ownership) from their long-time position as a subaltern population historically denied access to land, particularly following the Land Law of 1850 (76). GeografAR argues that while the quilombolas did not “incorporate a sense of property,” they did maintain a strong idea of the “occupation of territory,” which became the basis for their social and cultural identification as a group (2005, 76).

As I will show in subsequent sections, conclusions from my research with the quilombolas of São Francisco do Paraguaçu respect the importance of the land and the cultural identity that comes from the work associated with this difficult yet abundant terrain. But my conversations with the GeografAR researchers and their ultimate report tend to personify land and space, describing them as central actors in the construction of the quilombola identity. While land is a part of the quilombola identity, it underappreciates the role of history and memory to over privilege land. Perhaps, this is a reflection of the different disciplines that brought all of us to São Francisco do Paraguaçu.

The first day I arrived in São Francisco do Paraguaçu, I had unknowingly interrupted a GeografAR workshop. It was focused on the idea of the social construction of space, which Eleide explained theoretically to the group at the very beginning. She said that everything the residents did, from planting, to fishing, to “*sambas de roda*” were constructive acts that created what they called “quilombo lands”. Eleide divided the participants into thematic groups: history, culture, production, and social conflicts. She gave each group a map, not of São Francisco de Paraguaçu but rather of the entire Iguape region, and asked them to draw in all of the important places of their community using their assigned theme. I sat in on the history group, assigned to the only elder in the workshop, Seu Osorio. I noticed that they were having a lot of trouble with the exercise. A few people complained that the map did not adequately represent their community, and therefore it was impossible to find their lands on it. “Just go on,” urged Eleide, “it was the only map I could find so lets try to work with it.” Seu Osorio was having a hard time figuring out where to place the important historical events he was reciting. The history group only managed to complete the task after one of the researchers sat down with them and pointed out what they should mark. After 30 minutes, each group presented their maps. They seemed agitated and short-tempered. The history and culture presentations passed quickly. Seu Osorio

presented for the history group. He took more time because he told the entire history (very clearly) of slavery in Brazil, explaining the arrival of Africans on the continent. Never specifically speaking about the quilombos of São Francisco, Osorio ended by saying that quilombos came from those slaves that fled and refused to work and that is why “we are all quilombos.” The history was clear, but the part about how the community came to be a quilombo was cut short. The production group quickly bled into the social conflicts group discussion. It seemed to me that what the participants really wanted to discuss were not maps or culture but rather the abuses and intimidations they were facing from private landowners. People started heckling a man, from the production group who was sharing his opinion on the quilombo struggle because he was diverting the presentation on production. Visibly trying to be polite, Eleide asked him to allow others to speak and then continue his speech after the workshop.

The workshop was about mapping memory and solidifying a consciousness of quilombo identity for the community. Eleide explained to the group that it was important that they mapped their culture because it created proof that their historical and daily lives as quilombolas were real and active. ‘Active’ was the key word, explained Eleide, because INCRA was trying to prove to the justice system that São Francisco was a quilombo that still maintained its traditional culture, and that needed a land title to continue to practice that culture. The workshop ended in a samba de roda and song that only had four words “ Só os Quilombolas sobreviveram” (Only the quilombolas survived). Eleide conducted several of these workshops on culture and space, each time working to create understanding in the quilombo that land and culture were connected and formed the basis of the quilombo identity. Although conceptually I thought the workshops were very interesting, it appeared that they did not necessarily work out the way Eleide planned. Rather than have a discussion on the production of land and identity, the quilombolas used the time to vent and voice their opposition of private landowners that were violating their civil rights.

After “crashing” Eleide’s workshop, I had several conversations with the GeografAR team. I am grateful to them for allowing me access to all of their research files on the quilombos of Bahia. My conversations with Eleide were key to understanding the importance of the cultural definition of land for the quilombo recognition process. The new ABA definition of the quilombo category focused on the ethnic identity of descendants, and the ILO convention emphasized the right to cultural difference illustrated through cultural practices. Thus, quilombo descendants needed to show that everything they did on the land was culturally significant, historically rooted, and directly connected to their ethnic identification with quilombos. Above everything else, the quilombo clause proposes the transition of land rights from one owner to another. In order to obtain those rights, quilombo descendants have to make stronger claims to the land than the private landowner, who may have inherited his or her land titles from generations of plantation ancestors. While some quilombos have actual land titles to support their claims, the quilombolas of São Francisco are trying to establish their rights based purely on land use and its cultural significance. The quilombo clause grants land rights to rural black communities under the stipulation that these communities are actually part of the nation’s cultural patrimony. While this depends in large part on the way these communities frame their everyday activities, it also depends on their ability to identify the significance of the land they use on a daily basis.

### The Treasures of the Mata Atlântica

*Crispim and Sumido took me into the Atlantic forest so I could get a feel for their work. We started out on the small, dirt road that leads to the farinha house and to all the quilombo roças. We walked for about forty-five minutes until the road became loose, white sand. The sand lasted for over half an hour and was extremely difficult to walk on with tennis shoes. The morning was cloudy and crisp. The day eventually grew hot and dry while we were in the forest but I never noticed. The forest had its own climates. Some places were dark, damp, and cool while others were dry and arid. As we reached the end of the road, which had become more like a trail, Crispim pointed out the various entrances they took to the forest. "This entrance we are using today is one of the closest points," he said pointing to his left. "We'll go in here because you will not be able to handle going in farther on your first visit. This is a good work area but most are much farther out." We walked into the forest for another forty-five minutes or more mostly going uphill. We were still on a make-shift trail for a short while, but as we walked on the forest grew thicker and thicker and the trail began to disappear and gave way to steep rocks, slippery slopes, and winding creeks.*

*When the forest grew thick to the point that the branches slapped me in the face and began to cut my arms, we stopped and Crispim made me put on the jacket he told me to bring. "From here on you will need the jacket because if not your arms will get hurt," he warned. When I pulled out the jacket, both Crispim and Sumido chuckled. "You brought my rain jacket! I meant for you to bring a smaller jacket!" "You left this one the couch next to the shoes. I thought you meant for me to bring this one! I thought it was too big but I was not sure so I brought it! Now what," I asked embarrassed at the whole situation. "It's OK," he said smiling. "Just tie the bottom part up around your waist with this piece of piaçava so that it does not make you too hot." It was a very comical situation, and I looked hilarious wearing a huge, yellow, plastic trench coat tied halfway around my waist with a makeshift belt.*

*We continued our walk, which maintained its rhythm of ups and downs. Sumido asked if my shoes had smooth soles. The ground was wet and slippery so regardless of how careful I was, I slipped and fell many times but I got used to it. Besides making sure I did not step on any snakes or other creatures, I had to watch out for sudden slopes, holes, and branches all along the ways. There were no more trails at this point.*

*As we walked, Crispim and Sumido cut piaçava. Crispim pointed out different types of trees and plants and explained what they were for. Crispim learned to identify and use medicinal plants from his father. He told me it was a gift that was passed down through the generations. His father learned from Crispim's grandfather and Crispim would also teach his own son. We saw trees used for making the berimbau, the instrument used in capoeira, for making furniture, work tools, plants for rheumatism, for strokes, common pains, etc.*

*The quilombolas do not cut down trees for furniture or other large industrial work. They primarily go into the forest for piaçava. Not only do quilombolas not have the tools to cut down and treat such massive trees but they also see themselves as protectors of the forest.*

*Rede Globo accused us of deforestation, but that is impossible. Why would we destroy the forest that we need to survive? Why would we cut down and kill that which puts food on*

*our tables. We do not deforest. We don't even have the means or machinery to be able to do what the fazendeiros and large corporations do to our mata (Crispim 2009).*

*When we finally reached a work spot, Crispim and Sumido disappeared into the forest. I struggled to find them and realized how deceptive the forest could be for someone who did not know it. When I finally found them, we started back through a different route to see some of the waterfalls in the forest. Crispim showed me a creek where they often stopped to rest and eat lunch on a regular workday. There were even some hidden sacks with empty bottles that men left out so that they could drink water when they arrived in the afternoon. The waterfall was distant and painfully difficult to access. We walked nearly on the margins of a steep hill that rose right above the creek. I had to hold on to the trees to keep from falling or sliding to the bottom of the hill. The walk was tough, to say the least, but it was worth it. The waterfall was tall and powerful. It was an amazing experience to stand before something that seemed like nothing less than a natural treasure that few people had access to. It was at that point that I understood why the quilombolas were fighting, and risking their lives, for their right to own the land.*

As we walked back, the day had grown hot and the sun beat down relentlessly on our tired bodies. Crispim and Sumido told me to imagine walking in those same conditions carrying pounds of *piçava* on my back. The men usually begin at four in the morning and begin to make their way back home around two or three in the afternoon, arriving home around four or six in the evening, depending on how far out they go. "This is how we survive," Sumido said proudly.

It is hard work but we never go hungry, and it is honest. If our stoves ever run out of gas, we can cut some firewood and still have fire to cook our food. When will I ever be able to do that in the city? I would not leave all of this for anything in the world. They say we deforest but it is a lie. We take care of the forest and we only take what we need to survive. Why would we kill that which feeds and clothes us? (Crispim 2009).

Sumido and Crispim told me once again how important the certificate of recognition they received from the Palmares Foundation was for the community. Before then, they said, people were thrown off their lands without impunity and men were even barred from going into the forest to collect *piçava*. Sumido remembered how they had to go into the forest quietly and work quietly so that they would not be heard by the landowner's *capachos* or henchmen. "If these men caught us working in the forest, they would stop us at gunpoint calling us thieves," Sumido recalled angrily. As we neared Sumido's plantation, the men showed me all of the lands that had been taken away from quilombolas by landowners and areas that had been living plantations and were now barren areas overgrown by weeds.

The trip into the forest was difficult and tested the limits of my body at every creek and slope, but it was important. Without it I would not have understood the magnitude of the land at stake in the quilombo conflict. The land the quilombolas were fighting for was not limited to their homes and plantations but included the entire region that surrounded their homes and streets. Because quilombolas largely survive from the forest, bay, and mangroves, moving them to any other location would be detrimental to their lifestyle, sense of community, and sense of self. While quilombolas cannot own the mangroves and Atlantic forest because these are national territories, it is understood that they need these lands to survive. Like many indigenous groups



and other *comunidades tradicionais* (traditional communities), hundreds of quilombos depend on the forest for survival. Not only do they extract *piaçava* and *dendê* for minor income, but they also depend on the medicinal plants, firewood, and fruits of the forest.

Having learned to identify medicinal properties in plants from his father, Crispim listed without hesitation some of the plants his family used regularly: *Banho de Folha de algodão brabo* (for rheumatism), *Erva doce* (for gas), *Boldo* (for stomach pains) *Banho de Aroeira* (to heal wounds and for menstrual pains), *Caroço de laranja torrado* (for diabetes), *Papa Nicolau* (to stimulate abortion or for liver problems), *Mutamba* (for hair loss) *Capim santo* and *Erva cidreira* (used for their calming properties), and *Araçá mirim* (for dysentery) (Crispim 2009).

In addition to the use of natural resources, the forest is also a spiritual part of the community. The quilombolas tell stories of beings that protect the forest. For instance, the *Caipora* is believed to be a creature (male or female) that protects the forest and animals. It is said that it can cause people to get lost in the forest if they see it. Therefore, when entering the forest, people are supposed to whistle so as not to be distracted and deceived by the *Caipora*. Quilombolas also take *fumo* (a type of tobacco twisted into a ring-shaped rope) and *charutos* (cigars) as offerings to appease the *Caipora*, as well as candles to light their way. When Crispim and Sumido took me into the *mata* they whistled as soon as we began to leave the trails. The first whistles startled me because they were responded by another quilombola practically made invisible by the thick brush. The story of the *Caipora*, also called *Curupira* and *vovô do mato*, has become a common myth told throughout Brazil, and is popularly believed to have originated as a Tupí Guaraní legend (Guimares 1968). Like all mythical stories, the *Caipora* story alters slightly depending on who tells it. Some describe the *Caipora* as an Indian woman covered in leaves, others as a short, Indian boy, and others as a little man with fire for hair and a green body. The quilombolas taught these stories so as to create and maintain respect for the forest.

The significance of the forest for quilombo descendants has been documented by the Palmares Foundation (Bennett 2008) and other government organizations in charge of observing environmental rights in the country. In my interviews with the Palmares Foundation, and similarly with SEPRMI, quilombo descendants were often described as the “protectors” or “keepers” of the forest. Their lives were connected directly to the development and preservation of these lands, so much so that the law came to include this relationship in its stipulations for granting land rights. INCRA’s normative 56 stipulates that the INCRA must identify and describe in detail the community’s relationship to the environment and how the environment is used productively and sustainably. When a report is completed, it must be sent to the Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis, IBAMA), among other agencies, to determine if the lands that the community is claiming are areas of environmental protection (APA). If they are -- for example an important mangrove in São Francisco was declared an APA -- then IBAMA will need to determine if the community is caring for the area or if it needs to be officially closed off to all extraction. Although sustainable living is required of quilombo descendants, it has also become a part of the rhetoric used to describe the labor and lives of these communities. Many quilombos in Bahia have organizations dedicated to environmental protection. The quilombolas of São Francisco strategically named their organization “*Amantes da Terra*” “Lovers of the Land.” Here, quilombolas maintain an artisan fishing association that ensures that the community

only practices sustainable fishing. Similarly, they have formed a group that cleans the mangroves every week.

Because mangroves are natural barriers and filters of the ocean and river waters that flow through the bay, they are often filled with litter from passing boats and urban garbage. Quilombolas also need the mangroves for their daily sustenance so they are very concerned with keeping them clean so that the pollution does not interfere with the survival of the species on which they depend. Throughout Brazil, hundreds of mangroves have become barren wastelands that are no longer rich in marine life and can no longer be harvested. During my visit to the São Francisco, I was able to accompany one of these cleaning expeditions. Some of the quilombola leaders called INCRA to show them their mangrove-cleaning project in hopes that they could get some funding to support their work and allow them to do much more than they were doing so far. In just a few hours of work, we collected five large bags of trash that included mostly large pieces of scrap metal, car tires, and even old shoes. Most of the garbage was obviously from large boats and urban factories. Because one of the requirements of the quilombo title is that the community protects and cares for the environment, INCRA was very attentive and documented everything the quilombolas collected. The area that they were cleaning that day was mangrove that was been declared an APA. Thus, the fact that it was no longer worked by marisqueiras also made it more susceptible to piles of litter. According to Crispim, the quilombolas took on the responsibility of cleaning the mangroves because the state had refused to do it, claiming that they did not have the resources to carry out such a large project. The state was responsible for collecting the community's trash, which was piled up in the town entrance each week. Sometimes it was collected on schedule but, according to Crispim, was rarely collected weekly as promised. The day in which I observed INCRA visiting the mangrove, there was a very large, putrid pile of garbage that looked like it had been there for weeks. Crispim pointed to the garbage saying that it was a common sight because the state rarely collected the trash when they were supposed to.

The requirement to live sustainably has helped strengthen the cultural connection between the quilombo identity and the land. In the case of São Francisco, it has also strengthened the quilombo's identification as a "community." Quilombo recognition not only made them the inheritors of a history of resistance. It also made them the protectors of precious lands and resources.

### *Living through the Manguezal*

Typically, while the men were working in the forest, women and children could be found working in the *manguezal* (a mangrove also called a *mangue*). Women that work in the mangroves are called *marisqueiras*. There are mangroves surrounding all of São Francisco do Paraguaçu and the Iguape region. Some areas have more mollusks during the rainy season, or winter, and some during the dry, or summer season. Everyday women left their homes, sometimes accompanied by their young children, and walked down the main street calling into the windows of the their friends and family to hurry along any women that have not yet come out. "Embora, Dona Maria! The siri won't wait for you to finish your coffee!"

While men would usually go into the forest in small groups of two, or even alone, and then spread out in the forest, women always went into the mangue in large groups of four or more, and then divide into pairs to cover more ground. *Marisqueiras* often also took their dogs to work. Dona Andira is Crispim's eighty year-old mother and a woman that collected marisco and fished for eighty years. During our interview, I commented on all of the stray dogs in the town. Dona Andira corrected me saying that they were not strays. "Each dog belongs to a marisqueiras. They are our best friends and trusty work companions," she said. Dona Andira explained that dogs helped them dig up *sururu*, small crustaceans that look like small, black oval oysters, and sometimes even caught crabs; however, they were most useful as companions, to keep a woman company when she separated from the rest of the group.

The ground in the mangroves was very soft and similar to quicksand. Each step could send a marisqueira anywhere from one to three feet deep into the ground if she was not careful. Marisqueira's told me that during the rainy season, they were accustomed to working up to their waists in the mud. Walking on tree trunks or small stumps could offer some firm ground, but these were not always the best places to walk because they were also covered with slippery mildew. Unlike the more pleasant morning walk to the mangue, the walk home was most arduous because women had to carry heavy buckets of mariscos on their head and walk through the unforgiving afternoon sun after a long day of hard work. One day of work, according to Marisa, produced about one to two kilos of marisco. When they were done they still had to cook the crab, then separate out the crabmeat. The crabmeat or *catado* sold for about seven or eight Reais (three or four dollars) in the city. It was a lot of work for very little, and according to Marisa, no one in the community survived on mariscagem alone anymore. Mariscagem put food on the table, and what could be spared was sold for some income.

In the mangue, marisqueiras typically worked bent over all day digging and reaching into deep holes to dig out crabs. Most women wore protective gloves, but not all women were comfortable working with gloves because they could not feel the crabs. Thus it was not uncommon for women to receive stinging crab bites on their hands and arms while they were working. Some crab bites were small and could be ignored, but others could be serious and even cause a woman to rush home from the pain. While some crabs, such as the large, dark blue *caranguejo*, live in deep holes, other crabs, such as the large, red crab or *aratu*, live high up in the mangrove trees. *Aratus* could be heard in the silent mangue running furiously from trunk to trunk. To catch these, marisqueiras used sticks to knock them down and then scrambled to catch them on the ground before they ran away.

On most occasions, marisqueiras worked anywhere from eight to ten hours in the mangue, depending on the time of day they began and the time of day the tide would begin to rise. Women needed to be well aware of the time of day and the time the tide rose so they did not get trapped in the mangrove. In a normal workday, women would walk out for miles into the middle of the bay or river without even noticing how far they had gone. It usually took an hour to walk back to the nearest mangue exit. When the tide begins to rise, it only takes minutes for the manguezal to disappear under water, leaving only some of the taller trees as markers of the mangue's presence. Marisqueiras were usually aware of the time they should make their way out of the mangue, but just in case someone was not paying attention, someone would whistle at the end of the day to call together all the women so they could leave together the way they arrived.

All of the women were usually counted at the end of a workday to make sure no one was left behind.

*The Time Dona Andira Spent the Night in the Mangue*

In 2007, the first time ever to happen in São Francisco, Dona Andira got lost in the mangue. Dona Andira worked for 79 years as a marisqueira. In her 80<sup>th</sup> year, she had a stroke that impaired her walking and led to her permanent retirement from the mangue, a forced retirement that threw her into a deep depression. Dona Andira went out to work one day with Marisa and some other women.

Like I said, when we go out we never stay together but we try to stay close; if we get lost, we whistle to find each other before going home. But Andira knows the manguezal better than anyone else in the community. That day she decided to go further out from the rest of the group to take advantage of another area (Marisa 2009).

It was a little after one o' clock and Dona Andira went out for miles thinking that the bay was going down at that time and would not rise until much later. After hours of working, she looked around and noticed that the bay was rising, and she was almost entirely surrounded by water that was rising very quickly. By that point she was so far out in the middle of the bay there was no way she would make it out of the manguezal, especially since she did not know how to swim. Dona Andira called out to her companion dog and hugged the dog tight. When the water was almost up to her chest, she scrambled and found a low branch that had not been covered by the water and that was still low enough for her to climb up. "The lord put that branch there for me," Dona Andira said laughing. "It was like it was waiting for me." She climbed up on the branch with her little dog and prayed that it would rain so she could drink some water because she was so thirsty.

When it started to sprinkle rain, I gave thanks for the rain and drank as much as I could. I did not know what to do, and I was scared to call out because I had heard that there was a man who raped elderly women, so instead I slept. I actually slept very well, and when I woke up I could hear the roosters. I also heard two men's voices approaching in a canoe. I called out for help. "Hey canoe, hey canoe," I yelled. They heard me and asked who I was. I said, "I'm lost. Are you going to São Francisco do Paraguaçu?" They said yes and told me to hold on because they were going to get me. They carried me into the canoe but we struggled to get the dog in. Can you believe she wanted to stay? Crazy dog! At first I hesitated to get in the canoe because it was so nice and clean and I was so dirty and covered in mud. I knew they were not really going to São Francisco, but they felt bad for me and wanted to take me home. They offered me bread, crackers and some coffee but I just wanted water! I was so thirsty! I drank two liters of water all by my self that day (Andira 2009).

All the while, Crispim and everyone in São Francisco were dreading the worst. They had been up all night looking for Dona Andira with no luck. The women that went with her to the mangue were startled when they heard she had not returned home because she knew the manguezal better than any of them. Many, including Marisa, thought she had drowned and were mourning their

loss. When Dona Andira got home she showered, had some breakfast, and went to sit by the window like she would do on any regular day. As people found out she had returned, one by one they cried and laughed of joy and disbelief to see her so calm like nothing had ever happened.

This story is included because today Dona Andira barely speaks, saying very little about the manguezal or her life as a marisquira. As I foolishly attempted to interview her, Marisa explained that Dona Andira was never the same after her stroke. “She does not like to talk about the life she had because it makes her very sad to remember now when she can hardly move from her chair.” Although I could not imagine an eighty-year-old woman in the rough mangue terrain, Marisa explained it to me through the expression of the mangue baby, I described earlier. She told me that the mangue was all Dona Andira ever knew; she was born there, and raised her entire family in the mangue. As Marisa and I spoke, Dona Andira sat quietly between us staring out into the street.

Marisa’s story quickly fused into a discussion of quilombolismo and land rights. She extended Dona Andira’s sadness to the threats being made by landowners and the prospect of losing their homes. The memory of Dona Andira’s loss in a mangue became a story the quilombolas told frequently to illustrate how deep the roots of the mangue were buried in their cultural and physical lives. Cole writes that “...social memory is produced through the dynamic interplay of agents...and particular contexts (Cole 2003). She argues that individual narratives or stories contribute to the production of collective memory; and, that “memories are best viewed as a complex outcome of the way people’s “moral projects” shape their selection, use and interpretation of particular events” (2003, 95). Dona Andira’s loss in the mangue was never described as carelessness due to her age or failing health; rather, it was seen as a representation of changing times in the community and as a symbol of everything they stood to lose in the quilombo process. The quilombo political process had thrown the entire community into a tumultuous existence, but seemed to be most difficult for the elders of the community. After Dona Andira, I met two other quilombo elders who also shared a narrative of silence. Their quiet faces reflected a desire to be left alone, as well as a sign of caution. Aruti writes about being faced with silence while doing research in Mocambo:

Para “os mais antigos”, silenciar sobre histórias e casos vividos ou ouvidos foi, e ainda é, mais que a expressão de uma desconfiança com os recém chegados: silenciar faz parte de um ethos incorporado...[reflete] um medo e um estado de permanente cuidado com as palavras que se refletem na sua forma e capacidade de recuperar, de forma mais extensa, e detalhada, histórias e personagens (Arruti 2005: 212).

[For the elder, staying silent about lived experiences or life stories is more than just an example of distrust for outsiders: silence is an incorporated ethos...[that reflects] a fear and a permanent state of caution with words, which have the capability of reviving people and histories.]

Spoken narratives are difficult enough to interpret, so I do not pretend to understand Dona Andira’s silence exactly as she experienced it. I can only reflect on the interpretations of others, and the knowledge that the community was undergoing a major change with the quilombo process. Dona Andira and other elders, Seu Osorio, Seu Altino, and Dona Maria, were recurrent

themes throughout my fieldwork; the need to speak to these quilombolas (or hear their heroic stories, in the case of Altino and Maria), was essential to understanding not the origin stories of the community as the INCRA anthropologist suggested in our conversations but rather the things that were most valuable and sacred to the community: land, dignity, and freedom.

If you free a caged bird he will fly, but he will not know how to feed himself and will return to the cage; he has lost the scent of the forest. It is like us, we have worked so long for a 'patrão' and that became our reality. In the past I cried, 'Oh my lord which way should I go?' Today we have the chance to be free but people are afraid of that (Seu Osorio 2009).

#### *Other forms of Labor in São Francisco do Paraguaçu*

Labor in São Francisco do Paraguaçu does not end with foresting and mariscagem. One of the changes that quilombolas hoped to see from the quilombo process was the creation of more jobs in the community. Quilombolas want support from the government so that they can sell more of their products to other cities and thus bring in an income that will help them develop their homes, plantations, and community activities.

Because of the time of the year that I did my field work in São Francisco, primarily during the winter season, I was not able to observe the production of *azeite de dendê* (palm oil) from the seeds of the palm trees. Dendê is an important staple for the community because it is used in several, if not all, of the local cuisine; for instance in *muquecas* (a type of stew cooked with dendê, fish (or other sea food) and spices), *catado* (crabmeat cooked in dendê and spices but with less stew), fried fish, and *caruru* (okra, spices, and seafood). Dendê is primarily made, by hand, in the summer. During the winter, the community switched to a larger production of manioc and farinha.

The cultivation of manioc root for the production of various foods, such as tapioca, *beijú*, and *farinha*, also provides an important staple food for the quilombolas of São Francisco. Farinha is a coarse flour made from manioc root, also known as *cassava* or *yucca* in other parts of Latin America and Africa. The farinha house is a small, open structure where the manioc is peeled, cut, and processed into flour and tapioca. Every day of the week primarily women, usually all from the same family, can be seen working at the farinha house. Just the process of peeling and cutting the manioc, divided up among five women, took all day depending on the amount of manioc. Because of the tremendous amount of labor it took, farinha was usually made once a week but sometimes it could be made every day depending on how many families needed it. One liter of farinha cost about 1.20RS, less than one dollar, in the community. In Cachoeira a liter could cost up to 7RS. Because manioc is one of the most important staple foods in the community's diet, and buying it is considered out of the question, it is cultivated by every quilombo family that has a plot of land.

I spent a great part of my fieldwork in the farinha house because it felt like a place where, in addition to work, women and neighbors gathered to converse and gossip about everything going on in the community, from quilombo affairs to conflicts with non-quilombolas to problems in their own households. Seeing the many painful positions women experienced while making

farinha, I asked if any of them had back pains. Almost unanimously they yelled out that everyone had a broken back in São Francisco.

When we are done making farinha, everything hurts, my back, my arms, my pingelo (my clitoris), my bum bum, everything! It feels like my back is split open when I am done! I go to the health post and the nurse won't even treat me anymore. The nurse says, 'ela gosta!' (she likes it!) So I don't even go anymore, and then she asks why I don't go. I have to work, I respond! My finger is burning just from holding this knife.

The people of São Francisco work seven days a week and what feels like twenty-four hours a day. When women are not making brooms from piaçava, working in the mangue, fishing, making farinha, or making dendê, they are at one of the two local water fountains collecting water for their homes or carrying loads of laundry on their head to wash at the fountain. For quilombolas, the work they do in the forest, mangroves, rivers, and plantations is not separate from their cultural life and identity. While capoeira, *samba de roda*, and *maculele* are also part of their cultural inheritance, quilombolas consider their day-to-day struggles of working non-stop to care for their families and community the defining characteristics of their identity. As we stood in the middle of Crispim's plantation, Seu Osorio pointed to the lands surrounding us and lamented:

The color of our skin is sorrow. The black person has suffered a lot. And they say there was no slavery here! That there are no quilombos here! That is a lie! There are quilombos all around here where slaves fled when they arrived. They fled to the Boquerião and Caonde, deep into these forests you see all around you. Those are our ancestors!

São Francisco is defined by its long history rooted in the sugar economy and slave trade that characterized the Recôncavo throughout the entire colonial period. The quilombolas of São Francisco have learned to connect the activities of their everyday lives to the subsistence and survival of the thousand of slaves, free blacks, and fugitive slaves that inhabited the region. The community's identification with the land has been built as much from their connection with the slaves who constructed the Convento de Santo Antonio and who were believed to have created quilombos in the surrounding forest, as from the INCRA requirement to demonstrate a sustainable and culturally significant relationship with the land. In the description of labor, land, and everyday life in São Francisco, we begin to see the details of how the characteristics of a rural black community come to be connected to the historical quilombo. Land use is a significant part of the quilombo recognition and rights acquisition process, but even more essential is the way in which the community defines and demonstrates its cultural relationship to the land.

## Chapter VI

### How Does a Rural Black Community Become a Legally Recognized Quilombo?

*[T]he Brazilians developed legal confusion into a strategy of rule with grea[t] brilliance (Holston 2008, 121).*

The 1988 constitution propelled Brazil into a new democratic phase in which everyone was considered equal under the law. All forms of discrimination, especially racism, were denounced. Article 68 of the constitution recognized the violence that slavery had done to an entire cohort of Brazilians and returned lands to their ancestors. However, article 68 did not define the criteria for deciding who would be considered the legitimate descendants of quilombos. It did not describe how land was to be taken away from powerful, landed elites and given to poor blacks. But perhaps, most importantly, article 68 did not provide any provisions for protecting the rights and safety of the individuals that stepped forward to claim quilombo rights.

The bureaucratic system that now defines the quilombo recognition process was established in 2003 by the then president of the nation, Luis Ignacio da Silva Lula. Rural black communities that identify as quilombo descendants must pass through a long, tangled bureaucratic process of authentication and approval before any rights are conferred. Two government organizations, the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) and the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), bear primary responsibility for quilombo authentication, and the process has itself become the primary hindrance to the very acquisition of rights it aims to facilitate.

In this chapter, I review the painfully detailed FCP and INCRA processes that communities must undergo to obtain rights. Because INCRA is the organization that distributes land titles, their procedures, outlined in N56, are described in greater detail. Readers will see how the INCRA process is complicated, drawn out, and often stalled by its own requirements and an inability to fulfill them. Further, we will see how the absence of adequate federal funding and support makes INCRA both unable to complete its own procedures and, as well, unable to defend quilombo communities against attacks by private landowners who often have better resources. Coming to understand the process led me to appreciate how, on the ground, quilombo recognition is overcomplicated by bureaucratic procedures that expose communities to violent retaliations and long-lasting land conflicts that take years of struggle to resolve.

#### *Step One: Cultural Recognition*

The first step to becoming a quilombo is obtaining a “certificate of recognition” from the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP). The FCP is in charge of legally assigning cultural, quilombo recognition to any community who petitions for it. Although decree 4.887 grants quilombo descendants the right to self identify, they must still submit a series of documents that describe their quilombo history and present identity. They must submit a written description of their historical past, a petition signed by the majority of the community agreeing to the new title, proof that they have a community association, and letters or stories from elders that support their claims. Because it is quite a bit of documentation, communities can get help from universities, NGOs, and Social Assistance Sectors (*Secretarias de Asistencia Social*) from the municipal



district. It is the responsibility of the FCP to make sure that these organizations do not coerce a community into identifying with the quilombo category.

The director of the FCP in Bahia was one of the most open bureaucrats I interviewed. She was willing to share information, documents, and case studies in order to help me understand how the process worked. During one of our interviews, Luciana Motta introduced me to two quilombo leaders that were in her office discussing their petition. They were from a community along the Paraguaçu River that had just been certified the previous year. Their petition had been submitted by the *Secretaria de Serviço/Assistência Social*. All of the documents were stamped by the municipal government but did not have any sign of quilombo involvement. Immediately, Luciana set the petition aside and got in touch with people from the community. She called them into her office to exchange information and make sure they understood what they were doing.

We see a lot of NGOs that give support to traditional communities. When they are in the field, they identify these communities, and then they contact the necessary organizations to say that they have a community that fits the characteristics of a quilombo. I personally prefer that the community act first to represent itself. After a certification is secured, we come up against a lot of political conflicts that are aggravated if the community does not fully understand the process.

For years, Palmares has had to respond to hundreds of the certifications it has distributed. Although people have the right to self identify, the conflict over land is a major issue. If the community is not able to demonstrate its understanding of quilombo history and identity, it will be penalized. Luciana explained that, as the first step in the process, the FCP preferred to see quilombolas at the head of their petitions. Thus, it is common that they ask for a written oral history (*relatório histórico*) of the community's origin as they remember it. The FCP also wants to know how many of the elders participated in producing the oral history.

We ask the quilombolas to tell us anything and everything they know about the history of their community. We do this in order to see if they can talk about and communicate their history, because if they cannot do it then nobody will be able to do it for them, and the public will punish them for it. We want to help and protect quilombolas, but we also seek their autonomy (Luciana Motta, Regional director FCP Bahia 2009).

It is interesting to see the importance of community understating and elders in the quilombo process. For the FCP and INCRA alike, elders are held as bearers of authentic truth. Their memories and experiences are a major part of creating the community's connection to the "past." While the search for elder experiences is a strategy for understanding how the land may have been used in years passed, it also contradicts ABA's effort to expand and modernize the quilombo category to focus on present experiences. Throughout the quilombo bureaucratic process, one finds ideological contradictions that include the tensions between an imagined past and a lived present. These contradictions are rooted in the unresolved and conflictive relationship between the extant memory of the "colonial quilombo" and ABA's new "ethnic quilombo."

The project analyst of the INCRA office in Bahia emphasized the lack of community knowledge on "quilombo history" during our interview. She claimed that it was the hardest and

most frustrating aspect of her job. She often found herself in communities that had certificates of recognition from the FCP but that did not know what the word quilombo meant.

They asked me to define it for them, but I cannot define it for them, they have to know for themselves. That is why they are asking for recognition. Under the law they have to self-identify. If I tell them a definition I can be accused of coercion. I was accused of coercion in São Francisco! Can you believe it! It is not true! I was naïve, and I explained to the residents what it meant to help them out! But now, I do not say anything anymore. If a resident does not know, I write: “não soube dizer” (he/she was unable to answer) (Amelia Quieros 2009).

A major part of the first step in recognition was understanding—making sure communities understood the quilombo identity and how it connected them to the land. Communities often obtain a certificate of recognition from the FCP without much questioning. As long as all the required paperwork is submitted, theoretically any community can obtain quilombo cultural recognition, even an urban neighborhood. However, before granting certification, the FCP attempts to ensure that people claiming quilombo ancestry understand the new identity and its social and cultural implications.

Once a quilombo is certified, it gets grouped into the category of *Povos e Comunidades tradicionais* (Traditional Peoples and Communities (PCT)). PCTs are defined in Decree 6.040 of the constitution as culturally differentiated groups that possess their own forms of social organization and occupy and use traditional territories and natural resources in order to maintain their social, cultural, religious, ancestral, and economic way of life<sup>17</sup>. The PCT label solidifies the newly recognized quilombo as a unified and differentiated *community*. New quilombos are moved to the top of lists for more immediate social services and attention, together with indigenous groups and other PCTs. No organization, whether federal, state or public, will consider a quilombo for special status in receiving aid unless it is first certified by the FCP. During interviews, the Ministry of Health, the Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality, and the Ministry of Education, all participants of the *Brasil Quilombola*<sup>18</sup> program, noted that because there are already so many certified communities that need help, it would be impossible to meet the needs of the hundreds that have no formal recognition as well. “It is an unfortunate distinction we have to make, but logistically we have no choice. We just do not have the resources to help everyone” (Ana Reis, Outreach Coordinator, Koinonia 2009). It does not matter that many of the “non-certified” communities that are excluded from benefits share identical socio-cultural, racial, and economic characteristics with certified quilombos. While I do not want to limit my analysis to a simple, utilitarian critique, in the case of quilombo recognition, it is important to question the work of “ethnicity” and the ways in which ethnic groups are politically bound to specific cultural traits that necessarily separate and differentiate them from society. Describing this issue of what I see as consequential exclusion, Hooker writes:

Multicultural citizenship reforms in Latin America privilege certain kinds of subjects and

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<sup>17</sup> Ministério de Desenvolvimento Social e Combate a Fome, Decree number 6.040, <http://www.mds.gov.br/>, accessed July 6, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (SEPPIR), “Programa Brasil Quilombo,” 2009.

certain modes of framing grievances that have potentially negative consequences. The need to assert an ethnic or culturally distinct group identity in order to successfully claim collective rights means that not only the majority of Afro-Latinos, but some indigenous groups as well, are unable to gain such rights. The problem is that as a result Afro-Latinos who are unable to assert an 'ethnic' identity lack a solid claim to collective rights even though they may also suffer from political exclusion and racial discrimination (2005, 306).

Despite the right to self-identify and the historical developments of black Brazilians even prior to abolition (Reis & Santos Gomes 1996), the ethnic boundaries built around the new quilombo category confine and reduce participating communities to a specific representation of blackness that is somehow "traditional". For the government, being a "traditional" quilombo community means demonstrating a connection to past ancestors, land practices, and, interestingly, past forms of suffering. "Tradition" is rooted in the public's historical memory of the colonial quilombo, particularly Palmares. Reis writes that there is a dominant social and academic image of the "quilombo" as an isolated group of fugitive slaves in the middle of a secluded forest living a traditional African life. "In fact, most [quilombos] were not like this at all...and they usually settled in areas close to small towns, plantations, *engenhos*, and even near important urban centers" (Reis 1996, 332). In other words, quilombos were never "isolated", and because they were constantly hunted by authorities, most did not have time to recreate entire "African" communities (Schwartz 1985). Thus quilombo descendants who live in the middle of the Amazon forest often seem more authentically "traditional" than those who live an hour outside of the capital because of the dominant belief that quilombos formed in hidden, remote areas.

Although quilombos are also rural *black* communities, the concept of "tradition" does not give primacy to race. While quilombo "tradition" comes out of the history of slavery, the "black" experience is redefined through the "African" experience. What is most important to understand from the FCP certification process, and the assignment of quilombos as "traditional communities," is that they are built on a set of ideological assumptions about what it means to be "ethnic," "authentic," "traditional," and "black" in a multicultural Brazilian society. Thus while quilombo descendants unify around everyday political and social injustices, the cultural recognition process has nothing to do with social, political, or racial discrimination.

I argue that the discrimination and violence that the decedents of quilombos are facing today emerges largely from the very title they have chosen to adopt and the political rhetoric now attached to it in the name of multiculturalism. By redefining the quilombo as an ethnic category and attaching quilombo policies to an ILO convention written for "indigenous" groups and "tribal peoples," defined as culturally autonomous, the state recreates the image of the quilombo as a primitive and isolated, tribe-like community. It is important to think critically about the adoption of the ILO convention and the ABA quilombo definition. These create an assumptive foundation for self-identification and the right to difference; more importantly, they determine the political process and requirements for quilombo authenticity.

*Step Two: The Long Road to Land Ownership*  
*with the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA)*

While communities can self-identify, neither self-identification nor FCP certification guarantees access to land rights promised by the constitution. In addition to a certificate of recognition, quilombo descendants must undergo a long and intensive period of field research with the Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). INCRA is in charge of demonstrating that the people of a petitioning community actually have historical claims to the land. For dozens of communities, including São Francisco, the road to becoming a rights-bearing quilombo often stops for several years with the INCRA investigation. It is also during this investigation that private landowners begin to retaliate against communities, intimidating them into rescinding their claims. Field research, anthropological and geographical investigations of the community and their knowledge and use of the land, is estimated by INCRA to take at least two years, with the actual time currently being five or more due to limited funding and resources.

As mentioned briefly in the Introduction, INCRA's work is detailed in the federally sanctioned *Normative 56* (N56). The normative was recently updated from Normative 49 on October 7, 2009. In this document, the federal government outlines the procedures for the INCRA process. These procedures are divided into a) identification, b) recognition, c) delimitation, d) demarcation, e) *desintrusão* (de-occupation), and f) titling and registration of lands occupied by the descendants of quilombo communities.

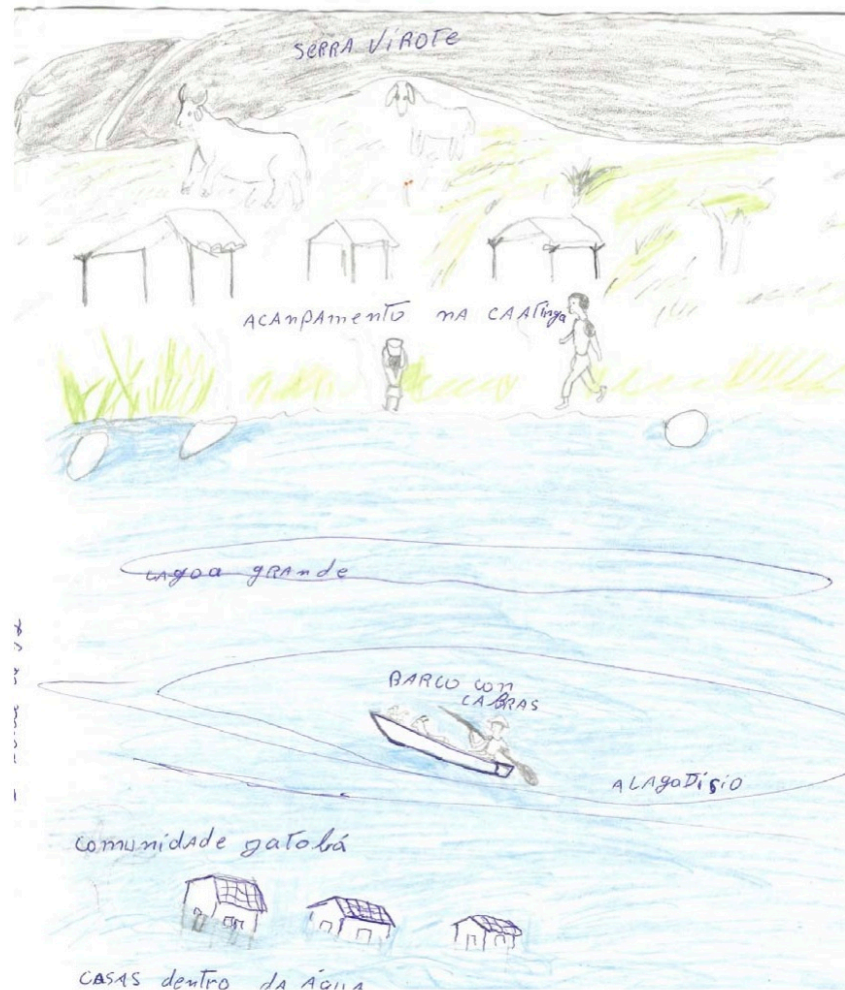
Identification and recognition are completed in a Technical Report of Identification and Delimitation (RTID). The RTID identifies in careful details the limits of quilombo lands as they are claimed by members of the community. The Regional Superintendence of INCRA creates an Interdisciplinary Technical Group, which includes an anthropologist, agronomist, analyst, and land surveyor, which is responsible for completing the research for the report. In addition to measuring and drawing out the limits of quilombo lands, the RTID is primarily a report on the demographics, history, work, economy, environment, and socio-cultural life of the quilombo. Because of the amount of work involved and the lack of appropriate funding for the research, the RTID can take several years to complete.

The INCRA process can be initiated by any interested party associated with a quilombo whether they are a community leader or representative of the community. The actual process will only begin after the community has presented information on the exact location of the territory in question, and after presenting proof of their certification from the FCP. When work begins depends on the number of cases already in the pipeline, but weight is given to a community's particular situation. If, for example, a community is contesting federal lands, indigenous lands, or private lands, it can take anywhere from one month to several years before INCRA begins the research process.

The INCRA anthropologist begins her fieldwork with a series of workshops aimed at helping the community (re)member and re-assemble stories about their ancestors. These workshops are an essential and systematic part of the land acquisition process that both government organizations and NGOs use. During some of these workshops, residents are asked to draw a map of their lands by marking significant geographical locations used for work, religious ceremonies, and cultural education, etc.. The image below illustrates a map drawn

during an INCRA workshop in Jatobá. These maps become an important part of the demarcation of lands claimed in the quilombo process. In addition to helping determine the physical limits of land claims, they also help establish land use and sacred or culturally significant areas. The map of Jatobá illustrates homes that are in a flood region, illustrating a geographical and development issue that the community needs help resolving.

Figura 2 Desenho da enchente, Comunidade Quilombola Jatobá, 1992



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It is often during these workshops that the community begins to mobilize and to learn how to disseminate the meaning of the quilombo throughout their town. Drawing maps is only one part of a series of workshops that may last months. Each workshop is organized around a different theme -- for example, history, quilombo definition, culture, land, and social issues, etc.. INCRA takes these workshops very seriously because they form the foundation for RTID process. Moreover, while the workshops attempt to solicit the local or emic definition of “quilombo”, they also ensure that the community comes to understand the definition of quilombo

<sup>19</sup> INCRA (2005), “Relatório Técnico de Identificação, Delimitação e Demarcação da Comunidade Quilombola JATOBÁ: Muquém do São Francisco- Bahia.”

that the government uses. Like the FCP, INCRA is also invested in making sure that communities know how to explain their new quilombo identity and history to outsiders, such as researchers and journalists, who may be working to disprove the authenticity of their claims. Once INCRA begins the tilting process in a community, it is their responsibility to protect them from landowner retaliation and violence. However, the researchers of INCRA complain that they are overworked and under-compensated. While they would like to protect the communities they represent, they complain, as we saw in Anita's story, that their hands are tied by the very bureaucracy that empowers them.

Everyone has rights in this process, the quilombolas, the landowners, the merchants, and the state, and all of these different entities have to be heard, respected, and compensated (Amelia 2009).

Quilombolas feel hope and relief when INCRA begins research in their community. They feel that because INCRA has arrived they are very close to being the legal owners of the lands they have worked for so many years. INCRA has to make it very clear that their arrival does not signify the end but rather the beginning of what will be a very long and difficult process. INCRA also uses the workshops to explain every aspect of the investigation, including the conflicts the community will face, the fact that there is no set number of years for completion, the rights of private landowners to contest, and the fact that quilombo titles are communal and cannot be divided or sold. Disagreements over the obligation to live communally and share land have led to violent divisions among residents and even between family members. Some communities have even desisted from the quilombo process after learning that their land would become communal.

Because there are an undetermined amount of years between a community's receipt of FCP certification and their consideration for land titles, recognized quilombos are left open to several forms of abuse and violence from landowners who feel betrayed and threatened by the community. This was the case with Dr. Iverio whose emotional response to the quilombo process was depression and isolation. Unlike most quilombolas, landowners are wealthy, and well-connected businessmen and women who know the law and its weaknesses.

Landowners have connections to the mayor; they know the mayor personally; they are the mayor! They are friendly with the local police and even have police officers that work for them; they have a lot of connections and that is why they can do whatever they want (Ana, Koinonia 2009)!

Once landowners learn that the communities living on their lands have been recognized as quilombos and are petitioning for land titles, they initiate a campaign of retaliation against the community even before INCRA visits the territory. The retaliation is so common it almost seems to take place in an organized and predictable manner. First they intimidate and expel residents involved in the quilombo process. Then they send out workers (*capachos*) or even police officers to destroy all of the small plantations of the quilombolas. Then the landowner works day and night to redo all of his fencing, and fences off as much land as he can, including land that was uncultivated and/or used by quilombolas. These fences make it "illegal," for quilombolas to go anywhere near these lands, and punishable by threats and abuse from hired police or henchmen.

In São Francisco, some of the landowners actually fenced one of the main mangroves in the community. Because mangroves are national coastal lands that belong to the nation state, the acts were illegal but never addressed by the justice system. The fence was an outrage in the community and quilombo leaders did everything in their power to denounce landowners for illegally fencing off public lands. While they were eventually able to take down the fence with help from INCRA, the CPP, and the FCP, it took the state more than a year to recognize the illegal act and rectify it. That the illegality of fencing off public lands was not reason enough have the fence removed immediately and to punish the landowner and, illustrates the impact of a justice system that is governed by the rights and desires of the wealthy. In fact, many of the acts of retribution and abuse that quilombos face from landowners are blatantly illegal but persist with impunity. Describing the paradox of justice and injustice in democratic Brazil, Holston notes:

Brazilian democracy has advanced significantly in the last two decades. ... Yet, precisely as democracy has taken root, new kinds of violence, injustice, corruption, and impunity have increased dramatically. This coincidence is the perverse paradox of Brazil's democratization (2008, 271).

Brazil's differentiated laws and select treatments for certain citizens as a form of governance were recognized early on by Gilberto Freyre:

...no student of Luso-American society can fail to recognize the fact that—as a consequence of the weakness rather than the virtue of slave-holders and landowners—what I have here called Brazilian feudalism was in reality a combination of aristocracy, democracy, and even anarchy. And this union of opposites would appear to be serving as the basis for the development in Brazil of a society that is democratic in its ethnic, social, and cultural composition and, at the same time aristocratic in its cult of superior individuals and superior families, and in the tolerance that it accords to differing personalities (Freyre 1945, xv).

While Holston's work focuses on the ways in which new "insurgent citizenships," can undo the "entrenched regime of inegalitarian citizenship," it also describes the pervasiveness of the roots of inequality, roots that penetrate deep into the justice system, especially the courts and police. Because of the violence and aggression that the quilombolas of São Francisco face from private landowners, they depend on the help of NGOs like the CPP and AATR to ensure that their complaints are not ignored; however, even these organization cannot protect the quilombolas twenty four hours a day. Many of the quilombo leaders continue to be threatened by the police and "unidentified" men that invade their homes and destroy their crops.

While the quilombo process of recognition and reparation can be imagined within this concept of "insurgent citizenship," I argue that in identifying themselves as quilombolas, rural blacks are being thrown head-first into a system of inegalitarian citizenship that still does not truly recognize the nation's long history of racial discrimination. Thus, quilombos are forced to fight with their lives for recognition within a system that cannot even protect their bodies from everyday police violence (Holston 2008, 272). Anticipating this type of state behavior, Hooker argues:

The fact that many of the same Latin American states that have recognized cultural diversity have also consistently withheld the resources that would enable the implementation of collective rights suggests the possibility that the focus on cultural recognition in current multicultural citizenship reforms might obviate questions of racial discrimination (2005, 309).

It is not my intention to disqualify the INCRA process as an illogical part of a corrupt justice system. It is impossible to speak of a nation that is not politically corrupt and entrenched in inequality. I do, however, want to show that conflict is exacerbated when the INCRA process begins. While land conflicts are initiated by private landowners, the length of time it takes INCRA to finish its research, its limited resources, and the unlimited time given to private landowners to contest all exacerbate the violence and conflict quilombo descendants face.

*Step Two Continued: The Never Ending RTID*

I naively asked the director of INCRA why it was so difficult to grant a land title during our first interview. His response focused on the financial aspect of transferring land rights, claiming that it was very expensive for the government because it had to financially compensate private landowners for the land it transferred to quilombo communities. There are some areas that are 20, 40, and even 50 thousands hectares, he explained. A small property of 400 hectares could cost the government about 500,000 RS (about 250,000 dollars). The director observed that that currently there was not one area of Bahia, in which quilombos were making land claims, that would cost less than 20 million Reais.

I know of a fazenda that will not be less than 12 million. That is the compensation that the government has to give a landowner in order to take back the land and give it to a quilombo. Okay, of course, it is taking away from one person, who may not even live near the land, to give it to a community of 50 plus families or 200 people. It is possible and necessary but it is also very expensive (Regional director of INCRA, 2009).

It can be several years before the INCRA process moves to land delimitation. Most of the time is spent doing field and archival research. If and when the RTID is finished, it has to be reviewed and approved by a special INCRA Regional Decision Committee. From this point, the road to publication can go in several directions. If the RTID is approved, it goes on to be published in the *Diário Oficial da União* (Official Daily Report of the Union, D.O.U). The *Diário Oficial* is one of the means through which the National Press is able to communicate and make public federal issues. If the RTID is not approved, it is because the research did not fulfill all of the requirements outlined in Normative 56, and therefore it must be corrected and re-published. After analyzing an RTID, the Regional Decision Committee can also decide that the area in question cannot be recognized as a quilombo. In this case, the committee would order that the case be filed away until INCRA has time to conduct more research and find new proof of the community's historical ties to the land. The community is notified if their case is filed away. They are also allowed to contest the decision by presenting their own new evidence.



If a quilombo RTID is published, it becomes open to contestation by any other entity with legal rights to the area. First, the final RTID is sent to the Institute of Historical and Artistic National Patrimony (IPHAN), the Brazilian Environmental and Renewable Resources Institute (IBAMA), the Secretariat of Union Patrimony (SPU), the National Foundation for Indigenous peoples (FUNAI), the Palmares Foundation, the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMbio), and others, in case the land in question overlaps with territories overseen by these organizations. If the land does overlap, then the organization involved has thirty days to make any demands or contestations. In addition to state and federal groups, private landowners and any other occupants of the land who are not included in the quilombo community are allowed three months from the date of publication to contest any part of the RTID they wish. If a private landowner contests, and most do, then the quilombo's case will either be resolved by the INCRA Regional Committee or, in case of further discord, will be sent to civil court or the *Advocacia Geral da União* (AUG). If the case goes to court, then it can remain paralyzed for several years until the court and INCRA can resolve all of the contestations. Most quilombos have more than one private landowner in the territory, and it is common for all landowners to file disputes against the RTID. If all contestations are resolved, INCRA usually has to revise the RTID and then publish it again, at which point all of the entities listed receive another three months to review and contest the new revisions. Just this process of publication and contestation alone can take several years.

The time it takes for INCRA to move past the RTID and on to the next steps of the land regularization process depends significantly on the number of private landowners in the territory, whether they live in the same state, and how influential they are in the judicial sector. Some landowners live out of state and even out of the country. Absentee landowners are not uncommon in Bahia and are the most difficult to deal with. According to the INCRA analyst, absentee landowners are difficult because of the time and bureaucracy involved in settling their disputes from across state or national borders.

More common, however, are highly influential landowners who have close or intimate relationships with judges and local police. Some judges are also private landowners involved in land disputes, and some simply have strong opinions against the quilombo process itself. All of these situations determine how long a court will take to settle a dispute or whether it will settle it at all. Take for example this statement by the INCRA regional analyst, Amelia:

We have cases where we have not even been able to close the RTID, and it has been more than a year, just because of so many disputes! All of this happens because when we go into the field there are difficulties that we have to deal with daily. We go into a territory knowing that it is being claimed by quilombolas, but then we discover that the land is also the ranch of a federal deputy, or the ranch of a businessman that does not want to give it up. And they both have rights. It is not just quilombolas that have rights. We have to see all sides of the coin. We can sit here and say that because 'fulano' (John Doe) is in quilombo territory he is wrong and should be moved out. Well it is not that simple.

Amelia explained that often private landowners were caught by surprise when INCRA contacted them to say they are on quilombo lands. Having to convince these people to permit surveys of

their property and to accept that they may lose territory requires both time and careful effort. In the case of absentee landowners, INCRA is required to send the landowner a document announcing the initiation of the quilombo process before they can enter the territory. If the landowner lived in Rio Grande do Sul, the farthest state south of Bahia, and accepted the process, it would be an extended process. But the situation would be much worse if the landowner lived in Amazonas and refused to let INCRA onto his property. If a private landowner denies INCRA access to his property, INCA must go to court to get official permission and communicate that to the landowner.

And of course, none of these processes happen from one day to the next. It is the public sector, after all, and everything takes very long. It is not just that the public sector is slow, but there are legal time spans, procedures, and every organ has its own bureaucracy that we have to go through. Someone cannot come here and ask me to open a case and expect me to just do it right at that moment. It is not like that. I have to begin a protocol that has to go from the secretary to the superintendent to my boss who will analyze the case and then send it back to me. That alone can take weeks (Amelia 2009).

While some of the challenges that INCRA faces are due to conflict and pressure from private landowners, many of their problems come from bureaucratic inefficiencies and contradictions. Thus, INCRA can open an investigation in a community and promise to help them obtain land granted by the constitution, but they cannot say when it will actually happen or even guarantee that it will happen. This was made very clear in interviews with both INCRA and SEPRMI staff who both said that when they first visit a community, they make sure the community understands that they are entering a long and uncertain process that will require patience and struggle.

I asked Amelia if INCRA took the quilombo's side in case of a conflict or if they had to remain neutral. She responded that when conflicts take place, by law, INCRA has to protect the quilombo community, but the government does not offer many resources to actually protect the community effectively. If a community is being threatened with expulsion, INCRA has an *interdito prohibitorio* that can help at least keep the community on the land. However, the juridical resources that INCRA has are extremely limited.

If a landowner submits a *reintegração de posse* (or reintegration of possession) then it's all over for the quilombo because the judge obeys the private land title. It does not matter if the quilombola has a house and crops and was born there. We can respond and try to revert the situation. That is all I do here, try to revert these situations, but it is not easy. I would say there exists a *sisma* here: it is the government against itself.

The right to land is sacred in the constitution, but how far can this sacredness to extend? Corruptness is endemic, and public archives are not exempt.. Someone may have a legitimate right to register ten thousand hectares of land and pays for ten thousand, but, in fact, the registration is for fifteen thousand hectares because the landowner has a friend in the archives. But how do we prove this corruption? Sometimes we are able to because we have an analyst that actually goes to the field and looks at all the documents. She sees that on X day a landowner had two thousand hectares, and now he has twenty. Where did those 18 come from? How did he pay? Who allowed it?

My interviews with Amelia were some of the most informative because she had a very personal and candid perspective on the quilombo issue. Unlike other bureaucrats, Amelia spoke from experience rather than script, and thus offered better insight into the legal limitations of the INCRA process.

The type of land grabbing that Amelia described is something that has taken place in Brazil since the colonial period. Prior to the Law of *Sesmarias* that I described earlier, land could be owned through *posse*, a form of squatting that helped particularly poor blacks claim some land. The Land Law of 1850 changed the system of *sesmarias* and was meant to regularize the largely uncontrolled land situation. All it did, however, was criminalize small landowners, *posseiros*, and give more legal power to rich landowners (French 2009; Holston 2008). Holston describes how 19<sup>th</sup> century landed elites sent their sons to the University of Coimbra in Portugal to study law so that they could return as “judges, legislators, politicians, administrators, and heads of state” and “enact laws to further their interests... (2008, 121). He argues that elites have manipulated and complicated the legal system to their advantage for centuries. Thus, not only did the inability of blacks to own land during the colonial period leave them in an inferior economic relationship to landowning whites, it also meant that many of their descendants grew up (legally) landless. Quilombo descendants do not consider themselves “landless” because they believe that they are the rightful owners of the lands they inhabit and work. Amelia’s description of the illegal land practices she witnesses working in INCRA illustrates how land is still controlled by the wealthy who retain the ability to manipulate a system they helped create. While quilombolas are aware of elite land grabbing, they depend on the INCRA analyst to research the land titles of all private landowners and reveal any illegalities. They also depend on NGOs to teach them the law so that they too can use the system in their favor and fully defend their own rights.

For most quilombo descendants, the land process remains stalled in the RTID for years without moving forward. This is the case of São Francisco do Paraguaçu which has been trying to finalize the RTID for over five years. During my interviews with the director of the regional INCRA office in Bahia, I was told that there was little to no funding for hiring trained anthropologists to conduct the fieldwork required by N56. Most INCRA regional offices only have one or two professionals in each field to carry out research for an entire state. For example, in 2009, the Bahian office only had one anthropologist, two agronomists, and two analysts. This one anthropologist was technically in charge of writing an almost 200 page report for every quilombo seeking land rights in Bahia. Faced with dozens of communities seeking land rights, and only one full-time anthropologist, INCRA depended on temporary contract workers, usually recent graduates from various departments of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) willing to give two or three years of service to research two communities a piece. While I was in Bahia, there were nine contract researchers working for the INCRA office. Although none of them had finished their assigned communities, their contracts ended at the end of the year with no prospect for renewal. Beginning in 2009, INCRA was no longer allowed to sub-contract researchers from universities or independent researchers.

To make matter worse, INCRA’s anthropologist decided in 2009 to leave her position for an undetermined amount of time, leaving the Bahian office without one of the most important professionals in the entire quilombo process. All of the full-time employees of INCRA, like any

federal office, have to be hired through the normal hiring procedures of the nation-state. In Brazil, federal employees are hired through national contests. This means that in order to work in a federal job, people have to wait for the government to open and announce a new position. The last contest for a position at INCRA was over four years ago when Anita Souza was hired. In 2009, the regional directors of all the INCRA quilombo offices were informed that the new contest for anthropologists that was promised for 2010 was cancelled without any provision for when it would be rescheduled. Deeply entrenched in the quilombo process, the quilombolas of São Francisco were left hanging without an anthropologist in the middle of their petition and struggle. The lack of resources that INCRA faces not only jeopardizes the future livelihood of the community but, more importantly, puts the lives of an entire community at risk.



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### Chapter VII

#### **(Re)membering the Quilombo: Waiting for Rights in São Francisco do Paraguaçu**

*Quilombo communities that today fight to stay on their lands are no longer only those that fled from slavery. Today they represent diverse origins and forms of organization (Koinonia “Cartilha de Direitos” 2007).*

*Now, I will say one thing, we were born and raised on this territory and we are quilombolas! We are! We are! E de boca cheia! Tchau!  
(Sumido, Quilombola, São Francisco do Paraguaçu 2009)*

São Francisco presents an interesting research case because the community is divided between those who identify as quilombolas and those who refuse the title based on differences over land use and ethnic identity. When I first visited the quilombo of São Francisco, I was welcomed by blaring white signs pasted on the walls of dozens of homes that declared: “We are Not Quilombolas,” and others that responded, “I know what it is: that is why I am a quilombola.” Ever since those who chose to identify as quilombos and seek legal recognition began the process, the quilombolas of São Francisco have experienced violence within their community, police threats, the destruction of their crops and homes, intimidation, and daily attacks. The contradicting signs pasted throughout São Francisco were evidence of the confusion created by a

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<sup>20</sup> This photo was taken on the day the quilombo community was going to receive the director of the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR), who was flying in from Brasília. Photo by Elizabeth Farfan-Santos.

quilombo recognition process that did not match the lived reality of rural, black communities.

This chapter describes the way in which the quilombo recognition process began in São Francisco. Because I am especially interested in analyzing how people express their memories of becoming a quilombo, I tell most of this story through the narratives of the quilombolas. To understand the impact of the quilombo process in the community, I think it is essential to understand how the community interprets and integrates legal and academic definitions of “quilombo” into their own rhetoric and life experiences. Moreover, through these narratives, we hear about the many forms of repression that the quilombo community is facing and how these repressions get connected to their origin story as slave descendants.

### *Memories, Stories, and Denunciations*

During my first meeting with the quilombolas of São Francisco, I asked a room of about twenty five people to tell me how the quilombo process began in their community, how they heard about “quilombos,” what the process was like in the beginning, and what things were like before they obtained the quilombo certificate. We sat in a crowded circle, in the corner of the new community meetinghouse. The meetinghouse was a bare, red brick building, little more than four walls with two window cutouts and a grey cement floor. The house was still under construction after the community’s first meetinghouse was destroyed by unidentified men. I found people eager to answer my questions and explain their side of the story.

We were at a community meeting being held in a town just a few miles away from here, still in the Iguape region, and they were discussing how they could get land rights because their ancestors lived and worked on the same lands. They were talking about foresting *piçava*, fishing, making *azeite de dendê*, teaching *capoeira*, and *maculelê*, and I thought, that sounds like us! We do all of those things too, and we have also been living and working on our lands for generations. We are also a quilombo (Crispim 2009)!

Before the quilombo process began we were discriminated against and treated unjustly. We could not use the land to cultivate our own foods. We had to pay to build anything on the land, and if we did not pay it would be destroyed (Seu Osorio 2009).

I first heard about the quilombo from a book I have had for many years. The book talked about the quilombos that existed back during slavery. That is how I heard about it. It is just that not a lot of people around here ever took any of that very seriously (Crispim 2009).

Sensing that there were different origin stories for the quilombo process in São Francisco, I probed to hear more about how the land acquisition process began.

We always knew about our culture and could explain the traditions of our ancestors; it is just that we never connected our culture to the word quilombo. We never knew to connect our lives and experiences to that word. For us it was a new word. But since there were classes being held in Salaminas, in the district of Maragogipe, we learned about the “quilombos.” The Secretariat of Racial Equality visited the town many times and explained

how the quilombos were blacks that fled from their captors and recreated their African culture in freedom and resistance. He said they were people who subsisted from agriculture and fishing and who fought against discrimination in order to survive. And that is how we discovered that this here (pointing to the space around her) is called a quilombo. We just did not know how to put all the parts together. That is when we asked for our certificate of recognition from the Fundação Palmares. We went there and said that our community is a quilombo, and we want our certification, and we want to fight together (*juntos e juntas*) for our rights. We held several meetings in the community to teach as many people as we could what it meant to be a quilombo. At first there were few people who wanted to participate and then it grew. We explained that all of our cultural traditions, dances, *capoiera*, our labor in the fields, river, and mangroves, all of that has the name of “quilombo.” We told people that our resistance as black Brazilians and our fight to survive is what it meant to be quilombolas (Roseni 2009).

Roseni’s story is significant because it illustrates several common connections that communities needed to make before seeking land rights under the quilombo clause. As described in the previous chapter, the first and most important step in the quilombo process is *understanding*. The community needs to understand three things: the definition of quilombo used by the government, their own connection to this quilombo, and the details of this connection (for instance, land use, cultural and labor practices, and ancestral memory). This understanding can happen in different ways. In many cases, community interest can be sparked by other communities involved in the quilombo process. This is taking place much more aggressively as more communities in Bahia are granted quilombo cultural recognition.

In most cases, however, the connection between a community’s everyday activities and the quilombo category needed to be made clear by a bureaucratic authority, whether from a government agency like INCRA or the FCP or from an NGO. Agreeing with Roseni’s recollection of the story, Crispim added:

Yes, we learned in Caonde and Salaminas, which are two fishing communities just a few miles away. We noticed that they have *engenhos* and are surrounded by the sugar cane where their enslaved ancestors once worked. If we have three *engenhos* here and are also surrounded by sugar cane where our ancestors also worked, why wouldn’t we also be quilombolas? We are in between Caonde and Salaminas. When the slave ship came through this area to drop off slaves and collect cargo, they would stop here on the shores of São Francisco do Paraguaçu before going to Cachoeira. It was during those stops that slaves fled into the quilombos of Boqueirão, Engenho Velho, and Caibongo. If all of these communities that surround us are quilombos, why wouldn’t we also be a quilombo? Today we have the knowledge to declare that we are a quilombo (Crispim 2009)!

The ways in which the quilombolas of São Francisco learned about the quilombo process were similar to other communities I visited and interviewed throughout Bahia. In 2003, when Lula restructured the quilombo process, NGOs and state organizations became more active in spreading the word to rural black communities about their rights to land. In May 2010, the Palmares Foundation published a bulletin announcing that 1,342 communities had been awarded a certificate of recognition. In just nine months, that number increased to 1,408 communities

(Fundação Cultural Palmares 2010). While the increase in number of quilombo communities is due in part to outreach work from NGOs and state organizations, much of this growth was caused by a snowball effect of example. The more communities that obtained recognition and entered the struggle for land and better living conditions, the more other communities became empowered to enter the process. Outreach from activists and community leaders only helped fuel the growth in quilombos by giving communities the tools and support they needed to initiate the process.

Crispim's recollection at the meeting introduced a stronger focus on the community's slave ancestry. Crispim reminds us that São Francisco is as much a part of the history of the Recôncavo as any other city in the region. He argues that sugar mills were erected in the town and ancestors were forced to work in those mills. Crispim reasserts the community's origin story as the descendants of fugitive slaves from the colonial period. Furthermore, he brings up a more interesting, and perhaps more controversial point. If all the communities surrounding São Francisco are quilombos, then why shouldn't they also be a quilombo? Here Crispim pinpoints the primary problem that paralyzes the quilombo clause in Brazil: the problem of who is and is not a quilombo and according to what parameters. In fact, Crispim's statement could be made even broader. With its deep history of slavery and resistance, why shouldn't all of the Recôncavo, and Bahia, be a quilombo?

Roseni and Crispim's responses indicate that interest in quilombo identity gained almost immediate support among a handful of people in São Francisco. These people were able to convince a larger group to support the cause and initiate the process. Although they learned about the quilombo clause from the SEPPIR director who visited Salaminas, the quilombolas of São Francisco were self-motivated to begin the process. This self-motivation, stimulated by a strong connection to the quilombo identity, has been essential to maintaining the community's commitment to the process throughout years of struggle.

Crispim went on with his version of the story by describing the details of the community's mobilization to become a quilombo.

I only remember a little bit about how the quilombo process here began because we have been in this struggle for more years. We spent a long time having meetings, and more meetings, and still more meetings. Then we began to mobilize. We spent more than eight months just organizing meetings. We held meetings all over the community. And when we felt that everything was just about ready, we contacted the Palmares Foundation and asked for the certificate. We already had dozens of signatures declaring agreement with the recognition process. Our coordinators, Anselmo, Dona Maria, and Seu Altino, were the ones who went to the FCP to request the certificate. Dona Maria and Seu Altino passed away last year because of pressure from the police that they could not withstand. The doctors say they died of heart attacks, but we know that they really died of broken hearts.

It did not take very long for us to obtain our certificate from the FCP, and that is when our problems began. That is when people started to mobilize against us, when the



Jornal Nacional and Globo came into our community and put our own people against us by handing out *cesta básicas* and making threats. Carlos Redondo, Lúcio Cachoeira, and even a famous politician named Marcos Medrano began to spread rumors that we were all frauds. How can something that was given by the Fundação Cultural Palmares be fraudulent?

INCRA has been here for about three years. They did all of the fieldwork. They called on laborers and landowners to go out together to see the fieldwork as it was conducted. We would go out to the forest to map the territory and do anthropological research about the community. INCRA held meetings in the main square asking people if they were quilombolas and whether they wanted to register their names as quilombolas or not. They explained to us what it meant and what made us quilombolas or not. And even after all of that, the landowners sued INCRA saying that they were forcing people to identify as quilombolas!

These meetings were public. They were held out there in the square for everyone to see and hear! The problem is that a lot of people who work for the landowners were actually calling the landowners to ask for permission to register. (Here Crispim listed dozens of people, and others helped him remember names, that called to ask the landowners for permission to identify as quilombolas). They said "Doctor should I register as a quilombola?" and the landowner said, "Yes, you can. Do it." The young lady from INCRA set up a table for people to sign the petition, and everyone signed. Dr. Iverio told them to register and they obeyed. And then he turned around and said they were forced! Coerced! With that accusation the court, suspended our political process for over a year. Now we are attempting to reinitiate our process with INCRA (Crispim 2009).

Crispim's story coincides with some of the things Amelia, the INCRA analyst, told me about her experience in São Francisco, particularly how she was accused of coercion for telling people what "quilombo" meant. Here we also see that conflict began immediately following the quilombo's certification from the FCP. Crispim, and all of the quilombolas, angrily blame a handful of private landowners in the area for maliciously stalling their progress in obtaining rights. In fact, the meeting grew heated after Crispim's story as he reminded everyone of the abuses they had experienced. My recorder no longer remained lazily on a chair in the middle of the circle. It was picked up and used as a microphone and passed around to everyone that wanted to speak. As men and women alike shouted into the recorder, declaring that they were not afraid to speak or to denounce publicly the people who were intimidating them and trying to throw them out of their homes, I began to understand many of my confusions about the quilombo process. I saw in the enraged and fed-up faces of those who spoke, and in the quiet, though deliberate nods of those who did not, that becoming a quilombo was not so much about claiming a new ethnic identity. It was about obtaining visibility from the government in order to obtain rights as equal citizens of the nation. I understood the strong connection these people felt to their slave ancestry and their rage at the present history of suffering at the hands of wealthy, white landowners.

As the meeting began to wind down, a middle school teacher named Maria, asked for the opportunity to read something for the group. Recognizing the importance of what she was about

to say, one of the male leaders picked up the recorder and walked over to where she was sitting. Holding the recorder close to her mouth, he gave her a nod as though to say go ahead, now you can speak to the world. A small but strong woman, Maria, unlike everyone else, had not grown up in São Francisco but in the nearby town of Maragogipe. She moved to São Francisco when she was in her twenties to teach middle school. After living there for a couple of years, she fell in love with the community and decided to settle there and start a family. She had now lived in the community for more than twenty years. As Maria began to address the people of the meeting, she explained that what she was reading was an historical pamphlet telling the history of the Santo Antônio monastery in São Francisco do Paraguaçu that supported the history of the quilombo.

What I have here in this pamphlet is the history of the Convento of São Francisco do Paraguaçu (Maria 2009).

Yes, that is important, good, people called out.

Here it says that the Convento of Santo Antonio was the first to be established in Brazil after independence from the custody of Portugal through the decree of independence signed on April 12th of 1647 by the father João de Napolis, General Minister of the Franciscan order, signed on April 18th of that year by the Papa Inocência X. ... The monastery of Santo Antônio do Paraguaçu was founded in 1649 after independence at the request of the residents of the Freguesia do Iguape, being that the lands were donated by Father Pedro Garcia to the custody of Frey João Batista... During those years the monks lived in a small chapel constructed by them in the Pontal that has now disappeared. This is the history of our monastery, but the most important part is the following. It says here that many years passed of continuous labor where under the orientation of Frey Daniel de São Francisco; slave labor (people around the room nod), lent by the senhores de engenho (owners of sugar mills) removed rocks and labored wood, made the 'gamasa,' and laying down rocks and bricks, built this monument (Maria 2009).

The proof is there! The Convento is there for anyone to see (Crispim 2009).

This pamphlet here is more than twenty years old; and it says that the monastery was constructed with slave labor donated by the senhores de engenho (Maria 2009).

Hold on to it, don't let it go! (Seu Osorio 2009)

This here has everything. It was distributed in the school, but it was thrown out, and I have had it for a long time. I want to photocopy it because with time it will get ruined. I will not lend this to anyone! If someone needs proof, I will take the time to make a copy myself because I think this is the only copy in São Francisco (Maria 2009).

Yes, make a copy of that. Take care of it, someone yells.

And they want to say that there is no quilombo here. This is proof. It is all written right here (Maria 2009)!

These documents that seem to offer proof of personal recollection offer great hope to the quilombolas. Charles Briggs notes that “stories are just as real germs...” (2003) and that the importance of narratives is their role in creating social reality. Many of the residents of petitioning quilombos do not know how the bureaucratic system works, but they understand that documents are official and they are proof. For the quilombolas of São Francisco, it did not matter who wrote or published the pamphlet. What mattered was that it was a document that told the history of slavery in their town. It was a document that for them proved, because the monastery is still standing, that their ancestors were slaves and that because of that, they were a quilombo. This pamphlet became more valuable to the community than even their own voice. They had been accused of fraud and discredited on national television, without defense from the justice system. The pamphlet was a material authority that put written history on their side and supported their struggle.

Describing the invisibility in which many rural black communities live, Genny Ayres, the Coordinator of Quilombo Policies at SEPRONI, told me that the quilombos she worked in did not have any information about their history documented in public records. For these communities, a quilombo certification meant visibility in the eyes of the federal and state government. It meant that their social needs might be recognized and resolved so that they could live as comfortably and fully as the citizens of a wealthy, modern nation should. But with this newfound visibility came turmoil and resentment. Quilombo descendants entered the recognition process mobilized by the knowledge of their civil rights. Over time, they were fueled by the backlash of those who wanted to take away those rights.

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*“Justice of the Land”: Violence, Fear, and Anger in São Francisco do Paraguaçu*

2005 marked a new way of life for the people of São Francisco. The certificate of recognition from the FCP spiraled the community into internal conflict, landowners against quilombolas and “non-quilombolas” against quilombolas. If the certificate brought them the attention they needed from NGOs dedicated to social justice and state ministries of health, education, and racial equality, it also subjected them to various forms of violence. Quilombolas accuse local landowners of retaliation and of working with public servants such as the police to intimidate them into dropping their claims to the land.

In 2006 the worst-case scenario happened. One of the landowner families disputing land rights with the quilombolas submitted a petition for the “re-integration of possession,” supported by a property title from 1904, to the court of Cachoeira. Any landowner who has his or her rights to a piece of land disputed has the right to a re-integration of possession or *re-integração de posse*. If conceded by the court, this petition forces the disputing party, in this case the quilombolas, to stop their investigation and leave the property. The court of Cachoeira approved the landowner’s petition and sent the military police to remove the quilombolas from their lands.

It was these police harassments described by Sumido that took a toll on the hearts and nerves of Seu Altino and Dona Maria. Before the police were able to remove every quilombo family, the Palmares Foundation and the Federal Public Ministry spoke out in defense of the quilombolas. They argued that because quilombo rights were written in federal law and were not

part of state law or the state constitution, state courts would not be competent in judging such rights, and thus the case should be sent to a federal court. With a change in judge, the quilombolas and their supporters believed that the court would reverse the state's decision and respect the quilombo rights outlined in the federal constitution. Unfortunately, the federal court maintained the state's decision without a proper investigation or a hearing from the quilombola defense.

The decision was a major blow to the community and only affirmed their belief that the justice system did not include them and that justice was only for the wealthy. During our second community meeting, I asked the quilombolas to discuss how they felt about the progress of the their land process. Brought to tears by frustration, Nildo asked for the floor.

Is it that the justice system will never hear our side? Will we always be the ones justicados (judged)? We do not want conflict; we do not! But it is just so much injustice that sometimes we feel the urge to do something stupid because the justice system never considers our side! We are indignant with this! There are never summons for [the landowners]! Why is it that there are never any complaints on them? We are the only ones who get summoned all the time! What kind of justice is this! If the law is for one, it is for all! We want equality for everyone! So if you have money and make a complaint on us, then we get our summons right away! But since we are poor, we are just honest workers and when we go to make a complaint we just get ignored! What kind of country is this? Lula says that this is a country of equality for all. I do not think that is right because justice still does not pay attention to the side of the less wealthy worker. I personally do not believe in the justice of the land. I only believe in God's justice because man's justice cannot be trusted. I do not believe in it (Nildo 2009).

Since the court's decision, the quilombolas have been fighting and protesting to stay on their lands. Joined by the AATR and the Pastoral Commission of Fishermen in Bahia (CPP) the quilombolas have protested in Brasilia and at the local INCRA office. The community is currently waiting for their RTID to be re-written and re-processed. The fact that the INCRA anthropologist has left for an undetermined time span, and INCRA has no notion of when the government will fund them to hire a new anthropologist, São Francisco's case may remain unresolved for several more years. It is not possible to know who on each side speaks only truth and who engages in deception to serve one's ends. What we do know is that the quilombos who worked the land to sustain themselves only found their right to do so questioned and removed when they tried to initiate the option for community land ownership offered to them by the state.

What is important to take away from São Francisco's case is that it represents a constant back and forth between the community's ability to legitimize their ethnic identity and the social and legal acceptance of that identity. Although the conflict is about land ownership, the subtext is about origin, race, and power. As the Brazilian state has democratized and even moved toward the promotion of multiculturalist policies, important structural issues have remained the same, particularly the hierarchical and patron-client relationships of landownership. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fernandes tried to call attention to the unequal social and economic integration of blacks into society. He wrote that blacks were being assimilated culturally but still marginalized politically and economically.

...[E]very decisive phase of differentiation and progress has occurred between relatively prolonged phases of commitment to the past and even selective resistance to urgent sociocultural innovations (1969, 131).

Although Fernandes was speaking of the economic changes taking place in the 1920s and 30s, his analysis seemed to be a warning about the continuation of economic development without social development. Most interesting for an anthropologist is that greater democratization and development, such as the *Agua Para Todos*, *Fome Zero*, and *Pontos de Cultura* programs, seem to be received with overall social acceptance as they contribute to the economic and cultural growth of the state. Programs that highlight racial stratification and injustice, such as the quilombo clause and affirmative action quotas for blacks in public universities, are resisted and violently opposed especially by the ruling classes. Fernandes argues that “the capacity for change” in Brazil has more to do with a person or group’s position in the economic and power structure than with the “content or organization” of their “cultural horizon” (1969). This is paralleled in the United States where women and minorities, for example, have managed to create strong unions and systems of support for themselves for over three decades and yet still face lower wages and less advancement than white males. Fernandes claims that serious and direct attention must be paid to the racial discrimination that blacks suffered before and after abolition if their position in the power structure will ever be reverted.

The quilombolas of São Francisco have come to understand the power struggle in which they are involved. Ever since Anita was indicted, their two strongest leaders died of “heart attacks” (or broken hearts), and the court stalled their process, they understood that their fight was no longer about proving their ethnic identity but rather about fighting against racial, political, and socio-economic injustice.

Once they learned what we were doing, the landowners began to mobilize and organize meetings. They divided the community in half putting one side against the other: those who were loyal workers and afraid to lose their jobs and homes against those who were determined to follow the quilombo cause. They held so many meetings people, ‘Are you all by chance slaves? Because if you are saying you are a quilombo then that means you are saying you are a slave!’ So here we are trying to go through the process of teaching people what it means to be a quilombola, and they start to say to the people that to be quilombola is to be a slave. So if you are not a slave then you are not a quilombola! So people started to question us and say, well, if being a quilombola means we are slaves then that is not right because we are not slaves. So that doubt began to stir in the community's mind.

You know that when these landowners come to these small towns they like to “baptize” a bunch of people in the community by giving them other names like, “menino” (boy) and “afiliado” (relative). Because of that people grow close to the landowner and begin to develop a certain respect for him, for their new “padrinho” (god father). So what happens is that the landowner begins to employ several people from one family to work on his lands and when these people pass away their sons and daughters work for the landowner, and so on and so on. And so people feel they cannot be against that

landowner for whom my father works and my grandfather worked. I cannot risk getting my father fired from his job because he supports our whole family. INCRA is not going to give us the land soon and then how would we live! It is better that I mind my own business. I hope that the quilombolas win but I better just mind my own life.

Then another says, oh but that is my godfather, I cannot be against my godfather! Then there is the capacho, that is what we call him, a "capacho." He is the one that goes out at night and puts up signs on all the houses that say, "we are not quilombolas". I'm sure you have seen them. Even when we take them down, he puts them back up so that when outsiders come they will take pictures of them and think that there is no quilombo here" (Roseni 2009).

It took courage and trust for these men and women to speak as they did. But it took rage at injustice as well. The 'familial' connection between private landowners and their workers as well as the figure of the "capacho" reflect the colonial relationships in which rural black communities continue to live. More specifically, these relationships illustrate the *policing* control that wealthy landowners have over *their* workers. In her description of the growing privatization of security in Brazil, Teresa Caldeira argues that as the police increasingly act outside the law and lose credibility among the population, "an increasing number of residents... [opt] for types of private security and even private justice [through either vigilantism or extralegal police actions] that are mostly unregulated and often explicitly illegal" (Caldeira 2000, 3). Although Caldeira's work is focused on São Paulo, a southern Brazilian state with a very different social structure from Bahia (See Telles 2006), the same issues that drive citizens to violently protect their rights can be seen throughout the Bahian population, particularly between private landowners and the communities that depend on their lands. While I was in the field I was surprised and shocked by the violence and intimidation that quilombolas faced not only at the hands of wealthy landowners but also of the justice system. The countless illegal acts, such as fencing the mangroves, allowing loose cattle to graze in quilombo plots, and scaring quilombolas away from working in the forest, that were carried out for years without impunity, left quilombolas disillusioned with the justice system and moved them to defend their own rights. Calderia notes that "these violations are tolerated by a population that often considers some citizenship rights unimportant or even reprehensible" (2000, 3). This idea is significant because it fits my observations that not only does most of society still not understand the new quilombo definition and process, but it also does not believe that rural black communities deserve differentiated rights based on an ethnic difference that seems to be more convenient than authentic. This was the basis of the *Jornal Nacional* story which fed to the social misunderstanding of the "quilombo" identity and the image of quilombo descendants as *frauds* and *land thieves*.

For hundreds of years wealthy, white, elites have controlled the ownership of land in Brazil. Changing that relationship will take greater commitment, "resources, technology, and administrative capacities" from the federal government (Fernandes 1969, 132). Efforts to fix the problems associated with the quilombo process have resulted in a focus on strengthening the cultural and ethnic representation of communities rather than on strengthening juridical support and resources for quilombo policies.



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<sup>21</sup> Illustration of the path to land acquisition for quilombos posted by the Comissão Pro-Índo de São Paulo, <http://www.cpispp.org.br/>, accessed June 25, 2011.

*Chapter VIII*  
**Navigating the Politics of Recognition:  
Non-Governmental Organizations as Bridges for the Acquisition of Rights**

*Not just? I don't understand. I don't know the context of these words. I'm totally in favor of [the quilombo article], or else I wouldn't even be here. I wouldn't be here doing this work that I do. Of course I defend it. I believe in it and I think it's fair... Anyway, I'm saying this because of the constitutional conditions (Mario, INCRA Bahia, 2009).*

With all of the confusion and conflict involved in the quilombo process, Brazilian NGOs are dedicated to helping quilombo descendants through the procedures involved in recognition and rights acquisition by teaching them to use the quilombo clause to their advantage. I researched and interviewed several NGOs working in Bahia and São Francisco, particularly the Pastoral Commission of Fishermen in Bahia (CPP)<sup>22</sup>, the Association of Lawyers for Rural Workers (AATR)<sup>23</sup>, and Koinonia's *Observatório Quilombola*.<sup>24</sup> While each of these organizations has a different focus -- legal representation for the AATR, employment and workers rights for the CPP, and civic and cultural empowerment for Koinonia -- they all see the quilombo article as an opportunity to empower rural black communities.

However, NGO work is much more than just philanthropic. In this chapter, I argue that NGOs are a central part of molding a community into a quilombo, of (re)membering and re-creating the community's historical past well as their present and future. Amelia best described their role when she stressed that the NGO "representing the community" has to do its job and "teach the community properly before submitting a petition... There are already so many people against this process, it doesn't help if [the quilombolas] don't know what they're talking about. It can be used against them."

With all of the uncertainty surrounding the contemporary use of the "quilombo" category, I argue that NGOs do much more than just empower communities. In fact, they help the quilombo article function on a practical, every-day level. It became clear throughout my work that the bureaucratic system of quilombo identification and legalization functions through the

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<sup>22</sup> The *Comissão Pastoral dos Pescadores* supports the work and rights of fisherman and women. They help communities organize themselves in order to improve their own economic conditions, promote environmental sustainability, and obtain social services.

<sup>23</sup> The *Associação de Advogados de Trabalhadores Rurais* is a group of community lawyers that represent rural workers in land disputes with private landowners and the state. The AATR mostly works to promote awareness and knowledge about legal processes and constitutional rights for rural communities. They hold workshops throughout the state of Bahia encouraging communities to demand their land rights.

<sup>24</sup> Among other programs focused on racial and gender equality, Koinonia's Quilombo Observatory is both a "watch-dog" program and a series of civic empowerment workshops for quilombos. Currently, the Observatory is working in more than fifty quilombos throughout Rio de Janeiro and Bahia to teach the residents about the bureaucratic steps to becoming a quilombo: learning their quilombo history, how to obtain their certification and land title, and how to teach others about quilombo culture.



joint effort of government organizations and NGOs. Because of their close working relationship, I treat all of these organizations as part of the same quilombo bureaucratic system.

While government organizations, such as the FCP, INCRA, and SEPRMI for example, are more cautious of criticizing the contradictions of the quilombo clause, they are aware of the disconnect between the rhetoric of legal documents and the lived realities of black communities. However, rather than question the ideological construction of the “quilombo” concept, government organizations depend on NGOs to teach and foster the concept among communities. In this chapter, I focus on the goals and procedures of the NGO *Koinonia* in order to illustrate how quilombo descendants are taught to navigate the politics of cultural recognition and land acquisition. Here, I illustrate how NGOs are essential to a community’s understanding of the “quilombo” concept as well as to their cultural development as a quilombo.

*Empowering and Shaping Culture: Koinonia’s Observatorio Quilombola”*

Koinonia’s Observatorio Quilombola holds a series of workshops in rural black communities that focus on teaching the new definition of the quilombo. On their website, they reference article 68 of the constitution in their emphasis on promoting the new expanded definition of “quilombo”:

A partir do texto do artigo 68 da Constituição Federal de 1988 transcrito acima, o termo quilombo assumiu um novo significado, não mais atrelado ao conceito histórico de grupos formados por escravos fugidos. Hoje, o termo é usado para designar a situação dos segmentos negros em diferentes regiões e contextos no Brasil, fazendo referência a terras que resultaram da compra por negros libertos; da posse pacífica por ex-escravos de terras abandonadas pelos proprietários em épocas de crise econômica; da ocupação e administração das terras doadas aos santos padroeiros ou de terras entregues ou adquiridas por antigos escravos organizados em quilombos. Nesse contexto, os quilombos foram apenas um dos eventos que contribuíram para a constituição das "terras de uso comum", categoria mais ampla e sociologicamente mais relevante para descrever as comunidades que fazem uso do artigo constitucional (Koinonia, Observatorio Quilombola<sup>25</sup>).

[Following article 68 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, transcribed above, the term quilombo has assumed a new meaning, and is no longer bound by the historical definition of groups of fugitive slaves. Today the term is used to designate the situation of blacks in different regions and contexts of Brazil, making reference to lands that were purchased by *libertos* [freedmen], to the peaceful occupation by ex-slaves of lands that were abandoned during times of economic crisis, to the occupation of lands donated to patron saints of Brazil, and/or lands acquired by past slaves organized as quilombos. In this context, the quilombos are only one of the events that contributed to the creation of the term “common use lands.” A more ample and sociologically relevant category used to describe the communities that make use of the constitutional article.]

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.koinonia.org.br/oq/quilombo.asp> , accessed December 17, 2010.

In addition to emphasizing the broadness and inclusiveness of the new quilombo definition, Koinonia also refers to the term, “common use lands.” “Common use lands” is the collective or communal appropriation of natural resources, forms of life considered beyond the Brazilian agricultural structure, in service of the national project to turn land and other natural resources into individual commercial properties symbolized by the Land Law of 1850 (Almeida 2006). In other words, according to Koinonia, because enslaved and free blacks, particularly quilombos, contributed to the productivity, and thus commercial development, of lands in Brazil, they have equal rights to the ownership of those lands under the goals of the Land Law of 1850, which proscribes agricultural productivity as a condition of ownership.

Work and productivity were the leading issues that Koinonia and other NGOs focused on to empower rural black communities and to give them an understanding of their legal connection to their lands. For Koinonia, there was a necessary connection that needed to be made between the laborers of the land and the land itself. At the same time, they needed to slowly dislodge the power relationship between the laborers and private landowners. Part of Koinonia’s work was to help the quilombo community understand that they did not owe their allegiance to the landowners, but rather that they too could make claims to the land based on their years of uncompensated labor. As was illustrated by Roseni’s frustration with the patron-client relationships that made many people in the community fearful of standing up to a landowner, NGOs understood that there was a power structure in these rural towns that had deep roots in colonial hierarchies. Getting communities to see themselves as right-bearing citizens of the nation was the primary project that directed all of Koinonia initiatives.

In their *Handbook of Rights for Black Territories*, a pamphlet used and distributed in community workshops, Koinonia begins with the same distinction between the colonial quilombo and the present day quilombo. In the first section titled: “Os Quilombos da História e os Quilombos do Presente,” they reaffirm the important difference between what was defined as a quilombo during the colonial period and what is recognized by academics and the government as a quilombo today. Using the example of Palmares, Koinonia warns communities that colonial quilombos were identified and labeled by the police. Any group of blacks that seemed to threaten or disobey the white colonial order was labeled as quilombos, and this included *candomblé terreiros*, *capoeira* groups, or even just blacks convened to “converse, share food, or practice religious activities” (Koinonia, *Cartilha de Direitos* 2007). By this same logic, argues Koinonia, some communities were only excluded from the quilombo label because they were hidden from the gaze of the police in the dense Brazilian forests.

Assim, quando falamos em termos históricos, é possível identificar e documentar quilombos de tantos tipos que não é possível chegar a uma definição única. Da mesma forma, as comunidades quilombolas contemporâneas apresentam as mais diversas origens e características e, portanto, é absurdo pensar que o conceito deve ficar aterlado aquela definição clássica de grupos descendentes de escravos fugidos (*Cartilha de Direitos* 2007, 8).

[Thus if we speak in historical terms, it is possible to identify and document various types of quilombos, and impossible to establish one single definition. In the same way, contemporary quilombo communities present diverse origins and characteristics, and thus

it absurd to think that the concept should remain bound to that classic definition of the descendants of fugitive slaves.]

In this pamphlet, Koinonia works to clarify to communities and their opponents that the “quilombo” was never a single type of community but rather an *idea* or even a way of being and living. For the colonial police, a “quilombo” was any action or activity that threatened the social order. For blacks, “quilombo” came to mean resistance and life outside of oppression. Thus Koinonia writes and teaches communities that they can be quilombos in any way they choose to define the term because history will not refute them and because the law gives them that right.

NGOs emphasize to communities that the definition of quilombo has changed and that they should not feel that in order to identify as the descendants of quilombos they have to imagine themselves as ex-slaves. This ideological transition from slave ancestry to an ancestry of resistance and cultural survival is an essential part of making the “quilombo” identity acceptable to rural black communities. Koinonia is very smart to emphasize the fact that the colonial use of “quilombo” was oppressive and thus does not need to be maintained by contemporary communities. “You are more than just the descendants of slaves” is Koinonia’s motto. According to Koinonia, even under the most repressive situations, such as enslavement, blacks contributed to the economic and cultural development of the modern nation. Thus, the quilombo clause is a form of reparation for black Brazilians.

The rest of the pamphlet is dedicated to explaining (and outlining verbatim) decree 4.887 and ILO Convention 169, which is described as though it were a law that has to be obeyed or else “can be denounced to international authorities” (*Cartilha de Direitos* 2007, 14). These documents are outlined to inform communities on how they are legally defined, what they need to do to obtain their rights, and what they should expect out the recognition process.

The most important part of the pamphlet is the *anexos* or the annexed sections. These sections go step-by-step through how to complete the documents required by the Palmares Foundations and INCRA in order to be certified and begin the land titling process. But before beginning to explain the process, the pamphlet warns the community to make sure the majority of their residents understand what it means to be a quilombo in order to avoid being questioned and accused of lying by opponents. Finally, the pamphlet cautions the community that the quilombo process will be long and arduous and certification does not mean, “all of their land troubles will be solved” (*Cartilha de Direitos* 2007, 22). The director of the Observatório Quilombola explained to me that it was important to properly educate communities, not just on their rights but more importantly about the new meaning of the “quilombo”, so that they were prepared to handle attacks from outsiders and opponents who disagree with the law. Thus as communities are assured that they have the right to self-identify, and therefore self-define, they are simultaneously cautioned to properly learn and understand the “quilombo” concept or risk negation.

*“Quilombolas Sim!”: Being Black and Quilombola in Bahia*

Supported in part by several international organizations<sup>26</sup>, Koinonia’s work was based in Rio de Janeiro, but recognizing the hundreds of quilombos that needed help in the Northeast, expanded their work to Bahia. The predominantly black state of Bahia required a different approach by the NGO. There they had to deal with the unique situation of quilombo identification and differentiation in a state that was already represented as racially and culturally “black”. Thus, their workshops focused on discussing blackness and the place of the quilombo identity in a black state.

One of Koinonia’s workshops dealt with teaching communities that their land, culture, and quilombo traditions could be legally recognized as Brazilian cultural patrimony. This workshop was especially important in Bahia. Article 216 of the Brazilian constitution states that national patrimony includes those material and immaterial parts of culture that are the “portadores de referência ‘a identidade, ‘a ação, ‘a memória dos diferentes grupos formadores da sociedade Brasileira ” (*Cartilha de Direitos* 2007, 13) (the references for the identity, actions, and memory of the different groups that make up Brazilian society). Here then, it is easy to see the connection that Koinonia came to make between the Bahian quilombo and the cultural patrimony of the state and the nation. According to the organization, the Bahian quilombo needed to emphasize itself as the keeper of “black,” (in this case, Afro-Brazilian) culture and history. It was essential that the quilombolas of São Francisco, for example, connected themselves to the construction of the Convento de Santo Antonio and the *engenhos* of the region because these were material patrimony they shared. Moreover, like these buildings, now in ruins, they too were the symbols of colonial black life and thus maintained the memory of an important part of the nation’s past.

It is important to point out that the ideas that NGOs like Koinonia worked with were often complicated by the same contradictions that complicated ABA’s anthropological ideas. For example, at the same time that Koinonia was working to distance the new quilombo category from the colonial definition and “slave” identity, they were also working to connect rural black communities to their colonial origin as the “keepers” or “symbols” of “authentic” or “traditional” Afro-Brazilian culture. While this connection was politically necessary in order to differentiate quilombo descendants from the massive “black” and “Afro-Brazilian” population in Bahia (as well as to fit quilombos into the parameters of the ILO convention), it was often detrimental to the quality of life of these communities. Having to prove ethnic authenticity and a historical connection to the land, as described earlier, were difficult enough for quilombo descendants. The identification of quilombo descendants as cultural patrimony was not an easy task in a society where everyone claimed some right to African culture, particularly the very aspects of that culture that quilombo descendants used to prove their authenticity, namely *capoeira*, *samba de roda*, and *candomblé*.

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<sup>26</sup> Koinonia’s website indicates that it is supported by Christian Aid, the Ford Foundation, Church World Service, Norwegian Church Aid, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund, among other international organizations.

### Empowerment and Equals Rights

Koinonia's workshops are different from INCRA's in that they are more lecture-based. The Koinonia model, shared by other NGOs, assumes that if quilombos learn properly and logically to understand the way the legal process functions, then they will be more likely to succeed in obtaining land rights. Furthermore, they will obtain authenticity (or believability) as the descendants of quilombos. While NGOs empower many communities, they also perpetuate the idea that if quilombolas do the work and prepare themselves properly they can solve their own land problems. Failure to obtain recognition or excessive conflict in a community often gets attributed to a community's ignorance of their "quilombo ancestry." In fact, São Francisco's case came up frequently in my interviews with Koinonia as an example of a community that has been plagued by conflict because of its public demonstration of limited knowledge

Povinelli argues that liberal multiculturalism's focus on an impossible 'traditional' and 'authentic' indigenous subject can lead local indigenous people to speculate that "the failure of the claim was the result of their failure to have and hold onto their traditional culture after 120 years of brutal colonization" (Povinelli 2002, 7-8). This erroneous idea that quilombo descendants are in control of their own destiny when it comes to obtaining land rights, however, extends beyond NGO rhetoric and workshop models. As illustrated in the above sections, INCRA anthropologists also follow this ideological model in their effort to properly prepare quilombolas for their *fight* for recognition. Government organizations (in interviews) admit that quilombolas have to fight to obtain real rights. Furthermore, they expect NGOs to do the majority of the work of *concientization*<sup>27</sup> and preparation.

### "You Got to Fight for Your Rights"

I was invited to the II State Conference on Politics for the Promotion of Racial Justice (CONEPIR) that was held in Salvador in 2009. Quilombolas from all over Brazil were invited to a session led by the Pastoral Commission for Fisherman and Women (CPP). The director of the INCRA office in Bahia, Luiz Eduardo Barreto, was also invited to answer questions and hear complaints from the quilombolas. When the director was finished speaking about the many bureaucratic challenges including the shortage of federal funding and lack of employees that inhibit INCRA's work, he bravely asked the room of quilombo leaders to "keep fighting." In a tone that called on the spirit of quilombolismo and the black Civil Rights movement all in one, the director told quilombolas to march, organize sit-ins, and "give [their] lives to the movement". Astonished by his call to action, I was unsure if anyone else in the room felt the irony of the INCRA director's words. One female quilombola from the Island of Maré, the first quilombo I researched in 2004, stood up and angrily asked for the microphone. "Why should we have to give our lives, and why do we have to fight!" She asked frustrated by the suggestion.

The reason we have all come here is because we are trying to go through the system to obtain what is rightfully ours. Your job is to fight for us; to get us what the constitution says belongs to us. We come here to hear solutions from you; to get answers about our

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<sup>27</sup> A term attributed to the work of Paulo Freire for his theories of critical pedagogy and liberation theology. Freire believed that knowledge should be produced from the bottom up, and that people could reach a higher level of critical understanding about their own lives and social problems, "concientização". See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 1968.

RTIDs and you tell us that you have no money! You tell us to fight because the system is broken! (Graciella, CONEPIR 2009).

Graciella went on for several minutes as the others in the room nodded in agreement. I was so relieved that she had challenged the INCRA director. Having spent months in São Francisco, I knew how significant it was that there were so many quilombolas present that day in Salvador. Some people in the room had traveled over five hours by bus and boat to be there. They were all there to get answers and wanted to hear that there were legal solutions to the conflicts taking place in their communities.

Several communities were facing landowner violence. The Island of Maré was in desperate need of a title so they could improve living conditions on parts of the island. Quilombolas from the mining region of Seabra were fighting with landowners who refused to follow the law and keep their cattle corralled. The cattle, in turn, were destroying their crops. Graciella's comments spotlighted the problem of quilombolismo in Brazil. On the one hand, the "quilombola" is a new category of black identity that was resuscitated by Black Movement activists and that is attempting to mobilize rural black communities around their racial history and their right to land. On the other hand, it is a political process fragmented by a weakly supported bureaucracy. Still, and as I described in Chapter VII, quilombo descendants have learned that even though their land rights are guaranteed by the constitution it does not mean that the government will simply hand them those rights. Take for example the mission statement of the still small but growing National Coordination for the Articulation of Rural Black Quilombo Communities (CONAQ) in Bahia.

Unidos pela força da identidade étnica, os quilombolas construíram e defendem um território que vive sob constante ameaça de invasão. Realidade que revela como o racismo age no país. Impede que negros tenham o direito à propriedade, mesmo sendo eles os donos legítimos das terras herdadas dos seus antepassados: negros que lutaram contra a escravidão e formaram territórios livres (CONAQ<sup>28</sup>).

[United by the force of ethnic identity, the quilombolas have constructed and defend a territory that is under the constant threat of invasion. This illustrates the reality of how racism works in this country. It prevents blacks from having property even when they are the legitimate owners of lands they inherited by their ancestors: blacks that fought against slavery and formed free territories.]

Unlike Koinonia, CONAQ emphasizes fugitive slave ancestors as a way of making cultural and political claims to the land. CONAQ's statement in many ways reiterates and moves beyond the ideological problems of race and ethnicity by combining them in their explanation of identity and discrimination. Thus, quilombolas are united by ethnicity in order to protect their territories which are under constant threat. The threat is racial discrimination which permeates the social and political structures of the nation in order to prevent blacks from owning land. Simply put, quilombolas know that the accusations of fraud, questions of authenticity, landowner threats, and weakly supported quilombo process are all part of one social and political problem: racism.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.conaq.org.br/>, accessed July 1, 2011.

As NGOs prepare quilombolas, and as quilombolas begin to make demands using the words of the constitution, Normative 56 and ILO Convention 169, they are met by an unprepared government whose only response is a call to fight. I do not critique NGO efforts in order to discredit their work but rather as a way to invite a more critical discussion on the social process of quilombo identity construction and the extant problem of proving authenticity before the law. As Graciella demonstrated, quilombolas want to work through the system because they believe that the system has finally recognized their plight and included their needs. NGOs, the Palmares Cultural Foundation, and INCRA espouse the romantic image of quilombolismo painted by Abdias do Nascimento (the quilombola as warrior) as they work to teach communities the parameters of the quilombo clause. But how does a community defend itself against well-connected, private landowners, hired police, and malicious reporters if INCRA does not have the resources to help them? Thus, with the help of NGOs, quilombolas work hard to imagine themselves ideologically as an *ethnic* group characterized by their heroic and hard-working ancestors while fighting against a system that still alienates them based on the color of their skin.

The quilombo clause fits within the framework of the multiculturalist state by differentiating blackness as ethnicity. It essentializes blackness by reducing it to a romantic image of African tradition and slave resistance and in doing so rallies black communities to civic action. Using the case of São Francisco, I have illustrated the ways in which the lives of an entire community are shaken by the quilombo process, the pain and frustration that inevitably emerge when the benefits of becoming a quilombo never materialize, and the hope that drives quilombolas to “give their lives” to the process.

In 2008, Seu Altino, a beloved quilombola leader, passed away melancholically sprawled out over his crops. I was told the story of Seu Altino and his partner, Dona Maria, by the quilombo leader Sumido a nickname meaning “one who has disappeared.”

My name is Sumido and I am not afraid to speak out! We do not want any conflict with landowners. All the violence and conflict is on their part. We have already lost three *companheiros* who died because their hearts could not handle all the violence of those thirteen landowners. In fact, one died in my arms. He was on his way to his plot, and I was in the field, when I heard him call out: ‘My Jesus!’ He did not look so well, his heart seemed heavy and his face was very somber. I did not think much of it but all of a sudden he put down his bucket. I asked, friend do you need help? He said, ‘I think a bit,’ and then called out again, ‘My Jesus!’ And with that he fell to the ground face first and scraped up his face and everything. I ran to him to pick him up. But by the time I looked to see if he still had health, he was gone. He took his last breath in my arms... His body was so filled with passion about everything that had been done to him and his family. The police had been banging at his door that day, yelling out, “Where is Seu Altino” as if the man were some kind of criminal! But he was not a criminal, no! The man was a *negão* (a big black man) who raised fifteen children and never even suffered from a headache. But he just could not handle the pressure, and that is what happened. And besides the fact that the man had been working in the fields for 42 years, they tried to say that he only worked for 2 years! And with that they worked everyday to slander him until he could not take it and his heart broke. The same thing happened to his wife, Dona Maria das Dores. Even to this day this woman, who is no longer living, is being summoned to appear in court to

respond for supposed illegal planting and crimes against the landowners! Now tell me, how is it that a dead person is supposed to appear in court? And what is the law going to do about our losses? What are they going to do to protect us against these landowners that are breaking the law and really messing up our lives (Sumido 2009)?

Sumido was one of the most vocal quilombo leaders I interviewed. He was dedicated to my research and making sure I understood what they were fighting for (and against). Throughout my work, Sumido came to symbolize the anger of the community. He often expressed his lack of fear in speaking out against the people that were oppressing the quilombolas. Given that many quilombolas were on edge over police threats and court summons, Sumido was never quiet about his opposition. Crispim, Rosení, Osorio, Marisa and other leaders of the quilombolas in São Francisco have gone through the legal procedures of the quilombo process. Worried about being expelled from their lands, when I left they were organizing protests in Brasilia to demand their constitutional rights.

The quilombo clause and the efforts that NGOs put into enabling rural black communities to use the constitution, are important developments to Afro-Brazilian rights in a country that did not abolish slavery until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Still, it is important to think critically about the individual and social effects of attempting to address the exclusion of blacks by differentiating them through a new ethnic category of “quilombos.”



Chapter IX  
Conclusion

**The Politics of Recognition and (Re)membering:  
Embodying the *Impossible* Quilombo Subject**

*[O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning picture of themselves (Taylor 1994, 25).*

*Sei o Que É, Por Isso Sou Quilombola! (Sign on a quilombola home 2009).*

The Center of Applied Cartography at the University of Brasilia conducted a study in 2005 that concluded that there are over 2,000 quilombo communities in Brazil totaling to nearly 2.5 million people (Fundação Cultural Palmares, *Article 68*). We can expect that the quilombo identity will continue to solidify as a separate Afro-Brazilian identity and that quilombo descendants throughout the nation will unite in their fight for recognition and rights. As the quilombo identity solidifies and gains more support among rural black communities, it is important (even necessary) to study the social and individual impact of this identity and the process of authentication that it necessitates. In concluding this story that unfolded for me in Brazil in ways I could not imagine when I first began to research the quilombo, I want to reiterate the message presented throughout these chapters that the quilombo clause is rooted in politics that focus on cultural difference to the detriment of racial justice. Furthermore, that these politics of cultural difference have emphasized a particular story of African ancestry and resistance that leaves quilombo descendants in the difficult position of needing to prove their authenticity through a series of bureaucratic procedures and ideological workshop trainings.

In this dissertation I have attempted to fill a void in the quilombo literature by connecting it to larger discussions on Afro-Latino rights vis-a-vis indigenous rights in Latin America. Here I have illustrated that quilombo descendants have had to imitate a form of *indigeneity* and present themselves as the gatekeepers of African tradition in Brazil in order to make claims to collective rights as a differentiated ethnic group.

The problem of authenticity in Latin America has been an issue for indigenous communities since the advent of the multicultural citizenship rights in late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite their right to self-identify, indigenous communities have also had to learn to “imitate” certain ancestry and disguise change in order to frame their claims for group rights in terms of cultural difference. While Afro-Brazilians and indigenous groups make these claims in different ways and with distinct social pressures, quilombo descendants have been most successful in their claims when they follow the indigenous example (Hooker 2005). Still, for Afro-Brazilians, the history of enslavement, scientific racism, and police repression of their cultural practices has made their connection to their “African ancestors” more difficult. What is more, quilombo descendants have to prove that they have different cultural claims to the nation than other social groups, particularly Afro-Brazilian groups. Interestingly, the relationship between urban blacks and quilombolas is much more supportive in Bahia than it is in other places. In São Paulo, the Black Movement has largely denounced the quilombo clause as a divisive and regressive policy

for all black Brazilians.<sup>29</sup> While cultural authenticity is a central part of the FCP and INCRA process, in Bahia, quilombos descendants have combined issues of ethnic identity, racial discrimination, and citizenship rights.

In Chapter IV, I noted that the quilombo clause *creates* difference through a process I called “(re)membering,” whereby history and memory are recreated to assemble the new quilombo concept. I illustrated how the importance of re-defining “quilombo” as an ethnic identity and expanding the term to include a broader notion of resistance was done to make the term more amenable to the creation of policies for the collective rights of rural black communities. But the new definition also led to the creation of a complex bureaucratic system charged with proving the cultural authenticity of quilombo descendants. Although they have the right to self-identify, they must do so within very strict parameters established by the federal government. Chapter VI described the parameters of authenticity as they were implemented in the process of recognition and rights distribution, a process that re-creates quilombo descendants as the inheritors of the social and cultural life of the historically imagined quilombo. Furthermore, the new “quilombo” definition necessitated the preparation and “training” of rural black communities by government agencies and NGOs. According to these organizations, communities needed to be taught not only to understand the political process of quilombo recognition but also how to properly explain their quilombo ancestry so as to avoid being accused of fraud.

I used the example of São Francisco do Paraguaçu in order to illustrate the violent and difficult experience of one community that has been trapped in the quilombo process for over five years. The narratives of quilombolas from São Francisco shine a light on the confusion and conflict that is created by a political process that demands a strict documentation of ancestry and land use, but that, in turn, is poorly supported by the very government that created it. For the people of São Francisco, the quilombo identity was rooted in their historical relationship with their land and labor. Through reflections and workshops, they came to understand that they too deserved land rights because they had worked hard for many years to help make those lands productive for the nation. While rural black communities were not the originators of the quilombo concept, neither colonial nor modern, through the process of recognition they learned to adapt the term to their everyday lives. Eventually they found in the term a ground for cultural unity, social inclusion, and historical re-inclusion (Arruti 2005).

Quilombolismo was presented to black communities as a concept that encompassed all of the cultural particularities and specificities of rural black life. For some communities that concept connected with their pre-existing identities. Having done everything correctly (and having the support of several NGOs), the people of São Francisco never expected to be in such a long and conflictive struggle for land. Quilombolismo came to encompass their lives and they could no longer image themselves outside of the quilombo struggle. Even those who were against the quilombo process had their lives altered.

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<sup>29</sup> In São Paulo the quilombolas are much more organized into a social movement than they are in Bahia. Conversations on the conflict between the MNU and the quilombo movement in São Paulo were part of a panel discussion between myself and other Brazilian researchers at the Latin American Studies Association conference in Rio de Janeiro in 2009.

Although the ABA definition of “quilombo” opened the identity to an expanded vision of slavery and resistance and allowed communities to choose their ancestors, other aspects of the quilombo clause made this effort contradictory. The need to demonstrate ancestral proof, particularly in the INCRA land process, often directs quilombo descendants to identify with “slave” or “fugitive slave” ancestors. For example, in São Francisco the quilombolas identify with the slaves that worked in the Convento of Santo Antônio and the *engenhos* of the region. Although NGOs seek to empower the “quilombo” to mean more than just slave descendants, the term remains embedded in the origins of slavery.

The quilombolas of São Francisco have come to embody quilombolismo as a life-long struggle that is their only means of securing a future for their children. The quilombo recognition process in Brazil illustrates the contradictions and conflicts that arise when ethnic authenticity and historical memory (especially a history that is primarily constructed by colonialists) become the only criteria for collective rights in a nation where racism and classism still permeate everyday life. The fact of blackness (and quilombo identity) in Brazil is that it is socially fluid and rooted in both African and Brazilian histories, in slavery, in resistance, and in political discrimination. While the problem of differentiated rights for Afro-Latinos is not unique to Brazil (Hooker 2005; Wade 1993), São Francisco illustrates the violent effects of an abstract language of rights (Povinelli 2002) that re-constructs the “quilombo” outside of the pervasive history of black (racial) exclusion. Black Brazilians have historically been treated as partial-citizens (Gomes & Gomes da Cunha 2007). The modern descendants of quilombos are fighting for their recognition as full and multiple citizens: *quilombolas*, *negros*, *Brasileiros*, and landowners.

The quilombo bureaucratic system has not made it clear whether the goal of the quilombo clause is in fact land rights for *all* of the quilombos that are recognized and how that would be achieved. Moreover, it is not clear whether the present quilombo category can, in fact, be expanded to include all of the national expectations for “quilombo” authenticity.

As the nation stretches out its hands to ancient Aboriginal Laws (as long as they are not “repugnant”), indigenous subjects are called on to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state. But this call does not simply produce good theatre, rather it inspires impossible desires: *to be* this impossible object and to transport its ancient prenational meanings and practices to the present in *whatever* language and moral framework prevails *at the time of enunciation* (Povinelli 2002, 6).

Although Povinelli’s work is on the recognition of Aboriginal rights in Australia, the theoretical analysis she provides for thinking about the problem of authenticity (and subsequently cultural recognition), is directly applicable to the contradictions of the quilombo clause. Like indigenous communities, quilombo descendants must be able to demonstrate an “authentic difference” in order to be granted the rights they need to feel like full citizens of the nation. The need to embrace a difference that they previously had little knowledge of has meant years of workshops (and conflicts) in the hopes of becoming the quilombo subject that the nation (and society) demands. As I illustrated earlier, the new quilombo definition is not something that petitioning communities know or understand upfront. Making the quilombo clause practical and functional

has meant that governmental and non-governmental organizations have had to work to help communities (re)member and re-think their past and their present.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ruth Landes alienated herself as a researcher and scholar by uniting with the *mulatto* Edison Carneiro and focusing on gender and race during a time when *mestiçagem* and racial democracy were the dominant ideologies. My hope is that this research will not be received as a proposition for or against the quilombo clause, but rather that it will inspire more research on the individual and social effects of the quilombo clause and its surrounding bureaucracy. Furthermore, I hope that this research will instigate new conversations among social scientists, historians, and bureaucrats (governmental and NGO) in Brazil about the parameters of the new quilombo definition, the use of Barth's "ethnic group," and the larger implications of the connection between rural black quilombo communities and indigenous and tribal communities. Like the archeologist Pedro Paulo de Abreu Funari, through my research I learned that the historical memory of the quilombo, and thus the future of quilombo descendants, is engulfed in the problem of *truth* and *authenticity* and who is empowered to define black history. The quilombo issue is divided along emotionally charged political lines that often move the researcher to identify with (or defend) one side of the debate. Although my field experience led me to focus on the passionate stories of quilombo descendants, my desire is that this work will have a much wider impact. I hope I can continue to build on this research by formulating ways in which to improve on a current situation that is based on honorable intentions but has resulted in dishonorable consequences.

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