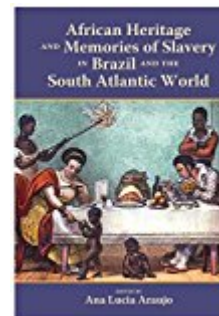




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Historic Memory and Slavery in Brazil

In *African Heritage and Memories of Slavery in Brazil and the South Atlantic World*, Ana Lucia Araujo assembles some of the most prolific scholars of Brazilian cultural history. Examining systems of oppression, representation, and acculturation, this book offers alternative ways of understanding and privileging African legacies in Brazil. Essentially, this interdisciplinary text challenges systems of racism and calls for the preservation, presentation, and proliferation of African legacies in Brazil. According to Araujo, “with the exception of Nigeria, the largest population of people of African descent is in Brazil” (p. 1). Brazil also maintains a unique and problematic legacy as a central port for transatlantic slavery. However, as noted by each scholar, the histories and contributions of African descendants have not been sufficiently told or preserved.

Organized in ten distinct chapters, this book examines the systematic suppression of black and African-centered arts, bodies, religious practices, cultural norms, and sociopolitical traditions in Brazil. Chartering new perspectives, scholars uncover archival mysteries, mu-

seum practices, hidden histories, and places of historic trauma. This collection also reveals communal legacies of resistance and empowerment in the lives and practices of all Brazilian people. As purposed by Araujo, “this book will show [that] the Brazilian slave past and its African heritage are emerging in urban and rural areas in various forms led not only by activists but also by scholars engaged with local black communities” (p. 5). Questions of citizenship, identity, cultural heritage, and historical memory are also woven throughout this monumental text.

In chapter 1, Brazilian historian Mariza de Carvalho Soares examines the acquisition and presentation of African artifacts in Brazil’s National Museum in Rio de Janeiro. Primarily obtained “before Brazilian slavery was abolished in 1888,” most of the Africana collection comes from the regions of Dahomey (Benin), Cameroon, and the Zambezi River (p. 18). The Museum’s collections also parallel movements of transatlantic commerce and enslavement. As noted by Soares, “one of the most significant international relationships developed by the mu-

seum regarding its Africana collection was with the Museum of Berlin, 1928-1929" (p. 25). Chronicling struggles for power and leadership, Soares suggests that artifacts must go through a "process of decolonization and liberation" (p. 18). Exemplifying the need for empowering identities, Afro-Brazilian items acquired after the 1950s were unfortunately omitted from the Africana collection. Thus, the struggle continues to not only affirm the origins of Brazilian collections but also denounce their subsequent separation from African ancestral bonds.

The second chapter offers an in-depth analysis of how two influential naturalists, Louis Agassiz and Hermann Burmeister, systematically classified African bodies as inferior and redefined perceptions of Western beauty and art. According to Maria Helena P. T. Machado, Agassiz's photographic collection of presumably "pure-race and mixed-race" (p. 45) Africans in Brazil "sheds important light not only on the history of anthropology but also on nineteenth-century race studies" (pp. 47-48). Agassiz's work and museum leadership at Harvard University paralleled that of Burmeister at the Natural Science Museum of Buenos Aires. Burmeister also sought to measure and compare phenotypes of Africans in Rio de Janeiro with animalistic characteristics of apes. "Both naturalists sought to confirm the racial inferiority of blacks, which they believed to be the case because Africans did not meet the classical Greek standard of beauty" (p. 61). Agassiz and Burmeister left an indelible mark on physical and social science inquiry, and Machado demonstrates their impact both within and beyond museum pedagogies.

In chapter 3, Matthew Francis Rarey outlines an artistically crafted counternarrative to the public torturing of enslaved bodies at whipping posts, known as *pelourinhos*. The reproduction of *pelourinho* images also manifested through European travel exchanges. *Pelourinhos* thus represented visual and psychological "codes of looking" and perpetuated Brazilian systems of oppression. Through external observation and internal oppression, the viewer and viewed became a symbol of trauma and remembrance: "Thus, the problematics of witnessing and the ambiguities of affect come with a consideration of audience in analyzing the visual culture of slave punishment in Brazil" (p. 91). Rarey argues, however, that counterwitnessing challenged the visual culture of slavery and empowered enslaved and free Africans to "sow the seeds of rebellion" (p. 75). Rarey also critiques the work of Francisco das Chagas, a free black artist in the eighteenth century, to whom is attributed a sculpture of Jesus Christ's whipping called *Cristo na coluna*. In addressing contemporary challenges, Rarey questions how

"historians and scholars ... participate in the reproduction of racial dynamics through images and objects" (pp. 102-103).

Struggles for identity and representation are foregrounded in chapter 4, where Mathias Röhrig Assunção documents Angolan lineages in Brazil. Through historical shifts, he defines how the term "Angola" is used and appropriated by formerly enslaved, creole, and post-emancipation populations. Assunção also argues that the "emergence of Angolan identity in Candomblé and capoeira" (p. 110) represents broader dialogues among Afro-Brazilian priests and academics. According to Assunção, the notion of racial inferiority "became a core characteristic of Brazilian intellectualism" (p. 118). Cultural capital and purist ideals also reveal deeper conflicts of colonial and intergenerational hegemony. Candomblé in Bahia, Umbanda in Rio de Janeiro, and capoeira cultural expression became salient markers of Afro-Brazilian cultural and historical identities. Although people presumed to be of Angolan lineage were ostracized, "Angola provided the most important demographic contribution to the Brazilian population" (p. 138).

In chapter 5, Martha Abreu and Hebe Mattos trace the sociopolitical and educational legacy of *jongo* festivals in the *quilombo* community of São José da Serra. *Jongo*, or *caxambu*, "is a circle dance accompanied by drumming, clapping, and a bonfire" (p. 150) that commemorates the May 13, 1888, abolition of slavery in Brazil. Abreu and Mattos posit that communal agency and political mobilization uniquely impacted the transformation and representation of *jongo* in nineteenth- and twenty-first century Brazilian historiography. Likewise, *jongo* signified tumultuous struggles for land ownership, economic mobility, Afro-Brazilian identity, and equitable access to higher education. Direct descendants of formerly enslaved Africans "transformed cultural practices into sites of memory and history" (p. 155). This chapter also documents shifts in the acceptance, representation, and omission of African cultural festivals by nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. As a counternarrative, from 2005 to 2007, Abreu and Mattos captured the voices, memories, and oral histories of descendants from "the last generation of enslaved men and women" (p. 169). Beyond regional histories of perseverance and strength, these legacies represent a national heritage of cultural, political, and intellectual exchange.

Bridging the gap between silenced histories and visual representations, in chapter 6, André Cicalo examines "the first stages of transition from public amnesia to

public memory of slavery in Rio de Janeiro's port area" (p. 180) of Gamboa. As noted by Cicalo, "in urban Rio de Janeiro, no slave pillories (*pelourinhos*) or slave quarters (*senzalas*) are visible today," essentially dismissing "profound African legacies for Brazilian culture and national identity" (p. 183). Echoing the voices of community elders, Cicalo questions how histories can be taught when their spoken, written, and material vestiges are erased. With Rio de Janeiro as a global lens for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games, national renovations emerged, including the Porto Naravilha (Wonderful Port) project. Excavations for a water-pipeline system, however, revealed a hidden slave trade wharf, previously celebrated as a memorial to Empress Teresa Cristina of Bourbon. Although a prior mass burial site was found at Pretos Novos in 1996, it was given limited attention. By contrast, Gamboa's Valongo Wharf provided an opportune time for political posturing and gentrification. Amidst efforts of presumed historical preservation and collaboration, the eviction and relocation of low-income Afro-Brazilian residents became a parallel reality. "[T]he discovery of Valongo Wharf has been important not only for counteracting a history of forgetting vis-à-vis slavery memory in Gamboa but also for the increased organization of the black social movement" (p. 196), Cicalo writes. He challenges researchers and black activists to critically examine how histories are revealed and the motivating factors of their appropriation.

Chapter 7 grapples with how "slavery is recalled or forgotten—and memorialized—in Angola" (p. 214). As noted by Marcia C. Schenck and Mariana P. Candido, institutional slavery, bondage, persecution, forced labor, and violence persisted in multiple forms beyond 1836 through 1962. This chapter not only examines the memory of slavery from multiple perspectives but also reveals voices from which narratives are told. For example, although the Museu Nacional de Escravatura (National Museum of Slavery) is the only museum of its kind in Angola, expositions contrast greatly with the lived experiences and oral histories of those formerly enslaved and their descendants. Through a victim-centered lens, museum interpretations project the horrors of slavery as external agents of the Americas and evade local accountability. This dichotomy "clashes with the individual and communal interpretations of Angolans ... who transformed the institution and resisted it" (p. 219). Schenck and Candido also interrogate the meaning of memory and its implications for global consciousness and tourism industries. Distinct from public and visible remnants of slavery in West Africa, Angolan histories are "well hid-

den ... and ... mostly inaccessible" (p. 222). Through archival pamphlets, oral histories, and site exploration, this chapter links Angolan historic memory to the hidden commemoration of slavery in the public sphere.

In chapter 8, Patricia de Santana Pinho examines the motivation and impact of African American "roots tourism" in Brazil using "ethnographic research, critical discourse analysis and a cultural studies approach" (p. 255). For many African Americans, Bahia is a "closer Africa" geographically and psychologically, yet undergirding the gaze are subjugated histories of colonial power and oppression that minimize and silence Brazil's legacy of slavery. Pre-departure orientations, media representations, and moral ideals also influence tourists' assumptions and expectations of Brazil. According to Pinho, "there is ... an intimate connection between the underrepresentation of slavery in African American tourism discourse on Brazil and the tourists' search for 'preserved African culture'" (p. 266). Perceptions of Afro-Brazilian identity are largely shaped by external Anglophone agents defining "'truth,' 'order' and 'reality'" (p. 277). Dominant information networks also propagate ideals of cultural purity, while devaluing a "creolized and hybrid Afro-Brazilian culture" (p. 266). Tourism scholarship, interviews, documentaries, and heritage site investigations also reveal that "although Bahia's Africanness is a central component of its image as a tourist destination, it is more often than not dissociated from the history of slavery" (p. 275).

As noted by Kimberly Cleveland in chapter 9, the 2004 opening of the Museu AfroBrasil (AfroBrazil Museum) in São Paulo marked a significant shift in the preservation and representation of African art, history, and memory in Brazil. Founded by the inspiration of Afro-Brazilian Emanuel Araújo, the museum "challenge[d] official versions of history, reshape[d] national attitudes toward African heritage, and cement[ed] a place for Africa in Brazil at the popular and official levels" (p. 286). As powerful archives of local, national, and global heritage, museums reflect the histories, cultures, and values of people and communities. However, in museums, Afro-Brazilian culture was "all but absent from the grand narrative of the nation" (p. 287). Counteracting these inequities, the Museu AfroBrasil is strategically grounded in Ibirapuera Park, offering visual, cultural, and economic access to visitors of all ages. Organized in six sections around three central themes, its educational foci proactively privilege African and Afro-Brazilian heritage through traditional and contemporary permanent collections. However, through diminished financial and

political sponsorship from 2005 to 2009, many of the museum's valued African collections were unjustly re-appropriated under São Paulo state ownership. In spite of these inequities, the Museu AfroBrasil perseveres as a national institution of Afro-Brazilian identity, cross-cultural learning, and empowerment.

As chronicled through much of this text, Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos reaffirms the importance of memory in redefining and counteracting previously written histories of enslavement in Brazil. Echoed throughout chapter 10, Santos vehemently asserts that the history of slavery "was not written by slaves or by their immediate descendants" (p. 314). Where contextualized in museums, textbooks, or multimedia, "slavery has been narrated predominantly through silences, stereotypes, and victimization" (p. 318). Santos also questions racial-

ized myths of inferiority and systematic racism embedded in national and international identities. Through comparative analysis, Santos critiques debates by theorists, anthropologists, sociologists, and interdisciplinary scholars on the legacies of enslavement. Interrogating the vestiges of slavery in contemporary society requires purposeful analysis and acknowledgement of traumatic pasts. Collective memory, however, has the capacity to stimulate national healing, social agency, and shared histories. This book challenges colonial histories of African diasporic oppression and enslavement. It also proactively centers Brazilian museums, historic sites, and cultural centers as spaces for liberating historic memory. Re-evaluating the role of ethnographic archives, this collaborative scholarship broadens public access to Brazilian history and the rich legacy of Africans in Brazil.

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