

# “IN THE NAME OF THE GOD OF ALL NAMES: YAHWEH, OBATALÁ, OLORUM”: *The 1981 Quilombos Mass as an Ecumenical Pilgrimage in Brazil*

**ABSTRACT:** On November 22, 1981, thousands of laypeople, along with bishops, priests, and theologians, gathered in Recife to celebrate the Eucharist. Offered during a military dictatorship in a period of popular insurgency, the Quilombos Mass mourned the death of millions in the African slave trade, sought pardon for the Church’s past sins, and celebrated the resistance of Blacks in Brazil and beyond its borders. The acclaimed Black Brazilian pop star and activist Milton de Nascimento collaborated with an activist poet and three bishops to produce a multimedia performance; in the spirit of liberation theology, it was marked by striking visuals, dance, music, and the invocation of the sacred. This article draws on reportage, speeches and correspondence, military court and intelligence records, published interviews, and the author’s interview with one of its composers. It offers a close textual analysis, with attention to Catholic theological debates, as well as an analysis of the performance itself, drawn from video recordings and bringing attention to aspects neglected by most commentators, who refer only to the album, as it was finally produced. Initially stifled by the Vatican, Milton’s masterpiece, issued as an album on vinyl and performed in paid concerts, became a powerful cultural reference for activists, serving as a touchstone for a strategic alliance between Black activists and the liberationist Church.

**KEYWORDS:** quilombo, Missa dos Quilombos, Missa da Terra sem Males, race, Catholicism, Liberation Theology

**O**n November 22, 1981, Catholic laypeople, priests, bishops, archbishops, and secular activists celebrated a mass in front of the Basilica of Our Lady of Carmo in Recife. Founded by a triumphant Lusophone Church in 1665, 11 years after the defeat of the Dutch occupation of Pernambuco, it was completed a century later. The church overlooks the square where in 1695, some 280 years earlier, the São Paulo mercenary Domingos Jorge Velho proudly displayed the severed head of Zumbi dos

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Palmares, the leader of a seventeenth-century community started by runaway enslaved (*quilombo*) that survived for 90 years. More than a “maroon” community, as we think of them in the Anglophone world, Palmares was a sovereign African kingdom with free populations, multiple villages, and a complex political and military structure. It oscillated between trading with and battling the Dutch and Portuguese. Writing to Lisbon, the Pernambuco captaincy’s governor, Fernão de Sousa Coutinho, complained that Pernambuco was “in no less danger from the audacity of these Negroes than it was from the Dutch,” since they served as examples to the enslaved within “houses and plantations,” who might “follow the pernicious example and admonitions of those same rebels.”<sup>1</sup>

Though originally a symbol for postcolonial Brazilians of regional pride and proof of national military prowess, Palmares eventually became a symbol of racial mixture, national resistance, and *negro* (brown and Black) liberation.<sup>2</sup> Together with the Land-Without-Evil Mass (1979), a condemnation of genocide against Latin America’s indigenous population, the Quilombos Mass (*Missa dos Quilombos*) celebrated in that plaza was an expression of the struggle to carve out a new space for the racially oppressed in a Latin American religious institution that was marked by racial oppression and conquest. The Church had failed to support abolishing slavery, finally acceding only five days before the May 13, 1888, passage of the “Golden Law” ending the practice in Brazil. Even then, Pope Leo XIII’s support for abolition was accompanied by the defensive claim that his predecessors had always “done their best for slaves.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1981, even though it had permitted the organization of Black brotherhoods and admitted a limited number of mixed-race priests, the Church could look back on a history of mistreatment of the extensive constellation of Black brotherhoods during its late nineteenth century romanization drive. It had historically condemned African-derived religiosity and as late as 1981 still had very few Black priests among its clergy—only 200 of 12,700 in 1987.<sup>4</sup> The

1. Letter from Governor Fernão de Sousa Coutinho, June 1, 1671, in “The Conquest of Palmares,” *The Bandeirantes: The Historical Role of the Brazilian Pathfinders*, Richard M. Morse, ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 116.

2. Rodrigo de Souza da Silva Pontes, “Programa,” *Jornal do Instituto Histórico Geográfico Brasileiro* 10 (July 1841): 151, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B\\_G9pg7CxKSseS13dWdnY29Oc2s/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_G9pg7CxKSseS13dWdnY29Oc2s/view), accessed December 23, 2023; Edson Carneiro, *Guerras de los Palmares* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económico, 1946), 8, 11-12; Clovis Moura, *Rebeliões da Senzala, Coleção A Questão Social no Brasil* (São Paulo: Editora Ciências Humanas, 1981), 188; Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 177-178.

3. Leo XIII, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Abolition of Slavery, in *Plurimis*, Rome, May 5, 1988, Sec. 13, 20 [https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_1-xiii\\_enc\\_05051888\\_in-plurimis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_1-xiii_enc_05051888_in-plurimis.html), accessed December 23, 2023. For an account of one exceptional moment in which the Church sought to rein in the slave trade, see Richard Gray, “The Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade: Lourenço da Silva, the Capuchins, and the Decisions of the Holy Office,” *Past & Present* 115 (May 1987): 63-64, 66-67. For a more recent account, see José Lingna Nafafé, *Lourenço da Silva Mendonça, and the Black Atlantic Abolitionist Movement in the 17th Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

4. Kenneth P. Serbin, *Needs of the Heart: A Social and Cultural History of Brazil’s Clergy and Seminaries* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 112-113, 115-117; João José Reis, *Divining Slavery and Freedom: The Story of*

Missa dos Quilombos, however, presaged a strategic alliance between Black movements and the liberationist Church, representing two historical processes have until now been treated separately by scholars.

Forty years after its debut, one might expect the Quilombos Mass to have generated a vast literature. After all, it sheds light on key racial, cultural, religious, and political dimensions of the fight for justice of Brazil's Afro-descendent populations. It seems too that the Missa would draw greater attention amid a current wave of scholarship about Afro-Brazilian culture and higher education expansion.<sup>5</sup> What we find instead is a few scholars who briefly mention the 1982 Church-recorded album in their discussion of the career of its composer, Milton Nascimento.<sup>6</sup> Only in 1997 did the Missa receive a first, limited treatment, in a 17-page article consisting mostly of quotes from the text of the mass itself and followed by a short commentary.<sup>7</sup> True, since the early 2000s, it has received mention from numerous scholars, but mainly as another of Milton's works of musical genius.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, it has been treated as part of a litany of events related to quilombos.<sup>9</sup> Some recent scholarship focuses on it as a broad example of Afro-Brazilian aesthetics or creative liturgy.<sup>10</sup>

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*Domingos Sodré, an African Priest in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, H. Sabrina Gledhill, trans., *New Approaches to the Americas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44, 101, 147, 197; Frei Davi Raimundo dos Santos, “Palavras ao vento,” *Maioria Falante* September-October 1987, 4.

5. Anadelia Romo, *Selling Black Brazil: Race, Nation, and Visual Culture in Salvador, Bahia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2022); Jessica Lynn Graham, *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy: Race, Politics, and Culture in the United States and Brazil* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Gladys L. Mitchell-Walthour, *The Politics of Blackness: Racial Identity and Political Behavior in Contemporary Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); David Lehmann, *The Prism of Race: The Politics and Ideology of Affirmative Action in Brazil* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018); Vânia Penha Lopes, *Confronting Affirmative Action in Brazil: University Quota Students and the Quest for Racial Justice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017); Rosana Heringer and Ollie A. Johnson III, eds., *Race, Politics, and Education in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Keisha-Khan Perry, *Black Women Against the Land Grab: The Fight for Racial Justice in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); John Burdick, *The Color of Sound: Race, Religion, and Music in Brazil* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Bernd Reiter and Gladys L. Mitchell, *Brazil's New Racial Politics* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2010).

6. Acervo da Música Brasileira, “Milton N., Missa dos Quilombos,” March 27, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2medbh5cGaM>, accessed December 23, 2023.

7. Charles A. Perrone, “Milton Nascimento: Sallies and Banners,” in *Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Song: MPB 1965-1985* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 155; Robert Stam, “‘Quilombo,’ by Augusto Arraes and Carlos Diegues,” *Cinéaste* 15:1 (1986): 43; Zelia Bernd, “Bibliografia específica sobre literatura negra no Brasil,” *Revista de Antropologia* 29 (1986): 177; Selma Suelly Teixeira, “Missa dos Quilombos: um canto de Axé,” *Revista de Letras* 2 (1997): 8-16.

8. Despite the controversy surrounding the use of first names, several of my protagonists have the common last name “Nascimento.” Using the less common names, whether first or last, is the practical option.

9. José Maurício Andion Arruti, “Direitos Étnicos no Brasil e na Colômbia: Notas comparativas sobre hibridização, segmentação e mobilização política de índios e negros,” *Horizontes Antropológicos* 6:14 (2000): 106; Richard Marin, “Zumbi de Palmares: Um novo Tiradentes?” *Clío: Séria História do Nordeste* 20 (2002): 242; Niyi Afolabi, “Milton Nascimento's Missa dos Quilombos: Musical Invocation, Race, and Liberation,” in *Migrations and Creative Expressions in Africa and the African Diaspora*, Toyin Falola, Niyi Afolabi, and Adérónké Adesólá Adesányà, eds. (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 65, 67-68, 76.

10. Edison Minami, “Milton Nascimento e o diálogo inter-religioso na Missa dos Quilombos,” *Conhecimento & Diversidade* 1:1 (2009): 111; Ciro Augusto Pereira Canton, “*Nuvem no céu e raiz: romantismo revolucionário e mineiridade em Milton Nascimento e no Clube da Esquina, 1970-1983* (MA thesis: Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei, 2010);

Several reasons may explain the relative obscurity of the Missa in the scholarship. It may have been a victim of the Vatican's successful international drive to curb liberation theology by marginalizing its practitioners and supporters in the episcopate.<sup>11</sup> The Church's growing competition with evangelicals perhaps made everyday parishioners more wary of Afro-Brazilian practices in Catholic rites, especially ones they thought objectified women.<sup>12</sup> Despite the early convergence of interests, Black consciousness movements came to be associated, for many activists, with a rejection of the Church, which they depicted as a colonial vestige and a white man's church. Militants like Abdias do Nascimento and Afro-Brazilian religious leaders such as Mãe Stella de Oxóssi felt Afro-Brazilian religious traditions such as Candomblé could separate fully from Catholicism and serve as authentic expressions of an African religiosity that could undergird Black autonomy and self-determination.<sup>13</sup> And finally, scholars of social movements perhaps see religion and spectacle as less 'significant' than social movement activism, street protests, or petitions to authorities.

This article hearkens back to the earlier period of convergence between Catholic leftists and Black militants. It offers the first comprehensively researched treatment of the origin, crafting, politics, and religiosity underlying the composing and performance of the Quilombos Mass. It is based on contemporary reportage, speeches, church correspondence, military court and intelligence records, published interviews, and my own extended conversations with the activist poet, Hamilton de Pereira, who authored the lyrics. It will explain how the five key architects of the Mass first conceived this beautiful and prophetic call to action and became involved in creating it. As an ecumenical story of pilgrimage and penitence, it traces the hitherto untold story of two and half years of debate that came to involve Black intellectuals, liberationist Catholics, filmmakers, and artists

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Petrônio Domingues and Flávio Gomes, "História dos quilombos e memórias dos quilombolas no Brasil: revisitando um diálogo ausente na lei 10.639/03," *Revista da ABPN* 5:11 (2013): 5-28; Paula Cristina Vilas, "Proferindo quilombo: cantos épicos latino-americanos de descolonização e liberdade," *Pontos de Interrogação: Revista de Crítica Cultural* 3:2 (2013): 90, 96; Augusto Marcos Fagundes Oliveira, "Êxodos e Encruzilhadas da Missa dos Quilombos" (PhD diss.: Universidade Federal Santa Catarina, 2015); Beatriz Schmidt Campos, *Letra, música, performance e memória do racismo na Missa dos Quilombos* (MA thesis: Universidade de Brasília, 2017).

11. Ralph Della Cava, "The 'People's Church,' the Vatican and Abertura," in *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation*, Alfred Stepan, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 153-156; Daniel M. Bell Jr, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001).

12. John Burdick, *Blessed Anastácia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 96-97.

13. Luís Nicolau Parés, "Where Does Resistance Hide in Contemporary Candomblé?" in *New Approaches to Resistance in Brazil and Mexico*, John Gledhill and Patience A. Schell, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 152-154, 157; Paul Christopher Johnson and Stephan Palmie, "Afro-Latin Religions," in *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction to Afro-Latin America*, Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 447; Peter Fry, "De um observador não participantes: Reflexões sobre alguns recortes de jornal acerca da II Conferência Mundial da Tradição dos Orixás e Cultura, realizada em Salvador, julho de 1983," *Comunicações do ISER* 3:8 (March 1984): 37.

who came together to write Black people into Brazilian national history and demand that the country right the wrongs of past and contemporary racial oppression. Once understood in this fashion, the Quilombos Mass can be seen as contributing decisively to a sustained national campaign to assert a positive Black racial identity while rejecting an “alliance with the colonial power.”<sup>14</sup>

The lives of the architects themselves encapsulate the exciting and transformational era. The name most associated with the *Missa* is Milton Nascimento, the internationally renowned Black singer and composer from Minas Gerais. A Catholic, he strongly identified with the opposition at the height of his national and international fame as a central figure in *Música Popular Brasileira* (Brazilian Popular Music; MPB), the musical movement that emerged in the late 1960s connected to folk music and socially committed politics.<sup>15</sup> Milton put to music words authored by former political prisoner Hamilton de Pereira, better known as Pedro Terra. Another key figure was Spanish-born Pedro Casaldáliga, the bishop of São Felix do Araguaia in the west-central state of Mato Grosso, who gained fame for courageously denouncing the contemporary enslavement of indigenous peoples in his diocese. In 1979, he and Terra co-authored a predecessor *Land-Without-Evil* mass that focused on the plight of the indigenous.<sup>16</sup> A former exile, Abdias, a Catholic turned Candomblé practitioner who was considered one of Brazil’s most prominent Black activists, provided the intellectual heft for much of the *Missa*’s Black diasporic focus.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the homily in Recife in November 1981 was given by the fifth major figure, the archbishop of Paraíba, José Maria Pires, who despite Brazil’s

14. Francisco das Chagas Fernandes Santiago Júnior, “Imagem, raça e humilhação no espelho negro da nação: cultura visual, política e ‘pensamento negro’ brasileiro durante a ditadura militar;” *Tópoi* 13:24 (January-June 2012): 105-106 quoting Beatriz Nascimento apud Ismail Xavier, “Cinema e descolonização.” *Filme Cultura* 15:40 (August-October 1982): 25.

15. Milton was born in Rio, adopted by a white couple, and grew up in Minas Gerais’ southwestern coffee region. His adoptive mother was a former student of Brazil’s internationally famous classical composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. His first musical group launched within the same year as the French film *Black Orpheus*, which introduced the world to Bossa Nova, the favelas of Rio, and their black residents. Charles A. Perrone, “Milton Nascimento: Sallies and Banners,” 134-135, 148-149, 151; Marcelo Ridenti, “Todo artista tem de ir aonde o povo está,” image, in *Em busca do povo brasileiro: artistas da revolução, do CPC à era da TV* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 220.

16. “Entrevista com Hamilton Pereira da Silva,” in Marieta de Moraes Ferreira and Alexandre Fortes, *Muitos Caminhos, Uma Estrela: Memórias de Militantes do PT* (São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2008), 252.

17. Abdias was born in Franca in São Paulo’s north to a nominally Catholic spiritist mother, a cook, and a “fervently Catholic” shoemaker father. Abdias received his bachelor’s degree in 1938 and last graduate degree in 1961. He participated in and created Black artistic and political movements from the 1940s onward. In self-exile, he plunged into Pan-Africanist activities after travels to France, Peru, and Argentina, then took a position as visiting professor at SUNY-Buffalo and traveled in African travel prior to his return to Brazil. Élê Semog and Abidas Nascimento, *O griot e as muralhas* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2006), 30, 37, 88; Pedro Celso Uchoa Cavalcanti, Jovelino Ramos, *Memórias do Exílio: Brasil 1964-19??*, 2nd ed. (São Paulo: Editora Arcádia, 1978), 23. [https://web.archive.org/web/20230429002401/http://www.dhnet.org.br/verdade/resistencia/livro\\_memorias\\_1\\_exilio.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20230429002401/http://www.dhnet.org.br/verdade/resistencia/livro_memorias_1_exilio.pdf), accessed December 23, 2023; Sales Augusto do Santos, “O Negro no poder no legislativo: Abdias de Nascimento e a discussão da questão racial no Parlamento brasileiro,” in *Movimento Negro Brasileiro: escritos sobre os sentidos de democracia e justiça no Brasil*, Amauri Mendes Pereira and Josélina da Silva, eds. (Belo Horizonte: Nandyala, 2009), 140.

enormous Black Catholic population, was the only Black prelate at so high a position in the Church hierarchy. Pires was from rural Minas Gerais and had received a rigorous classical education and endured discrimination in Diamantina's Vincentian seminary. He attended the Second Vatican Council, bringing its call to engage the modern world and oppose injustice, even with revolution, with him to a new posting in João Pessoa, Paraíba.<sup>18</sup> Though not considered racially militant, he caught the eye of an international French Catholic paper by practicing an internationally recognized "new form of ecumenism." For example, in December 1969, he invited leaders of the Iemanjá sect of Candomblé into the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Snows for a joint service to celebrate the African *orixá* of love and the sea.<sup>19</sup>

Though initially supportive of the military regime, Pires soon began to denounce human rights abuses, earning him his own intelligence file, replete with innuendo about his mental well-being and personal life.<sup>20</sup> In 1979, Pires entertained the use of a politically charged song ("Cálice," 1978) from Milton and leftist singer Chico Buarque in his own diocese's masses.<sup>21</sup> And finally, the permission and material support for the performance in Recife reflected the enthusiasm of Dom Hélder Câmara, archbishop of Recife and Olinda, an internationally prominent critic of the dictatorship who was a concelebrant. As it breaks new ground, this article also places the Quilombos Mass within post-Vatican II liturgical reforms that were a flash point between liberationists and traditionalists. In the end, we will be able to answer the question posed by the racist brother of a reactionary Pernambucan deputy who asked incredulously about the Missa, "How could the Church that had prayed "for the success of slave hunters . . . today defend Black people"?<sup>22</sup>

Journalists estimated that 3,000 to 6,000 people attended the historic outdoor performance of the Quilombos Mass, comparable to the June 7, 1978 march in downtown São Paulo that gave rise to the Unified Black Movement (MNU).

18. J. D. Vital, "O grande sacerdote negro," *Como se faz um bispo: Seguindo o alto e o baixo clero* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2012), 110-111; José Maria Dom Pires, "O homem livre, imagem de Deus," in *Dom José Maria Dom Pires: Uma voz fiel à mudança social*, Sampaio Geraldo Lopes Ribeiro, ed. (São Paulo: Paulus, 2005), 41-42; "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*," Vatican City, December 7, 1965. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html), accessed December 23, 2023.

19. "Oecuménisme (Bresil): L'archevêque de Paraíba (Nord-Est)," *Informations Catholiques Internationales* 352 (January 1970): 13.

20. Dom José Maria Dom Pires, Arcebispo da Paraíba, October 7, 1976, Serviço Nacional de Informações No. 970/19/AC/76, 76-77, 120-121.

21. Fundação Perseu Abramo, "Hamilton Pereira | História Oral: PT 40 Anos," Youtube, May 29, 2020, 02:10:15. <https://youtu.be/nSXHFxJZwlg?list=PLtsJqckMj3D4K6AjHmG7Aqm5-JorzOhK0&t=7815>, accessed December 23, 2023; Francisco Maria Filho, "Confidencial: Entrevista com Dom José Maria Dom Pires," *TV Borborema*, Campina Grande, February 5, 1979, in Serviço Nacional de Informações; "Entrevista de Dom José Maria Dom Pires," *ACE* no. 221/79, 1.

22. Ernane Régis, "Diário Político: Coisas da Igreja," *Diário de Pernambuco*, November 25, 1981.

Footage in a 1987 Church-produced documentary on liberation theologians shows the mass held on a multilevel platform in front of the basilica. Participants had to raise their eyes to gaze at the altar, high above the stage, where concelebrants bowed amid censers of incense to open the Catholic liturgy reviewed and sanctioned by two diocesan liturgical directors, fathers José Augusto Esteves and Reginaldo Veloso.<sup>23</sup> The dramatic action, however, took place below the altar, on a mid-level platform at stage left with the choir, on the platform below at stage right where drummers provided the beat for the free-style dance and movements of the Afro-Brazilian martial art *capoeira* (associated in some schools with the Candomblé religion), which was taking place at stage right, below them at the base of the stage.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the lively Recife commemoration, the Missa became a high point of unprecedented celebrations throughout Brazil on the anniversary of Zumbi's death, November 20, a day that a new generation of Black activists were demanding be recognized as nationally as Black Consciousness Day. In a country still ruled by the military, the *Folha de São Paulo*'s survey of related events described Zumbi's beheading as both “a precursor and sad memory of torture” in a country taking its first halting steps towards political liberalization.<sup>25</sup> A mood of trepidation pervaded those in attendance: this was a period when right-wing backlash included bombings of opposition figures and setting fire to newsstands selling newly legal opposition newspapers.<sup>26</sup> The date was resonant locally as well: the mass took place during the third year of massive and highly publicized sugarcane worker strikes that swept Recife's nearby *zona da mata*, a heartland of slavery since the sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

That period was also the crest for liberationist bishops, who composed only 24 percent of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (CNBB) in 1980—a healthy number but nonetheless a minority.<sup>28</sup> What made liberationists

23. Romero Rafael, *Negra Fé: A história da primeira Missa dos Quilombos*, 3:25-3:55, May 14, 2020, <https://youtu.be/m54XU3v9MjI?t=205>, accessed December 23, 2023.

24. Conrado Berning (dir.), Pedro Casaldáliga (script), and Leonardo Boff (text), *Fé na Caminhada* (São Paulo: Verbo Films, 1987), 52:12-54:05. <https://youtu.be/eS6OruVYU8M?t=3132>, accessed December 23, 2023. For the relationship between capoeira and Candomblé, see Sergio Gonzalez Varela, “The Religious Foundations of Capoeira Angola: The Cosmopolitics of an Apparently Non-religious Practice,” *Religion and Society* 8 (2017): 79.

25. Antonio Gonçalves Filho, “Por Zumbi, a maior festa negra,” *Folha de São Paulo* November 20, 1981, 33, <https://acervo.folha.com.br/leitor.do?numero=7866&keyword=%22Missa+dos+Quilombos%22&anchor=4216659&origem=busca&pd=c2154a12093a551746cfa4589b01ba19>, accessed December 23, 2023.

26. Thomas Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 227.

27. Anthony W. Pereira, *End of The Peasantry: The Rural Labor Movement in Northeast Brazil, 1961-1988* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 58, 68-72.

28. This was slightly more than the 15 percent classified as conservative and less than the 61 percent classified as moderate. “A Igreja no Brasil é moderada,” *Jornal do Brasil*, June 29, 1980, [http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/030015\\_10/11721](http://memoria.bn.br/docreader/030015_10/11721), accessed December 23, 2023.

distinctive in the early 1970s and 1980s was their ability to win leadership elections in the organization by winning the “situational radicals [*radicais de ocasião*]” who may not have believed in melding Catholic teaching with Marx and Hebert Marcuse, but did resent the dictatorship’s crackdown on ecclesial social initiatives.<sup>29</sup>

The Missa dos Quilombos derived from a radical reinterpretation of the Gospel spearheaded by liberation theology, which embraced both class and cultural affirmation as the pathway for social emancipation. From the Lusophone colonial era, orders such as the Jesuits had adapted their liturgies to local cultures amid a fierce debate over the existence and expansion of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.<sup>30</sup> The mass also opened a decade that would be marked by ecumenical experimentation, respect for other cultures, and attempts by theologians such as Paul Griffiths to rethink Christianity’s own theology through the cosmology of other great religions such as the polytheistic Hinduism and nontheistic Buddhism.<sup>31</sup> Priests such as François de l’Espinau, who immersed himself in Candomblé in 1974 and wrote in Brazil’s leading theological journals, saw themselves as the Brazilian equivalents of Matteo Ricci and other missionaries in countries such as China, India, and Vietnam. L’Espinau, who had served as a military chaplain in Vietnam and Algeria, put Candomblé on par with other world religions like Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. The Candomblé practitioners these priests interacted with saw no contradiction between their own spirituality and their simultaneous practice of the Christian faith, embodied in the washing of Salvador’s Bonfim Church. They saw symmetry between the spirit Oxalá’s “world-birthing” role and that of both God the Father and Jesus, alluding to such passages as John 1:3.<sup>32</sup>

## THE ORIGINS OF THE LAND-WITHOUT-EVIL AND QUILOMBOS MASSES

Pedro Terra (Hamilton Pereira) was born in Porto Nacional, Tocantins, in 1948, then the northern part of central Brazil’s isolated Goiás state. Far from a privileged child, he was the seventh son of farmers from Floriano, Piauí, long one of Brazil’s poorest states. Hamilton never knew his birth date, because he was registered only

29. Antônio Cândido, “Radicais de Ocasão,” *Revista da USP* 9 (1978): 195-196.

30. Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living: The Formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018) 155-159.

31. Francis X. Clooney et al., “Catholic Theology and the Study of Religion in South Asia: Widening the Context for Theological Reflection,” *Theological Studies* 48:4 (1987): 677-710.

32. François de l’Espinau, “A Religião dos Orixás-outra Palavra do Deus Único?” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 47:187 (September 1987): 639-641, 643, 647-648.

at age nine, so he could receive his elementary school diploma. At the urging of his mother, who hoped it would provide him an education and a stable life, he entered the seminary at ten but was expelled. Again at his mothers’ insistence, at 14 he entered a Dominican seminary where his brother Airton studied. His Dominican superior Mateus Rocha eventually advised him to leave the seminary, even as Hamilton’s respect grew for the courageous and militant opposition by many younger Dominicans to the military dictatorship in the late 1960s. After high school, he attended college briefly before dropping out to become a set designer for an anti-dictatorship theater. He joined National Liberation Action (ALN) and went into hiding in 1969 after its leader, the Bahian-born *pardo* communist Carlos Marighella, was gunned down in São Paulo.<sup>33</sup>

The seven Pereira children were unusually militant. Authorities arrested Tierra at age 24, in Anápolis, Goiás, where he was tried along with his brothers Athos and Edimilson and his sister Dagmar. Athos had been a leading educator of the Goiânia branch of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) who, with the help of Edimilson, distributed pamphlets and sought recruits, including his own sister Dagmar, to join him in a PCB offshoot, the ALN, that was dedicated to armed struggle.<sup>34</sup> Sentenced to prison, Tierra shared a cell with the Black radical Joel Rufino dos Santos and met popular theatre director Idibal Almeida Pivetta. As Joel Rufino’s cellmate, Tierra must have seen the vivid letters Joel Rufino wrote his son Nelson in 1973, recounting the story of Zumbi and Palmares.<sup>35</sup>

Encounters like these inspired Tierra’s first poems, which Casaldáliga helped to get published after they were smuggled out of prison under his fake Spanish pseudonym. Upon his release in 1977, Hamilton joined Goiânia’s Indigenous Missionary Council (Conselho Indigenista Missionário; CIMI) chapter and the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), where he also met nationally recognized Catholic figures like São Paulo’s Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns.<sup>36</sup> As Tierra’s friendship with Casaldáliga grew, so did their collaboration. Casaldáliga and he

33. Fundação Perseu Abramo, “Hamilton Pereira | História Oral: PT 40 Anos,” Youtube, May 29, 2020, 0:40, 2:32-2:35, 3:06, <https://youtu.be/nSXHFxJZwlg?t=40>; “Interview with Hamilton Pereira,” 2:50-5:25; Auditor Célio de Jesus Lobão Ferreira, “Acusado(s) Hamilton Pereira da Silva e outros,” Auditoria da 11ª Região Militar, no. 181/72, 31, [http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/BIB\\_01/13218](http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/BIB_01/13218), accessed December 23, 2023.

34. “Hamilton Pereira da Silva,” #670, *Relatório Projeto Brasil Nunca Mais (As Torturas)*, tomo 5, 2 (1972):121, [http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/REL\\_BRASIL/3099](http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/REL_BRASIL/3099), accessed December 23, 2023.; “Lobão Ferreira, “Acusado(s) Hamilton Pereira da Silva e outros,” 1-2, 11, 27, [http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/BIB\\_01/13218](http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/BIB_01/13218), accessed December 23, 2023.

35. Joel Rufino dos Santos, *Quando eu voltei, tive uma surpresa: Cartas para Nelson* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2000), 35-61.

36. “Entrevista com Hamilton Pereira da Silva,” in Marieta de Moraes Ferreira and Alexandre Fortes, *Muitos Caminhos, Uma Estrela*, 252, 254, 262.

traveled the country supporting indigenous rights and protesting agricultural minister Maurício Rangel Reis's Campaign for Indian Emancipation, launched in 1975. On July 28, 1978, CIMI and the National Indigenous Action Association (ANAI) hosted a national meeting on indigenous issues in São Miguel das Missões, in the heart of the famous Jesuit Guaraní colonial missions destroyed by Indian enslavers.<sup>37</sup> After reading his own poem, "Proclama Indígena," at the event, Casaldáliga asked Tierra to compose a mass "in defense" of the indigenous. When Tierra protested that he, an agnostic, knew nothing about the Catholic mass, Casaldáliga retorted "You take care of the history, I will take care of the liturgy."<sup>38</sup> Tierra read the works of Darcy Ribeiro and Carlos Alberto Ricardo and interviewed CIMI's head, Dom Tomás Balduino. For historical and theoretical framing, he drew on Josefina Oliva de Coll's *La resistencia indígena ante la Conquista* (1974) and the work of the pioneering Peruvian Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui, whose *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928) argued that the oppressed indigenous population was central to any revolutionary project in Latin America.<sup>39</sup>

Casaldáliga had long been the target of right-wing attacks from the military and within the Church. Traditionalists like Geraldo de Proença Sigaud resented not only his political and social stances but also his liturgical innovations. Sigaud and others had already questioned the decisions of the Second Vatican Council and saw Casaldáliga's innovations as harbingers of social upheaval and Communist revolution.<sup>40</sup> However, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops had given Casaldáliga room to experiment. In 1977, they issued guidance on "popular Masses" which, while stressing a unity of purpose in the mass, also recognized that distinctive cultures should be able to influence the conduct of the mass itself. It introduced the guitar, flute, maracas, and the ever controversial *atabaque* drum, broadly used in Africa, but specifically used in Brazil to summon spirits in Candomblé.<sup>41</sup> The mass should "mirror the popular character of [the people's] language, their own religiosity, their struggles and victories, or risk not reaching the heart of the people."<sup>42</sup>

37. Comissão Pró-Índio, *A questão da emancipação*, Cadernos da Comissão Pró-Índio, 1 (São Paulo: Editora Parma, 1979), 9, 13.

38. Ana Helena Tavares, *Um bispo contra todas as cercas: A vida e as causas de Pedro Casaldáliga* (Rio de Janeiro: Gramma, 2019), 123-124.

39. Travis Knoll, "Interview with Hamilton Pereira," August 12, 2021, 34:33-42:26.

40. Benjamin A. Cowan, *Moral Majorities across the Americas: Brazil, the United States, and the Creation of the Religious Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 16, 36-37.

41. Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil, *Directorio para Missas com Grupos Populares: Documento aprovado pela XV Assembleia da CNBB—8 a 17 de fevereiro de 1977*, 5th ed. (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1985), 9-10, 12, 17. For more on the *atabaque* in Catholic settings, see Gabriel Gonzaga Bina, *O Atabaque Na Igreja: A Caminho Da Inculturação Litúrgica Em Meios Afro-Brasileiros* (São Paulo: Editora Brasil, 2002).

42. *Ibid.* 15.

The Land-Without-Evil Mass also reflected the recommendation of the III Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla (1979) to recognize Christ in “the face of indigenous and often Afro-Americans . . . living in marginalized and inhumane conditions . . . the poorest among the poor.”<sup>43</sup> The resulting Land-Without-Evil Mass, named after the Tupi-Guaraní paradise that was to be found through migration and the overturning of the social order, was performed in São Paulo, the Amazon, and Goiás.<sup>44</sup> The “land-without-evil” motif had served as an inspiration for a Tupi rebellion in 1580s Bahia, which, in turn, served as a mythical precursor to Palmares.<sup>45</sup>

That the Land-Without-Evil Mass itself emerged from a pilgrimage to Jesuit missions was a sign of shifting missionary attitudes, mainline Protestant-Catholic liberationist cooperation, and liberationists’ new definition of martyrdom.<sup>46</sup> Since the 1970s, the Church’s Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) had played “institutional host” to a series of meetings of indigenous political leaders, including the one in São Miguel. Fearing dictatorial repression on one side and leftist accusations of paternalism on the other, Church militants “self-disappropriated” these events, passing them off as sui generis incidents of indigenous mobilization. They downplayed symbolic power imbalances between highly educated missionaries and rural non-Portuguese speaking indigenous leaders while fostering their movements under a dictatorship hell-bent on “developing” the Amazon at their expense.<sup>47</sup>

43. John Paul II, “Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate,” delivered at Puebla, Mexico January 28, 1979, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/january/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19790128\\_messico-puebla-episc-latam.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1979/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19790128_messico-puebla-episc-latam.html), accessed December 23, 2023; Secretariado del CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano), *La evangelización en el presente y en el futuro de América Latina: III Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano*, Puebla, 1979, Sec. 1:34. [https://www.celam.org/documentos/Documento\\_Conclusivo\\_Puebla.pdf](https://www.celam.org/documentos/Documento_Conclusivo_Puebla.pdf), accessed December 23, 2023; Frei Betto, *Diário de Puebla* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1979), 105, 119, 121-122.

44. “Funai está humilhando os índios,” *Folha de São Paulo*, April 16, 1980, 6, <https://acervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=7283&anchor=4306187&pd=9ad1e4cd6d9471fce85ac2561263750e>, accessed December 23, 2023; “Música do Sul, fora dos rótulos,” *Folha de São Paulo*, October 13, 1979, 31. <https://acervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=7283&anchor=4306187&pd=9ad1e4cd6d9471fce85ac2561263750e>, accessed December 23, 2023; Hélène Clastres, *The Land-Without-Evil: Tupi-Guaraní Prophetism*, Jacqueline Grenez Brovender, trans. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 22-23, 38; Martin Coplás, “Missa da Terra sem Males,” Youtube, February 25, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CDRLaM6geg&list=PL2gNGm0kBML7xx8AXVOr18uLLrVfL\\_CXq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CDRLaM6geg&list=PL2gNGm0kBML7xx8AXVOr18uLLrVfL_CXq), accessed December 23, 2023.

45. Ronaldo Vainfas, “God against Palmares: Lordly Representations and Jesuitical Ideas,” in *Freedom by a Thread: The History of Quilombos in Brazil*, Flávio dos Santos Gomes and Joao José Reis, eds. (New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2016), 46

46. Simeci Monteiro, “Telling the Story of the Land-Without-Evil (‘Terra sem Males’ in Portuguese, or ‘Maira’ in Guarani),” *Ecumenical Review* 60:4 (2008): 370-373; Judith Shapiro, “From Tupã to the Land-Without-Evil: the Christianization of Tupi-Guarani cosmology,” *American Ethnologist* 14:1 (February 1987): 134-136; Pedro Casaldáliga et al., “Missa da Terra sem Males,” *Tempo e Presença* 27 (1980): 15-17.

47. Jean Philippe-Belleau, “History, Memory, and Utopia in the Missionaries’ Creation of the Indigenous Movement in Brazil (1967-1988),” *The Americas* 70:4 (April 2014): 720-722. For other accounts on the creation of CIMI, see Jonathan W. Warren, “Prophetic Christianity, Indigenous Mobilization,” in *Racial Revolutions: Antiracism and Indian Resurgence in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); W. E. Hewitt, “The Roman Catholic Church and Environmental Politics in Brazil,” *The Journal of Developing Areas* 26:2 (1992): 251.

The 1979 performance of the Land-Without-Evil Mass in São Paulo's cathedral drew between 4,000 and 5,000 people, including 33 bishops, indigenous leaders, Brazil's interior minister Mario Andreazza, and FUNAI president Ademar Ribeiro da Silva. After the event, cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns would even claim to have extracted a "promise" from Andreazza of "better treatment" for indigenous populations and missionaries working with them. And at the very moment the mass was taking place, the Organization of American States was debating resolutions in favor of indigenous rights, prompted by renewed international attention to their plight.<sup>48</sup>

As performed in the Cathedral in São Paulo, the mass opened with "In the name of the Father of all the Peoples, Mãira of all, highest Tupã," the "Son" that "made all men brothers, in the blood mixed with all blood," the "Covenant of Liberation," "the Land-without-Evil, lost amid profit, won through pain," "Death Overcome," and "Life, we sing, Lord."<sup>49</sup> The Alleluia invoked pilgrimage, extolling the Gospel as "of all cultures, the Word of God in the Language of Men . . . the arrival point of all roads . . . the Presence of God in the march of Men . . . the destination of all History, the History of God in the History of Men."<sup>50</sup> It contrasted "the life bathed in water, the corn planted in the earth" with "the history of a time of slavery. . . the ashes of the sacked villages . . . the destroyed cities . . . the conquered legion of oppressed . . . the exhausted in the mines, the profaned river water . . . the open veins of America, the temples' silent stone, the cry of Indian memory."<sup>51</sup> The Eucharistic section wished all to "partake communion of all struggle . . . all blood . . . all searches of a Land-Without-Evil . . . the Bread of Liberty," as indigenous achieved liberation after crossing "the New Red Sea of your Blood."<sup>52</sup>

The Land-Without-Evil Mass drew on "missionary utopia," which merged a colonial past and oppressive present through the invocation of a series of (often conflicting) martyrs chosen by the liberationist Church writers.<sup>53</sup> The "Final Commitment" reflects this dynamic. It names saints without description, from the traditional (for example, Archbishop Toribio Alfonso de Mogrovejo (November 1538–March 1606) to the popular (Bartolomé de las Casas); from symbols of resistance (Túpac Amaru and Montezuma), to

48. Ricardo Carvalho, "Cinco mil oram pelos índios na Catedral da Sé," *Folha de São Paulo*, April 23, 1979, 1, 4. <https://acervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=6924&anchor=4238638&pd=d696092b20369fc206414ac45883d3c6>, accessed December 23, 2023.

49. "Missa da Terra-Sem-Males," 33.

50. "Missa da Terra-Sem-Males," 53.

51. "Missa da Terra-Sem-Males," 55–57.

52. "Missa da Terra-Sem-Males," 59.

53. Philippe-Belleau, "History, Memory, and Utopia," 727.

contemporaneous fallen priests (slain Jesuit João Bosco).<sup>54</sup> As the 33 bishops filed out, voices in the final procession proclaimed “all united in the memory of the Easter of the Lord, we return to history with a greater duty.” With the remembrance of “the Old Slavery” came promise of “victory over the new servitude.”

Though “Amerindian America” still found itself “in the Passion,” its suffering and death would turn into “Resurrection.” The Eucharist had strengthened them to “be your Peoples, the People that is to come.” “The Poor of this Earth” wished to build the “Land-Without-Evil,” with Maíra as its beginning and Maranatha at its end.<sup>55</sup> The composer of the music for mass, the Argentine Martin Coplas, from Catamarca but then residing in southern Brazil as an exile, touted his new CD recording, *Hermano Americano* and at the same time lauded “Brazilian artists like Milton Nascimento and the whole *mineiro* [from Minas Gerais state] group” for reaching across linguistic and historical barriers to compose with Spanish-speaking artists. The mass even had input from Brazilian musician Pery Souza Alves, actor José Guilherme Meneguetti, and Black *sulista* singer “Giba-Giba” (Gilberto Amaro do Nascimento).<sup>56</sup>

At the end of the mass, Câmara shared his awe at the “extraordinary beauty” of the music and lyrics of the celebration. “This was a poem!” he exclaimed, waving the manuscript. “I had the impression that *we*, at that moment, were paying a debt to the indigenous. ‘We,’ Brazil, but in a very particular way, ‘we’ the Church.” After recognizing the debt “of all Latin America” he continued, his arms waving gracefully in the air, “I was just thinking it would be wonderful to have a similar ceremony as soon as possible, and I immediately imagined Palmares, the Quilombo of Palmares, who knows? Maybe also a similar ceremony centered on the Black!”<sup>57</sup>

Significant sectors of the Church were not impressed. Conservatives like Father José Narino de Campos pushed back against the “profanation” of the “mystery of the Eucharist” in such politically focused masses, in the work of Pires, and in the Indian Pastoral more broadly. Campos argued that politicization, including

54. “Missa da Terra-Sem-Males,” 65.

55. “Missa da Terra-Sem-Males,” 66.

56. “A América Latina no canto teimoso de Martin Coplas,” *Folha de São Paulo*, April 26, 1979, 42. <https://acervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=6927&anchor=4238800&cpd=b12d6b0cf2917494fe4c7223197178a6>, accessed December 23, 2023; “A América deve ser a pátria do índio e não o seu cemitério,” *Folhetim*, April 22, 1979, 12. <https://acervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=6923&anchor=4238625&cpd=214c532ca34db6191b4c93812148fa6b>, accessed December 23, 2023; “Missa da terra sem males’ será apresentada em São Paulo,” *A Tribuna* (Porto Velho), October 3, 1979, 5, in Serviço Nacional de Informações, BRAN.BSB.AA3.PSS.558, 260.

57. Armazém Memória, “Missa da Terra Sem Males,” Youtube, October 6, 2013, 33:39–34:39. <https://youtu.be/pBNqtK-VF5g?t=2019>, accessed December 23, 2023.

that of trade unions, alienated the working class.<sup>58</sup> However, the masses he objected to only proliferated, especially following the death of union worker Santo Dias. The Land-Without-Evil Mass continued to serve as an inspiration for liberationists focused on indigenous and human rights.<sup>59</sup>

Câmara had long stood out for his sensitivity to race. He was an important and socially conscious figure in Brazilian Catholic integralism, which blended extreme nationalism, corporatism, fascism, and racially harmonious discourse. Câmara and lay Catholic militant Alceu Amoroso Lima attracted young Black militants like Abdias to co Integral Action (AIB), where Abdias claims to have met both men in the 1930s.<sup>60</sup> Through the 1940s, Câmara closely studied Christian Democracy, especially Jacques Maritain's *Integral Humanism* (1936).<sup>61</sup> His hosting the all-important 1955 Eucharistic Congress reinforced his dedication to the poor and marginalized and made him a global Catholic figure among those who would become the Second Vatican Council's staunchest reformers.<sup>62</sup>

This attitude led Câmara to his controversial support of Abdias's "Black Christ" exhibit at Rio's 1955 Eucharistic Congress, much to the consternation of Brazil's mainstream press.<sup>63</sup> In 1967, Câmara staged Isaac Gondim Filho's

58. Pe. José Narino de Campos, *Brasil: Uma igreja diferente* (São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, 1980), 16, 19, 113.

59. "Celebração da morte de Santo Dias da Silva pela libertação da classe operária," Campinas, São Paulo, October 21, 1979, Fundo Santo Dias, Centro de Documentação e Memória B. A. F. J. 002; Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, "Força do sangue na construção da Terra Sem Males: 2º aniversário da morte de Santo Dias, 1981," São Paulo, October 31, 1981, Fundo Santo Dias, Centro de Documentação e Memória B. A. F. J. 025.

60. Éle Semog and Nascimento, *O griot e as muralhas*, 82-83. Black militants sympathetic to fascism were quite common during this period. For more on Black integralism, see "Presaging the War: Racial Democracy and Fascism in the 1930s," *Shifting the Meaning of Democracy*.

61. Martinho Condini, "Dom Hélder Câmara: Modelo de esperança na caminhada para a paz e justiça social" (Master's diss.: PUC-SP, 2004), 81.

62. Kenneth Serbin, "Church-State Reciprocity in Contemporary Brazil: The Convening of the International Eucharistic Congress of 1955 in Rio de Janeiro," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 76:4 (1996): 736; Giuseppe Alberigo, *History of Vatican II, Vol. II: The Formation of the Council's Identity, First Period and Intercession (October 1962-September 1963)*, Joseph A. Komonchak, English edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 201, 217; Paul Gauthier, *Christ, the Church, and the Poor* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), 27, 76, 84, 113; Rock Caporale, *Vatican II: Last of the Councils* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964), 72. In fact, Câmara had dealt with favela issues through the Fundação Leão XIII (1947) and his Cruzadas de Sebastião (1955). He influenced priest Louis-Joseph Lebrét's view of favelas and development. Licia do Prado Valladares, *The Invention of the Favela*, Latin America in Translation Series, Robert N. Anderson, trans. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 66-72. His work with favelas brought him into contact with Carolina Maria de Jesus and made him an influence on Benedita da Silva. Robert M. Levine, "The Cautionary Tale of Carolina Maria de Jesus," *Latin American Research Review* 29:1 (1994): 66; Carolina Maria de Jesus, *Casa de Alvenaria: Diário de uma Ex-Favelada* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Francisco Alves, 1961), 77; Alan Riding, "Rio Journal: One Woman's Mission: To Make Brasília Sensitive," *New York Times*, February 19, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/19/world/rio-journal-one-woman-s-mission-to-make-brasil-s-sensitive.html>, accessed December 23, 2023.

63. Pedro Celso Uchoa Cavalcanti and Jovelino Ramos, *Memórias do Exílio*, 42. In the interview, Abdias de Nascimento describes his vocational discernment on whether to become a priest, racism, his move to Candomblé, and Câmara's help. Uchoa Cavalcanti, *Jovelino Ramos, Memórias do Exílio: Brasil 1964-19??*, 27, 42. Calling Câmara "his friend" he noted, "The Catholic Church was always good on the subject of incorporating outside cultures under its controls (42)." Declaring "[h]ere there is no racism," Rio de Janeiro's paper of record, *Jornal do Brasil*, in 1955

*Emanuel Deus Conosco*, featuring a “mulato Christ,” on the archdiocesan premises, again provoking controversy that the play was not suitable for Church settings.<sup>64</sup> But the archbishop of Olinda and Recife was not alone. The same year in which the archbishop defended Gondim, a liturgical and theological revolution was afoot. Paul VI called on a decolonizing Church to “giv[e] value to African cultures” through “the reform of the liturgy” and the teaching of “doctrine in terms suited to African peoples.”<sup>65</sup> Historian A. E Santos Neves, cited in Brazil, declared that liturgical practice in Angola must attend to the “specific interests and needs of the Black man,” whose spirituality depended on “images and signs” and their practical material use.<sup>66</sup> And the moderate Franciscan theologian Boaventura Kloppenburg did an about-face on Afro-Brazilian religion: whereas he had once compared Umbanda practitioners to those peoples God had told Israel to exterminate, he now claimed Umbanda as central to Brazilian religious identity, calling for a separation of legitimate cultural elements of Umbanda from the beliefs that were at odds with Catholic doctrine.<sup>67</sup>

Câmara, 70 years old, left Casaldáliga, then 53, and Tierra, then 32, to carry out his vision. Anthropologist Carlos Alberto Ricardo, who worked with CIMI on indigenous rights issues, put Tierra into contact with Milton through fellow musician Paulo Cezar Botas.<sup>68</sup> Milton had read Casaldáliga’s poems praising

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deemed Abdias’ representations of Christ as Black “specious” with “basis in neither historical nor artistic tradition.” It spoke nostalgically about the “sweet figure of the Nazarene, Symbol of Hope and Pardon,” which “throughout the centuries [had appeared] with very specific appearances” and in “that immutable form that everyone knows.” Editorial, “Cristo Negro,” *Jornal do Brasil*, June 26, 1955, 2. [http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/030015\\_07/52290](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/030015_07/52290), accessed December 23, 2023. The “immutable form” was not that of an oppressed Palestinian Jew. The universal subject, they implied, must necessarily be white.

64. “Cristo Mulato de Issac encontrou pousada no Palácio do Arcebispo,” *Diário de Pernambuco* March 10, 1967, 8, [http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/029033\\_14/48783](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/029033_14/48783), accessed December 23, 2023. Câmara vented in his diary about controversy surrounding the play, which set the Gospel in the modern day: He noted that the day prior, he had to defend his liturgical commission’s endorsement of Gondim Filho’s play (with music by the MPB composer and singer Chico Buarque) from the charge of “the other crime, which is having a *moreno* [non-white] represent Christ.” Frustrated, he exclaimed, “And some still say today that there is no racism in Brazil! They told me it does not have to do with racism, but with respect for historical truth.” Pushing back, he noted his own conviction that “the historical truth is that Christ belongs to all races and Christ is found always and when someone is run over or wronged . . . in the Northeast, Christ is named Zé, Antônio, [and] Severino.” Dom Hélder Câmara, “195th Circular,” Recife, February 25-26, 1967, in *Dom Hélder Câmara Circulares Pós-Conciliares, Volume III - Tomo III*, Zildo Rocha and Daniel Sigal eds. (Recife: Editora CEPE, 2012).

65. Paul VI, “Roman Documents: Africae Terrarum,” *African Ecclesiastical Review* 10, 1 (1967): 81.

66. A. E Santos Neves, “A Teologia de uma pastoral litúrgica em Angola,” *Ora et Labora* 14 (1967): 15.

67. Boaventura Kloppenburg, “Ensaio de uma nova posição pastoral perante a Umbanda [1968],” in *Cultos Afro-Brasileiros: Candomblé, Umbanda, observações pastorais* (Rio de Janeiro: Secretário Regional Leste-1 da Conferência dos Bispos do Brasil, 1972), 59; Dr. Boaventura Kloppenburg, *A Umbanda no Brasil: orientação para os católicos*, Vozes em Defesa da Fé, Estudo No. 2 (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes Limitada, 1961), 72-73. Kloppenburg wrote in the introduction that such a declaration did not represent “a position against African culture” but rather against “a pagan religion” that had “the declared purpose of paganizing Christianity.” *A Umbanda no Brasil*, 8.

68. Fundação Perseu Abramo, “Hamilton Pereira | História Oral: PT 40 Anos,” Youtube, May 29, 2020, <https://youtu.be/nSXHFxJZwlg?list=PLtsJqckMj3D4K6AjHmG7Aqm5-JorzOhK0&t=7492>, 2:04:52-2:05:56.

him for centering the poor. Milton's 1980 album *Sentinela*, a Gregorian chant-jazz remix of a traditional funeral folksong, included Casaldáliga's 1974 poem as an epigraph to its accompanying booklet. Nascimento would later name a school in Belo Horizonte Quilombo.<sup>69</sup> Whether Milton was aware of it or not, Casaldáliga himself had had some exposure to Africa, in 1960, when he spent six months in Equatorial Guinea running a Catholic lay leadership program (*Cursillos* in Christianity) that sought to combine effective evangelization with the promotion of socioeconomic integration.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the collection admired by Milton included two remarkable poems about Black women that inverted aesthetic and religious hierarchies and at the same time invoked the women's pursuit of liberation. One woman even gives birth to a *pardo* Christ who disarms Roman soldiers and convinces merchants to give away their wealth.<sup>71</sup>

In the 1970s, Milton composed work deriding some Third World intellectuals' musical inferiority complexes. He rejected their generalized approach to addressing slavery, reparations, and dictatorial repression.<sup>72</sup> As a politically involved, nonsectarian *mineiro* Catholic, Milton was a prominent figure in the rebel generation of 1968 and participated in the 1968 March of the One Hundred Thousand against the dictatorship in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>73</sup> Tierra brought Milton to Goiânia for another performance of the Land-Without-Evil Mass, in a stadium. Milton was especially moved by the use of Irántxe long flutes. After the presentation, he and Tierra stayed in an archdiocesan center for leadership training before Milton returned to Rio to begin working in earnest.

In seeking a model for performances that condemned the present injustices using historical events, Tierra was inspired by Augusto Boal's anti-dictatorial *Arena Conta Zumbi* (1965), for which Boal had been arrested, imprisoned, and tortured in 1971. He also promoted the controversial play *Calabar: O Elógio da Traição* by Chico Buarque, which lauded the Palmares-era defection to the Dutch of the Brazilian Domingos Fernandes Calabar during the seventeenth century as an anti-nationalist rallying point. Buarque's play was eventually banned. Tierra's primary concern was to depict Black people as active historical subjects. Rather than simply condemning slavery, he sought to exalt "the biggest instance of resistance" to colonial slavery in Brazil and make it speak to contemporary oppression, just as *Calabar* had spoken to nationalism. In doing

69. Perrone, "Milton Nascimento: Sallies and Banners," 137, 139, 141.

70. Tavares, *Um bispo contra todas as cercas*, 33-35.

71. Pedro Casaldáliga, "Negra" in *Tierra Nuestra, Libertad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe, 1974), 22-23; Pedro Casaldáliga, "La vieja negra," in *Tierra Nuestra, Libertad*, 85.

72. Perrone, "Milton Nascimento: Sallies and Banners," 134-135, 148-149, 151.

73. Ridenti, "Todo artista tem de ir aonde o povo está," image, *Em busca do povo brasileiro: artistas da revolução*, 220.

so, he drew on the work of scholar activists who addressed quilombos and race relations. They included Bahian pardo activist Édison Carneiro, the *paulista* sociologist Florestan Fernandes, who was of poor immigrant Portuguese origin, and Abdias, from São Paulo’s interior.<sup>74</sup>

To write the Quilombos Mass, Tierra and Milton conducted field research across Brazil, even in largely white states like Rio Grande do Sul, which nevertheless had distinctive Black communities. They interviewed historians and those who had lived through the post-abolition period.<sup>75</sup> The Casaldáliga, Milton, and Tierra met again at the Jesuit monastery in Itaici, São Paulo, the site of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ General Assembly, where Casaldáliga and around 20 liberationist bishops attended a lecture by Peruvian liberationist Gustavo Gutiérrez. When Tierra showed the trio his first draft of the mass, Milton joked to his collaborators: “This is not a Mass, it is an entire Holy Week.”<sup>76</sup> The enormity of the material produced composer’s block in Milton for days. One afternoon in his Rio apartment, he haltingly improvised the songs but could not yet internalize them. To get around this memory gap, he recorded improvisations for reference afterward.<sup>77</sup> Despite this difficult start, Milton’s involvement proved to be a game changer, garnering national press coverage even though Black people, unlike the indigenous, did not automatically garner intellectuals’ sympathy. His participation also assured the mass would be of high musical quality, politically relevant, and attuned to Black movements’ political demands.

This was no mere cosmetic concern. The Black activist Beatriz Nascimento, from Sergipe, and the Black philosopher Muniz Sodré, from Bahia, had both recently criticized white attempts to speak for them artistically. Beatriz had criticized filmmaker Carlos Diegues’s *Xica da Silva* (1976) as “repeat[ing] the *Casa Grande e Senzala* [1933]” by turning “Black people, slaves, and *quilombolas*” into either “passive” subjects or “inconsequential rebels.” Sodré had criticized the Cinema Novo filmmaker Nelson Pereira dos Santos for his 1977 adaption of Jorge Amado’s *Tent of Miracles* (1969), alleging that it advanced a class-dominated “doctrine of *mestiçagem*” (racial mixing, which in this context implied whitening).<sup>78</sup> Given these bitter criticisms, the architects of the

74. “Hamilton Pereira | História Oral: PT 40 Anos,” 02:06:39-02:07:22. <https://youtu.be/nSXHFxJZwlg?list=PLtsJqckMj3D4K6AjHmG7Aqm5-JorzOhK0&t=7599>; “Interview with Hamilton Pereira,” 52:45-54:28, 57:11-58:32, 59:50-1:00:09, 1:00:19.

75. Geri Smith, “Conviction and Harmony: Brazilian Milton Nascimento’s Powerful Voice and Sensitive Lyrics Speak to the Hearts of a New Generation,” *Américas*, July 1, 1988, 30; “Interview with Hamilton Pereira,” 1:01:15-1:02:55.

76. Tavares, *Um bispo contra todas as cercas*, 135; “Interview with Hamilton Pereira,” 1:15:10-1:16:51.

77. Maria Dolores, *Travessia: a vida de Milton Nascimento* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2006), 240.

78. B. Nascimento and Muniz Sodré, in “Imagem, raça e humilhação no espelho negro da nação,” 99-100.

Quilombos Mass were acutely aware of the need to avoid allegations of white gaze, class reductionism, and white ventriloquism by engaging directly with Black activists.

Liberationist currents in the Church had begun to engage with urban and educated Black militants even before the Quilombos Mass, and with less bias than before. As with many social movements, the Church helped make up for the deficits in institutional resources facing Black movements as they sought a wider national audience. For example, the United Movement Against Racial Discrimination (MUCDR), an earlier version of the emblematic Unified Black Movement (MNU) that aimed to eliminate racism against all groups, received publicity and aid from Church newspapers and enlisted Jewish volunteers.<sup>79</sup> Beatriz, the first prominent intellectual of *quilombismo*, would grace the pages of the most influential Catholic magazine well before Abdias's return from exile. She presented Black brotherhoods alongside quilombos as antidotes to poisonous invisibility and depoliticization.

Writing in the Franciscan publication *Revista Vozes* in 1974, Beatriz explained that “any quilombo of the Northeast,” as much as “the womb of her mother” or “Africa, where I do not want, nor am I able, to return,” constitutes a fundamental part of Black identity construction. Quilombos countered the reduction of Black identity to Afro-Brazilian religions, samba, and mere worldly pleasures. Whatever their limitations, they served as a “promised land” for Black people.<sup>80</sup> In other articles, she examined *congada* communities (focused on a popular style of Catholic Afro-Brazilian drumming) from Minas Gerais state and warned Brazilian Black people against mimicking North American methods, a caution that must have appealed to liberationists' anti-imperialist sensibilities.<sup>81</sup>

In a November 1980 meeting of the Group of Union and Black Consciousness (GRUCON), then a Black Catholic militant group, Casaldáliga fielded questions from activists skeptical of a church that, as he noted, had “participated greatly in the enslavement of Black people.” He assured them that

79. See Milton Barbosa, in A. Pereira, “O Mundo Negro,” 190, 196.

80. Beatriz Nascimento [“Gomes” added in original], “Por uma história do homem negro,” *Revista de Cultura Vozes* 68:1 (1974) in Alex Ratts, *Eu sou Atlântica: sobre a trajetória de vida de Beatriz Nascimento* (São Paulo: Instituto Kuanza/Imprensa Oficial, 2006), 98; Beatriz Nascimento, “O Quilombo do Jabaquara,” *Revista Vozes* 73:3 (1979): 177-178.

81. Beatriz Nascimento, “Kilombo e memória comunitária: Um estudo de caso,” *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 6-7 (1982) in Alex Ratts, *Eu sou Atlântica*, 111, 113, 115-116; Beatriz Nascimento, “Negro e racismo,” *Revista de Cultura Vozes* 68:7 (1974) in Alex Ratts, *Eu sou Atlântica*, 102. For English translations of these essays see Christen A. Smith, Bethânia N. E. Gomes Archie Davies *The Dialectic Is in the Sea: The Black Radical Thought of Beatriz Nascimento* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

“the Mass would be a plea for pardon” on behalf of the Church and would incorporate Afro-Brazilian characteristics.<sup>82</sup>

As the fourth key architect of the Quilombos Mass, Dom Pires was also involved in dialogue with Black activists, both within and beyond the ranks of his church. Born in the poor rural village of Côrregos in Minas Gerais, Pires had risen through the ranks of the Church, attended the Second Vatican Council, and founded one of the first diocese-based human rights centers. It tracked the abuses of the dictatorship era, including de facto, if not de jure, racial barriers in bars.<sup>83</sup> Pires was already widely known for his support of land squatters in Paraíba’s Alagamar region and for arguing in *Folha*, one of Brazil’s papers of record, for a Church counter-tradition that had opposed slavery.<sup>84</sup> In June 1980, he joined Abdias for a public discussion of race at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) to launch the latter’s book *Quilombismo*, published that year by the Franciscan-run Editora Vozes.<sup>85</sup>

With “Jesuits and pastoral agents” in attendance, Pires recognized the existence of discrimination against Black people, added that he had been spared its most “revolting” manifestations because of his high-level Church position. For Pires, discrimination stood at an intersection of racial and class bias, and he drew a lesson from the US TV series *Roots* (1977) as to why many Black people in Brazil pursued a path of “accommodation, as a survival instinct.” He also

82. To their suggestion that a free-standing show was better than the restrictive Catholic mass, the bishop explained that a mass would have greater appeal to the common people, as opposed to intellectuals. He also assured them that the mass was incorporating Afro-Brazilian characteristics. The cross used at the mass would be made of “sugarcane because the Black was enslaved principally to work on the sugar plantations.” Echoing Black cultural movements, he said “a Black celebration” without dance seemed “inconceivable.” “Relatório da Reunião de Grupo Negro,” Brasília, November 29-30, 1980, 5, in “Grupo de União e Consciência Negra: Primeira Parte,” CDI-CNBB #30750.

83. “Entrevista, Dom José Maria Pires,” August to December 2001, in *Um profeta em Movimento: Dom José Maria Pires Desatando Nos*, Mauro Passos and Leonardo Lucas Pereira, eds. (Belo Horizonte: O Lutador, 2011), 27, 37, 40-41; Centro da Defesa dos Direitos Humanos da Arquidiocese de Paraíba, “Você conhece os seus direitos,” 8, in Moacyr Coelho (Diretor-Geral do Serviço Público Federal), Ofício n° 284/76-CCP, Brasília, August 19, 1976, in Serviço Nacional de Informações, “D. José Maria Dom Pires, Acebispo da Paraíba,” N° ACE 9951/76 (Part 1/2).

84. José Maria Pires, “A Igreja e o Negro,” *Folha de São Paulo (Folhetim)*, June 6, 1980, 11. <https://accervo.folha.com.br/compartilhar.do?numero=7336&anchor=4246547&cpd=f444f26b041e54e27c523528287a19af>, accessed December 23, 2023; Cida Alves, “Música de Baiana System traz versos da luta camponesa na Paraíba contra regime militar,” *Brasil de Fato*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2021/02/22/musica-de-baianasystem-traz-versos-da-luta-camponesa-na-paraiba-contra-regime-militar>, accessed December 23, 2023; Hildegard Goss-Mayr, “Alagamar: Nonviolent Land Struggle in Brazil,” Satyagraha Foundation for Nonviolence Studies, December 15, 2015, <http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/alagamar-nonviolent-land-struggle-in-brazil/>, accessed December 23, 2023; Rio Records, “José Alberto Kaplán & W.S. Solha – Cantata Pra Alagamar,” Youtube, October 22, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aNQ5M65P9M>, accessed December 23, 2023.

85. Mirna Grzych and Osmar Barbalho, “D. Pelé e Abdias do Nascimento discutem o racismo,” *Em Tempo*, July 3-16, 1980, 11. This fascinating dialogue between the two Black men of the older generation appeared in the leftist São Paulo biweekly *Em Tempo* and noted Dom Pires’s courageous support of squatters in the Alagamar region. It also quoted the words of the event’s chair, Orlando Fernandes, from Rio’s Institute for Black Research and Culture (IPCN). For more on Brandes, see Michael George Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 93.

spoke of his own gradual “coming to consciousness,” condemning the “marginalization and oppression” of the “poor, and therefore, the rights of the Black.”

Pires also shared his nascent plans to create a Black Pastoral within the Latin American Church. Discussing the 1979 Puebla Conference documents, he expressed frustration that the only two lines addressing Black people in the Church “were taken out of the text, after the fact, and put in a footnote at the bottom of the page.”<sup>86</sup> Abdias, known for being a provocateur, raised a question regarding Pires’s nickname, ‘Dom Pelé,’ bestowed on him by bishopric colleagues in reference to criticism leveled at the world-renowned soccer player for his collaboration with the dictatorship and his racially accommodationist posture. Pires replied that he embraced the nickname: the dark-skinned Pelé, as *preto*, “made me accept my identity” as a Black person.<sup>87</sup>

As November 1981 approached, the stars aligned, figuratively and literally. Milton, Tavinho Moura, and Arlindo Keller accepted the assertion of a local Umbanda *terreiro* (an Afro-Brazilian religious house of worship), that Zumbi’s beheading in the plaza was a sign of the show’s relevance to struggles past and present, political and religious.<sup>88</sup> Milton fused traditional and avant-garde elements of MPB into the Missa dos Quilombos, gathering established and rising MPB stars as well as the traditional Olinda choir.<sup>89</sup> The secular Unified Black Movement called the mass a return to “his [Milton’s] political Black, and proletariat origins.”<sup>90</sup> Whatever misgivings GRUCON had regarding meeting with Casaldáliga, their local chapter publicized the Recife mass in a pamphlet on discrimination and Black Consciousness Day.<sup>91</sup> After more than two years, the long-awaited event was to begin.

86. Pires must have been referring to an interim draft because the references to Black people are back in the text of CELAM’s final document, approved by a March 1979 Papal letter, which mentions Black people as the “poorest among the poor” (Section 32).

87. Grzych and Barbalho, “D. Pelé e Abdias do Nascimento discutem o racismo,” Abdias was not completely hostile. He referred to his rejection from the priesthood, recalling it as an incident on his road to “finding my true Gods, the *orixás* of my ancestors which helped me remake my ethnic, cultural, and spiritual identity,” while arguing that the struggle in Brazil was “much more difficult” than it was for Black people in the United States and South Africa. Abdias lauded São Paulo’s Cardinal Arns for considering establishing an Afro-Brazilian Studies Center at São Paulo’s Pontifical University.

88. Maria Dolores, *Travessia*, 244.

89. “Toca Disco: Milton e a Missa dos Quilombos,” *Folha de São Paulo*, November 14, 1981, 29. <https://acervo.folha.com.br/leitor.do?numero=7860&keyword=%22Missa+dos+Quilombos%22&anchor=4214292&origem=busca&pd=78c4618a0afbdc426779b9e96ca7a3c0>, accessed December 23, 2023.

90. “Notas e Noticiário,” *Revista do Movimento Negro Unificado*, November 1981, Arquivo Edgard Luenroth (UNICAMP) CPDS B/0172, 2.

91. Movimento Negro de João Pessoa and Grupo de União e Consciência Negra, “Quem é negro num país desse?” in Serviço Nacional de Informações ACE# 3082/81, November 25, 1981, 13-14.

## THE QUILOMBOS MASS AS A PILGRIMAGE TO A BLACK “PEOPLE’S PALMARES”

There is no more powerful proof of the neglect of the Quilombos Mass, even by the few scholars who have written about it in the past decade, than the fact that none have asked why the mass’s most famous performance was held in Recife on November 22 and not on the true date of Zumbi’s death, which was November 20, 1695. Why would they hold a massive event to launch the mass on the wrong day?

In fact, the performance in front of the Our Lady of Carmo in Recife was its *second* public performance. The first was held on November 20, on a hilltop known as Serra da Barriga in an isolated rural area of today’s Alagoas. The Missa dos Quilombos takes on an entirely different meaning when it is understood as part of a Black movement pilgrimage to the site of the original Palmares quilombo, a pilgrimage that included Pires, Casaldáliga, Milton, Abdias, and Black feminist sociologist Lélia Gonzalez.

This pilgrimage by the architects of the mass was distinct from the “coming-home” pilgrimage of participants like Abdias who could perhaps see it as a search for “a paradise forever lost—never to be fully restored, yet always longed for.”<sup>92</sup> While inspired by liberationist consciousness-raising and a search for a universal utopia, the pilgrimage also had a penitential purpose: to atone for the past sins of the Church and draw attention to the social sins of torture and racism.<sup>93</sup> The pilgrimage was the climax of the First National Symposium on the Quilombo de Palmares, organized by activist professor Décio Freitas, who had himself written a book on Palmares. The symposium was most thoroughly documented by the fearsome National Intelligence Service (SNI). Their dossiers, which contain not only officers’ comments and summaries but also appended conference material and media coverage, are opened to a wide audience in this article, for the first time.<sup>94</sup>

92. Katharina Schramm, “Coming Home to the Motherland: Pilgrimage Tourism in Ghana,” in *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, Simon Coleman, and John Eade, eds. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 129.

93. Marjo de Theije and Cecília Loreto Mariz, “Localizing and Globalizing Processes in Brazilian Catholicism: Comparing Inculturation in Liberationist and Charismatic Catholic Cultures,” *Latin American Research Review* 43:1 (2008): 48-49.

94. “I Simpósio Nacional sobre o Quilombo de Palmares,” December 7, 1981, Serviço Nacional de Informações ACE nº 21550/82, 1. Rio de Janeiro, Arquivo Nacional. <https://sian.an.gov.br/sianex/Consulta/login.asp>, accessed December 23, 2023; Décio Freitas, *Palmares: a guerra dos escravos* (Porto Alegre: Editora Movimento, 1973). The symposium, which attracted diplomats from seven African countries, emerged out of an August 1981 gathering of national political and cultural Black movement groups pushing back against Ministry of Education proposals to turn Serra da Barriga into a “folkloric” national park, complete with campsites. Amílcar Araújo Pereira, “*O Mundo Negro*: A constituição do movimento negro contemporâneo no Brasil, 1970-1995” (PhD diss.: Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2010), 162, 203-204; I Simpósio Nacional sobre o Quilombo de Palmares, December 7, 1981, Serviço Nacional de Informações, 7-8; Anani Dzidzienyo, “The African Connection and the Afro-Brazilian Condition,” in

The conference itinerary forwarded to the intelligence officials showed symposium participants journeying by bus from a seminar held at the Federal University of Alagoas to União de Palmares. From there, they followed the river, some on foot and others on horseback.<sup>95</sup> Journalists for the Ministry of Education's cultural magazine spotted Casaldáliga ascending with a climbing group. A day before he had given an interview calling his presence "a penitential act." Carlos Diegues, who sought inspiration for what would become his landmark film *Quilombo* (1984), marched briskly ahead of the group.<sup>96</sup> The physical toll on the trekkers after 10 kilometers, two of them on a steep road winding upward, only heightened the sense of striving, struggle, and, for some, atonement.<sup>97</sup>

Milton would join Casaldáliga and Pires to close the symposium with the Missa.<sup>98</sup> Flanked by Macéio archbishop Miguel Fenelon, Campina Grande's retired bishop Dom Manoel Pereira da Costa, African clergy, and artists like Diegues, Pires preached on Zumbi's role as a "patriarch of liberation" for Black people oppressed at the margins, in the factories, and in the fields.<sup>99</sup> The setting itself, a 360-degree view in nearly impassable terrain, demonstrated how the quilombo could have survived for nearly a century. Abdias's invocation of the orixás Olorum, Xangô, Oxum, and Iansã gave the closing an ecumenical atmosphere. A year later, in a photograph taken by Elisa Larkin de Nascimento in 1981 and published in 1982, Pires appeared, hand raised in an emotional speech, with her husband Abdias and Casaldáliga on either side of him.<sup>100</sup> The penitential attitude of churchmen complemented the celebratory spirit of return that sang out in the drumming and the dance-focused *afoxés* such as Malê, Ilê Ayé, and Badaué, who had arrived in Macéio in dozens of buses from Bahia. After a late lunch, the groups took buses to União where they formed drumming circles and trekked toward the Serra, singing and hailing Zumbi as they encountered descending pilgrims.<sup>101</sup>

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*Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*, Pierre-Michel Fontaine, ed. (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985), 135, 140, 142-144.

95. Joel Rufino dos Santos, *Zumbi*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Moderna, 1985), 50-51; I Simpósio Nacional sobre o Quilombo de Palmares, Serviço Nacional de Informações, 5.

96. Júlio César de Souza Távares and Sérgio Ismael Nunes Moriconi, "Zumbi: Monumento á liberdade," *MEC Cultura* 10:38 (Out-dez. 1981): 20.

97. George D. Greenia, "Bartered Bodies: Medieval Pilgrims and the Tissue of Faith, The Pilgrim Body: An Anatomy of a Christian and Post-Christian Intentional Movement", Matthew Anderson and Sara Terreault, eds., *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 7:1 (2019): 42, 45.

98. "I Simpósio Nacional sobre o Quilombo de Palmares," December 7, 1981, Serviço Nacional de Informações, ACE n° 21550/82, 109.

99. Pe. Toninho, "Palmares, um altar histórico," *O São Paulo*, November 27-December 3, 1981, 4.

100. Abdias de Nascimento, *O Negro Revoltado*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1982), Image 14.

101. Távares and Moriconi, "Zumbi: Monumento á liberdade," 19-20.

The Serra da Barriga performance signaled some Black Movement support, but to capture national attention, the authors of the mass would need to take the performance into a center of Nordeste media, politics, and historical imagination, Recife. Two days later, after two years of preparation, the authors and musicians were finally ready to present their magnum opus: a mass with all five traditional movements put to contemporary Afro-Brazilian rhythms. Even as their work sung out against the invisibility of Blackness, authors may have wondered whether their innovative combination of music, poetry, dance, and art in the mass was sufficient opposition to potentially demobilizing white paternalism, the putative key defect of so many white leftist intellectuals in the 1970s.

Both the short and long answers are yes. By mixing denunciation with upbeat rhythms and dance, performers transgressed traditional boundaries to push back against Black invisibility. In doing so, they created a longing for Black heroes, remembered past oppression, denounced present-day racialized marginalization, and created new liberatory possibilities.<sup>102</sup> They arrived from “the depths of the earth,” from the “womb of the night,” from the “flesh of the whip” “to remember.” They emerged “from the office ground floor” as “the sound and shapes of prohibited art” coming “to create.” They came “from the death in the seas” and “the dregs below the decks,” and “from the rich ovens,” the “poor brothels,” the “old *senzalas* [slave quarters],” the “*mocambos* [encampments],” and the “new *favelas*.” They came “on the trains from the suburbs,” from “the great stadiums,” from “samba schools” to “sing,” but also to “charge” for past transgressions.<sup>103</sup>

To rapid chants and percussion, the Kyrie called out past injustices to condemn present inequalities. Through the repeated use of the term *negro*, it called for a unified Black consciousness, at odds with traditional Brazilian myths of racial mixture.<sup>104</sup> Penitent whites admitted to the “burn[ing] with fear” of our archives and the “whit[ing] out of our memory.” They compared the “white whipping posts,” the “chests broken,” and the “sacrificed babies” on plantations like those of Dutch loyalist Ana Pães Gonsalves de Azevedo to images of present suffering and invisibility: “Black people without jobs, without a voice and without a chance” nor even the most basic “right to be, to the Black being, or to be Black”; reduced to “office dust, the bar waiter, the kitchen shadow,”

102. Lorraine Leu, “The Press and the Spectacle of Violence in Contemporary Rio de Janeiro,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 13:3 (2004): 343-355; Perrone, “Milton Nascimento: Sallies and Banners,” 134; J. J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4-5.

103. “Missa dos Quilombos: Texto informativo, discursos e letras das músicas.” *Boletim do CIMI: Informativo do Conselho Indigenista Missionário* 76 (December 1981): 16-18.

104. For a longer gloss of these traditional arguments, see Marshall C. Eakin, *Becoming Brazilians: Race and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 24, 240-244.

the “underemployed hand [and] bordello flesh”; and “homeless children (*pixotes*) in the street hunted to the hills, dead in jail.”<sup>105</sup>

This denunciation was a call to pardos and pretos to transcend traditional divides. “Hopeful mulattos” working as “well-studied fathers, listened-to Pastors, well-accomodated nuns, Doctors of fate, fashionable singers, and Kings of the Stadium” should stay on “the side of the Black.” To do otherwise, to “deny the Blood, the cry of the Dead, the smell of the Black, the aroma of Race” would be to commit “white treason.”<sup>106</sup>

Proudly assuming his Black identity, Pires read from the *Book of Lamentations* and *The Beatitudes* before delivering his homily. In his debate with Abdias, Pires had made clear that he expected the Church to “practice[e] with respect to African religions what it has practiced with respect to the Orthodox and Evangelical churches: a healthy ecumenism that attributes to those people who practice those religions the same value that she attributes to Catholics that are faithful to their religion.” Above all, socially minded adherents of African-rooted religions and Catholics should “mak[e] themselves brothers in the search for. . . a new society.”<sup>107</sup> He used his homily to review painful history but also to suggest that the Church was starting to fulfill this vision.

In the text version of the mass, reproduced in the CIMI Bulletin, this section is illustrated with pictures of men and women from various West, Central, and East African nations, some hidden in the shadows, some as warriors protecting their families, and some as agricultural workers, whose sweat is literally watering a plant.<sup>108</sup> Dom Pires heralded “signs of a new aura that comes to wake the Church of Jesus Christ.” Although at first “impos[ing] a new religion [Black people] did not choose,” it had begun to “respect our culture and not treat it” as a “gross superstition.”<sup>109</sup> Dom Pires praised the Church for “helping us resurrect our historical memory, encourag[ing] our organization.”<sup>110</sup> He called whites present “our friends” who “although the descendants of those who

105. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 21-22.

106. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 23; This section shows traces of Calabar’s action-based view of race. In the play, a Portuguese friar mocks colonial Black general Henrique Dias for this racial duplicity. “This, yes, is a hero. Black (*negro*) in color but white in works and effort. Have you noted, Your Excellency, that he is becoming a little whiter?” Chico Buarque e Ruy Guerra, *Calabar: O Elogio da Traição*, 8th ed. (São Paulo: Civilização Brasileira, 1973), 11, <https://www.ufgfs.br/institutodeartes/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/CALABAR-texto-integral.pdf>, accessed December 23, 2023; Hebe Mattos, “Black Troops” and Hierarchies of Color in the Portuguese Atlantic World: The Case of Henrique Dias and His Black Regiment,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 45:1 (2008): 6-29.

107. “Missa dos Quilombos” *CIMI*, 11; Grzych and Barbalho, “D. Pelé e Abdias do Nascimento discutem o racismo.”

108. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 9, 12-14.

109. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 7; Mauro Passos, *Um profeta em movimento*, 65.

110. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 7.

humiliated and tortured our race” nevertheless “applauded” and “showed solidarity with our cause.” Dom Pires noted that white supporters did not want the “nefarious consequences” of “slavery that oppressed our grandparents” to continue. Some, he said, would see the Quilombos Mass as a “provocation or a demonstration of racism,” an unnecessary “gesture with more ideological and political than evangelical and religious content.” But the mass, in his words, simply represented the “liberation of the captives” (Luke 4:18). Dom Pires proclaimed that Black people were “not ashamed” of their “indelible marks of *negritude*,” alluding to Catholic-inspired “African socialist” and Caribbean leaders Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and even Abdias Nascimento himself<sup>111</sup>

This pride, Pires declared, had been forged by a fire harsher than Biblical captivity. “Longer than the slavery in Egypt, harsher than the captivity in Babylon was Black slavery in Brazil.” The Hebrews’ “hard servitude” allowed them to “conserve their conscience as a people and personal dignity.” But enslavers had “uprooted” Africans, creating entire communities “purposely separated from their people and family” and reduced to nothing more than “an object to sell, give, trade, or destroy.” In the slow and rhythmical words of the Offertory, backed by guitar and the sound of shimmering bells, Black people had “lift[ed] up empires” and “made the white sons’ America” by “the force of our arms, the scream between our teeth” that shattered “the soul into pieces.” Black suffering constituted multiple “Ways of the Cross.” Naturally, Dom Pires continued, reactions to this dehumanization varied. Some “collaborated with their oppressors” to survive, while others built quilombos which, he insisted, also welcomed indigenous and white “victims of exploitation.” These communities developed as “the most efficacious” form of resistance.<sup>112</sup>

But what of the Church itself, the “Church of the whites” which, pairing baptismal certificates with branding irons, had collected Black-harvested gold and ill-gotten fruits of the earth, such as “corn, cut cane, [and] white cotton”[?] Exploitation made a mockery of the Church’s assurance that “evils turn out for good [Genesis 50:20]” as if the price of Black lives lost in the Atlantic slave trade was worth paying if it facilitated Africans’ “integrating into Christian civilization, abandoning paganism.” “Beautiful theology!” Pires

111. “Missa dos Quilombos.” *CIMI*, 8. Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Leopold Sedar Senghor and the Politics of Negritude* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 6-8, 18, 28; Abdias de Nascimento and Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil: A Pan-African Perspective* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 40; Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948); Jean-Paul Sartre, “Black Orpheus,” *Massachusetts Review* 6:1 (Autumn-Winter 1964/65): 13-52; Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

112. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 9, 12, 27-28.

quipped sarcastically.<sup>113</sup> His irony could be seen as an indirect rebuke of Brazil's most important colonial theologian, the pardo Jesuit Antônio Vieira. Though he opposed indigenous enslavement, Vieira argued that God and Mary's "particular providence" had allowed African slavery so that the enslaved could "very easily achieve eternal freedom."<sup>114</sup>

Dom Pires and the words of the *Missa dos Quilombos* did not stop at denouncing the dehumanization of Black people. Nor did they offer explanations of injustice as inevitable products of the economic forces of history. This "beautiful theology" (for whites) would give way to "Liberation Theology, also called Captivity [Theology]," a theology supporting "the efforts of the oppressed to free themselves from the marginalization" that racism had imposed. Pires expressed hope that three centuries after the destruction of Palmares, society was beginning "to hear the cry" of marginalized Black people, strengthened by the Eucharist, which "made brothers" of the enslaveds' and masters' descendants. Championing this optimism, Dom Pires pleaded with his audience that they "not let any hate or violence install themselves in our hearts" since "the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah" would find rest in "the words of comfort and promises of hope" in the Gospel.<sup>115</sup> Comfort and hope were not religious escapism, but, as the "Alleluia" would later explain, the expectation of Christ's "new liberation" of his followers: they were to be "Quilombolas free of profit and fear" who "shout" "the word of life" after much "news of death," "fake promises," and "frustrated hopes."<sup>116</sup>

Bringing about this Black utopia required addressing Catholicism's relationship to African-rooted religions. Dom Pires nodded to the traditional syncretic forms of resistance that helped preserve captives' "original values." Captives had to hide their religion in plain site as "the images of the saints became the materializations (*materializações*) of their orixás [Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception as the river orixá Iemanjá, St. George as Ogum, a warrior orixá, and St. Barbara as Iansã, the storm orixá]."<sup>117</sup> Provoking his nervous fellow bishops, Pires stated that he considered Olorum (the supreme orixá), Oxalá (the co-creator orixá), and Ifá (the orixá of wisdom), as translations of the Trinitarian beings into the Yoruba language.<sup>118</sup> While conflating these six natures in seriousness would have been a mistake, Milton's song and Dom Pires's joke can

113. "Missa dos Quilombos," *CIMI*, 10, 27-28.

114. "Sermon XXVII of the Series Called Maria Rosa Mística," in Mónica Leal da Silva, Liam Matthew Brockey, *Antônio Vieira: Six Sermons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 184.

115. "Missa dos Quilombos," *CIMI*, 10, 27-28.

116. "Missa dos Quilombos," *CIMI*, 12-14, 21, 25-26.

117. "Missa dos Quilombos," *CIMI*, 11.

118. Mauro Passos, *Um profeta em Movimento*, 1 (Book Jacket). For basic definitions of the orixás see "Glossário," in J. Reginaldo Prandi, *Mitologia dos orixás* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2001).

both be seen as sharing two purposes: to relativize Christianity enough to open ecumenical dialogue and to motivate better Christian discipleship by reflecting on the day-to-day devotion of *candomblecistas* toward orixás.<sup>119</sup>

A year later, the Quilombos Mass had not merely fulfilled these aims but surpassed them. It integrated a popular, interreligious, and ecumenical approach. The same text called on the Lord of Bomfim (a version of Jesus and Bahia’s patron), whose church steps Candomblé practitioners traditionally wash, to free the modern enslaved. In a nod to the Islamic roots of the 1835 urban insurrection in Bahia known as the Malé Revolt, it extolled “Ishmael of the Nations.” It denounced Black people’s “gratuitous” status within enslavers’ Christianity: “the cursed race” of a “denigrated Africa” bearing the “worldly mark” of Hagar “the slave” and “despoiled Mother.” It exalted legendary regions of Africa-Luanda, Gold Coast, the Kingdom of Oyo, and Luanda’s diasporic counterpart, the paradisaical quilombo Aruanda.<sup>120</sup> The mass text went beyond tepid alliances of convenience, incorporating Abdias’s call to bring African-rooted orixás out of the shadows *and* fulfilling Pires’s plea to treat those in the terreiros as Christian brethren.

The Missa dos Quilombos highlights what the enslaved had once hidden, in the barely “tolerated twirl” to rhythms associated with Candomblé, from the closed “parish faith.” The Kyrie invoked the intercessory orixá Exu for the strength to outlast “white justice,” based on “profits.” Milton performed a jazz-like solo, a prayer “in the name of God of all names: Yahweh, Obatalá, Olorum, Oió.” He praised the Father who (like Obatalá) “from the dirt,” “tenderly” created “the Black and the white” both “red in blood”; the Son, “Jesus our brother who was born *moreno* of Abraham’s race”; and the Holy Spirit, the “bearer of the Black Reveler’s song.” “Abraham’s race,” as used here was not simply Isaac and David’s race; it encompassed Jews and Muslims. Abraham also formed the cornerstone of the Vatican’s embrace of interreligious dialogue.<sup>121</sup>

With his deep baritone, Milton sang on to affirm the traditional trinitarian God: “Three who are One God only,” the God “who was and is and is to come,” but this God stood with “the people,” “deported by the white sails,”

119. Volney J. Berkenbrock, OFM, “Diálogo e identidade religiosa: Reflexões sobre a base teológica para um encontro possível entre o Candomblé e o Cristianismo,” *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 56:221 (1996): 39, 43.

120. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 20. Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky, “Quilombo and Utopia: The Aesthetic of Labor in Linduarte Noronha’s *Aruanda* (1960),” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 20:3 (September 2011): 247, 252. For more on Hagar as an inspiration for women’s and Black liberation, see Dolores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

121. Paul VI, “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*.” Vatican City, October 28, 1965. [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nosta-actate\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nosta-actate_en.html), accessed December 23, 2023.

trapped in “wharfs,” in the “favelas,” and “at the altars,” who awaited “the voice of Xangô,” the kingly orixá of thunder and justice. As the offertory states, the “Lord Olorum” would “refuse . . . the voice of the overseer” and “join the Black revolt” and accept “the cut head of Black Zumbi.” He would join “the feet tolerated in the samba circle, the bodies tamed in the *congo* trios,” the tired who found an abode in solace in “the sacred Rosaries, the Rosaries of pain, Rosaries of faith in the liberating life” and “peace of the quilombos.” Olorum would also be joined by a powerful intercessor, Nossa Senhora Aparecida, Brazil’s Black Virgin; here, she is called “the poor one of the Nativity,” the “rose bush and stream of our Rosary,” the “loyal comrade of liberation,” and the “Black maid (*mucama*).”<sup>122</sup>

The litany of the mass showcased the careful historical research Hamilton and Milton had carried out. Those normally included in the litany are great teachers and martyrs of the faith who are capable of interceding with God, intercessions which often result in miracles. This litany, combining religious and secular figures, formed a distinct “textual map” that carefully balanced the Black Movement and ecclesial heroes (see the list in Figure 1). Of the 34 names, 16 were secular Black Movement figures, eight were popular religious leaders or symbols, and ten were traditional religious figures. Seventeen figures were rooted in South America (14 from Brazil itself); eight were from Africa, four from the United States, and only two from Europe.<sup>123</sup>

The mass was not simply baptized politics. It included saints traditionally revered by Afro-Brazilian Catholics and the Church more broadly, such as the Three Kings, Benedict the Moor, Augustine of Hippo, St. Iphigenia, St. Cosmas and St. Damian, St. Onuphrius, and the Portuguese Dominican Gonçalo de Amarante. St. Pedro Claver and St. Martinho de Lima were traditional Latin American Church figures who ministered to the enslaved or were Afro-Latin themselves. Also included were popular folk saints such as the Congolese religious leader Kimpa-Vita, who declared Mary and Jesus Black, and the Negrinho do Pastoreiro of southern Brazil, who was adopted by Mary after suffering grave cruelty from his slave master.<sup>124</sup> The legendary Afro-Brazilian sculptor and church-architect St. Aleijadinho and Black Brotherhood leader Brother Lourenço de Nossa Senhora reflect Milton’s *mineiro* Catholic upbringing. Naming Colombian liberation-minded archbishop Gerardo Valencia Cano, who developed an “ethno-educative approach” in 90 percent Afro-Colombian

122. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 18-19, 21-22, 36.

123. Corinna Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Finger Nails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 192. For another table example, see Fagundes Oliveira, *Êxodos e Encruzilhadas da Missa dos Quilombos*, 102.

124. For more detail see Frei Luiz Carlos Susin, “O Negrinho Do Pastoreiro: Leitura Teológica De Uma Lenda,” *Revista Brasileira Eclesiástica* 48:189 (1988): 124-153.

FIGURE 1

Persons, Events, and Places Recognized in the Litany of the Quilombo Mass. Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of the Snows, November 22. Recife, Brazil: Religious and Secular

Name	Religious Type
Zumbi de Palmares	Secular
Francisco Jose do Nascimento	Secular
João Candido	Secular
Pedro Ivo [Veloso da Silveira]	Secular
[Eduardo] Angelim of the Cabin Rebels	Secular
Jose De Patrocinio	Secular
Haussas, Nagos, and Tailors of Black Bahia	Secular
Arturo Alfonso Schomburg	Secular
[Patrice] Lumumba	Secular
Beatriz Kimpa-Vita	Popular Religious
Negrinho do Pastoreio	Popular Religious
Children of Soweto	Secular
Children of Atlanta	Secular
Saint Aleijadinho	Popular Religious
Louis Armstrong	Secular
Amilcar Cabral	Secular
James Meredith	Secular
Solano Trindade	Secular
Santo Dias [da Silva]	Secular
Three Kings	Traditional Religious
Benedict the Moor	Traditional Religious
Augustine of Hippo	Traditional Religious
St. Martinho de Lima	Traditional Religious
St. Iphigenia	Traditional Religious
Pedro Claver	Traditional Religious
Gonçalo de Amarante	Traditional Religious
Sts. Cosmas and Damian	Traditional Religious
Geraldo Valencia Cano	Popular Religious
Brother Lourenço de Nossa Senhora	Popular Religious
Friar Gregório de José Maria	Popular Religious
Father [Augusto Joaquim da Siqueira] Canabarro	Popular Religious
St. Onuphrius	Traditional Religious
Charles Lwanga	Traditional Religious
Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.	Popular Religious

Source: List compiled by author from “Missa dos Quilombos: Texto informativo, discursos e letras das músicas.” *Boletim do CIMI: Informativo do Conselho Indigenista Missionário* 76 (December 1981).

Buenaventura and laid the groundwork for the Latin American Afro-Pastoral, invoked the promise of a Church hierarchy capable of joining the struggle for racial justice.<sup>125</sup>

In deciding on secular heroes, Hamilton and Milton likely consulted Abdias. His short-lived magazine *Quilombo* (funded by another Black Movement pioneer, Guerreiro Ramos), published Sartre's "Black Orpheus," a seminal text on *negritude*, as well as short treatments of litany figures and events, including the Black communist Solano Trindade, the abolitionist writer José do Patrocínio, and the 1835 Malê and Tailor Revolts.<sup>126</sup> These last two were of interest to white radicals as well, as demonstrated by Décio Freitas in his 1976 book, *Insurreções Escravas*, which argued that a dialectical historical process, not just Sudanese Islamic culture, contributed to Brazil's biggest urban slave revolts.<sup>127</sup> Other figures such as Northern and Northeastern rebel leaders Francisco Jose do Nascimento (Ceará), Pedro Ivo Veloso da Silveira (Pernambuco), and Eduardo Angelim of the Cabanagem Rebels (Pará) were well-known abolitionist leaders in the nation's poorest regions. The citation of abolitionist priests Gegório de José Maria (Espírito Santo) and Augusto Joaquim da Siqueira Canabarro (Rio Grande do Sul) reflected Tierra's knowledge of Brazil's South, gained from working there on the Land-without-Evil Mass and his interest in Southern and Southeastern Afro-Brazilian abolition movements. João Candido became a Black national hero after leading a naval revolt that paralyzed Rio de Janeiro in protest of the Navy's policy of whipping sailors as discipline.<sup>128</sup>

The litany tied movements for civil rights and African independence struggles together, emphasizing education. First came Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Next was Amílcar Cabral, revolutionary leader of Guinea-Bissau's independence struggle, who implemented Paulo Freire's literacy campaigns, followed by James Meredith, the first Black student at the University of Mississippi, representing "all the students on campuses and . . . streets that march, opening up history."<sup>129</sup> Other inclusions recognize and pay tribute to civil rights struggles and African American cultural icons: the Afro-Puerto

125. Aline Helg, "Missionary or Revolutionary? Bishop Gerardo Valencia Cano and the Emergence of an Afro-American Liberation Theology in Buenaventura, Colombia," in *Liberation Theology and the Others: Contextualizing Catholic Activism in 20th-Century Latin America*, Christian Büschges, Andrea Heidy Müller, and Noah Oehri, eds. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021), 97-98; Santiago Arboleda Quiñonez, "Gerardo Valencia Cano: Memorias de resistencia en la construcción de Pensamiento Afrocolombiano," *Revista Historia y Espacio* 20 (2003): 79-95.

126. Abdias de Nascimento and Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil*, 38.

127. Décio Freitas, *Insurreções Escravas* (Porto Alegre, RS: Editora Movimento, 1976).

128. Joséph L. Love, *The Revolt of the Whip* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Álvaro Pereira do Nascimento, *Cidadania, cor e disciplina na Revolta dos Marinheiros de 1910* (Rio de Janeiro: Mauad; Faperj, 2008).

129. "Missa dos Quilombos," *CIMI*, 33.

Rican poet Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, trumpet legend Louis Armstrong, Atlanta’s position as a birthplace of civil rights, and Martin Luther King Jr. The citation of South Africa’s 1976 Soweto township uprising showed the link the authors made between anti-apartheid and civil rights struggles.

Like the mass itself, the invocation voiced aspirations to a utopia that would do away with worldly inequality. The Final March of the Quilombos Mass addresses the longing for an Afro-Diasporic paradise and laid out its contours: “[L]ocked in night” for “a millennium outside,” the strugglers would “now push the gates of the Day” to “make a people of equal brothers [*bantus*]” and the homes of those people “fraternal *senzalas* [slave quarters], nothing more (*sem mais*).” Echoing the Father’s house with many mansions (John 14:1-2), participants would build “the Black Utopia of the New Palmares” in “one Big House [*Casa Grande*] of the sons of the Father.”<sup>130</sup> The use of the words “fraternal” to describe *senzalas* is jarring but in this context seems to imply the universal servanthood and brotherhood of all believers before God and an eventual levelling of all social status. The invocation of a *Casa Grande* shared by all confirms this reading.

The Final March thus traced the vision of a multiracial promised land. The “New Israel” would accept all people, since all possess “the Blood sign of the Lamb.” Equipped with the *berimbau*, the capoeira string instrument, and the *toré*, an indigenous flute, diasporic communities would welcome “everyone in Liberty” in “the gardens of the sons of the Saint.” The “Black people of Africa, the Afros of America, the Black people of the World” would form a common front with “all the Poor of the Earth” as “a quilomboed people,” who would live “free of masters.” These “Zumbi builders” from the “beloved Quilombos” embodied “the Law of the New Brotherhood,” “Black being Black, Indian being Indian, each one as the hand of Olorum has made them” in “the exact measure of happy human Dignity.”<sup>131</sup>

As the patron of the mass, Câmara stepped up to close, offering an impromptu invocation in which he called on “Mariama [a Black Mary], mother of men of all races, of all colors, and from the four corners of the earth” to intercede in pressing for resolution of the regional and international crises of the time, such as weapon production, food insecurity, unequal land distribution, and wealth inequality. After all, “the Black problem” connected with “all great human problems.” Câmara appealed for moderation, saying, “You [Mary] do not have to go so far as in your hymn,” the “Magnificat,” in which God “filled the

130. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 37.

131. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 36, 38.

hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty-handed (Luke 1:53).” Continuing, his voice rang out, “[T]he rich do not have to have to go away empty-handed nor the poor with hands full. Neither rich nor poor!” He called on the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil “[to] get fully onboard [*embarcar em cheio*] with the Black cause, just as with the Pastoral Land Commission and the Indians.” He warned that “it is not enough to ask pardon for the errors of yesterday”; the Church must “correct our path today, without worrying about what they might say about us.” “Of course, they will say,” he derisively predicted, “that Mariama is political, is subversion, is Communism.”<sup>132</sup>

The National Information Service (SNI) was tracking the Recife performance, as it had the Palmares conference at which the mass was first given. The intelligence services had long favored traditionalists and feared that liturgical experimentations like the *Missa dos Quilombos* would advance a host of other causes they opposed, such as birth control.<sup>133</sup> Among the materials the SNI collected from the Recife mass were pamphlet cartoons and editorials of racist disinformation decrying Dom Pires. Among the allegations against him were living extravagantly off of European money, owning Church land instead of donating it to land reform efforts, and having a “white soul,” a term for powerful Black figures who have risen suspiciously above their station.<sup>134</sup>

Journalists from Recife’s main newspaper, *Diário de Pernambuco*, denied the existence of institutional racism, citing Black church officials throughout history. They accused Pires and Câmara of rank ambition and of destroying vocations through an obsession with politics.<sup>135</sup> According to Pires, a right-wing dossier similar in content to the material collected by the SNI contained an image enveloping the black hand symbol of the *Quilombos* Mass in a hammer and sickle. The material alarmed the nuncio, Carmine Rocco, who demanded answers from Pires, Casaldáliga, and Câmara.<sup>136</sup>

Pedro Terra defended the mass in an unsigned editorial the following month in the CIMI bulletin, which provided the full published text, along with Pires’s

132. Dom Hélder Câmara, “Invocação á Mariama,” Instituto Dom Hélder Câmara. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=862104470809645>, accessed December 23, 2023. Compare “Depoimento Pessoal Sobre o Papa Paulo VI: ‘Palestra de D. Hélder Câmara: Paulo VI e a CNBB,’” Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, 13th Viagem Nacional, 1988 Campinas, São Paulo, 19-09-1988,” in Dom Hélder Câmara, *Discursos Portugueses, 1986-1988*, 16-17, 20. Instituto Dom Hélder Câmara, Recife.

133. Benjamin A. Cowan, *Moral Majorities across the Americas*, 231.

134. “Panfletos acusam bispo do uso de mordomias,” *Jornal do Comércio*, November 24, 1981, in “*Missa dos Quilombos, no Recife/PE*,” Serviço Nacional de Informações ACE no. 3056/81, 27 (Annex C), ACE no. 3056/81, 21 (Anexo C); Maximiliano Nunes, “O Leitor e sua opinião: Dom José,” ACE no. 3056/81, 21-24.

135. “Grupo moderado da Igreja contesta Dom Maria Pires,” *Diário de Pernambuco*, November 24, 1981.

136. Ana Helena Tavares, *Um bispo contra todas as cercas*, 163-138.

homily and the aforementioned illustrations to emphasize the Mass’s message. The mass, he wrote, centered “the History of the massacres against the Black race” and exposed “the methodical terror with which white civilization . . . in the name of faith, converted millions of Africans into wood,” fueling “the furnace of the capitalist ‘New World.’” Tierra accused “[t]he successors” of legendary abolitionist and lawyer Rui Barbosa and the former slave owners of burying “the meat-grinding history” of slavery, “sell[ing] the ideology of whitening.”<sup>137</sup> The mass gave voice to “Black people oppressed in the factories, in the ports, in the favelas, in the maroon encampments (*mocambos*) of this America.”<sup>138</sup> Two months after this rousing defense, liberationist bishop and CNBB president José Ivo Lorscheiter responded to the Vatican’s inquiry about the mass, arguing that it conformed to the Second Vatican Council’s first approved document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), which launched the conciliar reforms and encouraged cultural diversity in the liturgy.<sup>139</sup>

The Vatican’s Pro-Prefect for the Congregation for the Divine Worship and Sacraments, Archbishop Giuseppe Casoria, wrote Lorscheiter banning the Land-Without-Evil and Quilombos masses for focusing on race, not Christ.<sup>140</sup> Even the Vatican’s top African official was unsympathetic. When Pires presented a recording to Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, head of the Congregation for Bishops during his obligatory fifth-year visit to Rome, the cardinal simply replied “The Mass was more a celebration of a man named Zumbi. The Mass should pay homage to Jesus Christ.”<sup>141</sup>

## TIME FOR A RESURRECTION? THE QUILOMBOS MASS LEGACY

Palmares itself became important in the 1980s, so important that Beatriz Nascimento put aside her criticisms of Carlos Diegues’s early work and consulted on his *Quilombo* (1984) film, along with Joel Rufino and Lélia Gonzalez.<sup>142</sup> Beatriz’s 1989 documentary *Orí* lauded Palmares as a symbol of

137. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 5-6.

138. “Missa dos Quilombos,” *CIMI*, 6.

139. Ivo Lorscheiter, “Os textos da Missa dos Quilombos,” February, August, and November 1982, Conselho Permanente, CDI-CNBB, 147-148; John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 138-139.

140. Giuseppe Casoria, “Sobre ‘Missa dos Quilombos,’” N. 1649/81, Rome, March 2, 1982, in *Comunicado Mensal da Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* 354 (March 1982): 258; Giuseppe Casoria [Pro-Prefect, Congregation for the Divine Worship and Sacraments], Prot. N. CD 163/82, Rome, March 2, 1982, in CDI-CNBB #00483-3, 2.

141. Passos, *Um profeta em movimento*, 65.

142. “Prospecto de divulgação do filme *Quilombo* de Carlos Diegues,” Arquivo Nacional, Fundo Maria Beatriz Nascimento, Box 5, folder 1, item 27. [https://www.gov.br/arquivonacional/pt-br/servicos/copy\\_of\\_instrumentos-de-pesquisa/Instrumento\\_Provisorio\\_MariaBeatrizNascimento\\_2018.pdf](https://www.gov.br/arquivonacional/pt-br/servicos/copy_of_instrumentos-de-pesquisa/Instrumento_Provisorio_MariaBeatrizNascimento_2018.pdf), accessed December 23, 2023.

Brazilian independence in which Brazil became “the parent of itself,” with Zumbi as the father of the nation. Palmares came to serve as a rallying cry for causes ranging from land rights to environmentalism.<sup>143</sup> Its historical significance, and even its precise location, constantly shift. And even this symbol of Black equality and freedom had its tributary hierarchies and contentions, around population issues such as gender inequities.<sup>144</sup> By 1983, ecumenical language had also fallen out of vogue with Afro-Brazilian religious leaders. Though terreiros occasionally initiated Catholic priests (especially Dominicans and Franciscans), religious leaders headed by Mãe Stella rejected rituals such as the Bomfim Church’s step-washing and language comparing saints and orixás as religious syncretism and the legacy of a colonial past.<sup>145</sup>

Historical nuances aside, those who had composed and supported the Quilombos Mass centering Palmares fought for and remembered its celebration. Abdias rose on in Brazil’s Chamber of Deputies on June 9, 1983, to defend recently introduced bills on public sector quotas and Black Consciousness Day. He thanked Casaldáliga and Pires for their performance of the historic Serra da Barriga mass, “a penitential act for the centuries of complicity and protagonism of the Catholic religion” in the Atlantic trade.<sup>146</sup>

Key passages from the Missa dos Quilombos survived as part of the repertoire of Black movement mobilizations—origins unrecognized in some cases—and served as a powerful influence on the movement by Black Pastoral agents to celebrate Afro masses, starting in the mid 1980s. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops even performed the mass at a 1985 missionary training conference.<sup>147</sup> In a defiant gesture, on April 13, 1986, Black Pastoral agents played songs from the Missa dos Quilombos “to prepare the meeting and the ambiance” for Cardinal Gantin, as he visited Porto Alegre’s Nossa Senhora Aparecida favela on April 13, 1986, where he celebrated a mass presided over by Dom Pires.<sup>148</sup>

143. Raquel Gerber and Maria Beatriz Nascimento, *Orí*, video, 55 minutes (New York: Third World Newsreel, 1989), 27:30, 50:00-55:0, 1:13:56, 1:14:58. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PBQtumbgkx63IUUD8qOgIM2wKVI4n/view>, accessed December 23, 2023.

144. Sílvia Hunold Lara, *Palmares & Cucuí: O aprendizado da dominação* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2021), 13-17; Flávio Gomes, *Palmares: Escravidão e Liberdade no Atlântico Sul* (São Paulo: Editora Contexto, 2005), 78, 81-82.

145. Vera Felicidade de Almeida Campos, *Mãe Stella de Oxossi: Perfil de uma liderança religiosa* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 45-48.

146. Abdias do Nascimento, “Pequeno Expediente,” *Diário da Câmara de Deputados*, June 9, 1983, 4757. <https://imagem.camara.leg.br/diarios.asp>, accessed December 23, 2023.

147. “1. Louvação a Mariama,” “14. Em Nome de Deus,” “25. Ladainha,” “38. Estamos Chegando,” in *Canto Zumbi*, Agentes de Pastoral Negros (São Paulo: Quilombo Central, SD), CDI-CNBB #38213; Centro Cultural Missionária, “Missa dos Quilombos,” *Curso de Formação Missionária*, Brasília, January 13-February 10, 1985 CDI-CNBB #30100, 14.

148. “Cardeal Gardin [sic.] em Porto Alegre,” *Afro-Brasileira: Orgão Informativo e Formativo dos Agentes de Pastoral Negro* 3 (July to September/1986): 14.

The relationships created between the mass’s protagonists endured and brought new attention to Catholicism locally and internationally. Casaldáliga continued to write poems to Zumbi, which featured in liberationist documentaries on Palmares.<sup>149</sup> In the year of the Abolition Centennial, as Milton prepared to again bring the Quilombos Mass to Recife’s Praça do Carmo, he called it “one of the most important” projects “in my life.” He explained it had helped him come to terms with racism he had suffered. “I could not go to a certain club because of my color, I had trouble studying in certain schools.”<sup>150</sup> In 1992, he performed the mass in Santiago de Compostela in Spain, fulfilling his dream of visiting the pilgrimage site. Standing alongside saxophonist Paul Winter, he condemned “the cross and the sword” the Spanish brought to the Americas in 1492.<sup>151</sup> Opening the 1993 academic year at Paraíba’s Immaculate Conception seminary, Dom Pires again argued that Land-Without-Evil and the Missa dos Quilombos would help the Church present alternatives to an often chaotic urban culture.<sup>152</sup>

The authors of the Missa dos Quilombos were vindicated when the mass “arrived” in 1995 at the Nossa Senhora Aparecida basilica, a Lourdes-like shrine named after the country’s Black Madonna and patroness that is a mix of mystic and modern.<sup>153</sup> The mass was given at the end of a 160-kilometer Central Workers’ Union (CUT) march, where, in a sign that the Vatican had lifted its ban, the Redemptorist father Ronival Benedito dos Reis presided. Milton fulfilled a “dream” during the opening processional, carrying the Aparecida statue down the aisle as Black union leader Vicente Paulo da Silva and Zezé Motta, the Black lead in the film *Xica da Silva* and over 10,000 others looked on. Dom Pires was invited but had a scheduling conflict.<sup>154</sup> The procession embodied the worker, racial, and religious solidarity the mass’s lyrics had sought to inculcate.

The Quilombos Mass lives on in its composite parts and was recognized by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the following decades as a “collective conscientizing moment” for Church efforts at evangelization and

149. *Canção para Zumbi* (São Paulo: Verbo Filmes, 1995). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lu3CW\\_8XrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lu3CW_8XrA), accessed December 23, 2023.

150. Geri Smith, “Conviction and Harmony,” 30.

151. Carlos Galilea, “Liturgia de negros ante el apóstol,” *El País*, July 20, 1992, [https://elpais.com/diario/1992/07/21/cultura/711669610\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1992/07/21/cultura/711669610_850215.html), accessed December 23, 2023; Carlos Galilea, “La Misa de América Negra se celebra hoy en Santiago,” *El País*, July 18, 1992, [https://elpais.com/diario/1992/07/19/cultura/711496802\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/1992/07/19/cultura/711496802_850215.html), accessed December 23, 2023.

152. José Maria Pires, “Aula Inaugural do Seminário Imaculada Conceição,” João Pessoa, February 4, 1993, 1, 4, 6, in Correspondence Files, Aktionskreis Pater Beda Private Collection. Hörstel, Germany.

153. Suzanne F. Kaufman, *Consuming Visions: Mass Culture and the Lourdes Shrine* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

154. “Missa dos Quilombos’ reúne 20 mil em Aparecida,” *Folha de São Paulo*, November 16, 1995, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/1995/11/16/cotidiano/21.html>, accessed December 23, 2023.

Afro-Brazilian cultural recognition.<sup>155</sup> The song, “We Are Arriving” was still appearing in 1980s liberationist pamphlets on Palmares, and Câmara’s Invocation to Mariama has continued to inspire Black activists and theologians alike. The author has heard the section “*Estamos chegando*” (We Are Arriving) sung to openly authorized Black Consciousness Day Masses in Rio dioceses where the mass’s litany and invocation of Zumbi and orixás have served as models for other inculturated missal texts, allowed even by conservative bishops.<sup>156</sup>

Even as a show, the mass remains a point of pride for the nation as a whole, featuring in a Senate documentary and various retrospectives as it racks up decades of existence. The Escola Superior Dom Helder celebrated a full Missa dos Quilombos in November 2022 to mark the fortieth anniversary of the album’s release.<sup>157</sup> Whatever the reasons for its apparent historical death, delving into the birth of the mass and the continued poignancy of its lyrics shows the time is ripe for its historical resurrection.

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155. “Diálogo Evangelho e Cultura Afro-Brasileira,” *Comunicado Mensal* 528-530 (January to April/1999), 1229.

156. “Saberes, causas da cultura negra, luta, resistência e espiritualidade,” Ronilso Pacheco (PUC, Rio) and Ana Flavia Magalhães (UNB, Brasília), 32nd Congresso Internacional da SOTER, July 11, 2019, <https://fb.watch/p8LQBBOlvp/>, accessed December 23, 2023; CEHILA, *Palmares de Liberdade e Engenbos de Escravidão* (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1985), Duke University Libraries, Microfilm, Brazil’s Popular Groups: Blacks, Pamphlets and Serials, 1966-1986, BI/1-BI/10. 88/5259, MICRR; Frei Athaylton Jorge Monteiro Belo, “2. Ele vem chegando,” *A força dos antepassados: Projeto Espiritualidade e Cantos Afros Católicos na Baixada Fluminense* (São João de Meriti: Pastoral Afro, 2005); Frei Athaylton Jorge Monteiro Belo, “4. Ladainha,” *Tambor nas mãos das meninas e dos meninos: Cantos da Pastoral Afro, uma homenagem à Irmã Luciana* (São João de Meriti: XIX Encontro dos Padres, Bispos e Diáconos Negros do Brasil, 2007).

157. “A história por trás de ‘Missa dos Quilombos,’ álbum importante na luta antirracista,” *EBC*, March 16, 2022, <https://radios.etc.com.br/arte-clube/2022/03/historia-por-tras-de-missa-dos-quilombos-album-importante-na-luta-antirracista>, accessed December 23, 2023; “Missa do quilombo e acordeão na programação da TV Senado,” *Agência Senado*, November 16, 2006. <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2006/11/16/missa-do-quilombo-e-acordeao-na-programacao-da-tv-senado>, accessed December 23, 2023; “Missa dos Quilombos é celebrada pela Dom Helder,” *Dom Helder Escola Superior*, November 25, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20230204075731/https://domhelder.edu.br/2022/11/25/missa-dos-quilombos-e-celebrada-pela-dom-helder/>, accessed December 23, 2023.