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Scrapping Maroon history : Brazil's promise, Suriname's shame
Args that all American nations except Suriname now provide legal protection for its indigenous/Maroon populations. Demonstrates that successive Suriname governments have been pursuing an increasingly militant and destructive policy against both Maroons and indigenous communities. Calls for rapid legislation, to bring Suriname's constitution and legal code in line with the various human rights and ecological treaties to which the country is party. Also reviews recent work on remnants of quilombos in Brazil, which often uses research on Caribbean Maroon communities as implicit or explicit models.

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From Canada in the north to Argentina in the south, every nation in the Americas now provides special legal protection for its indigenous (and, where relevant, Maroon) populations—except the Republic of Suriname.

The history of Maroons in the Americas has always been linked to land. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treaties between Maroons and colonial powers in Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Suriname, and elsewhere demarcated geographical zones of freedom, under the full control of the Maroons, in return for a cessation of hostilities. Collective control of territory (for agriculture, gathering, hunting, and fishing) also meant control over space in which to develop an autonomous culture. In Jamaica and Suriname, which had the largest enduring Maroon populations, the spirit of these treaties was generally respected well into the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed in Jamaica, independence brought a renewed legislative recognition of Maroon collective rights to land, and Maroon history has been officially consecrated by the state as a heroic chapter of Jamaican history. But in the pre-independence Suriname of the 1960s, the colonial government in collaboration with Alcoa summarily dispossessed some six thousand Saramaka Maroons of lands that had been guaranteed under the eighteenth-century treaty in order to construct a hydroelectric dam and lake. And since Suriname’s independence in 1975, successive governments have been pursuing an increasingly militant and destructive policy against both Maroons and indigenous communities, stripping of them of their rights to land (and its potential riches) and endangering their rights to exist as separate peoples.

Since the devastating civil war between the national army of Suriname and the Maroons (1986-92, begun during the military dictatorship of Desi Bouterse), in which many hundreds of Maroon civilians were killed and fundamental Maroon rights repeatedly violated (see Polimé & Thoden van Velzen 1988), the Suriname government has been asserting the state’s claim to all of the country’s interior. The government insists that under Suriname law, neither Maroons nor indigenous peoples hold any special rights and that “the interests of the total development of the country”—which increasingly means the private interests of government officials and their cronies—must prevail (Price 1995). Recent reports by N.G.O. observers describe a grim situation.²

[August 21, 1996] The Saramaka Maroon community of Nieuw Koffiekamp faces forced relocation to make way for a multinational gold mine, being developed by Golden Star Resources of Denver, Colorado, and Cambior Inc. of Montreal. The Maroon community is disputing the relocation and demanding that the companies negotiate with them as the traditional owners of the land. Golden Star has erected a number of gates and other devices, including a huge earth wall, to restrict the movements of community members on their lands, denying them access to their agricultural plots, hunting grounds and religious sites. Suriname police and company security forces have established a presence and collaborate closely. Indeed, the head of Golden Star’s security is the commanding officer of the police detachment at the Gros Rosebel mine and has armed Golden Star security personnel with police issue weapons. A unit of the heavily-armed, elite, anti-terrorist Police Support Group has also been stationed at the site. The security officers have threatened, harassed and intimidated community members. On a number of different occasions, patrols have shot live ammunition at or over the heads of Nieuw Koffiekampers, even those engaged in tending their agricultural plots and gathering forest foods.³

[March 6, 1997] On February 24, 1997, Jules Wijdenbosch, President of Suriname, announced his government’s intention to seek financing for the construction of two hydroelectric dams on the Kabelebo River in West Suriname. As presently conceived, the plan is to construct two dams that will provide power for bauxite mining, gold mining, timber processing, and other unspecified activities. Estimated costs for the dams are one billion US dollars. For financing, Suriname is looking to Brazil, the private sector, and possibly the World Bank. The President reports that recent high-level visits to Brazil concerning the Kabelebo project have been positive and that a group of Brazilian investors has shown a great deal of interest in building the dams. Chairman of the ruling National Democratic Party, Desi Bouterse, is presently in China to discuss, among others, the Kabelebo project. [Suriname newspaper] De Ware Tijd (March 4) stated that China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs “welcomed the idea of a joint Suriname-Brazil-China Kabelebo project.” Discussion of the Kabelebo project comes in the midst of a concerted effort on the part of...
the Surinamese government to decrease its dependence on traditional donors, the Netherlands and Belgium in particular, and to seek business relationships and support in Latin America. The present government is also related to the former military dictatorship which ruled Suriname in the 1980s and had a good relationship with the military in Brazil, who are a major force in Brazilian industry. A cooperation agreement has been discussed regarding the exploration, exploitation, production and marketing of gold, a fact that is sure to intensify the region's ongoing gold rush. Possible joint ventures with Brazilian and Surinamese businesses was also discussed. This would provide Brazil with tariff free access to the CARICOM (Caribbean Community) market and Suriname access to the MERCOSUR trading block. Certain confidential matters were also discussed in the meetings. Suriname continues to routinely disregard Indigenous and Maroon rights when resource exploitation is at issue. The government states that private investors in the Kabelebo project will have full ownership rights to the land near and around the dams, but it refuses to recognize Indigenous and Maroon land rights in any form and frequently states that it is impossible to do so because Surinamese law dictates that the State is the sole owner of all land in Suriname. It would appear that the government is willing to make exceptions to this when it suits them.

[April 20, 1998] The leaders of twenty-three Saramaka Maroon villages gathered in the community of Piki Seei on 13-14 March, 1998, to discuss land rights and the incursions of a Chinese logging company. The village leaders stated unequivocally that they were opposed to the operations of the Chinese company, NV Tacoba (a.k.a. Tacoba Forestry Consultants) in or near their ancestral lands and that they want their rights to own and control their ancestral lands, as defined by international human rights law, fully recognized. The present government of Suriname states that it has no legal obligations under the [eighteenth-century] treaties with the Maroons and does not recognize their rights to own their ancestral lands. Furthermore, it has granted, or is in the process of granting, vast areas of the rainforest in concession to multinational logging and mining companies. These concessions are granted without notifying Indigenous and Maroon communities, let alone seeking their participation or approval, even when their villages fall within the concessions. Presently, at least two-thirds of the Indigenous and Maroon communities [home to more than 50,000 people] are either in or very near to logging and mining concessions. The Saramaka leaders first became aware that a concession had been granted in their territory when a group of "English-speaking Chinese" arrived in the communities of Nieuw Aurora and Guyaha, informing the communities that they were about to begin logging operations. The communities later discovered that Tacoba and other logging companies had been granted multiple logging concessions in and near their territory. An Indonesian company, Barito Pacific, is also rumored to be acquiring a concession of 600,000 hectares covering Saramaka and Ndyuka Maroon territories, from central Suriname to the Marowijne River. Barito representatives recently visited the area (Jai Kreek) accompanied by Suriname national army troops and helicopters,
carrying a letter signed personally by the President of Suriname. Apparently, a deal with Barito was signed while the President of Suriname was in Indonesia last September. None of these concessions have been approved by the National Assembly. Little is known about NV Tacoba, although it is suspected that they are a Chinese state-owned company, locally incorporated in Suriname. Tacoba is also known to have relations with the former military dictator, Desi Bouterse, himself active in the timber business as a third party buyer, and with other members of Suriname’s ruling party, the National Democratic Party. Suriname recently opened an embassy in China and has been seeking expanded trade and aid relations. Tacoba seems to be the first major Chinese investment in Suriname. One of Tacoba’s concessions encompasses the Saramaka community of Duwata. Reportedly, Tacoba representatives told the village leader that his community was no longer allowed to use the forest beyond one kilometer from the village, as the area was now a Tacoba concession. Presently, all land in the interior of the country (approximately 80%) is classified as state land and indigenous peoples and Maroons are considered to be occupiers of state land without rights or title thereto. If their subsistence activities conflict with logging or mining operations, the latter take precedence as a matter of law. Furthermore, Suriname law does not provide any mechanism for consulting with communities about the granting of concessions on or near their territories. International human rights standards provide that indigenous peoples and Maroons have the right to participate fully in decisions, before they are taken, about whether concessions are granted on their lands. This right includes the right to information concerning the proposed activities, the companies involved, and the nature of the risks posed by the activity. Matawai Maroons now have to import water from the coast because their rivers and creeks have been polluted by miners, and they report catching fish with soapy, white eyes and tumors.5

Concerned anthropologists—almost all foreign nationals, and many sufficiently outspoken critics of the Suriname military regime so that they feel less than welcome in the country—have been unable to do much more than bear witness to the recent devastation and abuse of human rights. Given power relations within the country, it is unclear who will have the courage and the means to come to the aid of Maroons and Indians in their struggle to preserve their identity as distinct peoples. What seems to be needed is rapid legislation, to bring Suriname’s constitution and legal code in line with the various human rights and ecological conventions to which the country is already party (and which would give Maroons and Indians a significant measure of autodetermination), and a realization by the government that its treatment of Maroons and indigenous peoples gives Suriname the shameful distinction of being “the only state in the western hemisphere in which indigenous peoples [and Maroons] live that does not in some way legally recognize their rights to own their ancestral

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To students of Afro-America, the Suriname Maroons have long stood as a symbol of heroic resistance and a leading exemplar of long-term diasporic cultural creativity. Yet the Republic of Suriname has clearly undertaken a unilateral program to abrogate the Maroons’ eighteenth-century treaties and to erase the historic accomplishments of these largest surviving Maroon groups in the Americas. In the case of Suriname, scrapping Maroon history is tantamount to ethnocide.

In February 1998, when Sally Price and I arrived in Salvador, Brazil, for a semester of teaching on Fulbright Fellowships, the land rights of Suriname Maroons were very much on our minds. If we hadn’t already known it, the T.V. news quickly made clear that related concerns were making front-page headlines in Brazil as well. Nearly nightly we saw pictures of Kiriri men in war-paint confronting Bahian settlers who had established homes and schools within the bounds of the Indian reservation, views of banner-carrying sem-terras camped out on the doorstep of government buildings in Brasilia, and menacing images of vigilante militias in the state of São Paulo, armed to the teeth and mounted on horses, Chevy Blazers, or the occasional Mercedes-Benz, determined to protect their fazendas from roaming bands of rural squatters. One could not live in 1990s Brazil and remain unaware of fierce struggles over rights to land.

We soon learned that Afro-Brazilians hold a special position in these struggles. Since 1988—the centenary of the abolition of slavery—members of many rural black communities have had unique legal claims to land. The organized Black Movement, with the support of numerous academics, was successful, during the debates that led up to the promulgation of Brazil’s new federal constitution, in assuring the inclusion of three articles. Articles 215 and 216 (“Da Cultura”) officially recognize the contribution of “black groups” to the nation’s cultural patrimony and guarantee the exercise of “Afro-Brazilian cultural practices” (in particular, Candomblé and other religions). And Article 68 states that “The definitive property rights of remanentes [“remnants”] of quilombos that have been occupying the same lands are hereby recognized, and the State shall grant them titles to such lands.”

This latter law opened a can of worms that, for the last decade, has spilled over into the laps of anthropologists, historians, lawyers, agronomists, and human rights and ecological organizations, as well as diverse others who have been working, with community members, to help secure their title to land. For, despite the existence of hundreds of maroon communities in Brazil during the era of slavery (including, of course, the great seventeenth-century quilombo of Palmares), present-day Brazil is not
home to the kinds of maroon societies—with clear historical continuities to
slave-era rebel communities and with deep historical consciousness and
semi-independent political organization—that still flourish in other parts of
the Americas (Jamaica, Suriname, French Guiana, and Colombia). The
excellent collection *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no
Brasil* (Reis & dos Santos Gomes 1996), while including several chapters
on Palmares, devotes most of its 500-plus pages to demonstrating the
variety and geographical spread of other such communities in Brazil—
detailed maps show, for example, the remarkable density of quilombos in
eighteenth-century Minas (where there were some 160 documented
villages), in Mato Grosso, in the area of Rio de Janeiro, in Maranhão, and
elsewhere. However, seventeen of the book’s eighteen chapters deal with
quilombos that were destroyed well before the abolition of slavery, and a
more general review of the historiography makes clear that, in a
comparative hemispheric context, Brazil’s ruling classes were singularly
successful in destroying the country’s hundreds (or more likely
thousands) of historical quilombos. At the moment of abolition, the great
majority of quilombos that were still extant were recently formed, and most
of these later melted into the surrounding populations.

Throughout Brazil today, in what were once economically marginal
areas, one finds hamlets of Afro-Brazilians traditionally referred to as
*comunidades negras rurais* (rural black communities) or *terras de preto*
(lands belonging to blacks). Their origins are varied—some were formed
by slaves (or former slaves) after the bankruptcy of a fazenda or plantation
in the confusing decades surrounding abolition, some involved gifts of
land by masters to ex-slaves, purchases of lands by freed slaves (who in
some cases had bought their own freedom), grants of land to slaves who
had performed military service in time of war, or gifts of land to slaves by
religious orders. In a few cases (particularly in the lower Amazon region),
they include actual descendants of quilombos formed near the end of the
slave era or perhaps even earlier. What these communities of diverse
origins share, besides their “blackness,” is a many-decades-long residence
on a territory that they exploit (usually by hunting, fishing, and swidden
horticulture) without subdividing and without official title.

It is these communities—most of which have no traditions (either in
written documents or in oral testimony) connecting them directly to
historical quilombos—that, during the past decade, have in many cases
entered the legal battleground as candidates for inclusion in the privileged
circle of *remanescentes de quilombos*. Although by 1995, when the first
national meeting of *remanescentes de quilombos* was held in Brasilia, not
a single such community had been formally recognized by the state, the
movement began achieving small but symbolically important successes soon after. (By 1996, one inventory of potential communities that fit the bill included more than 500 and another postulated "at least 2000 Black communities in Brazil today which can claim to descend from maroon groups" [Carvalho 1996:451-52].)

A similar diachronic pattern describes most of the relevant cases—what Maria de Lourdes Bandeira (1988:32) has called "an ethnic drama in three acts"—"the whites leave for elsewhere, the blacks create an egalitarian community, the whites return and the blacks resist." The "return of the whites" during the past decade or two has taken various forms, including the expansion into previously marginal areas by lumber, mining, and agro-business companies, hydroelectric projects, and private developers. And the affected rural black communities have now added the judicial/anthropological mode of resistance to all those quieter, less visible forms of resistance that they called upon to maintain themselves in the past.

The remainder of this essay reviews a selection of the recent work on remanescentes de quilombos, which often uses research on Suriname and other Caribbean Maroon communities as explicit or implicit models. Although the situation of remanescentes and Suriname Maroons are in many respects different, Brazil's legal pledge of solidarity may provide crucial lessons for her northern neighbor. And a review of the experience may also be of interest to students of slavery unfamiliar (as was I until recently) with the ongoing battle in Brazil over the meaning of "quilombo" and the meaning, more generally, of forms of black resistance, in slavery and after.

O Quilombo do Rio das Rãs (Carvalho et al. 1996) may serve as point of departure, as it adopts a comparative perspective in its militancy for the public recognition of the struggle of rural black Brazilian communities for visibility and human rights. In the book’s first section, anthropologist José Jorge de Carvalho presents a seventy-three-page overview of maroon communities in the Americas, modeled in part on my own Maroon Societies. Suriname Maroons, especially the Saramaka, take pride of place and information from First-Time and Alabi’s World is liberally appropriated, sometimes with citations. Haitian, Jamaican, Colombian, Cuban, and Venezuelan Maroons then get their due before the author turns to an overview of maroon communities in Brazil.

Carvalho believes he has identified a central difference between Brazilian and other American slave societies—the utter lack, in Brazil (in contrast, for example, to Suriname), of a generalized structural opposition between maroons and slaves, the lack of a discursive tradition that
contrasts maroons and slaves (Carvalho et al. 1996:48). He goes on to argue—drawing on Afro-Brazilian cults as well as everyday discourse—that, in general, Brazilians construct the image of “the slave” as downtrodden, oppressed, and subservient. And he analyzes at some length the annual dramatic performance by residents of the area that was once Palmares of a play whose message is largely anti-quilombola, anti-Indian, and pro-slavery (and which may have Jesuit and other “white” origins)—the message that armed resistance never pays.

Turning to Rio das Râs, in the state of Bahia, Carvalho explains that its historical context was quite different from that of Palmares (or Saramaka). Without a discursive tradition of oppositionality between maroons and slaves, and with a generally “passive” model of “the slave,” the community’s chosen mode of historical resistance was non-confrontational, ruse rather than warfare, more reminiscent (he says) of the life of Esteban Montejo in Cuba than of Zumbi of Palmares. In a rhetorical move characteristic of the recent Brazilian literature, Carvalho insists that the kind of resistance adopted historically by Rio das Râs represents an “alternative form of dignity” to the more apparently “heroic” resistance of the Saramakas—indeed, he hints that it is more “democratic” in that it isn’t racially exclusionary (anti-white). While fighting for its lands, he says, the community of Rio das Râs embraces the idea of “universal brotherhood,” incorporating in its religion, for example, the figures of Indians, Africans, Slaves, and Whites (in the form of Jesus and Mary) (Carvalho et al. 1996:68).

The central section of the book, by Siglia Zambrotti Doria and Carvalho, opens with a description of the violent attempt, begun in the 1970s, by Brazil’s third largest cotton company to take over the lands that include Rio das Râs—the systematic destruction of residents’ homes and planted fields, and the community’s continued resistance. (It is interesting that the fazendeiro had received loans from the Interamerican Development Bank to “improve” these very lands [Carvalho 1996:428].) By 1993, the community was surrounded by armed thugs hired by the fazendeiro, their animals had been shot, some of their houses had been bulldozed, they had been deprived of access to their gardens and freedom of movement out of the area, and they were subsisting largely on donations from outside organizations. It was in this atmosphere, and with federal police protection, that the researchers undertook their investigation into the community’s ethnography and history, designed to legitimate its legal claims.

Given the particularities of its intent and circumstances, research in Rio das Râs—and in most of the other communities under review here—takes
on characteristics different from that carried out in maroon societies elsewhere in the Americas (which has often consisted of long-term ethnographic and historical work—see, for a recent review, Price 1996:xi-xl). In a chapter assessing the Rio das Rãs project, Adolfo Neves de Oliveira Jr. catches the special flavor of such enterprises. "We were faced," he writes,

with a black community that was not traditionally considered [by its members or by outsiders] as descended from a quilombo but which wished to redefine itself, before the courts, as being so descended. Moreover, they had no articulated oral tradition that in any way linked them to a quilombo past, except a few references to the presence of escaped slaves in the region and a generalized belief that they themselves were not descendants of slaves. In contrast to what one might expect in a quilombo, there was no evidence of any sort of oral tradition about heroic resistance. Nevertheless, oral tradition insistently described a way of life that was not compatible with that of slaves, and there was no tradition of their having been granted lands as freedmen, or anything else that could explain the presence of a black community in the region ... [On the basis of these investigations] we believe we have found the descendants of a group of runaway slaves who gathered in the region of Rio das Rãs about 150 years ago. (Carvalho et al. 1996:229-30)

We are a long way from Mooretown (Jamaica), El Palenque de San Basilio (Colombia), or Asindoopo (Suriname). 18

It might seem unfair to compare research undertaken explicitly to support a legal claim with more traditional "scientific" research. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable (from a comparativist perspective) to note, in almost all the studies under review, the general thinness (and brevity) of the research, the lack of textured ethnography, and the poverty of the oral testimonies. In the Rio das Rãs book, for example, one page-long interview is printed verbatim to demonstrate that the ancestors of present-day community members were always "free agriculturalists," that they "never worked for a master," but this discussion with a sixty-one-year-old man bears witness to the researcher's tendency to put words into her interlocutor's mouth, and the man himself makes clear he really can't speak about any epoch before that of his own grandfather (Carvalho et al. 1996:121-22). In general, the investigation moves from hypothesis to hypothesis, from one tidbit of evidence to the next, building a case that rests largely on possibilities. In the end, the researchers nevertheless assert that they have "confirmed the continuous possession, since time immemorial, of the lands of Rio das Rãs by almost 300 black families" (Carvalho et al. 1996:126). As of this writing (1998), the legal claims of the Comunidade Negra de Rio das Rãs continue to move slowly through the
federal justice system, and at least another ten years is expected to pass before there is a definitive decision.\textsuperscript{19}

A contrastive case is provided by the area known as “Brazilian Guiana,” between the Suriname border and the Amazon, which was once home to large numbers of maroon communities (in this region usually called \textit{mocambos}). Historical records show major military expeditions against maroon villages strung along the northern tributaries of the Amazon in 1799, 1811, 1813, 1831, 1844, 1855, and 1863, with some of these capturing more than one hundred prisoners. (The 1813 expedition included 375 men—militia, slaves, and Mundurucú Indians.) The story of these \textit{mocambos} is partially told in Eurípedes A. Funes’s unpublished dissertation, “\textit{Nasci nas matas, nunca tive senhor}”: \textit{História e memória dos mocambos do baixo Amazonas} (1995), and summarized in his chapter in Reis & dos Santos Gomes (1996). Funes tells us that Pacoval, the contemporary community he studied in detail, was formed only in the 1870s, by people fleeing other maroon settlements in the region. The residents’ essential similarities (in everything from religion to social organization) to other (non-\textit{quilombo}) rural Brazilian communities, then, is explained by a lack of long-term continuity with the kind of maroon past experienced by Ndyukas or Saramakas. Reading about this community (as in the case of Rio das Rãs), I am struck by the absence of deep oral historical traditions—the slim histories collected refer to the mid-nineteenth century at the earliest (or in a few cases to generalized Africa or slavery stories of the kind that could easily have been learned from the missionaries who have been present since the founding of the town).\textsuperscript{20}

Funes does a good job describing slavery in the region of Santarém and Óbidos, whence maroons fled—small plantations, usually with only a handful of slaves. By the first half of the nineteenth century, the map of the region was dotted with maroon communities, located in sites very similar to those in Suriname (riverine villages above great waterfalls, many days’ march from the regional capitals). Unlike the parasitic maroon communities that were common in many regions of Brazil (see Reis & dos Santos Gomes 1996), many of these Amazonian maroon villages resembled their Suriname counterparts in their distance from plantation or city and in their relative economic independence.\textsuperscript{21}

The maroon communities of the lower Amazon as described by Funes, then, resemble their Suriname counterparts both historically and geographically—around 1800, for example, they may have shared many features—but at the same time differ from them sharply in terms of what they are like today, with those in Suriname having maintained a vast range of cultural continuities that keep their “difference” from non-maroon
communities in Suriname, and with those in Brazilian Guiana having experienced sufficiently frequent rupture and displacement so that their "continuity" as communities dates only from the second half of the last century.

Anthropologist Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer carries the lower Amazon story further, offering a description of the current situation of descendants of quilombos in the Trombetas region (1995a). In the mid-1970s, a giant multinational center for bauxite extraction was established eighty kilometers upstream from Oriximiná, where many descendants of historic quilombos live. (Participating companies include such familiar names as Reynolds, Alcan, and Billiton, as well Norwegian and Brazilian firms; ALCOA is involved in a separate venture nearby.) The company town of Porto Trombetas was quickly constructed in the forest, with its omnipresent security guards, its supermarket, cinema, hospital, school, and administration buildings, and with regular VARIG flights into the new airport. On the river, giant foreign-flag bauxite ships now dwarf the canoes of Amerindians. Next to this new city stand more than a hundred houses inhabited by *remanescentes de quilombos*, who built them from the detritus of the town during the 1980s, when the men worked as company laborers. In the early 1990s, when these men were laid off, they found themselves unable to return to their previous subsistence activities, in large part because of the stringent efforts of Brazil’s environmental protection agency (IBAMA) to guard a 385,000-hectare "biological reserve" and a "national forest" reserve of 426,000 hectares from their use. (N.B.: They and their ancestors had been making gardens and hunting and fishing in those spaces for more than a century.) The inhabitants of Boa Vista, but also the other descendants of Trombetas quilombos in the area, find themselves in direct and frequent confrontation, then, with both powerful private enterprises and the full force of the state. Indeed, Cantarino O'Dwyer argues that it is precisely this situation of confrontation that encourages the category of *remanescentes de quilombos* to emerge as a meaningful "ethnic identity" for the people of Boa Vista today.

In 1989, several thousand residents of the region (from twenty-one villages) organized themselves as the Associação das Comunidades Remanescentes de Quilombos do Municipio de Oriximiná and, with the help of anthropologists and other designated experts, began militating for title to land. In November 1995, the tiny community of Boa Vista became the first in all of Brazil to receive collective title to land under Article 68 of the constitution. (It is significant that the government first proposed the granting of individual titles to plots of land but that the community insisted on collective ownership. In November 1996, two nearby
communities, Água Fria and Pacoval (the community studied by Funes), became the second and third in the country to receive their lands under Article 68.\(^{22}\)

A different variant of the *remanescente* story is told in *Frechal terra de preto: Quilombo reconhecido como reserva extrativista* (Projeto Vida de Negro 1996), which describes the successful struggle of the people of Frechal, in the state of Maranhão, to have their community recognized by the state as an "Extractive Reserve" in the wake of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro U.N. Earth Summit. Funded by the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, and other such organizations, a large team of researchers, lawyers, agronomists, photographers, and others participated in the Frechal project and the production of the book. In 1994, community members joined by a host of national and international organizations occupied the offices of IBAMA in the state capital to pressure authorities to effect the expropriation of lands mandated in the 1992 presidential decree. The final judicial and administrative steps are still in process, but with every sign of the community’s ultimate victory.\(^{23}\)

The people of Frechal call their community a quilombo, though they have no traditions that relate them to historical quilombos—their oral history recounts simply that their parents and grandparents were buried there and that they have lived there as long as anyone remembers (Projeto Vida de Negro 1996:59). As Eliane Cantarino O’Dwyer writes elsewhere (1995b:1), community spokesmen, anthropologists, and others engaged in the present struggle are clearly in the process of "resemanticizing" the word "quilombo" to cover quite generally "the present situation of black segments in different regions and contexts of Brazil ... who have an identity relating to a place and a group."\(^{24}\) Using such criteria, the Projeto Vida de Negro, the Maranhense Society for Human Rights, and the Centro de Cultura Negra have now identified in the state of Maranhão alone "about 400 territories peopled by blacks who have an ethnic identity which goes back to slave-times."\(^{25}\)

*Terra de pretos, terra de mulheres* (Gusmão 1996) concerns yet another contrastive area—the seacoast south of Rio, which is being rapidly developed both for petrochemical industries and for beach-tourism. The building of the Rio-Santos highway, which split the lands of the community of Campinho da Independência in two, is only one of the recent assaults on the integrity of a group that has been settled on the same once-marginal lands for a century and a half. The second half of book’s title, *Terra, mulher e raça num bairro rural negro*, refers to ethnographic realities brushed in by the author with rather broad strokes, though it does seem clear that women have formed the core of the commu-
nity's continuity, genealogically and economically, since three black women received the land as a gift from the departing fazendeiro. In 1995, the tricentenary of Zumbi's death, young people (like those in other parts of Brazil) took on a new identity for their community, renaming it the Quilombo Contemporâneo de Campinho da Independência.

The idea of an “ethnic drama in three acts,” occurring in all corners of Brazil, was developed before anthropologists even began working for the recognition of remanescentes, during the study of a community with an unusual history—Vila Bela. Its story is described with unusual grace by Maria de Lourdes Bandeira (1988), in what is the best balanced historical ethnography of the books here under review. For the second half of the eighteenth century, this colonial city—whose physical plan was laid out in Portugal—was capital of the province of Mato Grosso. By the 1820s, it had been abandoned by most of its white population (who moved to the new capital, Cuiabá, simply leaving behind many of their slaves). For the next century and a half, what had become a relatively isolated black town of a couple of thousand people, growing its own food in swidden gardens on the outskirts, managed to survive, often fighting off attacks by surrounding Amerindians. But with the arrival of a paved road, and timber, ranching, and other agrobusiness interests, the population increased by a factor of seven between 1970 and 1985. The black inhabitants of Vila Bela have been swamped by a wave of “pioneers” from other poor regions of the country who, in combination with large business interests, have taken possession of (and obtained title to) the bulk of the lands that had been used for a century and half by the residents of Vila Bela.

Article 68 is a tiny, but significant, crack in the Brazilian monolith of property rights. Remanescentes de quilombos have become a recognized (if numerically minuscule) category, joining indigenous peoples and the great masses of sem-terras in the general struggle for land redistribution in this most unequal of modern societies. At the Brazilian Anthropological Association’s latest sessions on “Terra de Quilombos,” anthropologists described new cases from north to south and east to west of the country—twenty-two potential communities of remanescentes were mentioned for the state of São Paulo alone. Brazilian anthropologists continue to play a strong and facilitating role in the ongoing creation of neo-quilombos, a role that grows in part out their recent struggles on behalf of indigenous peoples, and one that partly parallels that of U.S. and Canadian anthropologists a decade or two ago in the redefinition of what it meant to be member of a Federally recognized Indian tribe.
“Quilombo” has taken a prominent place in Brazil’s rich forest of symbols, from Gilberto Gil’s title song for Carlos Diegues’s film Quilombo, or Milton Nascimento’s neo-Catholic “Quilombo Mass,” to such journalistic gems as “the favela is the child of the quilombo” (Folha de São Paulo 1995, cited in Berno de Almeida 1996:19) or the “Quilombo” bars (and “Mocambo” airport souvenir shops) that one finds in many cities. Today, Salvador’s historic center, the Pelourinho, is often referred to by members of the Black Movement as a “quilombo,” though the remaining residents more often use the borrowed word “guêto” (ghetto) to refer to the area. And the most famous of all quilombos remains a fiercely contested icon. The Movimento Negro is reported to be divided over the fate of the 252 hectares set aside by the government for commemorative use on the historic site of Palmares. One proposal is to mount an “imaginative reconstruction” of Zumbi’s quilombo, “stressing its African roots”; the second is to erect a massive concrete memorial, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, architect of Brasilia; and the third is to transform the area into a nature park.

Brazil’s slave-era quilombos possess heroic histories of resistance, even if they are largely lost in shadows today. Remanescentes de quilombos, in my view, share a different heritage of quieter resistance. Now under siege by forces far beyond their control, these communities clearly need all the help they can muster. With the ongoing support of anthropologists and political action groups, there now is—thanks to Article 68 and its supporters—at least the promise of better days for Brazil’s remanescente communities.

For nearly two decades, in all aspects of policy-making, Suriname has been seeking ways of using “Third-World” or “Southern-Tier” models rather than European or North American ones. Thus the relatively enlightened recent solutions to land and autonomy issues for indigenous populations in, say, Canada or for the Saami in the European Union may be less relevant to Suriname decision-makers than Brazilian practices. Given that in Suriname, unlike Brazil, Maroons represent a significant proportion of the national population—and that anthropologists are hardly needed to demonstrate their remarkable cultural/social/political “difference,” which is evident to the most jaded eye—there is every reason for Suriname’s policy-makers to look to their southern neighbor, and the sooner the better.

In 1994, a South American Wayampi visiting Florida was introduced to the burly, six-foot-plus Chairman of the Seminole Nation, but later insisted flatly that this man “is not an Indian.” It is safe to say, similarly, that from
the perspective of Suriname Maroons, who have always seen the world divided between “us” (heroic Maroons) and “them” (all others, including slaves and their descendants), few of the Afro-Brazilians classified as remanescentes de quilombos would be seen as Maroons (or quilombo) — in the sense that Saramakas, Ndyukas, Alukus, Mooratown and Accompong people, or Palenqueros are. Nevertheless, because of the strange twists and turns of late twentieth-century history, these Brazilian “remnants” and their political allies have come to represent a powerful potential model for their Suriname cousins. Without ever eliding the differences between Suriname Maroons, whose identity remains anchored in the armed struggles of their ancestors, and Brazilian “remnants” — and without condoning careless scholarship that casually merges them in the name of political militancy — we see in the end that their fates have become intertwined. And that the phrase “Rebel Destiny,” which the Herskovitses used to characterize the Saramaka in 1934, may ultimately apply (as long as we never forget historical specificities) to both, together.

NOTES

1. Such treaties are discussed more fully in Price 1996 and analyzed in detail in Bilby 1997.
2. I summarize here, changing only an occasional word for continuity, from much longer reports available on the Internet.
3. World Rainforest Movement, Urgent Action Suriname, August 21, 1996. [Internet text.]
4. Forest Peoples Programme, Suriname Information Update, March 6, 1997. [Internet text.]
5. Forest Peoples Programme, Suriname Information Update, April 20, 1998. [Internet text.]
6. Forest Peoples Programme, Suriname Information Update, April 20, 1998 [Internet text]; see also Vernooij 1995.
7. Maroons number some 55,000 people, perhaps 12 per cent of the Suriname population. For the latest news of Saramaka resistance to the inroads of logging companies, see Forest Peoples Programme, Suriname Information Update, August 1, 1998 [Internet text].
8. The text of the law (Artigo 68 do Ato da Disposições Constitucionais Transitórias) reads in full: “Aos remanescentes das comunidades dos quilombos que estejam ocupando suas terras é reconhecida a propriedade definitiva, devendo o Estado emitir-lhes os títulos respectivos.” The 1988 legislation was pathbreaking, insofar as post-emancipation Brazil (in contrast, say, to the United States or South Africa) did not have any legal tradition of intervention into “racial” matters. For further legal details, see NUER 1996.
9. Muita briga para frente: Demarcação das terras quilombolas, November 1996. [Internet text from Revista Sem Fronteiras 246, p. 18.]

10. The Fundação Cultural Palmares has prepared a map, available on the Internet, that graphically represents the geographic distribution of some of these remanescente communities—<http://www.minc.gov.br/fcp/new/quilom/capinter.htm>.

11. I undertook this review at the urging of our host in Bahia, historian João Reis. The selection of books is far from comprehensive, consisting largely of works from João's personal library (as the university library was closed during most of our visit owing to a strike). I present it with all the tentativeness of a neophyte in Brazilian studies. John Collins, Flávio dos Santos Gomes, Ilka Boaventura Leite, Sally Price, and João Reis made helpful suggestions on a draft. All responsibility for errors and misunderstandings remains my own.

12. I am particularly concerned about the reproduction here of various Saramaka texts from First-Time, including highly powerful songs and prayers, in isolation from (and without reference to) the complex contextualization that Saramakas explicitly required as prerequisite to their being translated and printed (see Price 1983:5-30).

13. There is a strong dose of presentism in this claim of a "lack of discursive tradition." As I read the histories presented in Reis & dos Santos Gomes (1996), armed confrontations between slaves and Maroons seem to have been as common during anti-Maranon military expeditions in Brazil as they were in Suriname, and our ignorance about quilombola (or Brazilian slave) discursive traditions seems much more likely to stem from our present-day lack of knowledge about much of anything that say, late-eighteenth-century Brazilian quilombolas thought or said.

14. For a more nuanced interpretation of the Quilombo play, including a review of the literature and an attempt at historicization and contextualization, see D. Reis 1996.

15. It is interesting that this argument closely parallels the current revisioning of the slave past by Martiniquan writers Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, who claim that the apparently docile but actually ruse-ridden plantation slave should replace the rebel maroon as the lead figure in Martiniquan representations of historic resistance (see Price and Price 1997). Much like the Martiniquan writers' new hero, Carvalho's (and he says Rio das Rãs') sought social invisibility as the primary means of resistance: "It was necessary for the descendants of quilombos . . . to make themselves invisible, symbolically and socially, in order to survive" (Carvalho 1997:152).

regarding the communities allegedly created by ancestors of present-day remanescentes. They were "capable of integrating people of the most varied racial and ethnic origins" and constituted "the realization of a utopia of freedom, brotherhood, and autonomy."

17. For a dramatic, journalistic account of these incidents, see James Brooke, "Brazil Seeks to Return Ancestral Lands to Descendants of Runaway Slaves" in New York Times, August 15, 1993, p. A12.

18. In a nuanced, sophisticated study of Cafundó, a black community in the state of São Paulo that maintains its identity in part through the use of a "Bantu" lexicon in selected social contexts, Carlos Vogt and Peter Fry (1996:269-70) irone about the conceptual looseness of the "militant" definition of remanescentes de quilombos.

While inventing a past of essentialized africanisms, they are also inventing a new present, filled with consonances with that past ... They organize events, make proclamations, and create a Zumbi-based calendar for citations and references.

In 1994, residents of these communities, militants from the Movimento Negro Brasileiro, social scientists, and members of the government, meeting in Brasilia 'under the inspiration of the national hero Zumbi' for the First National Seminar of Remanescentes de Quilombos, issued a 'proclamation to the Brazilian people' in which they defined the general characteristics of comunidades remanescentes de quilombos:

Predominantly black ethnic identity; long-term residence on the same lands; the maintenance of a geographic base common to the group; family-based and collective organization of labor; living in relative harmony with the existing natural resources.

Within this particular identity politics, the concept of quilombo gets ever broader and ever more inclusive (Vogt & Fry 1996:269-70).

From their text it seems clear that, despite the apparent fit of Cafundó within such definitions, these authors feel it important to maintain the community's self-definition and specificity (which in fact includes no historical ties to quilombos), and to avoid "the romantic tints of a social collectivism that in fact does not exist in the community" (Vogt & Fry 1996:270).


20. Another researcher, Lúcia M. M. de Andrade, has found elderly people living in the "remnant" communities of the area who have traditions that their great-grandparents or great-great grandparents lived in the quilombo of Maravilha, which historical records show was inhabited from 1835 to 1852 (de Andrade 1995:51-52, 57). As far as I have seen, this seems to be the backward limit of present-day
collective memories among Brazilian *remanescentes*. In my view, further research among *remanescentes*, particularly in the lower Amazon region (Pará and Amapá), holds promise of uncovering occasional quilombos with even greater historical continuity, perhaps stretching back well into the eighteenth century.

21. At the same time they managed, like "isolated" maroon communities elsewhere in the Americas, to conduct significant trade with the cities, for example, growing tobacco, gathering cashews, and producing palm oil in exchange for manufactured products.


23. Perhaps because of the pioneering nature of the enterprise—the need to find a key that might unlock the chambers of the Brazilian legal system—the arguments used by lawyers pleading the community's case, spelled out in detail in the book, are of the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink variety. Among the phrases used most frequently to describe the relationship between this "black community" and the surrounding natural environment are "perfectly harmonious," "perfectly integrated," and "traditional"—arguments that, if they smack of noble savagism, nevertheless make *relative* sense in the context of the "modern" destructive practices of agrobusinesses that commit "crimes against the environment." The enthusiasms of this "militant" literature also lead to the occasional use of out-of-date claims. The Frechal book (p. 27), for example, cites Arthur Ramos's figure of 18 million Africans brought as slaves to Brazil, while any modern historian would know that this early twentieth-century estimate exaggerates reality by a factor of more than four. (Another quilombo book, making a different kind of argument, cites a total figure of only 700,000 [Leal 1995:9]—so much for history.) And the Rio das Rãs book suggests that the *remanescentes de quilombos* in Oriximina and Frechal are actually descendants of seventeenth-century quilombos (Carvalho et al. 1996:67), a claim I do not find in either of the studies of those communities themselves, and the Rio das Rãs *remanescentes* are characterized in an English-language publication with rhetoric that seems more appropriate—in my view at least—to Suriname or Jamaican Maroons, as both "maroons" and as "freedom fighters" (Carvalho et al. 1996:429-30).


25. For this quotation see Ivan R. Costa's jacket flap for Frechal (Projeto Vida de Negro 1996). After completing this paper, I was kindly given by Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer a copy of the Projeto Vida de Negro's latest book (1998), a detailed account of the ongoing struggle to get the community of Jamary dos Pretos, in Maranhão, recognized as a "quilombo" under Article 68. That work includes the full text of the official petition for recognition (pp. 27-112) plus additional information on the community and region: Its strengths and weaknesses (e.g., the
brevity of the anthropological fieldwork—one month—on which the petition, in part, rests) fit into the pattern of the other remanescentes books under review. For a recent journalistic account of remanescentes de quilombos in Maranhão, see Amaral 1998.

26. An example of the pre-remanescente social science literature, this study was written as part of a broader, more purely "scientific" project at USP, strongly influenced by the São Paulo School (Bandeira 1988:13-24). Vogt & Fry 1996, an anthropological study that is also clearly separate ideologically from the remanescente literature, stands out as well for its general rigor and sophistication.


28. Brazilian anthropologists have also continued to fight against the general invisibility of blacks in many parts of the country. A collective work edited by Ilka Boaventura Leite (1996) takes invisibility as its theme, making an effective case for the historical (and contemporary) importance of blacks even in the most “European” of Brazil’s regions, the south.


30. The publication of Quilombo, by journalist Hermes Leal (1995), demonstrates that there is a market in Brazil for sensational works about “primitive” quilombos. Leal and a T.V. film crew visited the “Quilombo do Kalunga,” which he claims consists of some forty-one villages with 8000 people 350 kilometers north of Brasilia. Though much of the book describes his own (and the film crew’s) hardships during the brief adventure, he finds time to paint a picture of Kalunga poverty and ignorance, and their total lack of knowledge of who they are, where they came from, and why and how they’re “different” from other Brazilians. Like the rural Brazilians of times past, he claims, Kalungas live almost like animals and constitute “the most primitive quilombo” of Brazil (p. 13)—though no Kalunga knows what a “quilombo” is. The book ends with brief discussion of the plans for a hydroelectric dam that will flood much of their territory, and other recent threats to their “time-immemorial” way of life. (For a contrastive anthropological view of the Kalunga, see Baiocchi 1996:429-30.)

31. Ari Cipola, “Destino de local de quilombo é discutido” in Folha de São Paulo novembro 20, 1997. [Internet text.] On reading these lines, anthropologist John Collins called my attention to “the recent push in Salvador to categorize anyone of African descent as Black rather than the moreno norm arising from ideas about ‘racial democracy’—t-shirts proclaiming ‘100% Negro’ and the reworking of census categories are examples that come immediately to mind. This growing racial essentialism, alongside remanescente spatial essentialism, helps explain a recent comment by an MNU activist in Salvador that “Every black family is a quilombo. Every black Brazilian lives in a quilombo”” (Personal communication, May 1998).

32. Carvalho (1997:158-59) wishes to insist on the heroism of quilombolas in the Brazilian context—taking Reis & dos Santos Gomes (1996) to task for allegedly not stressing it sufficiently—and calls for a new national history which recognizes “in our gallery of heroes, alongside Zumbi of Palmares, names like Cosme, leader of the
grouping of quilombos in Itapecuru; Queen Teresa, leader of the Quilombo of Quariterê (MT); Ambrósio, chief of Quilombo Grande de Minas Gerais; Atanásio, leader of the Quilombo Cidade Maravilha in Trombetas; Malunguinho, legendary rebel of Quilombo Catuca (PE); and so many others who fought for the flag of freedom, carried forward, with no less commitment and dignity, by their thousand of descendants today."

33. Though it seems almost too evident to point out, perhaps it is worth underlining that in the self-proclaimed “racial democracy” of Brazil (which, it is often said, has the second largest black population in the world, after Nigeria), the tiny number of people covered by even the most expansive new “quilombo” definition still leaves tens of millions of poor, uneducated, and largely dispossessed black people without special legal recourse.

34. In June 1998, as this article goes to press, Suriname seems to have pulled off a remarkable public relations coup, culminating in a lead editorial in The New York Times headlined “Suriname’s Example” (June 21, 1998, p. 14 wk). At a press conference in New York featuring film star Harrison Ford, the rainforest protection group Conservation International, which is in partnership in Suriname with Bristol-Myers Squibb, announced the creation of a four-million acre nature (and bio-prospecting) park in central Suriname, to be free from logging and mining, and maintained with the assistance of funds from Conservation International (Suriname Protects Major, Pristine Tropical Wilderness [Press Release of June 17, 1998; taken off Internet]). The designated area does not include either Indian or Maroon lands, and the only mention of “inhabitants” comes in C.I.’s touting of Suriname’s prospects for ecotourism, with its “welcoming traditional cultures, including the forest-dwelling Maroon people.” The New York Times seems unaware, as C.I. surely cannot be, that this worthy project provides a timely smokescreen for Suriname’s ongoing forestry depredations just to the west of the park. As in the 1960s, when Suriname flooded Saramaka territory for a hydroelectric project yet received a great deal of feel-good publicity as part of the International Society for the Protection of Animals’ save-the-wildlife project (see, for example, Walsh & Gannon 1967), the very public announcement of the nature reserve might be seen as a magnificent diversion from the vast devastation and abuse that Suriname is perpetrating in precisely those areas where Maroons do live.

35. The Wayampi added, “He is really white ... we Indians are not like that ... Chinese are Chinese, Japanese are Japanese, Indians are Indians, they aren’t like white people.” Joachim could not conceive of an Indian who looked and acted so much like other Americans. Indeed, in this memorable encounter the Tribal Chairman sold Joachim a cassette made by his band featuring a song called “Space-Age Indian.” The scene is recorded in the film Joachim Goes to America, by Frederic Labourasse (1995; Coproduction France 3/Les Films d’Ici).
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