

A “Lost Vocation”? The Life and Work of Edison Carneiro, Exponent of Afro–Brazilian Studies

Gustavo Rossi

PNPD-Capes/Unicamp, Brasil

2020

POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

Rossi, Gustavo, 2020. “A “Lost Vocation”? The Life and Work of Edison Carneiro, Exponent of Afro Brazilian Studies”, in *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris.

URL Bérose : article2031.html

BEROSE Publisher: ISSN 2648-2770

© UMR9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université, CNRS, Ministère de la culture)/DIRI, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture du Ministère de la culture. (All rights reserved).

Your use of this article indicates your acceptance of the Bérose site (www.berose.fr) terms and conditions of use, available [here](#).

Visited on 24 April 2024 at 06:22

Publié dans le cadre du thème de recherche «Histoire des anthropologies au Brésil», dirigé par Stefania Capone (CNRS, Césor) et Fernanda Arêas Peixoto (Universidade de São Paulo)

Edison Carneiro (1912-1972), a Brazilian intellectual, was born in the city of Salvador, capital of the State of Bahia. He dedicated himself to a very wide range of genres and themes, among which are his ethnographic and historical studies concerning African-derived religiosity and cultural practices in Brazil, as well as his works on folklore and popular culture. As a communist intellectual and combative journalist, in the 1930s he carried out fieldwork in the candomblé *terreiros* (cult houses) of Salvador, the 'African Rome', and became one of its main interpreters and specialists. In 1937, Carneiro organized the Second Afro-Brazilian Congress in Salvador and helped create the Union of Afro-Brazilian Sects, an ephemeral but pioneering entity in an effort to plead for full freedom of worship for the African-derived religions in the country. In Rio de Janeiro, where he established himself definitively in 1939, he continued to work as a journalist and scholar of black history and culture in Brazil, without, however, ever obtaining a university post. From the 1950s on, Edison Carneiro dedicated himself almost entirely to the so-called 'Brazilian folkloric movement', engaging in the National Folklore Defense Campaign, of which he was the director from 1961 until 1964, when he was compulsorily removed by the military junta that took power through a coup d'état. Some of his most important works were: *Religiões Negras* (1936), *Negros Bantos* (1937), *Quilombo dos Palmares* (1947), *Candomblés da Bahia* (1947), *Antologia do Negro Brasileiro* (1950), *Ladinos e Crioulo* (1964) and *Dinâmica do Folclore* (1965). Throughout his sixty years of life and

near forty-year career, Edison Carneiro built a life and work which was resolutely involved in the development of the studies on culture and folklore associated with the African cultural legacy in Brazilian society.

A 'black white' Bahian family

Born in the city of Salvador, Edison Carneiro was the fourth of seven children of Antônio Joaquim de Souza Carneiro and Laura Coelho de Souza Carneiro, a respected family that enjoyed easy access to and good relations with the influential factions of the local political oligarchies. Esteemed and respected by the *good society*, the family was part of those sectors of the Bahian capital that the sociologist Thales de Azevedo would name its “coloured elites” (Azevedo 1996 [1955]). In the case of the Souza Carneiro, it is worth saying, this was a less economic and more cultural elite, whose personal and social aspirations were sensibly linked to their services and loyalties to oligarchic chiefs, as well as to the constant demonstrations of their professional, intellectual and educational skills.

It seems that the mismatch between social prestige and wealth was a permanent condition in the life of this 'poor but good family, called 'fidalgo' [noble]' because of the respect they engendered, as the American anthropologist Ruth Landes (1908-1991) once recorded; she met the relatives of Edison Carneiro in the late 1930s, when she was conducting field research on racial relations in Salvador. Landes continued: 'His father, fair in color, was a retired professor of engineering, with a reputation for original work. His aunt looked like an Indian, and owned a school. An uncle was a judge. An elder brother [of Edison] was a well known lawyer (...) It was the kind of family that was sometimes called 'white Negro' because it was so respected' (Landes 1994 [1947]: p. 14). [1]

As his mother died he was young, Edison Carneiro grew up under the strong influence of his father, Antônio Joaquim (1881-1942), a celebrated civil engineer, university professor at the Polytechnic School of Bahia and author of numerous books – technical, fictional, ethnographic and esoteric. His erudition and pronounced presence in public and intellectual debates in the Bahia of his time contributed decisively to the cultural formation of his son. In that intellectually stimulating and freewheeling family environment, Edison Carneiro was also exposed to an early socialization with all sorts of mystical-religious repertoires, thanks to the studies and practices of his father: high-level Freemason, spiritist and 'specialist in Allan Kardec and other masters of spirituality' (Amado 1981: n.p.), but also the author of studies on contemplative geometry, esoteric sciences and a book on the 'initiations' of Jesus Christ, written in 1927, as a result of his affiliation to the 'fruitful and benevolent bosom of the Esoteric Circle' (Souza Carneiro 1927: 4). In other words, his childhood and adolescence were marked by the close and continued coexistence with different modes of relationships with the mystical and extrasensory planes. This certainly helped to produce in Edison Carneiro a certain sensitivity to religious themes and to various forms of apprehension of candomblés and other beliefs of African origin. There are even reasons to believe that during part of his adolescence, Edison Carneiro himself would have shared some of his father's

beliefs, declaring himself an 'esoterist, half magician and half diviner' (Amorim 1937: n.p.).

The family underwent recurrent periods of financial instability – the result, to a large extent, of Souza Carneiro's large family and the persecutions he suffered because of his energetic adherence to local political campaigns. Yet despite this, his prestige, connected to his significant asset of relationships and protections, had a decisive effect on the ways in which the markers of race and colour were experienced and perceived by the family itself and by those who knew them. These markers, it seems, were almost always experienced through a double revealing silence. On the one hand, it revealed the efforts of Souza Carneiro to minimize the chances of having their personal and social identities monopolized by the markers of race and blackness. On the other hand, this silence was equally revealing of the ways in which Edison Carneiro and his family sought to negotiate the meanings of themselves, their positions and their differences amid the embarrassment and regimes of racialized hierarchies of Bahian society in the early decades of the twentieth century. In this society, ideals of blackness regulated the production of a double order of subjects that often – but not always – coincided: the subjects recognized as bearers or practitioners of an 'African culture', strongly stigmatized by the elites as barbaric, ignorant and violent, allocated at the base of the social hierarchy and, most especially, those who lived off manual labour (Bacelar 2001; Azevedo 1966; Butler 1998). The Souza Carneiro family were neither. This certainly helps to understand the fears of this family in asserting their own blackness, at the risk of seeing the distinctive effects of their social positions diminished.

The very fact, after all, that Antônio Joaquim de Souza Carneiro was classified as 'white' on his death certificate in 1942, shows the racialized way of representing his social place, as well as his qualities as a teacher, intellectual and scholar through which, as Ruth Landes realized, he built his 'excellent reputation' (see Rossi 2015).

Ethnographer apprentice

Edison Carneiro grew up under the strong influence of his father's talents, surrounded by his prestige and his bookcases, and so it is not surprising that Edison Carneiro was very quickly stimulated to intellectual work. He made his home – 'nicknamed Brazil' by dint of being 'huge' and 'disorganized' (Amado 1985: 4) – a privileged space for meetings with his youthful colleagues, who would come in the certainty of finding in Souza Carneiro all sorts of incentives to their ambitions as aspiring literates. Proof of this is that, around 1927, at the age of 15, Edison Carneiro would already start publishing his first batch of poetry, chronicles and tales in the newspapers and magazines of Salvador and would soon after help found the *Academia dos Rebeldes* (Rebels Academy).

Together with the Rebels, besides publishing what would be his only fiction book, the novel *Lenita* (1930), with his academic partners, Clóvis Amorim (1912-1970) and the then unknown Jorge Amado (1912-2001), Edison Carneiro would actively contribute to the two magazines launched by the group: *Meridiano* (1929) and *O Momento* (1931-1932). [2] In these magazines,

these young people, many of them barely out of school, evoked the task of putting Salvador on the map of a broader debate on social and literary modernity that, at the time, was gaining strength and resonance in the most diverse intellectual scenes of the country: Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Recife, Belo Horizonte and Belém, among others. Paradoxically, however, in order to discuss the languages and achievements associated with modern times (jazz, feminism, futuristic aesthetics, free verse, cinema, psychoanalysis, the aeroplane, electricity), what ended up prevailing in the poetry and texts of the *Academia dos Rebeldes* were much more the frustrations and contradictory feelings in relation to a Bahian society that seemed to them to define itself as their own antithesis: literally conventional, culturally provincial, economically decadent and politically discredited in the conduct of the nation; a society, in short, that seemed to them averse and virtually immune to transformations of all kinds, that would be capable of altering the 'primitive purity' of its colonial and patriarchal traits (Carneiro, 1931a).

As an observer, Edison Carneiro was ever more sensitive to the disarray of Bahian society with the dynamism and promises of the march of progress boasted in other regions of the country, which made its 'primitive purity' stand out even more. It was precisely at this moment that, in his texts of the period, he began to record his growing adventures through the 'mysteries' of the 'poor neighbourhoods', the suburbs and the 'Africas' of the city of Salvador, attracted by the still somewhat puerile excitement of seeing 'the cuffs of [his] civilized pants' "decorated" with mud (Carneiro 1931b: n.p.). Amidst his practices as the chronicler of the city, Carneiro would train his gaze and intensify his incursions into the groups and spaces of Bahian blackness. These were groups and spaces from which Carneiro grew up socially distant, but about which he would write and think more systematically from that moment on, almost invariably without blurring the symbolic boundaries with the subjects and the themes of his reflection: on the one hand, blacks and black culture, and on the other, himself.

It did not take long, however, for Edison Carneiro's interests in the Africanisms of Bahian and Brazilian society to gain more regular and meaningful forms, politically and intellectually, leaving behind, according to Jorge Amado, the ambition of being the 'poet of this city of Bahia' to become one of its main scholars and 'essayists' (Amado 1936: n.p.). In the wake of the ideological polarization that followed the so-called Revolution of 1930, the military coup that brought Getúlio Vargas (1884-1954) to the presidency of the Republic, in the early years of that decade, Edison Carneiro joined the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), which was at the time illegal. Despite being only 25 years old, Carneiro established himself as an important leader among his fellow militants. But differing from significant numbers of these partners, Edison Carneiro's ideological commitments did not result in insensitive perspectives to the racial, cultural and Afro-Brazilian religious issues. These were central themes for the constitution of the universes of experience of the Brazilian black population and, in particular, the Bahian, but which were not properly recognized in the plots of revolution nurtured by the communists of the country. On the contrary, the author's militancy, in addition to shedding new light on the problem of the 'oppressed races'

(Carneiro 1934: n.p.), acted as a catalyst for his close relations and complicity with the candomblé *terreiros* of the Bahian capital, which he began to study more systematically and where, not infrequently, he found refuge from police persecutions because of his political activities. Proof of this is that, as early as 1934, Carneiro made his debut as a young specialist in 'Africanologist' studies when he was invited to participate in the First Afro-Brazilian Congress in Recife, organized by Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987), still under the impact of the warm reception of his book *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (1933). On that occasion, he presented the thesis 'Situation of the black man in Brazil', one of the most expressive works of Carneiro's efforts in that decade, aiming – in a very original way – to reconcile historical materialism, analysis of racial relations and the 'phenomenon of interpenetration of cultures in Brazil' (Carneiro 1988 [1935]: 238).

In 1936, after graduating from the Law School of Bahia, Carneiro started work as a journalist in the *Estado de Bahia*, one of the main newspapers in the state. Taking advantage of his growing prominence as a communist intellectual and a combative journalist – responsible for numerous texts and reports dignifying the Afro-religious universe – he gradually conquered positions so that, at that moment, he launched himself as one of the main names in studies on black people in Brazil. In the condition of an 'eternal cicerone that [took] friends to the *pais de santo* [candomblé leaders]' (Amado 1936: n.p.), the author became an important mediator between different worlds, networks and social groups. On the one hand, at the local level, he was a mediator between Afro-religious leaders and the Bahian elites, and became a kind of privileged interpreter and spokesman for political demands, especially for religious freedom claimed by *pais* and *mães de santo*. These, on the other hand, gave him free access to their *terreiros* to carry out his research. However, linked to this local prestige, Edison Carneiro also assumed a key position as a scholar and mediator of an ethnographic universe – Salvador, the 'African Rome' – which became a paradigmatic space for debates on race in Brazil and in the world.

Afro-Brazilian studies and the fight for religious freedom

Internationally, the Brazilian racial situation and, in particular, that of Bahia – one of the main destinations of enslaved black Africans in the Americas – would gain prominence in the intellectual and political agendas of foreign and, above all, North-American researchers. All of them, to a greater or lesser extent, were guided by the idea that Salvador would constitute a privileged ethnographic universe either for finding a model of peaceful coexistence and integration between blacks and whites (i.e., a counter-model to the segregation regime then in force in the United States), or for better preserving the surviving traces and cultural practices of African origin. That is why, between the years 1930 and 1940, Salvador ended up becoming a territory of transnational pilgrimage of successive waves of North-American intellectuals, such as Donald Pierson (1900-1995), Robert Park (1864-1944), Ruth Landes, Edward Franklin Frazier (1894-1962), Lorenzo Turner (1890-1970), Melville J. Herskovits (1895-1963), and Charles Wagley (1913-1991). For many of them, Edison Carneiro was a key character in facilitating or even conducting their research on the Afro-Bahian world

(Sansone 2012). From the national point of view, the influx of foreign researchers, in conjunction with the renewed interest in the racial question in the debates regarding the mestizo character of Brazilian culture and identity, would contribute enormously to the Bahian intellectual scene's dispute for the leadership of Afro-Brazilian studies in the 1930s. [3] This occurred especially through the work of Arthur Ramos (1903-1949), a physician from the state of Alagoas, at that time living in Rio de Janeiro, who had built his professional reputation as a scholar of black cultures based on the materials he collected in Salvador, where he did his university studies and resided until 1933. With Gilberto Freyre, the sociologist and anthropologist from Pernambuco, he would dispute the position of the great Afro-Brazilian 'owners of the subject', depending for this on the data collected by Edison Carneiro himself in the Afro-Brazilian world, from which Ramos stayed away and in which he did little fieldwork (Rossi 2015; Corrêa 2003). Although Arthur Ramos saw in Edison Carneiro no more than a 'disciple', with works only 'complementary' to those he had already done in Bahia (Guimarães, 2008: 60-61), the truth is, however, that Carneiro's researches and work in the *terreiros* of Salvador were indispensable for the Alagoas doctor to keep his political and intellectual pretensions of leadership alive in the field of Afro-Brazilian studies.

Drawing intellectual and political strength from his growing prominence in the *terreiros* of Salvador, as well as from this national and international attention to the racial situation in Bahia, Edison Carneiro was able to create the necessary conditions to publish his first religious ethnographies, *Black Religions* (1936) and *Black Bantus* (1937), in which he systematized his research in the Bahian *terreiros*, analysing different types of ceremonies found there. Read together, they reveal Carneiro's effort to demarcate boundaries about the African 'purity' of the *terreiros* and their liturgical practices. On the one hand, they contrasted the supposed complexity and authenticity of the 'Jeje-Nagô' candomblés, based on the hegemony of Yoruba mythology, and, on the other hand, the rituals of Bantu origin, whose inferiority and simplicity, according to the author, would end up making them a fertile ground for cultural mixtures and 'degradations' of all kinds, thus stimulating 'the widest charlatanism' (Carneiro 1991: 70). At stake in this differentiation between 'degenerate Bantus' and 'pure Nagôs' was the concern to 'normalize the cults' in order to distinguish, analytically and politically, the Afro-religious leaders who 'practiced religion for they preserved African wisdom' from those others who, deprived of the authenticity of this knowledge, 'were doing evil and exploiting popular credulity' (Capone 2010 [1999]: 184). [4] This was not exclusive to Edison Carneiro but his work on this would be 'emblematic'.

To a huge extent, guided by such issues and, in partnership with Afro-religious leaders and his colleague from the Rebels Academy, Aydano do Couto Ferraz (1914-1985), Edison Carneiro organized the Second African-Brazilian Congress of Salvador in 1937, the papers from which would be gathered in the book *The Black in Brazil* (1940). Although he continued the efforts already advanced by the congress organized by Gilberto Freyre in Recife three years earlier (especially with regard to criticism of biological determinism), the Second Congress idealized by Carneiro was distant from the first due to at least two very striking differences. The first of these is that, by bringing together jurists, sociologists, anthropologists,

musicians and writers, Edison Carneiro and the Second Congress moved the Brazilian racial debate from the field of medical-psychiatric knowledge – still prevalent in the first congress – to the field of proper cultural debate. The second difference concerns the fact that, in Salvador, personalities and leaders of the Afro-religious world, less than mere objects or supporting actors, actively participated in the congress, either presenting papers, claiming religious legitimacy to candomblés, or making the right to freedom of worship one of the political and programmatic axes of the event. Such differences did not go unnoticed by Gilberto Freyre, organizer of the First Congress, who at the time accused the Bahian organizers of being 'demagogic' and of 'slipping into the political apology of coloured people' (Freyre *apud* Lima & Oliveira 1987: 129), thus revealing different perceptions of the very place that Afro-religious leaders should have, after all, in the discussion about their own religious practices. For Carneiro, unlike Freyre, less than mere spaces to be tutored by science and the state, candomblés should enjoy full autonomy for the exercise of their African beliefs. In Carneiro's view and in the light of his performance as a communist intellectual, just as the workers and working classes had their unions, the practitioners of black religions should have their own spaces and bodies of political and civil representation for the sake of their interests and the survival of their traditions.

To this end, in support of the successful repercussion of the Second Congress, alongside the *pais* and *mães de santo* of Salvador, Carneiro sought to promote the creation of a 'federation', a civil association of Afro-religious centres through which its practitioners could better protect themselves from the repression and tutelary treatment they were subject to. This would operate both on the part of the police organs, on which they usually depended for prior authorizations to hold their ceremonies, and also on the part of medical-psychiatric institutions and 'mental hygiene services'. These, in turn, competed with the repressive apparatuses in the management of Afro-religious spaces, under the allegation that they were environments which were conducive to the development of psychiatric disturbances and, therefore, threatened public and social order. The *União das Seitas Afro-Brasileiras* (Union of Afro-Brazilian Sects), as the initiative became known, despite its short and ephemeral duration, expressed many of the causes and positions embraced by Edison Carneiro in that decade. These positions were, not infrequently, the counterview of the most hegemonic visions of the nascent anthropology in the country, as well as of the positions of the two main authorities on the Afro-Brazilian field in those years, Gilberto Freyre and Arthur Ramos. Both were enthusiasts of medical and psychiatric supervision of candomblé practitioners and other groups considered susceptible to state guardianship, alongside madmen, children, women, schizophrenics and criminals. After all, instead of projecting a merely *curative* or assimilationist view of African-derived religions, understood at the time as marks of socially backward groups devoid of 'true culture' (Ramos 1934), the idea of a candomblé federation seemed to promote what, at that time, 'was most feared: the stimulus and preservation of organized forms of Afro-Brazilian experience' (Consorte 1997: n.p.). Edison Carneiro was a critic of the 'paternalistic way' that seemed to him to be striking against the way the black populations in the country were treated by Brazilian intellectuals, for whom they were 'just

an object of study' (Carneiro 1935: n.p.). He claimed the Afro-Brazilian studies as a series of debates that were inseparable from a broader one, concerning the recognition of this populations as political subjects, with their own rights.

In gaining prominence as an interpreter of black cultures in Brazil, Edison Carneiro himself was urged to deal with the tensions and constraints that were running through a field of study, itself marked by certain paternalisms and by disputes in the analyses of Bahian and Brazilian "Africanisms". This became particularly explicit in the last years of that decade, when Carneiro met the American anthropologist Ruth Landes, who arrived in Salvador in 1938 to conduct her fieldwork research in the city's *candomblés* until 1939. As her main guide and research companion, Carneiro would develop an intense romantic and professional partnership with Landes, the development of which eventually put them in a situation of conflict and enmity with the main names of the studies on African survival in their respective countries: Melville J. Herskovits, in the United States, and Arthur Ramos, in Brazil. [5]

As for Ruth Landes, in addition to seeing her romantic relationship used by Ramos and Herskovits to achieve her credibility as an anthropologist, she was severely criticized and dismissed by them: first, because of her observation and her strong emphasis on a subject, then very well-known but considered taboo, and which concerns the strong presence of homosexual *pais de santo*, especially in the rituals of the cults considered less traditional and more de-Africanized; second, because Landes' conclusions proved to be sensibly dissonant from those perspectives adopted by Herskovits, and through which he imposed himself as a major authority in the studies of the black man of the New World (Yelvington 2006). That is, instead of explaining the social and religious practices of Afro-Brazilians as survivals of African cultural patterns, Landes sought to understand these practices as creations and adaptations to the circumstances of local social life (Corrêa, 2003; Cole 2003; Maggie 2015). [6] As far as Edison Carneiro is concerned, although his work, at the time and throughout his life, proved to be ambivalent and oscillated between these two positions, it is certain that his partnership with Landes ended up posing a threat to Arthur Ramos: he was then Herskovits' main ally in the field of Afro-Brazilian studies, in which he sought to exercise a counterpart authority to that which his colleague had in the American context. Or rather, the partnership threatened a certain asymmetrical relationship between Ramos and Carneiro, to the extent that the latter could see himself no longer depending on the intellectual prestige of the former. [7]

Rio de Janeiro, folklore and popular culture

In late 1939, after Landes' return to the United States, the outbreak of World War II and the end of his partnership with the anthropologist, Edison Carneiro moved to Rio de Janeiro to settle down there for good, soon after his marriage in 1940 to Magdalena Carneiro. [8] The relocation to Rio de Janeiro would result in a significant diversification of his work, as he distanced himself from the ethnographic field to which he had dedicated himself almost exclusively until then, at the same time as exposing himself to new networks of dialogue and

sociability. Or rather, away from the orthodoxies of the politics of Africanity of Bahian candomblés, although he never abandoned the Afro-religious theme, Carneiro's interests and gazes gradually turned to universes of practice in the favelas and cultural associations in Rio – such as carnival and samba schools. These areas were less tied to the dilemmas of African purity and more linked to issues related to the mestizaje and to the roots of Brazilian nationality and popular culture (Gonçalves 2013).

In the 1940s, pressed between the duties of his work as a journalist and also as translator and chief editor of the news agency Associated Press, Carneiro also published what are perhaps his best known works, *Quilombo dos Palmares* (1947), first released in Mexico, and *Candomblés da Bahia* (1948). In this way, he linked his ethnographic research to the study of a historical and cultural phenomenon, the *quilombos* [villages of maroons], which, together with candomblés, seemed to him one of the most vigorous expressions of the tenacious capacity for resistance and 'rebelliousness' of the African population and cultures 'to the standards of living imposed by official society' (Carneiro 2011 [1947]: XXXVII). In these spaces, blacks would have achieved what Brazilian history had otherwise systematically denied them: racial fraternity in *quilombos* and mutual care and support in candomblés, since candomblé would protect 'indistinctly everyone who believes in its mysteries and has connections with the house [of worship]' (Carneiro 1948: 89).

In this context of redemocratization, with the end of the dictatorship of the so-called *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) implemented by President Getúlio Vargas, Edison Carneiro ended up approaching a renewed black movement and, in particular, the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN), created in Rio de Janeiro by journalist and activist Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011). Along with black intellectuals such as the sociologist Guerreiro Ramos (1915-1982) and Abdias do Nascimento himself, Carneiro contributed to the group's newspaper, entitled *O quilombo* (1948-1950), as well as to the organization of the *Conferência Nacional do Negro* (National Conference of the Black - 1949) and the *Primeiro Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* (First Congress of the Black Brazilian - 1950), both in Rio de Janeiro. Theoretical and political divergences, however, quickly caused a deterioration of his relations with Abdias do Nascimento and the TEN, whose approach to the aesthetics and politics of the French and North American Negritude would be seen by Carneiro with mistrust and even as a re-updating by a 'black elite' of the 'evils' of exoticism – 'the black as a spectacle' – of the 'Afro-Brazilian phase', of which himself was one of the main protagonists, but that now he believed was overcome. For Carneiro, at that moment when the black man 'was already an old Brazilian citizen, identified with the vicissitudes of our people, [he] became, even more a foreigner' (Carneiro 1964 [1953]: 116) for scholars of the black elite. These criticisms were very similar to those that the sociologist Luís de Aguiar Costa Pinto (1920-2002) would formulate about the TEN in his work *O negro no Rio de Janeiro* (The Black in Rio de Janeiro - 1953), one of the results of the cycle of research on racial relations in Brazil sponsored by UNESCO in the 1950s. [9] Carneiro, by no means randomly, contributed in a decisive way to this research in the collection of data and in the fieldwork on traditional (recreational, religious and cultural) black associations in Rio de Janeiro. However, for little explained reasons, as Costa Pinto himself stated in the

preface to the volume, it had not been possible to 'share with him, as we had desired, the execution and intellectual responsibility of this research' (Costa Pinto 1953: 11).

The differences with the TEN, as well as its publications of the period, suggest that, at that time, Edison Carneiro reinvented himself intellectually as a folklorist and as a scholar of Brazilian folklore, with his interests increasingly focused on the discussion of cultural manifestations associated with the sense of 'people' and 'popular'. Symptomatic of this is that, in 1950, he curiously opted for the folkloric theme when he wrote the thesis *Dynamics of Folklore*, with which he tried to compete, without success, for the chair of Anthropology and Ethnography at the National Faculty of Philosophy in Rio de Janeiro. This chair had been released a year before with the death of its holder, Arthur Ramos.

The last twenty years of Carneiro's career, until his death in 1972, in Rio de Janeiro, were dedicated to the so-called 'Brazilian folkloric movement' and to the Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore: an institution created in 1958 by the Ministry of Education and Culture and which, through its state commissions, sought to stimulate research and documentation of popular manifestations and the inclusion of folklore teaching in Brazilian schools and universities (Vilhena 1997). In this movement, he stood out as one of its main representatives, with substantial production dedicated to the conceptualization of folklore phenomena and the unveiling of the matrixes of culture and national identity. This was a substantive but scattered production, which only from time to time – or posthumously – would end up gathered in a book, following the example of *A sabedoria popular* (1951), *Ladinos e crioulos* (1964), *Dinâmica do folclore* (1965) and *Folguedos tradicionais* (1974). Edison Carneiro's effort in these works is to revalidate the relevance of folklore as a legitimate science in the interpretation of social life, seeking to see the folkloric manifestations (samba schools, capoeira, carnival festivities and other popular festivals and revelry), not as mere remnants of archaic practices and uncontaminated by time, but as a dynamic symbolic heritage through which 'the people', those excluded from the dominant society, socially and politically interpret everyday life. That is why, according to Carneiro, there would be no reason to believe, as with his folklorist colleagues, that popular amusements and revelry would disappear with the advance of urbanization and mass culture. On the contrary, as long as stimulated and encouraged – by the state and by the intellectuals themselves – they would be able to recompose themselves 'to infinity', traditional in form, but always contemporary in terms of their meanings and contents, always with the 'same age of the events from which they were born' (Carneiro 2008 [1965]: 22).

The apex of his work in this series of studies was in 1961, when he took over the direction of the government agency 'Campaign for the Defense of Brazilian Folklore', exercised until his compulsory removal due to the military coup of 1964. During his mandate as director, he contributed significantly to the nationalization and systematization of folklore studies in the country, leading the creation of the *Brazilian Folklore Magazine* (1961-1976), an official means of disseminating research, congresses, exhibitions and festivals promoted by the Campaign. Among the many themes in which he engaged as a folklorist, one can highlight his particular

interest in samba and Rio de Janeiro samba schools, in which Carneiro believed he found one of the most eloquent expressions of the dynamic nature and capacity for transformation of folkloric manifestations. Like his relationships with *candomblés* in the 1930s, 'his relationship with [samba] schools was not that of [just] a distant observer' (Gonçalves 2013: 241). Not because he simply let his analyses be subsumed into native categories, but because his actions were almost invariably marked by a strong sense of commitment and daily interaction with the subjects and social spaces he studied throughout his life. That is why he received numerous tributes and decorations from the most diverse associations, for example: Grande Benemérito da Portela (Grand Benefactor of Portela); honorary member of the samba schools Acadêmicos do Salgueiro and Mangueira, in Rio de Janeiro; and honorary president of Afoxé Filhos de Gandhi, in Salvador, and of the *frevo* club Pás Douradas, in Recife (Nascimento, 2011; Costa, 2012; Gonçalves, 2013).

Edison Carneiro and anthropology in Brazil

Edison Carneiro made numerous achievements with the folkloric movement, and was extremely successful in creating a national mobilization in the political and cultural field for the study and preservation of popular culture. Meanwhile, the folklorists and their efforts to give folklore its own autonomous scientific status did not find equal success in the academic field, marginalized as they were by the nascent social sciences in the university. This was singularly materialized in the first works of the sociologist Florestan Fernandes (1920-1995) and the fight he fought against the claims to scientific status of folklore (Fernandes 2003 [1977]) from the 1950s onwards. Perhaps, precisely because Carneiro never achieved an academic position and, at the end of his life, was revoked in his functions by the military regime because of his communist activities, one of his closest friends, Aydano do Couto Ferraz, even claimed that Carneiro was a 'lost vocation': he was drawn away from the great deeds to which he was destined, having lacked the elementary institutional 'shelters' to accomplish the 'work [that was] expected from him' (Ferraz 1972: n.p.).

It is hard to say what work could have been expected from him or even how much this portrait corresponded or not to Edison Carneiro's perceptions of his own career. In contrast, however, with Ferraz's portrait, it can be said that if, on the one hand, he remained on the margins of the academic institutions in which the Brazilian social sciences became professionalized from the 1930s onwards, on the other hand, as a self-taught intellectual, he made the 'constitutive ambiguity of his own figure' (Nascimento 2011: 22) the nucleus of effervescence of a work whose strength and richness reside precisely in the traffic and tensions between the many universes that conform it: disciplinary, professional, political and cultural. Whether in his work on Afro-Brazilian history and religions or in his production and performance in the field of folklore and popular culture, which played a fundamental role in the very constitution of these areas of studies, the work of Edison Carneiro represents a remarkable effort of understanding and documentation of the long and tortuous path along which blacks were present in the construction of Brazilian society.

With no background in social sciences or anthropology, but in dialogue with them throughout his productions and trajectory, Edison Carneiro played a decisive role in the development of social studies and ethnography in Brazil, and in this sense can be claimed as a pioneering character for the consolidation of fieldwork in Brazil and, most especially, for the already broad and consolidated tradition of Afro-religious studies in the country: a tradition for which his work remains, nationally and internationally, an indispensable reference. His intellectual protagonism, whose importance is inseparable from the solutions of political commitment that, through his production, he sought to establish with the subjects he studied, made the struggle for the rights of full freedom of manifestation, organization and celebration of cultural and religious practices of African origin in Brazil, the gravitational axis around which his career orbited.

Primary Sources: work of Edison Carneiro

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1931a. “Lixópolis”. *O Momento*. Salvador, 15 de setembro.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1931b. “Onde Judas perdeu as botas”, *O Momento*, Salvador, 15 October.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1934. “As raças oprimidas no Brasil”, *A Bahia*. Salvador, 12 & 13 October.

CARNEIRO, Edison Carneiro. 1988 [1935]. “A situação do negro no Brasil”. In: FREYRE, Gilberto (ed.). *Estudos Afro-Brasileiro: trabalhos apresentados ao 1º Congresso Afro-Brasileiro do Recife*. Recife: FUNDAJ/Ed. Massangana.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1935. “Exploração do negro”. *A Manhã*. Rio de Janeiro, 14 November.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1940. “The Structure of African Cults in Bahia”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, v. 53, n. 210, 271-278.

CARNEIRO, Edison & FERRAZ, Aydano do Couto (eds.). 1940. *O negro no Brasil: trabalhos apresentados ao 2º Congresso Afro-brasileiro (Bahia)*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 2011 [1947]. *Quilombo dos Palmares*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1948. *Candomblés da Bahia*. Salvador: Publicações do Museu do Estado/Bahia.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1951. “Arthur Ramos: Brazilian Anthropologist (1903-1949)”, *Phylon* (1940-1956), v. 12, n. 1.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1958. *O Quilombo dos Palmares*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1964 [1953]. “Os estudos brasileiros do negro”. In: *Ladinos e Crioulos*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1968. “O negro como objeto de ciência”, *Afro-Ásia*, n. 6-7.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1980. "A lei do ventre-livre". *Afro-Ásia*, n. 13.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 2008 [1965]. *Dinâmica do Folclore*. São Paulo, Martins Fontes.

CARNEIRO, Edison. 1991. *Religiões negras/Negros bantos*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira.

SANTOS, Gilfrancisco (ed.). 2005. *Musa Capenga: Poemas de Edison Carneiro*. Salvador, Fundação Cultural do Estado da Bahia.

Bibliography

AMADO, Jorge. 1936. "O jovem feiticeiro", *Boletim de Ariel*. Rio de Janeiro, abril.

AMADO, Jorge. 1981. "O professor Souza Carneiro", *A Tarde*, Salvador, 20 January.

AMADO, Jorge. "Discurso de posse". *A Tarde*. Salvador, 6/3/1985.

AMORIM, Clóvis. 1937. "Doidos". *Estado da Bahia*. Salvador, 15 June.

AZEVEDO, Thales. 1996 [1955]. *As elites de cor numa cidade brasileira*. Salvador, Edufba.

AZEVEDO, Thales. "Classes sociais e grupos de prestígio". *Cultura e situação racial no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1966.

BACELAR, Jeferson. *A hierarquia das raças*. Rio de Janeiro, Pallas, 2001.

BASTIDE, Roger & FERNANDES, Florestan. 1955. *Branços e Negros em São Paulo*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional.

BUTLER, Kim. *Freedoms given, freedoms won: Afro-Brazilians in post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador*. New Brunswick/New Jersey/London, Rutgers University Press, 1998.

CAPONE, Stefania. 2010 [1999]. *Searching for Africa in Brazil. Power and Tradition in Candomblé*. Durham NC, Duke University Press.

CARNEIRO, Nelson. *Punhados de vida*. Brasília, Centro Gráfico do Senado Federal, 1990.

COLE, Sally. 2003. *Ruth Landes: a life in anthropology*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London.

CONSORTE, Josildeth Gomes. 1997. "Culturalismo e educação nos anos 50: desafio da diversidade", *Cadernos CEDES*, v. 18, n. 43.

CORRÊA, Mariza. 2003. *Antropólogas & antropologia*. Belo Horizonte, Ed. UFMG.

COSTA, Maria Elisabeth Andrade. 2012. "Edison Carneiro, um jovem feiticeiro". In: CENTRO NACIONAL DE FOLCLORE E CULTURA POPULAR. *Centenário de Edison Carneiro*. Rio de Janeiro, CNFCP.

COSTA PINTO, Luís de Aguiar. 1953. *O negro no Rio de Janeiro*. São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional.

COUCEIRO, Luiz Alberto & TALENTO, Biaggio. 2009. *Edison Carneiro*. Salvador, Assembleia Legislativa do Estado da Bahia.

CUNHA, Olívia Maria Gomes da. 1999. "Sua alma em sua palma: Identificando a 'raça' e inventando a nação". In: PANDOLFI, Dulce (ed.). *Repensando o Estado Novo*. Rio de Janeiro, Ed. FGV.

DANTAS, Beatriz Góis. 1988. *Vovó nagô e papai branco*. Rio de Janeiro, Graal.

FERNANDES, Florestan. 2003 [1977]. *O Folclore em Questão*. São Paulo, Martins Fontes.

FERRAZ, Aydano do Couto. 1972. "Retrato do escritor aos 60". *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 23 June.

GONÇALCES, Renata de Sá. 2013. "Edison Carneiro e o samba: reflexões sobre folclore, ciências sociais e preservação cultural", *Anuário antropológico*, vol. 38, n. 1.

GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio. 2008. "Africanism and racial democracy: the correspondence between Herskovits and Arthur Ramos (1935-1949)", *Estudios interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe*, vol. 19, n. 1.

LANDES, Ruth. 1994 [1947]. *The City of Women*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press.

LIMA, Vivaldo da Costa & OLIVEIRA, Waldir Freitas (eds.). 1987. *Cartas de Edison Carneiro a Arthur Ramos*. São Paulo, Corrupio.

MAGGIE, Yvonne. 2015. "No underskirts in Africa: Edison Carneiro and the 'lineages' of Afro-Brazilian religious anthropology", *Sociologia & antropologia*, vol. 5, n. 1.

NASCIMENTO, Ana Carolina Carvalho de Almeida. 2011. "O sexto sentido do pesquisador: a experiência etnográfica de Edison Carneiro", *Textos escolhidos de cultura e arte populares*, vol. 8, n. 1.

OLIVEIRA, Waldir Freitas. 1980. "Edison Carneiro", *Afro-Ásia*, n. 13. Accessible at: <https://portalseer.ufba.br/index.php/afroasia/article/view/20806/13407>

ORTIZ, Renato. 1994. *Cultura brasileira & identidade nacional*. São Paulo, Brasiliense.

RAMOS, Arthur. 1934. *O negro brasileiro: Etnografia religiosa e psicanálise*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

RIBEIRO, Rene. 1956. *Religião e relações raciais*. Ministério da Educação e Cultura/Serviço de Documentação. Rio de Janeiro: Departamento de Imprensa Nacional.

ROSSI, Gustavo. 2012. "Uma família de cultura: os Souza Carneiro na Salvador de inícios do

século XX”, *Lua nova: revista de cultura e política*, n. 85. Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-64452012000100004>.

ROSSI, Gustavo. 2015. *O intelectual feiticeiro: Edison Carneiro e o campo de estudos das relações raciais no Brasil*. Campinas/SP, Editora da Unicamp.

SANSONE, Lívio. 2012. “Estados Unidos e Brasil no Gantois: o poder e a origem transnacional dos estudos afro-brasileiros”. *Revista brasileira de ciências sociais*. Vol. 27, n. 79.

SILVA, Paulo Santos. 2000. *Âncoras da tradição: Luta política, intelectuais e construção do discurso histórico na Bahia (1930-1949)*. Salvador, Ed. UFBA.

SEIXAS, Cid. 1996. “Modernismo e tradicionalismo na Bahia: Apontamentos”. *Triste Bahia. Oh! Quão dessemelhante*. Salvador, EGBA.

SOUZA CARNEIRO, Antônio Joaquim de. 1927. *Jesus! Mistérios das iniciações de Jesus de Nazareth*. São Paulo, Ed. O Pensamento.

VILHENA, Luís Rodolfo. 1997. *Projeto e Missão: o movimento folclórico brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro, Funarte/FGV.

WAGLEY, Charles (ed.). 1952. *Race and Class in Rural Brazil*. Paris, UNESCO.

YELVINGTON, Kevin A. (ed.). 2006. “The invention of Africa in Latin America and the Caribbean”. In: *Afro-Atlantic dialogues: anthropology in the Diaspora*. Santa Fe/Oxford, School of American Research Press/James Currey.

[1] The elder brother to whom Landes refers is Nelson Carneiro (1910-1996), who, recently graduated from the Law School of Bahia, took his first steps in politics, sponsored by the local leader of whom Souza Carneiro himself was a protégé and an exalted correlative, José Joaquim Seabra (1855-1942): a character of extreme importance in Bahian politics at the time and who governed the state almost uninterruptedly between 1912 and 1924. Nelson Carneiro would build a successful political career, elected, from the 1950s, for successive terms as a Federal Deputy and Senator of Rio de Janeiro, standing out as the author of the bill that instituted divorce in Brazil in 1977. See Carneiro (1990).

[2] Besides Edison Carneiro, also part of the Rebels Academy were Jorge Amado, Aydano do Couto Ferraz (1914-1985), Clóvis Amorim, João Cordeiro (1905—1938), Guilherme Freitas Dias Gomes (1912-1943), José Alves Ribeiro (1909-1968), Sosígenes Costa (1901-1968), Walter da Silveira (1915-1970), José Bastos (1905-1937) and, finally, the only one over 28 years old, considered a kind of ‘spiritual leader’ of the group, Pinheiro Viegas (1865-1937). With the exception of Edison Carneiro and Jorge Amado, none of these young men established recognized trajectories in Brazilian intellectual and literary history. Other names, for example Walter da Silveira and Sosígenes Costa, did, however, have a trajectory with strong regional resonance, in film criticism and poetry in Bahia, respectively. The rest of them kept an intermittent and

sporadic poetic and literary production, whose recognition little extrapolated the memories of the members of the group itself. For more detailed information on the social profile of the Rebels and the Bahian intellectual context in the 1920s and 1930s, see Seixas (1996), Silva (2000) and Rossi (2015).

[3] In Brazil, the 1930s constituted a moment of inflection with regard to the symbolic incorporation of the cultures of African matrix, as well as indigenous ones, in the reflection and definition of national identity, in which the *mestizaje*, from ancient *macula*, would be systematically celebrated as a mark of its riches and potentialities. Manipulated by intellectuals and by the state itself, the *mestizaje* was then transformed into a central element for the formulation of a discourse of harmony and mingling among the races that formed Brazilian society. This discourse, in various ways, took advantage of elements associated with blackness (for example, samba, *feijoadá*, or the white costumes of *Candomblé* women) to transform them into privileged signs of national authenticity (Ortiz 1994; Cunha 1999).

[4] Of course, although intellectuals acted as privileged chancellors of the greater or lesser Africanity of the cults, they were not simply the inventors of these differentiations, but rather codified political disputes between the Afro-religious leaderships themselves and their practitioners around the legitimacy and prestige of the traditions they followed. On the subject, see Capone (2010 [1999]) and Dantas (1988).

[5] The campaign of public defamation of her research in Bahia and the consequences of Ruth Landes's romantic relationship with Edison Carneiro were analyzed by Cole (2003) and Corrêa (2003). A graduate of Columbia University in the United States and a student of such names as Franz Boas (1858-1942), Ruth Benedict (1887-1945) and Margaret Mead (1901-1978), Ruth Landes, unlike anthropologists of equivalent background and education, never achieved a permanent academic position in the United States; this would only happen in the late 1960s in Canada. Moreover, Landes never wrote the ethnographic monography she intended to produce on her research in Bahia, which eventually became the book *City of Women*, published only in 1947, and yet received, not as an anthropological and scientific book, but as a 'popular account' or travel narrative (Cole 2003: 221). The most substantive texts on Landes' research were reduced to two articles she published in 1940, 'A Cult Matriarchate and Male Homosexuality' in *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, and 'Fetish Worship in Brazil' in *The Journal of American Folklore*.

[6] This interpretative dilemma was not restricted to the work of Ruth Landes. At the time, the ethnographic data from Bahia served also to polarize an international debate on the social organization of the black family in the Americas, in which these two perspectives were defended by Herskovits and the American black sociologist Edward Franklin Frazier. Having both done fieldwork in Salvador in the 1940s, with data collected even from the same black families, Frazier and Herskovits reached quite different conclusions, for example, about concubinage: for Frazier, it was a practice that was explained by the social disorganization caused by poverty and slavery; on the contrary, for Herskovits, it was a survival of African polygamous habits. On this debate that took place in the pages of the *American Sociological Review*, in 1942, and its importance for Afro-Brazilian studies, see Sansone (2012).

[7] The first two religious ethnographies of Carneiro were published by the prestigious publisher *Civilização Brasileira*, in the collection *Biblioteca de Divulgação Científica*, under the direction of Arthur Ramos. Although he was interested in the field data collected by Carneiro, Arthur Ramos had difficulty giving greater importance to the work of his colleague, who at times was treated more like a privileged informant than a *candomblé* interpreter. In this sense, the correspondence exchanged between Carneiro

and Landes between 1939 and 1941 reveals the possibilities that the partnership between the two could represent in Edison Carneiro's career. In this correspondence, it is possible to see Landes' effort to intercede, albeit without success, in favour of Carneiro staying in New York, using her former teachers Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Carneiro, however, was unsuccessful in applying for the few scholarships available for Brazilians to study in the United States, such as those offered by the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations, for which Arthur Ramos was also applying. This correspondence can be found at the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution in the United States.

[8] The couple had two children, Philon and Lídia Carneiro.

[9] Under the impact of World War II, the holocaust and crimes committed in the name of racial purity, in the late 1940s, UNESCO, whose Social Sciences Division was then under the direction of Brazilian Arthur Ramos, commissioned a series of research projects on racial relations in different states of Brazil, seen as a potentially successful case of alleviating interracial conflicts. Among these researches, besides that of Costa Pinto, to which Carneiro contributed, some of the main results were: *The colored elites* (1996 [1955]), by Thales de Azevedo; *Whites and blacks in São Paulo* (1955), by Florestan Fernandes and Roger Bastide; *Race and class in rural Brazil* (1952), organized by Charles Wagley; and *Religion and race relations* (1956), by René Ribeiro.