

Bandits & Heroes, Poets & Saints: Popular Art of the Northeast of Brazil

Glossary

Afoxé—A Carnival parading tradition practiced in Bahia to express African identity through singing, drumming, and dancing.

Agogô—A metal bell that is used as a percussion instrument in Candomblé ceremonies.

Anastácia—She a legendary enslaved African princess now regarded by many in Brazil as a popular saint. She is depicted wearing a face mask as she was punished for resisting the advances of her master. She is a symbol of resilience and resistance in Brazil.

Antonio Conselheiro—This was the religious leader of a group of peasants and the hero of the community called Canudos.

Arte Popular—This literally means “popular art” or art of the common people (not academically trained artists) in the poorer, less educated sectors of Brazilian society. In South America, the word “popular” refers to ordinary. Arte popular includes objects created for use in daily life and or for celebratory occasions in the community or objects intended to illustrate and communicate community history and stories.

Axé (Ah SHAY)—A force, energy, and spirit in the universe.

Bahia—The largest state in the Northeast of Brazil.

Baiano—A male person born in Bahia.

Baiana—A female person born in Bahia. This is also the term commonly used to refer to women of Bahia who dress in white lace dresses and sell traditional African foods in the streets and squares of the city of Salvador.

Baião (by-OUN)—A popular form of syncopated dance music of the Northeast.

Bendito—A praise song, linked with popular Catholicism and devotional music of pilgrimages in the sertão.

Berimbau—A single stringed percussion instrument of African origin that is commonly incorporated into the performance of *capoeira*.

Caatinga (ka-TING-ah)—The thorny underbrush of the *sertão*. Also known as a biome or ecosystem in which this thorny brush resides.

Caboclo—A person or mixed race, usually drawing from Portuguese and indigenous roots; also the name of a deity in some houses of Candomblé honoring the indigenous spirit in Brazilian history.

Candomblé (kahn-dom-BLAY)—An African-Brazilian religion formed mainly from religious traditions of Yoruba, Fon, and Bantu people (traditions from the Congo and the Gulf of Benin in Africa). Music, dance, and ecstatic ritual are used as a means for Candomblé practitioners.

Cangaceiros (kon-ga-SEHR-oh)—These were outlaws in Brazil's backlands who attacked towns, burned ranches, and stole from the rich. At times the crimes of these bandits were met with sympathy and even admiration from the poor. They wore a distinctive dress including colorful kerchiefs and leather hats with upturned brims and cartridge belts across their chests. Lampião is a famous and colorful *cangaceiro*.

Cantoria—A stylized singer/poet tradition in the northeast region of Brazil in which singers improvise to comment on and offer humorous criticism of social issues and public figures.

Capoeira (kop-o-WAY-ra)—This is a form of martial art that was often masked as a dance. It focuses on the legs and feet and *capoeiristas* are forbidden from striking with their hands.

Carranca (ca-HAHN-ka)—This is a wooden carving attached to the front of a riverboat. These figureheads depict human or animal faces that traditionally have a scowl or menacing face to frighten away intruders. The *carrancas* served as guardians and also identified different merchants travelling on a waterway.

Church of the Bonfim—This is a Catholic Church in the city of Salvador, dedicated to the Crucifixion of Jesus. Both Catholics and initiates of Candomblé revere the church as a place of miracles.

Cruzeiros—A currency in Brazil that circulated from 1942–86 and 1990–93 and was replaced by the real.

Engenhos—Plantations in Brazil that produced sugar for export. Fields of sugar cane were planted and harvested; mills with heavy presses were used to grind juice from the cane, and huge boilers boiled the juice into syrup and refined raw sugar. Slaves worked on the sugar plantations and sugar was traded for slaves.

Ex-votos—These are symbols of prayers offered or answered that are made of carved wood or wax that represent hands, feet, heart, or eyes. Often they are hung from the ceiling or posted on walls as a sign of prayer or petition. *Ex-votos* are sold in local markets to religious pilgrims paying homage to a saint.

Exu (e-SHU)—In Candomblé, this mischievous spirit is the messenger who travels between the *orixás* and believers. Exu loves to play tricks and his colors are red and black.

Ferramenteiro—An artisan who works in iron.

Ferramentas—These are hand-wrought iron symbols of African deities called *orixás* in the African-Brazilian religion of Candomblé. *Ferramentas* are abstract representations of spirits and are often found in shrines or *altaras*.

Filha de santo—A female initiate of Candomblé.

Filho de santo—A male initiate of Candomblé

Forró (fo-HO)—A popular Brazilian northeastern dance music.

Ganho—This was an earning system typical of urban slavery in Brazil.

Irmandade da Boa Morte (Sisterhood of the Good Death)—This is the oldest functioning women’s mutual aid society in Brazil. It was established by free and enslaved black women in the early 1800s to care for members in illness and death.

Lampião (lahm-pee-OUN)—A famous bandit or *cangaceiro* of Brazil’s Northeast. His band of outlaws terrorized the backlands in the 1920s and 1930s for nearly twenty years until he was killed by the state militia in 1938.

Literatura de cordel (lit-er-a-TUR-ah de cor-del)—This refers to stories on a string; a popular literature tradition featuring small inexpensive pamphlets of poetry that were sold clipped to strings in markets.

Lula da Silva—Lula was the founding member and later President of the Workers’ Party. He ran for president of Brazil three times and was elected in 2002. He emphasized social development and initiated a campaign to eradicate hunger.

Malês—This term is from the Yoruba word *imale* which means Muslim—*malês* were black Muslim slaves in Brazil and because they were literate, were able to organize a number of slave revolts.

Mamulengos—Marionette-like figures with articulated joints and chins that are sold in markets of Brazil.

Maria Bonita—She was a famous *cangaceiro*, one of Lampião’s gang members and his beautiful consort.

Movimento Sem Terra—The Movement of the Landless, or MST was founded in 1984 by landless workers to demand a more equitable distribution of land.

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Naná (na-NAH)—*Orixá* of the moon who is the eldest of the female *orixás* and identifies with death and life, rain and earth. Her color is purple.

Nordeste (nor-DEST-chee)—The Northeast region of Brazil.

Nordestinos—These are the ordinary people of Brazil's Northeast region. There are 53 million inhabitants of the Northeast region.

Ogum (o-GUM)—*Orixá* of iron and blacksmiths. This is the strong and fearless *orixá* of iron and war who protects workers, especially those who work with metal. His colors are blue and green.

Omolú (o-mo-LU)—*Orixá* of pestilence and healing. He is covered in a straw garment and is bent over by his wounds. His colors are red, black, and white.

Orixás (o-ree-SHAS)—These are the deities in the Candomblé religion that reflect different aspects of God. Each *orixá* has its own story, own temperament, own color, and own symbols such as fans, swords, bows, and arrows etc.

Ossain (o-sigh-IN)—The *orixá* of medicines and herbs who wears the colors of the forest (green and brown) and carries a bird on his staff.

Oxalá (o-sha-LA)—The father of the *orixás* who is connected to wisdom, creation, life and death, and associated with the color white.

Oxossi (o-SHOW-si)—*Orixá* of the Hunt who carries a bow and arrow. His colors are blue or green.

Oxum (o-SHOOM)—*Orixá* of fresh waters whose colors are gold and yellow. Oxum is connected to beauty.

Oxumaré (o-shum-a-RE)—The *orixá* of the rainbow and serpents. He/she is clothed with many colors and is always in motion. He/she carries a serpent, sometimes on his/her head.

Padre Cicero—Cicero Romão Batista (1844–1934) is widely known as Padre Cicero and was a Catholic Priest and civic leader in Juazeiro do Norte. He was loved by the poor and known as a worker of miracles. A 75-foot statue of Padre Cicero stands in foothills outside of Juazeiro do Norte. Every year, thousands of people make a pilgrimage to this city in his honor.

Pai or Mãe de Santo (Pai or Mãe rhymes with why) (father or mother of saints)—The priest or priestess of Candomblé religion.

Pelé—Born in 1940, he is regarded as the best Brazilian soccer player of all time. Now retired, he once received the International Peace Award for his work with UNICEF and in 1999 was named Player of the Century by the International Federation of Football.

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Pelourinho (pel-oo-REEN-yo)—This is the historic center of the city of Salvador and since 1985 has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the 1500s, it was an important public square in the city of Salvador. It contains the largest concentration of colonial architecture in the Americas.

Quilombo—The *quilombo* is a runaway slave community. The most famous is located in Palmares, which was called an African slave state. A famous hero of the *quilombo* is Zumbi.

Repentistas (he-pen-CHEE-stas)—These are improvisational singing poets found at markets or fairs.

Retirantes (hey-chee-RAHN-tes)—These are people who have fled the *sertão* region due to drought and move to the South to larger cities in search of work.

Rosario—The Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks is known as Rosario and stands in the historic Pelourinho square in Salvador.

Seca (SHE-kah)—A period of drought in the *sertão*.

Senzalas—These were plantation slave quarters where enslaved blacks of different ethnicities and from regions in Africa lived. *Senzalas* were located a distance from the house of the landowner.

Sertão (ser-TOUN)—This is the desert-like, dry, and sparsely populated place that comprises the interior of the Northeast of Brazil. It's also known as the backlands. Historically, cattle ranchers, poor farmers, and fugitives from enslavement have lived in this region.

Terreiros—A house of Candomblé or a temple. The *terreiros* preserved African religion, language, cuisine, ornament, rhythms, dance, song and poetry. One of the oldest houses of Candomblé in Salvador is Ilé Axé Opo Afonja.

Xangô (shan-GO)—The *orixá* of Justice and fire who carries a double-headed axe. His colors are red and white.

Xilogravura (shee-low-gra-VU-rah)—These are woodblock prints created and valued as works of art, but sometimes sold in the markets. Woodblock prints were used for the covers of *literatura de cordel*.

Yansan (yahn-SAN)—*Orixá* of the Wind and Storms thunder, wind, and lightning. Yansan is known for her fiery temper. Her colors are red and white.

Vaqueiros (va-KEHR-ohs)—These are the cowboys of the dry backlands of the Northeast of Brazil, in the *sertão* region. They often dressed in leather, drove cattle over large tracts of land, and had the responsibility of caring for them and ensuring their survival.

Yemanjá (ye-man-JA)—*Orixá* of the seas who is also the *orixá* of motherhood and protectress of sailors; she is associated with the colors silver, white, rose, or light blue.

Zumbi—He is a legendary hero among African Brazilians that was born in the *quilombo* of Palmares in 1655. Zumbi was born free but was captured by the Portuguese and was given to a priest at age six. He escaped and returned to the *quilombo* of Palmares at age fifteen. He became a leader of the *quilombo* and was killed in a battle with the Portuguese in 1697. November 20 is known in Brazil as the Day of Black Consciousness in celebration and honor of Zumbi.