

constitutes a body of explicitly identified cultural texts that are viewed under privileged circumstances—that is, they are not part of the overall sociocultural fabric, but are sought out by audiences who choose to consume this particular genre of cultural production, either in the circumscribed space of a theater or in the privacy of the home. For those interested in cultural studies, especially the considerable importance of Brazilian film, the coverage here of the eroticized Japanese body, male as well as female, is enormously useful.

The other topic, Japanese political militancy on the left during the period of dictatorship during the 1960s and 1970s, is not as tied to a specific cultural production, although one could argue that the range of interpretive documents such as journalistic coverage, photography, police reports, even “wanted” posters does constitute a textual inventory susceptible to interpretive critique by cultural studies protocols, in addition to Lesser’s conventional historical analysis. Urbanized Japanese Brazilians participated with great visibility in the fabric of national life afforded by both venues, political militancy and erotic cinema, imaging themselves, according to Lesser’s analysis, to be Brazilian. Yet, as Lesser points out—and in this he returns to the same sort of divided record he identified for Jews in Brazil—as much as these participants/protagonists wished to assert their Brazilianness, they could never escape being identified as the problematic Other, whether “wanted” for the undesirability of their political militancy or “wanted” for their erotically objectified bodies.

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ELIZABETH W. KIDDY: *Blacks of the Rosary*. Penn State University Press, 2005.

Combining detailed archival research with oral history, Elizabeth W. Kiddy’s *Blacks of the Rosary* tells the story of self-identified “black” (*preto*) lay religious brotherhoods in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais from the early colonial period to the present. Through this broad temporal lens, Kiddy aims to show how brotherhoods dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, and the present-day Afro-Brazilian *congados* or ritual communities that continue their traditions, provided a flexible institutional space for people of African descent to build long-lasting forms of community and identity, despite the asymmetries of power they faced during and after slavery.

The book has three parts. The first part examines the history of the rosary brotherhoods in Europe and Africa before Brazil’s colonization. Chapter One focuses on the emergence of lay brotherhoods as popular forms of devotion in

medieval and early modern Europe, showing how those dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary became intimately associated with marginal people (the poor, or after Portuguese expansion, Africans). Chapter Two turns to Africa, providing an overview of key aspects of the belief systems of the West and Central Africans who constituted the majority of the slaves shipped to Brazil. An emphasis on “kinship, kingship, expressions of hierarchy, and a link with the ancestors,” along with the incorporation of Catholic symbols (such as the rosary), comprised the basis of the cosmology Africans would seek to re-create in the brotherhoods in Minas Gerais.

The second part deals with the development of the brotherhoods during Brazil’s colonial and imperial periods, from 1690 to 1889. Chapter Three examines the establishment of the black brotherhoods in the frontier atmosphere of colonial Minas Gerais, at the beginning of that state’s gold mining boom (1690-1750). The relative lack of church and state control during this period, Kiddy argues, allowed the brotherhoods to flourish in places where slaves and free people from several African ethnic backgrounds sought to re-constitute autonomous communities based on a common identity as “blacks” with a shared remembrance of Africa. The outlines of today’s *congado* celebrations were established at this time, with Africans creating rituals (like coronations of kings and queens) that reinforced shared aspects of their cosmologies. The chapter also describes the “work” of the brotherhoods—how they organized members and negotiated white patronage; how they cared for members while they lived and when they died; and how they helped members in their struggle for economic viability. Chapter Four discusses the crystallization of “black” identity in the rosary brotherhoods during the late colonial period (1750-1822) as members sought autonomy from white oversight in a period when the church tried to increase its control over the brotherhoods. Chapter Five follows the brotherhoods into the Brazilian Empire, stressing the ways members continued the practices that bound them together in their memory of Africa, despite the end of the slave trade in 1850 and the rising dominance of free people in the brotherhoods.

The third part examines the brotherhoods in the twentieth century. Chapter Six shows how major religious and political processes—the reorganization of the church and the state’s drive to modernize—challenged the rosary organizations and festivals, forcing them to find new ways to continue the practices developed in the colonial and imperial periods. Kiddy provides case studies of two present-day *congados*, comparing and contrasting their strategies for adaptation and survival: the first separating from the established brotherhood (which came to see *congado* celebrations as secular and “folkloric”), and the second emerging independently of any brotherhood. Finally, in Chapter Seven, Kiddy analyzes

the “Voices of the Congadeiros”—particularly their songs and stories—which reveal the group’s identity, worldview, and links with the past.

In a field dominated by micro-histories, Kiddy’s chronologically and geographically broad study of the rosary brotherhoods in Minas Gerais affords a *longue-durée* view of their role as agents of cultural change and continuity in the Atlantic world. Her findings illuminate the complex history of the brotherhoods’ shifting articulation with church and state institutions, and their ability to negotiate power and autonomy in ways that complicate traditional categories of “resistance” or “accommodation.”

Yet these insights are somewhat obscured by her limited engagement with the complex historical and historiographic debates on race and ethnicity in Brazil. Kiddy makes repeated assertions that the “brotherhoods provided a forum for the development of identities based on ‘race,’ or being black in the colonial period,” and that “this blackness was reinforced by the constant rearticulation of links to Africa.” But her sources do not speak fully to the question of how and to what extent brotherhood members saw themselves as “black”; rather, she tends to infer the existence of a “black” racial identity from the presence of multiple ethnic groups in brotherhoods with the ascribed title “of the blacks.” Above all, the oversimplified translation of *pretos* as “blacks” (without discussing the distinctions Brazilians made between this and other terms that might fit under the same rubric, such as *negros*, *crioulos*, and *africanos*) problematically serves to create the “racial” unity Kiddy wishes to see as early as the colonial period. At times, then, it appears that she reads the present-day racial consciousness of the *congadeiros* backwards onto the colonial period, conflating “memory” and “history.”

The importance of “Africa” in this work also calls for a more historicized approach to its changing meanings. For instance, when the author uses present-day *congadeiros*’ “remembrances” of Africa as evidence of the importance of a shared African past in the brotherhoods since colonial days, we also need sustained historical analysis of shifting constructions of Africa in these stories and in the archival record. We know from recent works on Afro-Brazilian culture that ideas of African “purity” or “unity” have distinct genealogies. How did the end of the slave trade, or the re-Africanization movement of the 1970s and 80s, inflect brotherhoods’ portrayals of their African heritage?

Overall, though, Kiddy’s work is valuable for it places present-day *congadeiros* in dialogue with their predecessors, showing the resilience of their strategies of adaptation created in the early brotherhoods of colonial Minas Gerais.

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