



# Africanness in Action

Essentialism and Musical Imaginations of Africa in Brazil

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CAMPSSAH BOOK TALK

FEB 22, 2022



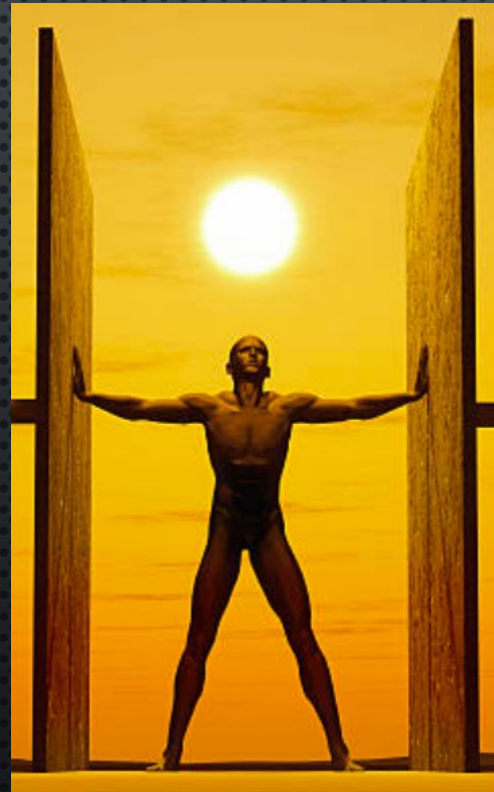


Letieres Leite (1959-2021)



# WHAT IS “AFRICAN” ABOUT AFRICAN MUSIC?

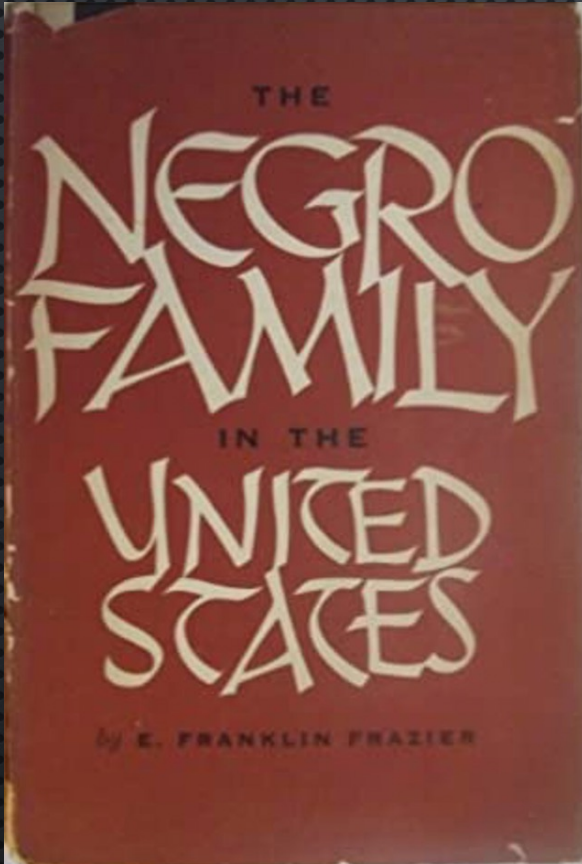
RHYTHMICITY  
PERCUSSIVENESS  
EMBODIMENT  
SPIRITUALITY  
SPONTANEITY  
COLLECTIVISM



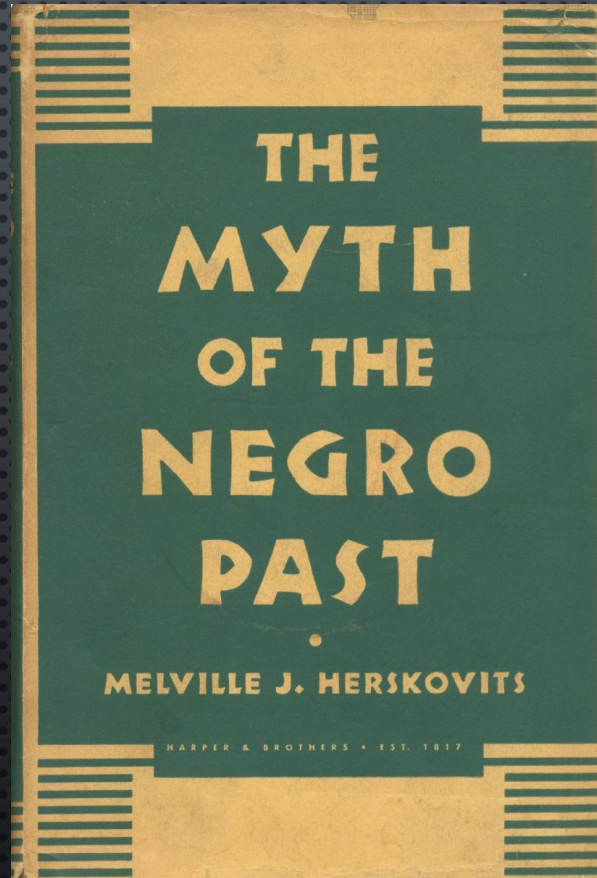
MELODICITY / HARMONICITY  
NON-PERCUSSIVENESS  
MIND / INTELLECTUALISM  
SACRED AND SECULAR SEPARATION  
FORMALISM  
INDIVIDUALISM



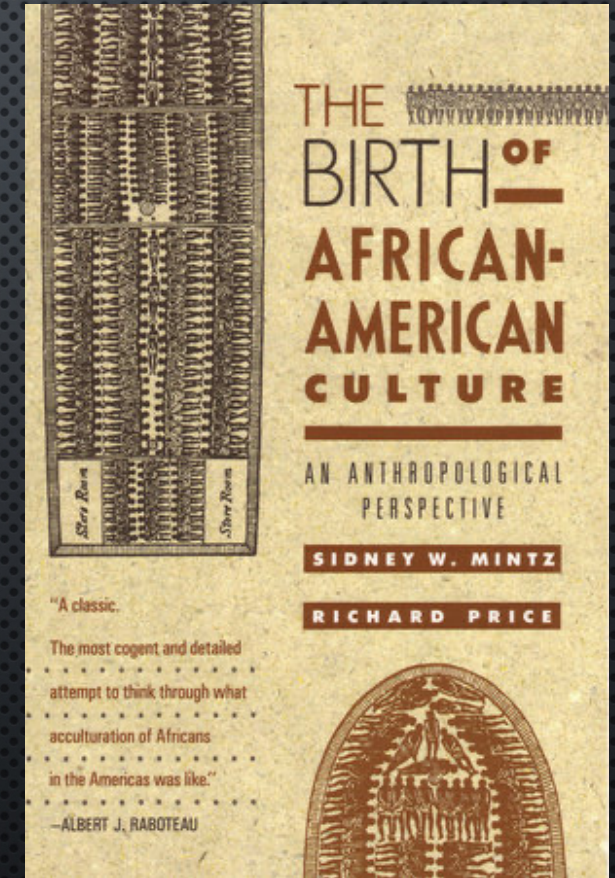
# SEARCHING FOR “AFRICA” IN THE DIASPORA



Loss of culture 1939



Africanisms 1941

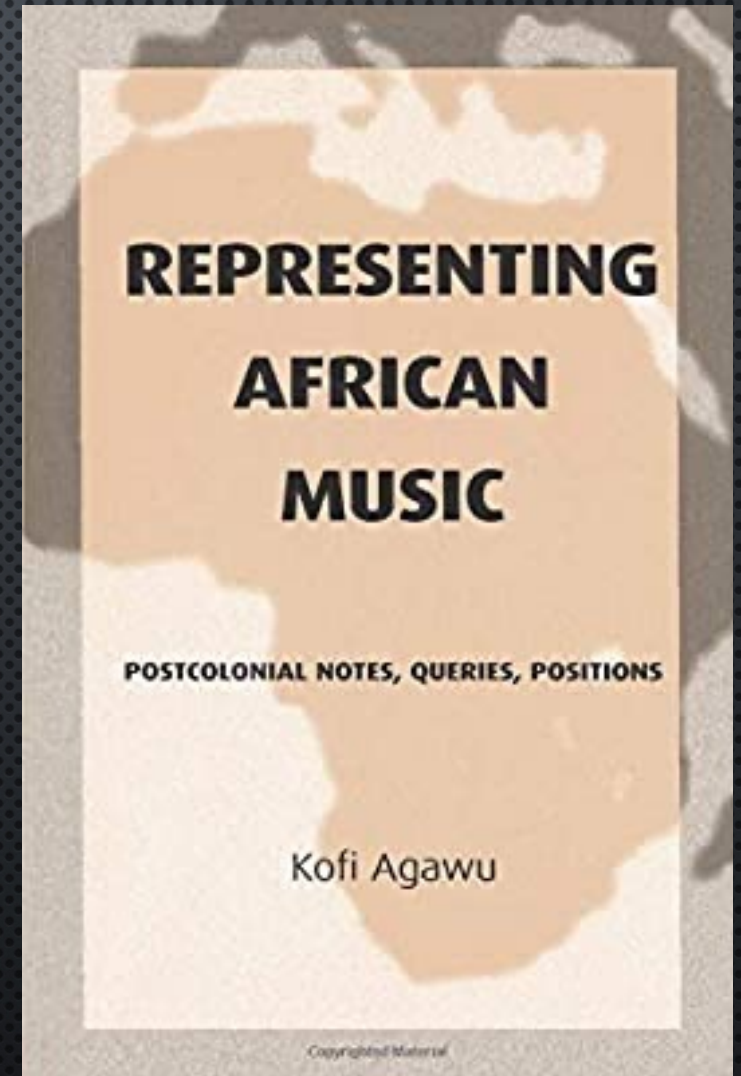


Creolization 1976



# THE INVENTION OF AFRICAN RHYTHM

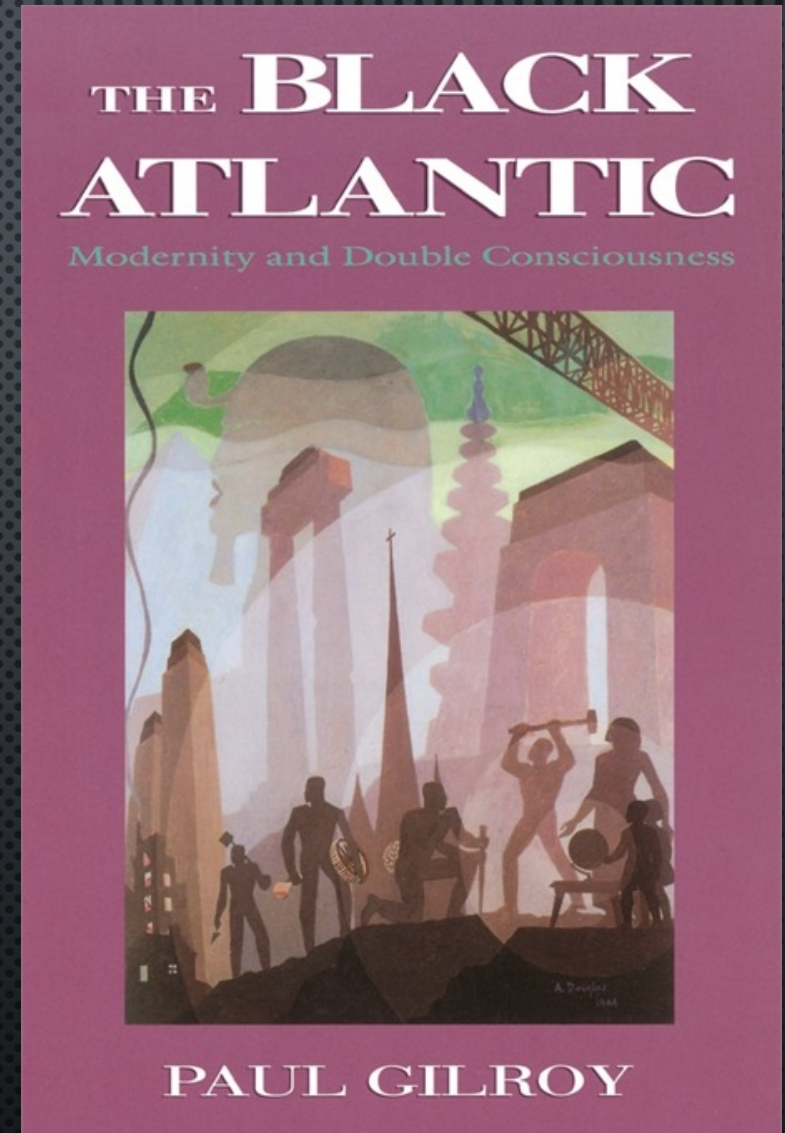
- IDEOLOGIES OF DIFFERENCE
- WE CAN FIND TRUE DIFFERENCE ONLY WHEN WE ASSUME SAMENESS





# THREE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF BLACK CULTURE

- ESSENTIALIST
- ANTI-ESSENTIALIST
- ANTI-ANTI-ESSENTIALIST



1993



Wakanda [ . . . ] function[s] as a place for multiple generations of black Americans to store some of our most deeply held aspirations. We have for centuries sought to either find or create a promised land where we would be untroubled by the criminal horrors of our American existence [ . . . ] Never mind that most of us had never been to Africa. The point was not verisimilitude or a precise accounting of Africa's reality. It was the envisioning of a free self. (Wallace 2018)



# FROM AFRICANISMS TO TROPES OF AFRICANNESS

RHYTHMICITY  
PERCUSSIVENESS  
EMBODIMENT  
SPIRITUALITY  
SPONTANEITY  
COLLECTIVISM

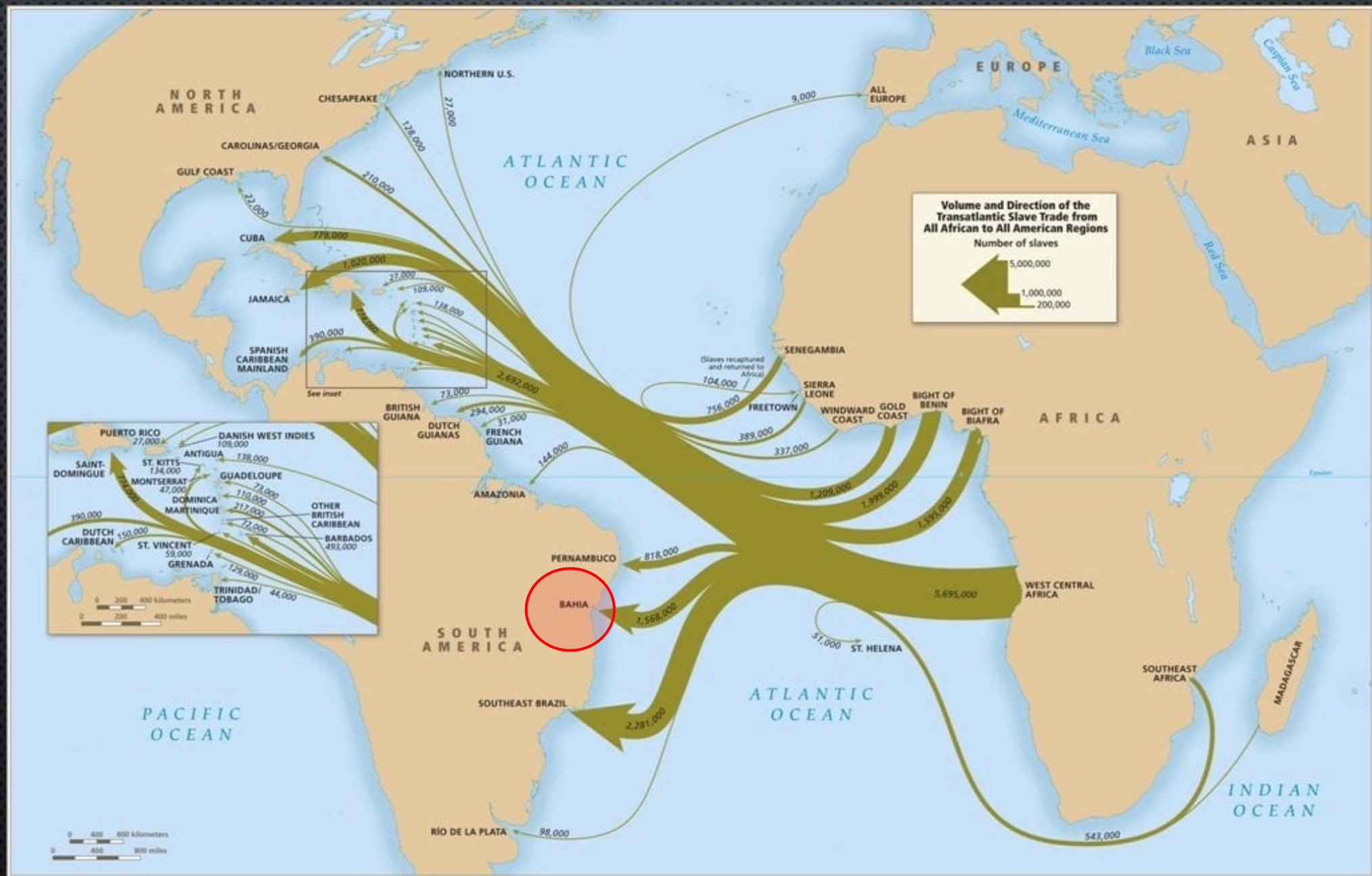
## TWO INTERRELATED REALMS:

- DISCOURSE
- PRACTICES

## TWO PREMISES:

- AGENCY AND MEANING FOUND AT THE CROSSROADS OF DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE
- FOLLOW PRACTITIONERS

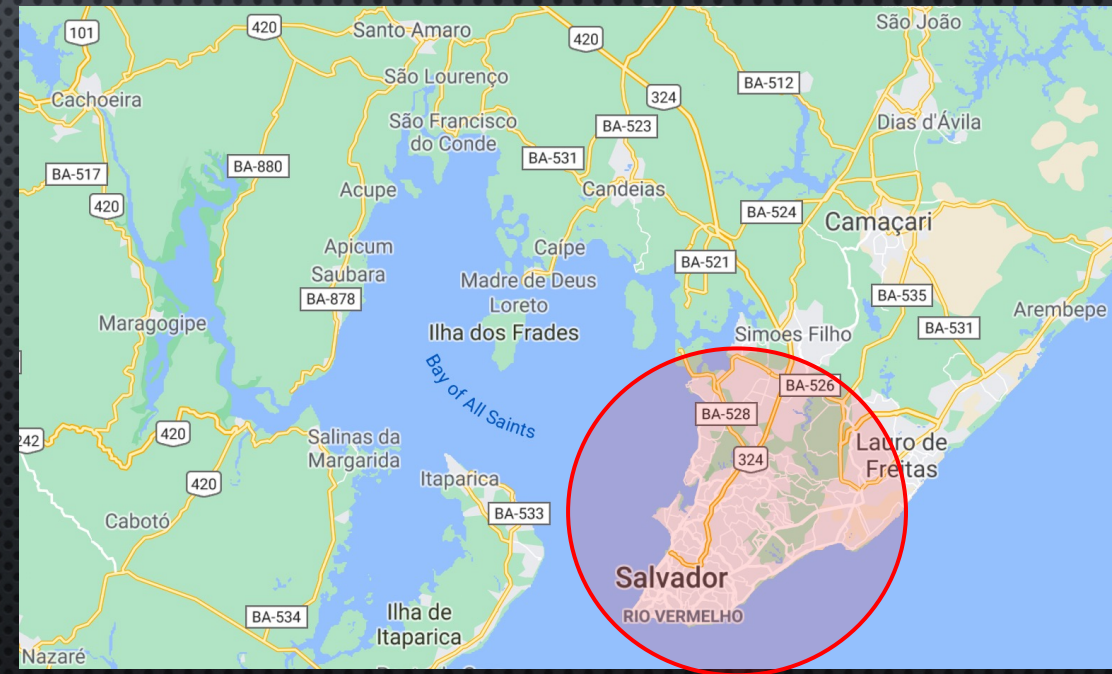
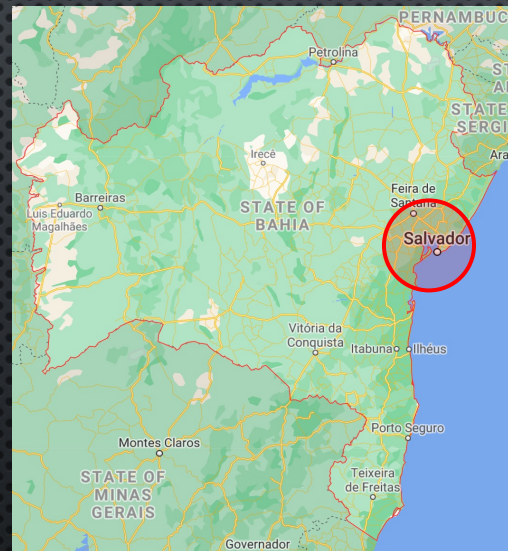
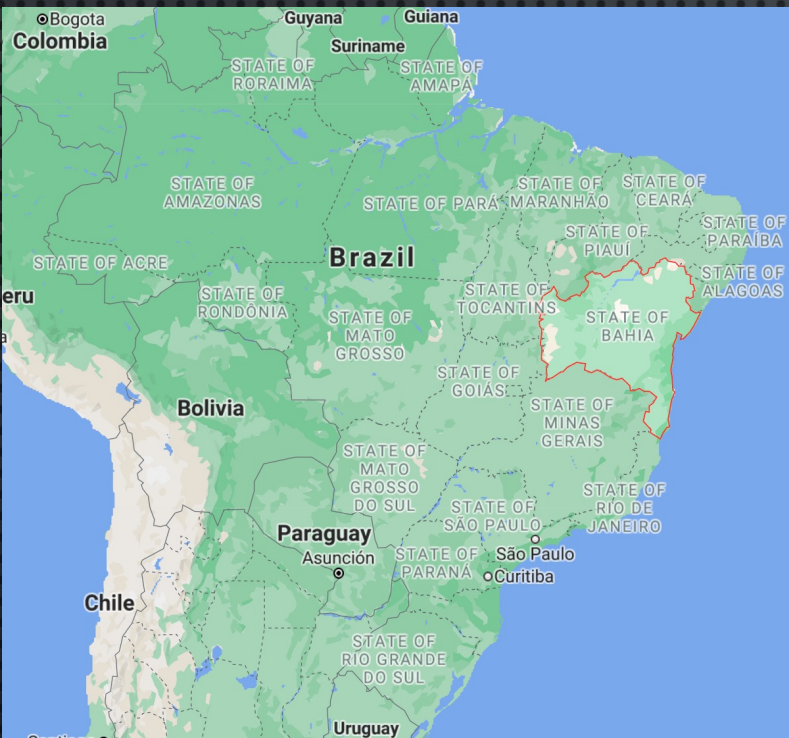




The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (Eltis 2013)



# THE “AFRICAN ROME”





# “MORE AFRICAN THAN AFRICA”



on the visitors. The late Wyza Kendy (1975–2017), for instance, asserted that he felt at home in Bahia because “Bahia is Africa,” and went as far as to say that “In some regards, Brazil preserves more African rituals than Africa itself.”<sup>33</sup> This affirmation of Bahia’s Africanness by an African individual was music to Bahians’ ears. The news outlet that published Kendy’s statement about Bahia’s superior Africanness concluded: “During the night of the concert, the Africa that both locales preserve will be mixed and will become one, complete, faithful, and original.” These statements suggest that both Bahia and Angola preserve complementary aspects of an “original” Africa: Bahia has preserved Africa’s most traditional and ritualistic aspects and Angola the most modern ones. Bahia is thus



GOLI GUERREIRO

A TRAMA  
DOS TAMBORES

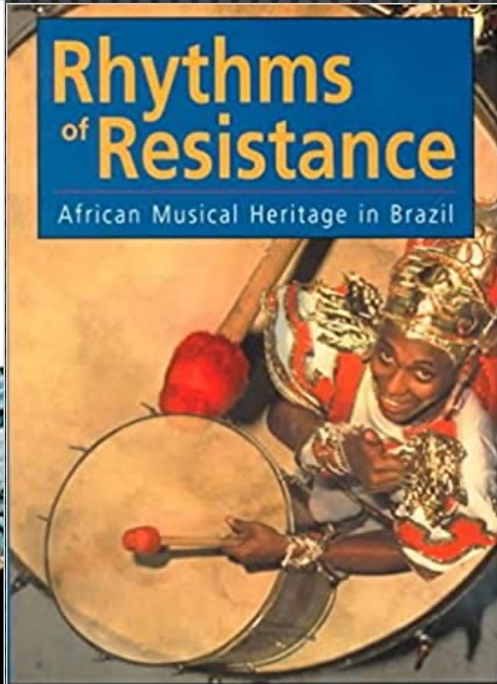
A MÚSICA AFRO-POP DE SALVADOR

editora 34



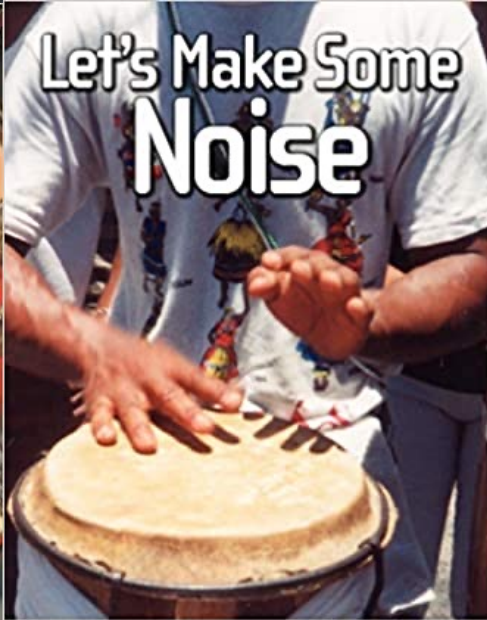
Rhythms  
of Resistance

African Musical Heritage in Brazil

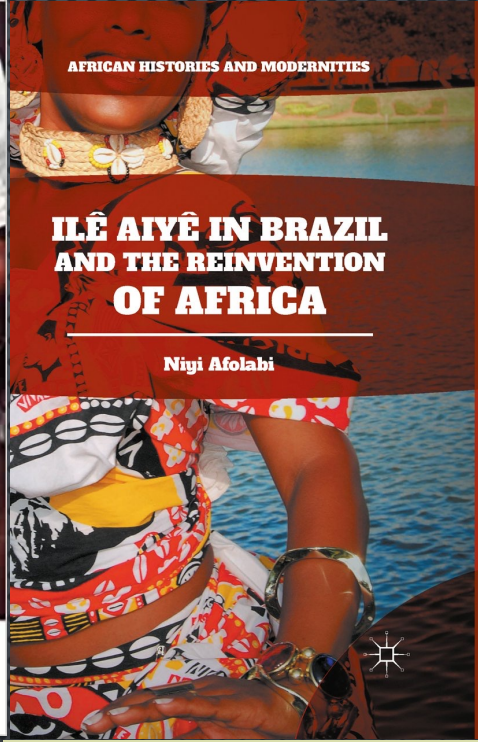


Peter Fryer

Let's Make Some  
Noise



Axé and the African Roots of Brazilian Popular Music  
Clarence Bernard Henry



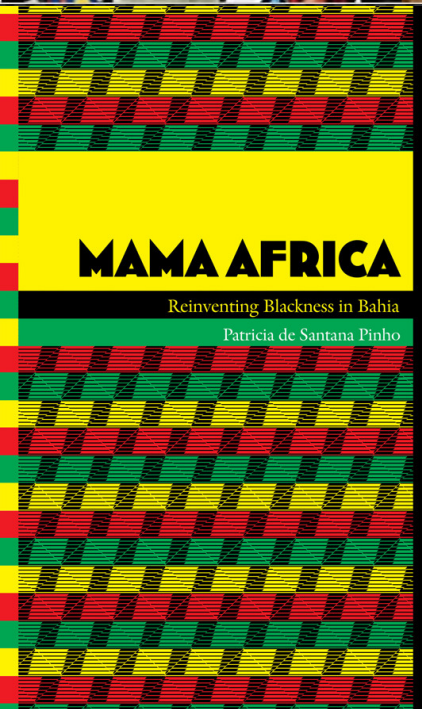
ILÊ AIYÊ IN BRAZIL  
AND THE REINVENTION  
OF AFRICA

Nigi Afolabi



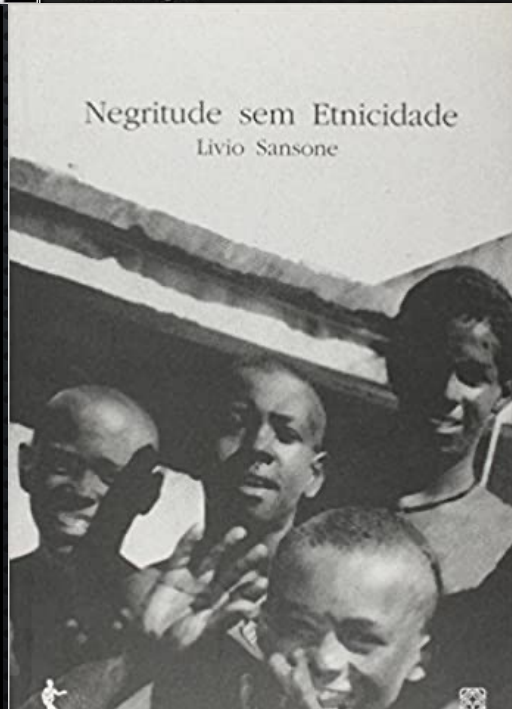
Ritmos em Trânsito

Estudo Antropológico da Música e do Ritmo



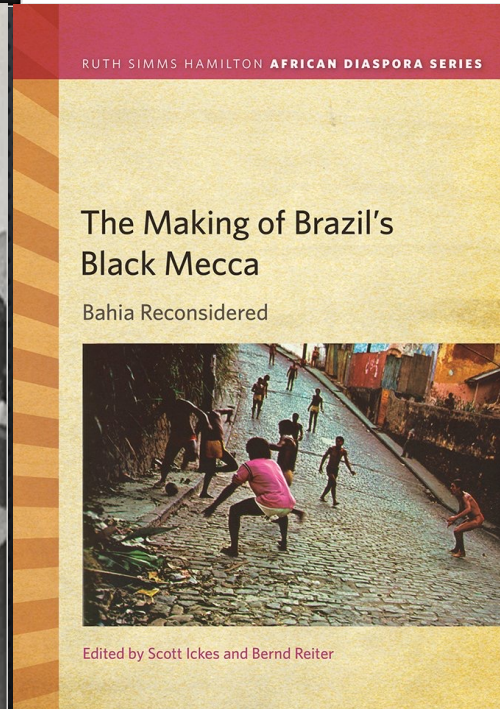
MAMA AFRICA

Reinventing Blackness in Bahia  
Patrícia de Santana Pinho



Negritude sem Etnicidade

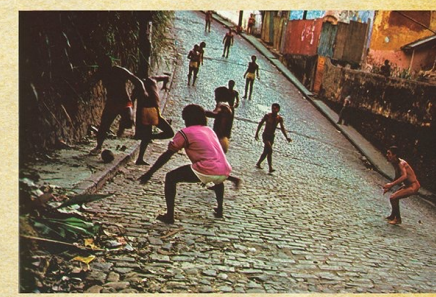
Livio Sansone



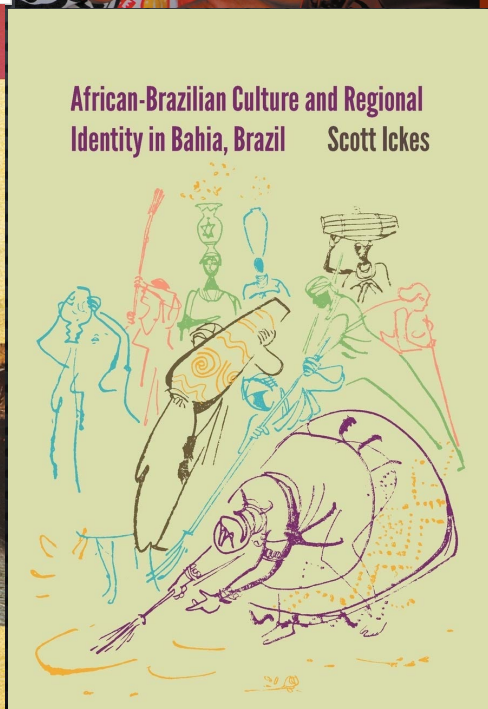
RUTH SIMMS HAMILTON AFRICAN DIASPORA SERIES

The Making of Brazil's  
Black Mecca

Bahia Reconsidered

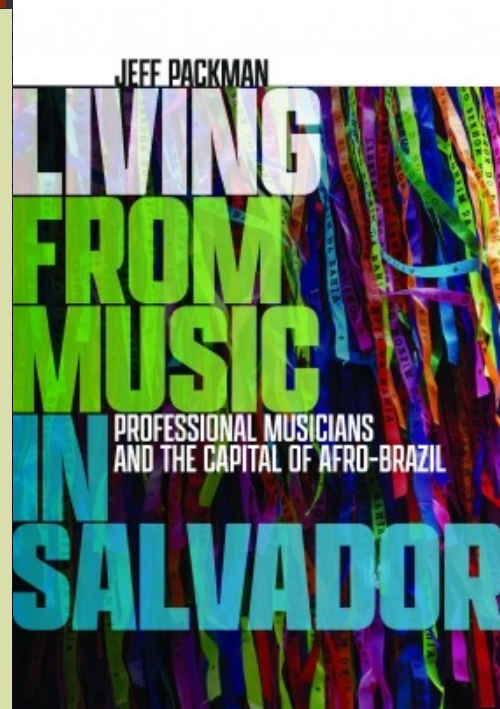


Edited by Scott Ickes and Bernd Reiter



African-Brazilian Culture and Regional  
Identity in Bahia, Brazil

Scott Ickes



JEFF PACKMAN

LIVING  
FROM  
MUSIC  
IN  
SALVADOR

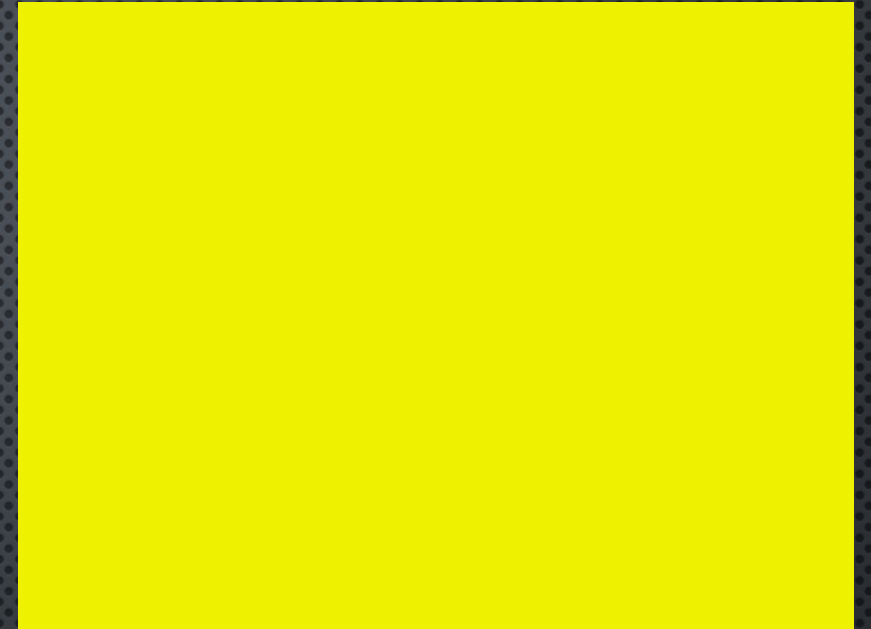
PROFESSIONAL MUSICIANS  
AND THE CAPITAL OF AFRO-BRAZIL



Orkestra Rumpilezz



Orquestra Nzinga de Berimbaus



Orquestra Afrosinfônica



OBADX



# Global

Jazz

European  
Classical  
Music

# Afro-Brazilian

Candomblé  
Religion

Capoeira

Folk samba

Carnival samba



# LETIERES LEITE'S RHYTHMICITY

“MY INTENTION IS TO CREATE A TYPE OF MUSIC WHERE THE RESOURCES OF AFRO-BAHIAN MUSIC ARE MIXED; WHERE THE COMPLEXITY AND ORGANIZATION WHICH CHARACTERIZES THEIR RHYTHMIC SYSTEMS BECOME CLEAR. IT IS A WORK FOCUSED ON AND INSPIRED BY PERCUSSION AND THE RHYTHMIC AND POLYRHYTHMIC UNIVERSE OF CANDOMBLÉ”

“ALL AFRICAN MUSICS FOLLOW A RIGOROUS SYSTEM OF CLAVES. *CLAVE* IS THE SMALLEST RHYTHMIC UNIT AROUND WHICH THESE KINDS OF MUSICS REVOLVE.”

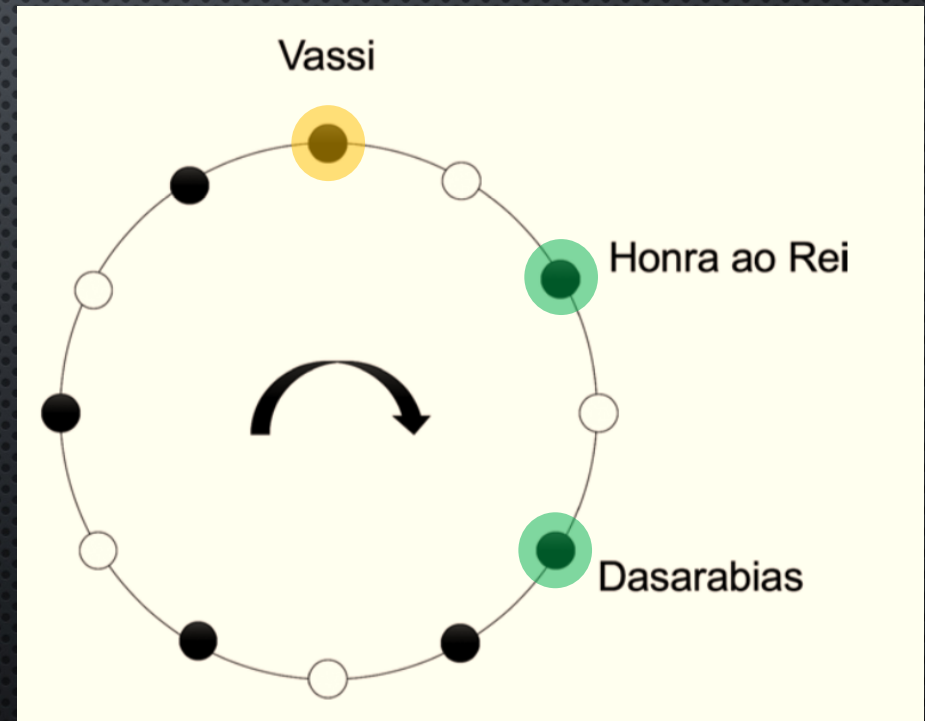




# TIMELINE ROTATION

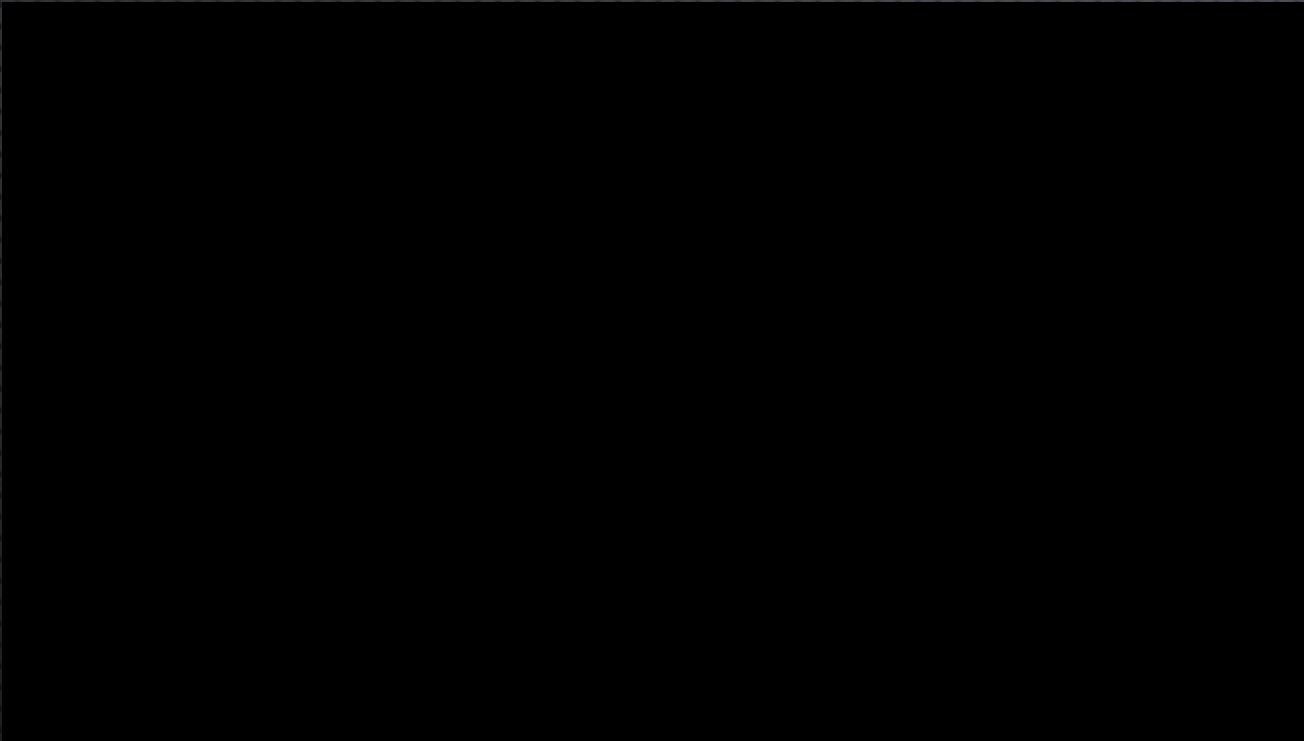


Candomblé ceremony featuring vassi rhythm





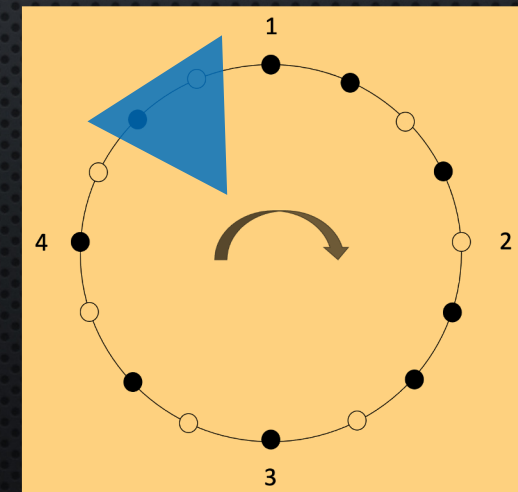
# TIMELINE TRUNCATION



ijexá

Feira de Sete Portas

cut



Afoxé carnival ensemble featuring ijexá rhythm



# DAINHO XEQUERÊ'S MELODICITY



“IN THE SAME WAY THAT PEOPLE IMAGINE AFRICA AS A SMALL COUNTRY FULL OF POOR AND NAKED PEOPLE, THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT AFRICAN MUSIC IS ONLY DRUMS AND RHYTHM.”

“WE WANT TO DISPEL THE MYTH BY SHOWING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE RHYTHMIC, MELODIC, AND HARMONIC ASPECTS OF AFRICAN MUSIC.”



# RAVEL'S *BOLERO*

## OBADX'S ARRANGEMENT FOR BERIMBAU ORCHESTRA

**Example 7.2** Ravel's *Bolero* performed by OBADX at UFBA's School of Music, 2014.

$\text{♩} = 40$

The musical score is for an 8-part Berimbau arrangement of Ravel's Bolero. It is written in 3/4 time with a tempo of 40 beats per minute. The score consists of eight staves, labeled Ber 1 through Ber 8. Ber 1 through Ber 5 are in treble clef, while Ber 6 through Ber 8 are in bass clef. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Berimbau 6-8 part features a dense, continuous rhythmic pattern in the bass.



UFBA-EMUS (2014)

(5:55-6:30)



# CONCLUSIONS

- TROPES ARE STRATEGICALLY EMPHASIZED, DOWNPLAYED, IGNORED, TRADED
- AFRICANNESS IS EMERGENT AND CONTINGENT BUT NOT SEPARATED FROM THE TRAJECTORY OF AFRICANS IN THE DIASPORA
- STRATEGIC USE OF POPULAR/ERUDITE BINARY
- FAMILIARITY WITH TROPES EXPANDS MUSICAL DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY







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THANK YOU!