

Chronotopic Realignmentments and the Shifting Semiotics and Politics of Visibility in Brazilian Candomblé Activism

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the shifting semiotics and politics of visibility in Brazilian Candomblé activism in the late 2000s in the city of Salvador. It analyses how the use of publicly salient discourses and signs of peace and antiviolenence activism by activists from the African diasporic religion Candomblé reconfigured the religion's practitioners public image from that of politically passive practitioners of "black magic" and self-sacrificing "black mothers" to that of politically active peace and antiviolenence activists. I argue that this transformation was effected by a realignment of the general public's chronotopic orientation toward the religion and its practitioners from a chronotope of concealment to one of political visibility. This shift in chronotopic orientation not only aligned Candomblé practitioners with the social persona of the politically engaged peace activist but also produced a new social persona of a religiously motivated "black mother of peace."

In June 2010, Mãe Jaciara, a young Candomblé *mãe de santo* 'mother of saint' (female temple leader), was appointed as the coordinator of the Brazilian federal government's community pacification program *Mulheres da Paz* 'Women

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Earlier versions of this article were presented at workshops held at the University of Virginia Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies and the University of Chicago Divinity School. I thank the participants of these workshops for their insightful comments. Thank you especially to Michael Hanchard for his commentary at the Woodson Institute. In addition, I am especially grateful to Andy Graan, Michael Silverstein, Sue Gal, Dain Borges, Stephan Palmié, Rick Parmentier, and a reviewer for their close and generous engagement with drafts of the manuscript. Finally, I must thank the many Candomblé practitioners in Salvador who welcomed me to their religious and activist lives, thus making possible the research on which this article rests. I dedicate the article to the memory of Pai Raimundo de Oxum of Ilê Axé Ninfá Omin, my religious father.

Signs and Society, vol. 5, no. 2 (Fall 2017). © 2017 by Semiosis Research Center at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. All rights reserved. 2326-4489/2017/0502-0006\$10.00

of Peace' for the state of Bahia.¹ The aim of the program was to counter crime-related violence from the ground up through the development of informal mentor and support relationships between women and youth at risk of joining drug gangs who resided in the nation's most violent urban communities. The choice of Mãe Jaciara to head the program in Bahia was widely celebrated by Candomblé activists who interpreted it as the federal government's recognition of and support for Candomblé practitioners' own political efforts. Their activism, however, rarely focused on the mitigation of crime-related violence. Even though Candomblé practitioners were concerned with how violence, crime, and insecurity had escalated in Salvador in the preceding months and years, their own political efforts were directed at a different kind of violence, that performed by Evangelical Christians against Candomblé practitioners. This was also the kind of activism for which Mãe Jaciara was known.²

This article asks how Candomblé practitioners came to be associated with pacification in Salvador's public imaginary to such a degree that in 2010 the federal government turned to them as privileged purveyors of peace.³ To answer this question, I trace how the social persona of the Candomblé *mãe de santo* came to be laminated on that of the peace activist as practitioner activists turned to the organization of marches framed as peace marches in efforts to gain government recognition for their struggles with Evangelical Christian intolerance. The central aim of this article, thus, is to provide a semiotically informed account of how Candomblé practitioners' political efforts came to have a transformative effect on their public image. Specifically, my concern is exploring how the interdiscursive associations of the political forms that Candomblé activists chose to engage contributed to the production of a new social persona for Candomblé practitioners.

1. Candomblé is an African diasporic spirit possession religion that developed in the state of Bahia in Brazil. Its core area of practice is the city of Salvador and its surrounding area. In Salvador, the majority of the religion's practitioners are Afro-Brazilians who live in the city's self-constructed working class and poor neighborhoods. In Southern Brazil, the practitionership of Candomblé is racially and economically more diverse as it also includes large numbers of white and middle-class practitioners (see IGBE 2010). *Mãe* 'mother' is a religious title employed for female temple leaders. Temple communities are conceptualized as families. Accordingly, titles as well as reference and address terms used to describe relationships within a given temple members trope on kin terms. For religious kinship in Candomblé, see Lima ([1977] 2003).

2. In the years preceding her appointment as the coordinator of the Women of Peace program, Mãe Jaciara had come to stand as the figurehead of Candomblé activism against Evangelical Christian religious intolerance. In 1999, a photograph of Mãe Jaciara's mother, an elderly *mãe de santo* named Mãe Gilda, had been used without permission by Brazil's largest Evangelical Christian newspaper *Folha Universal* to illustrate a cover story on charlatans. The picture had so shocked Mãe Jaciara's mother that her health deteriorated to the extent that a few weeks later she suffered a lethal heart attack. The elderly *mãe de santo*'s tragic death acted as the threshold event that drew Candomblé practitioners together into a political movement against Evangelical Christian intolerance with Mãe Jaciara, an until then publicly unknown young woman, at its center.

3. This article is based on ethnographic research on Candomblé practitioners' political activism in Salvador conducted between 2004 and 2011.

As Hilary Dick (2011) has demonstrated, the construction and consolidation of new social personae does not emerge *ex nihilo* out of the minds of people but instead relies on the construction of interdiscursive links between locally salient discourses of identity (2011, E37–E38). Such interdiscursive links can be constructed in a variety of ways. For example, Dick’s own analysis traces the ways in which the conflation of the social categories of the “Mexican immigrant” and the “illegal alien” in small-town United States relied on the semiotic processes of citation and iconic replication. Asif Agha (2007a, 267), in turn, points to the ways in which hybrid social personae may be constructed and thus also on occasion consolidated through the display of indices that are icons of different social types. And Anya Bernstein (2017) has described how Taiwanese bureaucrats construct themselves as a postethnonational and postbureaucratic avant-garde by code-switching between Taiwan’s two primary languages. My analysis of the emergence of the social persona of the Candomblé “Mother of Peace” contributes to this body of scholarship, but through an examination of interdiscursivity that operates on the level of cross-chronotopic alignment. Thus, in order to trace the political effects of Candomblé activists’ adoption of the political strategy of the peace march, I take the cross-chronotopic alignments and realignments that this political strategy produced as my primary focus.

The concept of “chronotope,” or spacetime envelope, was developed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) to describe how novelistic discourse fuses spatiotemporal indicators into integrated wholes. He argued that such spacetime (i.e., chronotopic) relationships do not merely constitute narrative settings. Instead, they presuppose specific character types (i.e., social personae) and logics of action. Linguistic anthropologists have adapted this model of the chronotope to the study of “cultural chronotopes,” that is, spacetime configurations particular to a given cultural milieu (Silverstein 2005; Agha 2007b), such as the chronotopes that organize Afro-Cuban religious discourses of the past (Wirtz 2007), discourses of migration in Mexico (Dick 2010), and discourses on democratic transition in Macedonia (Graan 2015).⁴ A central concern for these scholars has been to delineate the semiotic processes through which individuals align with and, in so doing, bring into being but also transform social personae of a given chronotope. As they have demonstrated, such social personae are formulated by a vast variety of text patterns and genres of discourse and interaction that range from the use of linguistically marked speech registers (Wirtz 2007) to forms of “nomic cal-

4. Although Bakhtin’s analysis was focused on literary chronotopes, he argued that they emerged out of and in dialogue with the “actual chronotopes of our world” (Bakhtin 1981, 253).

ibration” between different spatiotemporal framings (see esp. Dick 2010; see also Wirtz 2007, Graan 2015).

The chronotopes that interactants invoke, however, never exist in isolation from others. Instead, they participate in and gain their form through “inter-discursive” linkages and contrasts with a network of intersecting chronotopes (Silverstein 2016; see also Lemon 2009; Wirtz 2016).⁵ Notably, these dialogic relationships are operative on two distinct axes. On the one hand, the construction of representational chronotopes is predicated on interdiscursive alignments to other chronotopic representations. That is, they gain their form through being contrasted to and/or layered on other representational chronotopes (Wirtz 2007, 2016; Lemon 2009; Dick 2010; Graan 2015; Silverstein 2016). On the other hand, the representational chronotopes that are constructed in a given interaction also stand in dialogic relationship to the chronotopic configuration of the interaction itself (see esp. Agha 2007b; Silverstein 2005, 2016; see also Dick 2010; Graan 2015).⁶ As such, chronotopes exist in what Silverstein has called a “duplex chronotopic order” in which “semiotic forms emergent at particular sites of social interaction (with their own chronotopic character as events) are endowed with significance for social actors insofar as they orient to and/or contest immanent normative defaults established in the implied chronotope of multiply interdiscursive socio-space-time” (2016, 187).

This chronotopic multiplicity provides interactants with a powerful semiotic resource not only for the management of interactions but also for the manipulation and transformation of the chronotopic envelopes themselves. Indeed, the semiotic effects that they may accomplish through manipulations of chronotopic footing (Goffman [1979] 1981; Lemon 2009) are broad. For example, the use of semiotic forms that act as diacritics to particular chronotopic envelopes can trigger shifts in chronotopic footings (Lemon 2009), and they may provide a means to comment on the relationship between different chronotopes and the social persona they invoke (Dick 2010; Wirtz 2016). In addition, such manipulations of chronotopic footing may overlay or contrast different chronotopes in ways that have a transformative effect on the chronotopes at play. Writing on chronotopes in general, Agha (2007b) has argued that although the constitution of chronotopes draws on presupposed notions of place, time, and personhood, it can be and frequently also is “transformative” of these presuppositions.

5. According to Alaina Lemon, Bakhtin described this multiplicity of chronotopes as *heterochronia* (Lemon 2009, 840).

6. Although Bakhtin’s analysis was focused on literary chronotopes, he also argued that they emerged out of and in dialogue with the “actual chronotopes of our world” (Bakhtin 1981, 253).

Agha pinpoints this transformative power in the various ways which chronotopic depictions contrast with their frames of reference. He argues that “the difference is most frequently experienced by language users as figure-ground contrasts between sketches of place-time-personhood formulated by co-occurring text-segments, as in the contrast between the sketch that a focal text-segment semiotically formulates and that which it presupposes as already ‘in play’ from accompanying co(n)text, and which, when ratified, it effectively transforms or replaces” (2007b, 323–24). Shifts in chronotopic footing frequently accentuate these change-inducing figure-ground contrasts as they both reposition and reframe elements from one chronotopic envelope to another.

The linguistic anthropological analysis of chronotopes has primarily focused on examining how they are produced through and invoked by language. Thus, linguistic anthropologists have been centrally concerned with describing how chronotopes take form through patterns of deictic or temporal reference (Dick 2010) and linguistically marked speech registers (Wirtz 2007), as well as the contrastive alignment of these patterns with those associated with other chronotopes (see esp. Agha 2007b; see also Lemon 2009; Dick 2010; Graan 2015; Silverstein 2016; Wirtz 2016). However, outside the realm of text artifacts, the construction of chronotopes is oftentimes multimodal. Thus, the patterns of signs that invoke and bring specific chronotopes into being frequently also involve extralinguistic diacritics like color (Moore 2016), participant frameworks (Agha 2007b), and modes of social conduct (Dick 2010). In attending to the chronotopic multivalency of the color white in Salvador, my analysis of Candomblé marches asks how such extralinguistic diacritics contribute to the formation of chronotopes and how manipulation of them allows for the realignment and reconfiguring of chronotopes and the social personae associated with them.

Chronotopes of Active Citizenship and Politics of Visibility

On November 21, 2009, Luiza Bairos, Bahia’s state secretary for the promotion of racial equality, gave a speech at a seminar organized in connection to the first national Candomblé march against religious intolerance to take place in Salvador, the Caminhada Nacional pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa.⁷ She concluded the speech with an argument on the role of citizen demands on policy making. Drawing her audience’s attention to the dual meaning of the Portuguese word *política*, she argued that state recognition of such citizen demands required col-

7. All names provided in this article are real. The data that are analyzed and identified come either from public statements made by publicly well-known figures or interviews and informal discussions with Candomblé practitioners who requested that I use their real names.

lective political mobilization. Only groups that were politically visible and organized, that is, groups that “did politics,” could expect to be acknowledged by policy makers.

One thing we cannot forget is this [. . .] in the Portuguese language the word *política* is used both to refer to public policy, which is what you are demanding from the government: that the government develops public policy to protect the rights of communities. And, the same word is used for politics in terms of political action, which [. . .] is the politics that organizations like the black movement do in society. It is the same word, and this is no coincidence, because we need to understand the following: there is no public policy for a social group that does not do politics.⁸

Luiza Bairros’s characterization of the dual meaning of the word politics invoked a notion of “active citizenship” (Dagnino 2007; Holston 2008) that has become central to Brazilian discussions on the ideal organization of state-civil society relationships after the country’s redemocratization in the late 1980s. The redemocratization process was heavily influenced by social movement understandings of the place and role of citizens in democratic politics. In contrast to earlier Brazilian configurations of citizenship that characterized the relationship between state and citizens as a top-down one (see Holston 2008), the social movement activists who were involved in the constitutional process and who entered into government after it, forwarded an understanding of citizenship that took as its point of departure “a right to have rights” (Dagnino 2007). This new understanding of citizenship was by definition an active one as it not only emphasized the citizen subject’s possession of rights but also his or her capacity as a political actor to define what they were and to struggle for their recognition (Dagnino 2007; Holston 2008). With the entry of social movement activists into government positions, this new model of citizenship came to increasingly undergird policy. In addition to constituting an overt goal for programs aimed at strengthening civil society through the construction of citizenship, it came to be seen as a prerequisite for state recognition.

When evoked by former social movement activists turned government representatives like Luiza Bairro the notion of active citizenship did not only prescribe a particular model of state-citizen interactions. In addition, it was constitutive of a new chronotope of politics: a chronotope of active citizenship that

8. Speech given during the seminar for the Caminhada Nacional pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa, November 21, 2009. All translations from Portuguese to English are mine.

stood in direct contrast to a chronotope of “passive citizenship” associated with pre-1980s Brazil. According to James Holston (2008), prior to the emergence of the notion of active citizenship in Brazil, the term *cidadão* ‘citizen’ was most commonly associated with a notion of being acted upon by the state in negative ways. It was a measure of social distance, anonymity and lack of privilege, rather than one of rights and equality. In this configuration, to be described as a citizen was to be positioned as “a nobody,” a person to whom others had no personal relationship (Holston 2008, 4–5). The model of active citizenship was seen to provide a means to move beyond such older conceptions of citizenship in two ways. On one hand, it reconfigured the relationship between citizens and the state. On the other, it moved politics from the private realm of personal relationships to that of the public realm citizen-state interactions. Thus, if the chronotope of active citizenship was temporally anchored in an aspirational timeline of democratization, spatially it was located in the public realm. The key social personae who inhabited this chronotope were politically active citizens who not only knew their rights but who also engaged in particular types of political action to demand that these rights be recognized by state

In recent years, this chronotope of active citizenship has increasingly come to be layered with another political chronotope in Brazil, that of *visibilidade* ‘visibility’. This is reflected in the ways in which government representatives like Luiza Bairros have begun emphasize the importance of visibility for efforts to draw government attention to encroachments on citizen rights as well as for gaining political recognition for marginalized and discriminated social groups. At the same time, and certainly at least partly in response to such government interest in visibility, visibility has been adopted as a goal and a political strategy by a broad range of Brazilian social movements including black movement activists seeking to draw the public’s attention to the forms of racialization and racial discrimination Brazilians of color confront in their every-day lives (Peixoto and Silva 1997), favela residents in Rio de Janeiro protesting growing rates of police violence (Farias 2007; Leite and Farias 2009; Leite 2009), LGBT activists combating homophobia in São Paulo (Sosa 2015), and Movimento sem Terra ‘Landless movement’ encampments seeking land rights in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (Sullivan 2012).

These Brazilian concerns with visibility both parallel and reflect a more general, global rise in political projects of visibility that understand visibility as a means to expose violations of citizen rights and afford political recognition to marginalized groups (see esp. Barnhurst 2007; Castor and Moore 2009). Such politicized efforts at making the politically and socially “invisible” visible follow

directly in line with earlier discussions on the silencing of subalterns and the need to give them “voice.” Indeed, both of these political frames equate political marginalization with absence from the public sphere. However, if the politics of voice envisions the solution to subaltern marginalization to lie in the inclusion of her views in public sphere conversations, the politics of visibility is predicated on visual presence. It is a politics of protest marches and parades, of public as well as visual media presence, that aims at making both the social struggles and size of marginalized groups publicly visible.

This globally circulating politics of visibility is productive of a chronotope of politics in much the same ways as Brazilian notions of active citizenship. First, similar to the model of active citizenship, the politics of visibility is temporally anchored in a contrast to a political order that it aims to transcend. If the opposing pole for active citizenship is a politics grounded in passive citizenship, for the politics of visibility it is one of marginalization or absence from the political public sphere. Second, in both chronotopes the public realm appears as the locus of emancipatory politics. While in the chronotope of active citizenship public political interactions are presented as the antidote to the relationalist politics, in the chronotope of visibility they are viewed as a solution to political marginalization understood as produced by and productive of invisibility in the public sphere. Finally, these two chronotopes of politics are populated by similar kinds of social figures. In both chronotopes, the agent of emancipatory politics is an activist who strives for political and social inclusion through a politics of the public realm.

It is these structural parallels that are foregrounded by government representatives’ efforts to laminate the two chronotopes on each other. In suggesting that active citizens are individuals who engage in a politics of visibility, they emphasize that the politics of active citizenship are inherently both self-directed and of the public realm. However, what goes less mentioned are the ways in which the two chronotopes diverge from each other, the interdiscursive gaps (Briggs and Bauman 1992) between them so to say. Indeed, not all forms of politics of visibility fit with the government expectations for active citizenship. This has been powerfully demonstrated by the violence with which government representatives have responded to protests organized by the Movimento sem Terra or groups calling attention to police violence and impunity over the past couple decades (see Dagnino 2007; Smith 2016). As these acts of violence reveal, the government support for politics of visibility does not only obscure the differences between the chronotopes of active citizenship and of politics of visibility. It also actively polices the bounds of acceptable politics of visibility.

The challenge for groups that wish to gain government recognition in the frame of active citizenship, then, are twofold. On the one hand, they need to decipher what constitutes the right kind of politics of visibility. On the other, they need to align such politics with their prior political engagements. In the following, I examine how Candomblé practitioner activists worked to respond to these challenges. I begin with an analysis of the political chronotopes in which Candomblé practitioners have been positioned in the public realm in Salvador.

Candomblé in a Chronotope of Racial Democracy

The Candomblé religion has figured prominently in state as well as artistic celebrations of Brazil's African heritage from the 1930s onward.⁹ In Salvador—which is commonly described as the cradle of Afro-Brazilian culture, or the “Black Rome,” due to its predominantly Afro-Brazilian population and its history as the primary port of entry for the African slave trade to Brazil, but also its centrality to the practice of Candomblé—the religion has an especially visible public presence. Not only does artwork depicting Candomblé's *orixá* gods deck public buildings and parks as well as advertisements for commercial establishments throughout the city (see fig. 1), but also the smells and sounds of the religion are widely mobilized by tourism operators, city officials, musical groups, and street vendors to produce and reproduce Salvador's touristic allure as the capital of Afro-Brazil (cf. van de Port 2007). This is most apparent in the city's historical center, the Pelourinho, where visitors are regaled with the smell of *acarajé* ‘bean fritters’ cooking in palm oil (a ritual food of the *orixá* Iansã) sold by street vendors dressed in Candomblé ritual attire, the sounds of *afoxé* musical groups playing Candomblé rhythms and songs, and the calls and whispers of tourist guides offering to organize visits to authentic Candomblé spirit possession ceremonies.

As historian Anadelia Romo (2010) describes, such public celebration of Candomblé dates to the 1930s. At that time, Salvador and the state of Bahia had lost their economic centrality in Brazil. The sugar and slave economies that had undergirded the region's privileged place in the nation's geography had been supplanted by the industrial, wage-labor economies of the south. Bahia had become a backwater. The ideology of racial democracy that was emerging among the nation's intellectual elites, however, provided a means to recenter the state in the Brazilian imaginary. In its celebration of racial and cultural mixture, the ideology did only provide a means for revalorizing these processes, but also the Afro-

9. For analyses of the public celebration of Candomblé, see esp. Johnson 2002; Santos 2005; Sansi 2007; van de Port 2007; and Romo 2010.



Figure 1. *Orixá* statues in the Dique de Tororô park in central Salvador. Photograph by Elina I. Hartikainen.

Brazilian populations and cultural practices that dominated the state of Bahia. The regional elites of Bahia seized upon this imagery to reimagine the state as a privileged site of tradition and authentic Afro-Brazilian culture. Significantly, the Candomblé religion was central to this new imaginary of Bahia from early on.

If Candomblé was celebrated as a vestige of the African cultural and social forms that had contributed to Brazil's mixture, by the mid-twentieth century the religion's practitioners had also come to occupy a privileged position in the national imaginary of racial democracy as the quintessential *mãe pretas* 'black mothers' of the nation. As the scholarship on the gendered and raced character of Brazilian conceptions of the nation has demonstrated, the ideology of racial democracy was predicated on idealized celebrations of the figure of *mãe preta*.¹⁰ In these celebrations, the *mãe preta* anchored a chronotope of seigniorial racial harmony. She was the self-sacrificing, unconditionally loyal enslaved wet nurse, who acted as mother to her master's children on Brazil's slave plantations. A parallel figure to the mammy of southern regionalist and nationalist depictions of slave society in the United States, the *mãe preta* was endlessly devoted to and always warm and caring to her protégés. But, at the same time, she was also firm (*firme*) with the plantation's black children whom she "commanded with an iron hand" (*comandava com mão de ferro*) (Matory 2005, 203).

10. For an excellent analysis of the historical emergence of the figure of the *mãe preta* in Brazilian literature, see Roncador (2008).

As J. Lorand Matory (2005) describes, Candomblé *mãe de santos* occupied a privileged role in this imaginary of the *mãe preta* from the 1960s onward. For the proponents of the ideology of racial democracy, the Candomblé *mãe de santo* served as an indexical icon of both a past social order of personalistic and emotional relationships and the *mãe preta*'s warm embrace of her white protégés and firm command of her black children (Matory 2005). Central to these associations between the Candomblé *mãe de santo* and the *mãe preta* was the mid-twentieth-century reimagining of the religion's temples as female-led communities and the relationships between temple leaders and their initiates and clients as maternal ones. This development was at least partly motivated by anthropologist Ruth Landes's (1940, 1947) claims that the religion's temples presented an example of a "cult matriarchy."¹¹ Although male temple leadership was relatively widespread at the time, Landes's (1940, 1947) claims that the religion's temples presented an example of a "cult matriarchy" quickly came to dominate the public depiction of Candomblé.

For elites, the argument that Candomblé temples were led by religious matriarchs effectively positioned the relationships of spiritual and political clientilism and patronage that many of them cultivated with Candomblé practitioners in a frame of black motherhood.¹² Instead of something to be ashamed of or to conceal, the ties of spiritual dependence they held to Candomblé practitioners could thus be reinterpreted as an example of the nationally foundational maternal care of the *mãe preta* toward her elite protégés. In this frame, the Afro-Brazilian *mãe de santos* that they consulted came to stand as the quintessential self-sacrificing, self-effacing, ever generous and sweet *mãe preta* whose loving care and warmth extended equally to white elites and black masses. This argument only gained further support from Candomblé practitioners' conceptualization of the ritual hierarchy of their temples in familial terms with temple leaders considered their spiritual mothers or fathers.

The figure of the *mãe de santo* as *mãe preta*, however, also differed from that of the *mãe pretas* of literary depictions of plantation society. In contrast to the enslaved wet nurse, the Candomblé *mãe de santo* was the proud leader of an African-derived religious community. In these respects, she also invoked another Brazilian chronotope of the *mãe preta*, that constructed and promoted by

11. According to Matory, this image of Candomblé was also forwarded by many of the religion's practitioners as well as Edison Carneiro, the Bahian journalist and ethnographer who served as Ruth Landes' guide to Salvador's Candomblé temples (Matory 2005, 190–99).

12. For a historical analysis of these relationships, see Reis 2001.

black activist organizations. In parallel to the racial democratic celebrations of the *mãe preta*, the figure of the black mother was configured as a source of pride and empowerment by black activists since the early twentieth century. For example, George Reid Andrews argues that in early twentieth-century São Paulo, the *mãe preta* “was often cited in the black newspapers as a symbol, not just of the sacrifices that black people had made for Brazil, but also of the powerful ways in which Euro- and Afro-Brazilians were linked in a common destiny” (1991, 215, cited in Matory 2005, 201). The way black organizations in São Paulo worked to reinterpret the figure of the *mãe preta* was also reflected in their designation of September 28, the date of the passage of the Law of the Free Womb in 1871, a key step in the dismantling of Brazilian slavery, as the Day of the Black Mother. Such black activist celebrations of the *mãe preta* came to increasingly associate her with the figure of the Candomblé *mãe de santo* in the 1960s. Here too, the claim that Candomblé constituted an African cult matriarchy was influential. It provided a means to ground the associations that black activists promoted between black motherhood and Afro-Brazilian resistance in a particularly African notion of feminine power. Candomblé temples, they argued, not only epitomized the struggle of Afro-Brazilian communities in the face of a racist society, but also retained a distinctly African form of maternal resistance and resilience that was exemplified by the figure of the Candomblé *mãe de santo*.

Notably, Salvador’s Candomblé practitioners were variously involved in the construction of these chronotopic associations between the figures of the *mãe de santo* and of the *mãe preta*. One Candomblé *mãe de santo*, Mãe Menininha of the famous Gantois temple, figured especially prominently in journalistic and artistic efforts to align Candomblé priestesses with the social persona of the *mãe preta*. From the 1960s to the 1980s, she was celebrated by numerous musicians, Carnival performance groups, and journalists as the quintessential *mãe preta*, who, as Matory (2005, 202–3) observes, “awaited the visits of her high-class children in an enormous house, spotlessly clean, with a permanent yard, a large kitchen, lots of food and entertainment, and always a kind word. Politicians were said to *pedir colo dela*—‘to ask to be held on her lap’.” However, if the most widely revered, Mãe Menininha was not the only Candomblé priest to be celebrated as the epitome of the *mãe preta*. A statue commemorating the *mãe preta* in Rio de Janeiro that was erected in 1969 was modeled on Mãe Senhora, the then recently deceased leader of another famous temple from Salvador, the *Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá* (202). In addition to such public celebrations of individual Candomblé priestesses, in the 1960s in São Paulo Candomblé practitioners took a leading role in the September 28 celebrations for the *mãe preta* (201).

Nevertheless, irrespective of their emphasis, the social persona of the Candomblé *mãe de santo* that these chronotopic formulations of the *mãe preta* produced was a far cry from the active citizens called for by government representatives like Luiza Bairos. Even the black activist configuration of the *mãe de santo* positioned her in the temple instead of on the streets. Rather than a politics of visibility, she was engaged in a politics of resistance that focused on resilience to but also seclusion from dominant society. Significantly, the incongruence between Candomblé practitioners and the figure of the politically active and visible citizen was even further strengthened by the ways in which the chronotope of the seignorial past crystallized in the figure of the *mãe preta* was undergirded by another chronotope of visibility, one grounded in concealment, in Salvador's public sphere.

A Chronotope of Concealment

From its beginnings, the public celebration of Candomblé has been undergirded by a particular semiotics and politics of concealment. Indeed, the public allure of Candomblé has been predicated not only on the religion's perceived ability to preserve the nation's African cultural heritage but also on the suggestion that there is more to the religion and its practices than meets the eye. Despite the wholesome character of the religion's public portrayal, the specter of spiritually powerful but morally ambivalent ritual praxis is never far. The folklorized public face of Candomblé is understood to conceal a religious practice that can just as easily be mobilized by practitioners to bring devotees and clients great fortune and good health as it can for such more sinister ends as reeking vengeance on unfaithful lovers, deceitful friends, or unfair employers or eliminating competition in matters of love, employment, and neighborhood relations.

As Mattijs van de Port (2007) has eloquently demonstrated, this semiotics and politics of concealment is most clearly reflected in a "poetics" of the color white. He observes that the color white, which dominates the public depictions of Candomblé whether they are produced by state institutions, tourism operators, media professionals, or artists, anchors a multilayered public understanding of the religion. On the surface, the white of Candomblé evokes positive connotations such as cleanliness and purity. However, this "politics of white" intersects with a "poetics of white" that hints at and gestures toward that which is concealed by the impeccable surfaces of Candomblé's public appearance. Indeed, since nonpractitioners know that Candomblé practitioners engage in animal sacrifice, the very fact that no blood stains can be seen on their clothes raises

suspicions about what else might be concealed by the white clothes. In pointing to that which cannot be seen, the spotless white of Candomblé practitioners not only contradicts but also destabilizes more general associations between the color white and peace, purity, and harmony (van de Port 2007).

This semiotics and politics of concealment is also reflected in and informed by Candomblé practitioners' religious engagements with the public sphere. Indeed, secrecy and concealment are key orienting principles of Candomblé practice. The religion is organized around a body of knowledge called *fundamentos* which is carefully guarded by senior practitioners. These *fundamentos* are understood by practitioners both to constitute the African core of the Candomblé religion and to compose the knowledge that enables practitioners to appropriately and effectively serve the religion's African deities. Thus, the *fundamentos* are not only ritually but also socially powerful. The deeper a practitioner's knowledge of them, the greater his or her ability to act as mediator between them and other practitioners as well as religious clients. Significantly, however, the practitioners' ability to act as such a mediator depend on the communication of his or her possession of the *fundamentos*. Since the content of the *fundamentos* cannot be disclosed but must instead be kept secret, practitioners instead engage in practices of secretism (Johnson 2002), such as meaningful silences and glances as well as the use of religious speech registers that are known in only limited ways by the uninitiated and junior practitioners, that gesture to that which is concealed.¹³

The semiotics and politics of concealment that emerges from these religious practices of secretism has historically intersected in various ways with Candomblé practitioners' efforts to avoid confrontations and attacks by the prejudiced. Indeed, Candomblé public celebration has also concealed a reality of everyday discrimination and intolerance against the religion. In attempts to protect themselves from this reality, Candomblé practitioners have long engaged in different modes of concealment. Thus, temple structures are generally not visible to passers-by on the street. The careful observer may catch a glimpse of a white flag on a tree beyond the walls of a temple complex or notice the placement of ritual offerings on top of or beside the gate, but the structures' character is rarely advertised overtly with signs or name plaques. Similarly, when moving through public spaces in Salvador, practitioners typically conceal such indexes of their reli-

13. For secrecy and religious knowledge in Candomblé, see esp. Johnson (2002); see also Braga (1998); Castillo (2008).

gious commitments as protective beads and amulets under shirts, in pockets, or in the case of women, in their bras. Or, when expected to wear particular colors for religious reasons, they strive to do so in an inconspicuous manner. For example, practitioners at Ilê Axé Ninfá Omin, a Candomblé temple, where I conducted participant observation and interviews, would typically respond to the ritual requirement of wearing white on Fridays by combining white garments with other light colored ones. In this way, their adherence to the ritual precept was more likely to go unnoticed by those who did not know they were practitioners.

The semiotics and politics of concealment revolves around the color white also in this domain. Tellingly, for many of the Candomblé practitioners I came to know, the value of such practices of concealment had been drawn out especially forcefully on occasions when they had been required to wear all white for religious reasons and when they therefore could not hide their religious commitments in public. The stories they told me emphasized the connection between wearing white and religious intolerance. For example, Rose, an elderly practitioner from the Ilê Axé Ninfá Omin temple, described to me how she had struggled to continue her studies at the Federal University of Bahia when she had been obligated to wear white for months after her initiation into Candomblé. Her white garb had been met by ridicule and strong disapproval from both her peers and her advisors. Claudia, another practitioner from the temple, in turn, described how at least on one occasion, when required as a recent initiate to dress in white, she had been spat in the face by a fellow bus passenger.

As these stories reveal, wearing white not only discloses Candomblé practitioners' religious commitments in public but is viewed in particularly negative ways. Indeed, in Salvador the association between white clothes and Candomblé is so strong and negative that the wearing of white by nonpractitioners commonly elicits comments and jokes on their purported Candomblé practitioner-ship (see also van de Port 2007). In particular, the figure of the recent initiate, dressed in white and with a shaved head, who for religious reasons should avoid direct sunlight and eye contact with strangers, invokes fear and anger in non-practitioners. It does not merely gesture to that which is kept concealed. Instead, it momentarily brings Candomblé's otherwise hidden world of animal sacrifice, spirit possession, and morally ambivalent ritual practice into the public domain.

In aggregate, all these practices are productive of a chronotope of concealment that is populated by secretive and potentially dangerous religious practitioners. The quintessential indexical icon of this social persona is the white dress of the Candomblé practitioner, whose spotlessness suggests that there is more to the religion than meets the eye. Spatially, this chronotope is anchored

in the never fully contained private sphere of Candomblé temples. Indeed, not only are religious practitioners required on occasion to wear religious attire outside the confines of temples, but more significantly the very power and allure of the religion depends on the subtle violation of the boundary between the private temple and the public street.¹⁴ This is the case for both the practices of secretism that are key to the production and reproduction of practitioners' reputations as knowledgeable and efficacious mediators to Candomblé's African deities and the stylized hints and gestures to Candomblé's secret ritual practices in the religion's public portrayal that constitute its tantalizing appeal. Temporally, in turn, this chronotope is anchored in an African past that is understood to have been retained in the practice of Candomblé temples but that resists containment within them. In this regard, it presents a window to an imagined African past in which deities exerted a direct influence on human life and society was governed by a different set of mores, but at the same time it threatens efforts to portray Brazil as a modern society as it suggests that the nation may in fact not have moved beyond this past to the extent that many Brazilians would prefer to believe it has.

In the end of the 2000s when I conducted the majority of my fieldwork in Salvador, a growing number of Candomblé practitioner activists had begun to argue that the time had come for practitioners to move beyond such semiotics and politics of concealment. According to them, it did not constitute an effective response to the new forms of intolerance against the religion that were performed by Evangelical Christians. Instead, what was needed was a politics of visibility. The adoption of such a politics of visibility, however, necessitated a reorientation of the temporal and spatial coordinates of the chronotope of concealment. Instead of the African past and temple practices of Candomblé, activists argued that it was a product of the religion's public persecution and discrimination in Brazil.

From Concealment to Visibility

Luiza Bairros was not alone in her calls for doing politics at the November 2009 Candomblé activist event. Instead, her arguments on the import of politically visible action were echoed by many of the senior Candomblé practitioners who spoke at the event. For example, Babá Diba, a senior practitioner activist who had been invited to speak on one of the event's panels, argued that "the time has come for everyone to take to the streets. No longer is there space for the Babá [male temple leader] [. . .] who sits behind his [divination] table inside the tem-

14. For analyses of the shifting character of the public-private divide in Candomblé temples, see Johnson (2002); and Hartikainen (2013).

ple waiting for people to knock on the door to consult an oracle. We need to take to the street, and say that we want our space in all sectors of society: in education, in health, in politics.¹⁵

Such arguments were directly connected to the exponential growth in Evangelical Christian intolerance against Candomblé in Brazil. Over the previous ten years, the number of overt attacks against the religion's temples and practitioners had grown exponentially. The most widely discussed of these cases was that of Mãe Gilda, Mãe Jaciara's mother. Other cases had involved invasions of Candomblé temples for the purpose of destroying religious shrines as well as physical abuse of Candomblé practitioners.

In Salvador's mainstream media, these kinds of attacks were typically described as a fringe phenomenon that was associated with the growing influence of Evangelical Christian churches in Brazil.¹⁶ And indeed, some of these churches, although not all of them, had positioned Candomblé along with other African diasporic spirit possession religions as their primary targets in a *guerra santa* 'spiritual war' against Satan.¹⁷ From their perspective, the deities channeled by practitioners of these religions were manifestations of the devil. As soldiers in Christ, their task was to combat these religions, purge their practitioners of the influence of the devil and win them over to the evangelical faith. At the forefront of this spiritual war against African diasporic religions was the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (IURD), which had attacked Candomblé in a variety of highly visible ways.¹⁸ In addition to organizing regular exorcism sessions for former Candomblé practitioners and encouraging church members to forcefully convert such practitioners the church had spread its views on Candomblé through a vast media empire that produces free broadcasts and publications, which reach audiences well beyond the church's membership. The newspaper that featured Mãe Gilda, Mãe Jaciara's mother, the *Folha Universal*, was the IURD's flagship print publication.¹⁹

15. Babá Diba, speech given at Caminhada Nacional pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa seminar, November 21, 2009.

16. The number of Evangelical Christians in Brazil has grown from 6.6 percent of the nation's population in 1980 to 22.2 percent in 2010 (IGBE 2010).

17. In Brazil, Evangelical Christians have also positioned themselves in opposition to Catholicism as evidenced by the notorious 1990 *chute da santa*, a televised kick at a statue of Our Lady of Apparition by a bishop from the IURD.

18. For analyses of the IURD's relationship to African diasporic religions, see Silva et al. (2007); Almeida (2009); de Brito (2010).

19. The circulation of IURD's weekly newspaper *Folha Universal* is estimated to be around 2.5 million copies, while the audience of the numerous nonreligious national and regional television and radio stations owned by the church is significantly broader. According to the *Folha de São Paulo*, the IURD owned the majority of television stations in Brazil in 2007. In addition to having a 99 percent ownership of the company TV Capital, which controls Brazil's oldest and second largest television network Rede Record, the church

While the negative characterizations of Candomblé practitioners that these Evangelical Christian churches espoused paralleled those associated with the chronotope of concealment, they existed in a chronotope of their own. This was an Evangelical Christian chronotope of spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons. It was populated by Evangelical Christians conceived of as Christian soldiers, and their enemies, Satan and his demons. Temporally and spatially it aligned the here and now of Evangelical Christian's everyday lives with the transcendental plane of God's kingdom in heaven. In this chronotope, the devil was not a distant, transcendental entity but instead a concrete presence in the human world. Thus, war against him and his demons had to be waged in the here and now. This was how Evangelical Christians could do God's work on earth.²⁰

In accord with this chronotopic frame of spiritual warfare, the Evangelical Christian attacks against Candomblé also diverged from the forms of intolerance associated with the chronotope of concealment in their virulence and overtly public character. Whereas the disapproval, fear, ridicule and despise that Candomblé practitioners invoked among their non-Evangelical Christian neighbors, peers, and coworkers rarely took public form and was more commonly expressed through jokes, gossip, and speculation outside the earshot of practitioners, Evangelical Christian attacks against Candomblé tended to both occur in public and be directed at a more general public. Indeed, from the exorcism sessions organized by the IURD to the defamatory depiction of Candomblé and Candomblé practitioners in Evangelical Christian media to the assault of Candomblé practitioners by Evangelical Christians on buses and in other public spaces, Evangelical Christian intolerance was overtly public.

It was the publicity of Evangelical Christian intolerance that practitioners like Babá Diba argued necessitated a new kind of public response from Candomblé practitioners. According to them, Candomblé practitioners could no longer hope to avoid attacks against their religion by remaining in their temples or by avoiding the wearing of white in public. Instead, faced with an increasingly public wave of religious intolerance, they too had to adopt a more public position: either they took to the streets to protest against religious intolerance or they would be destroyed by Evangelical Christians. Such a public response, of course, was also what was needed for gaining state recognition and support for Candomblé practitioners' struggles with Evangelical Christians.

owns twenty-three television stations and at least seventy-six radio stations: Elvira Lobato, "Igreja controla maior parte de TVs do país," *Folha de São Paulo*, December 15, 2007, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/brasil/ult96u373563.shtml>.

20. On spiritual warfare in contemporary Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism, see Marshall (2009); O'Neill (2010). On spiritual warfare in the Brazilian context, see Silva et al. (2007); de Brito (2010).

Adopting a more public stance to religious intolerance was, however, no easy task for Candomblé practitioners as it necessitated an undoing of the multilayered semiotics and politics of concealment that ordered Candomblé practitioners' portrayal in and engagements with the public sphere. Key to Candomblé activists' efforts to respond to this challenge was an attempt to move away from the publicly salient chronotope of concealment. The foundation for this had been laid earlier by Candomblé activists who argued that the forms of concealment Candomblé practitioners engaged in were not African but instead Brazilian in origin. Rather than reflect the religion's African foundations, these activists claimed, such practices had been developed by practitioners in Brazil in response to religious intolerance and persecution. The best-known advocate of this argument is Mãe Stella de Oxossi, the leader of Salvador's famous Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá temple, who along with four other highly respected Candomblé leaders launched an influential re-Africanization campaign for the religion in 1983. The primary objective of the campaign was to purge all syncretism with Catholicism from Candomblé temples and in so doing revert to a more authentically African form of the religion. Such syncretism, the campaign's proponents argued, was the product of Candomblé practitioners' efforts to mask the true character of their religious practice in a society that did not tolerate African religions. These practices of concealment were, however, no longer necessary in Brazil.²¹

In the mid- to late 2000s, similar arguments were being mobilized by Candomblé activists to call practitioners to a politics of visibility. An especially clear example of such arguments was presented by Makota Valdina, one of Salvador's most vocal and widely respected Candomblé activists, at a Candomblé activist forum on "Candomblé and the Media" held in May 2009 at the Terreiro de Cobre temple. In response to a question from a junior practitioner in the audience of the event on the indiscriminate dissemination of videos of secret Candomblé ritual practices on Youtube, Makota Valdina argued that while such uses of Youtube were unfortunate, ultimately, they did not violate the religion's African foundations. The proof of this, she explained, was that in Africa in the places of origin of Brazilian Candomblé, traditional African religions were practiced openly in public. She herself had had a chance to observe this on a trip to Benin. As this demonstrated, the practices of concealment that were central to Brazilian Candomblé practice were a New World invention. They were a response to the various forms of religious discrimination and persecution that Candomblé practitioners had confronted in Brazil.

21. For an analysis of the re-Africanization campaign, see Capone (1999).

Such arguments constituted an overt effort to detach Candomblé's religious practice from the chronotope of concealment and in so doing carve out a space for Candomblé practitioners to engage in a politics of visibility. As activists like Makota Valdina proposed, the practices of concealment in which Candomblé practitioners engaged and for which the religion was known were not motivated by the religion's African foundations. Instead, they were a New World addition. As a result, they were expendable.

However, if such arguments could successfully detach the chronotope of concealment from Candomblé's religious practice for Candomblé practitioners, for this to also happen on the level of public discourse demanded new ways of engagement with the public sphere from practitioners. In their efforts to respond to this challenge, Candomblé activists turned to a political form that was viewed by government representatives like Luiza Bairros to exemplify politically visible active citizenship: the protest march. As I demonstrate in the following, the *caminhadas* 'walks' that Candomblé activists organized in the mid- to late 2000s engendered significant transformations in how the religion's practitioners were recognized by Brazilian state institutions and representatives. Key to this was the ways in which Candomblé activists' framing of the marches as peace marches oriented onlookers to view the religion's practitioners in yet another chronotopic envelope, one of peace and antiviolence activism.

Marching for Life, Religious Liberty, and Peace

In Salvador, Candomblé practitioners' efforts to draw public and government attention to the exponential growth of Evangelical Christian intolerance against their religion have been broad. Not only have they involved a range of distinct activist groups but also a variety of political strategies including the writing of letters to the editor and op-eds for local newspapers, the maintenance of blogs and websites, the production of video documentaries, the creation of informational pamphlets for practitioners on the resources available to them if confronted with intolerance, and the organization of seminars and conferences designed to provide practitioners with opportunities to share experiences of and develop collective strategies for combating Evangelical Christian attacks. However, the most prominent form of politics of visibility that Candomblé activists have engaged in Salvador has been the organization of annual large-scale protest marches.²²

22. For Candomblé activism against Evangelical Christian intolerance, see Silva et al. (2007).

At the end of the 2000s, the longest running annual Candomblé march in Salvador was the Caminhada contra a Violência, a Intolerância Religiosa, e pela Paz (March against violence, religious intolerance and for peace) that had been organized by Candomblé communities based in the neighborhood of Engenho Velho de Federação since 2004.²³ The largest Candomblé march was the Caminhada pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa (March for life and religious liberty) that had been organized under different names by the Candomblé and black movement activist collective Coletivo de Entidades Negras since 2005.²⁴ Finally, the third widely publicized annual Candomblé peace march was the Caminhada contra Intolerância Religiosa e pela Paz (March against religious intolerance and for peace), which was organized by a group of temples from the neighborhood of Itapuã. This march against religious intolerance was dedicated to the memory of Mãe Gilda, the *mãe de santo* from the neighborhood who had suffered a fatal heart attack in 2000 after the publication of her photograph on the front page of an Evangelical Christian newspaper.²⁵

All of these marches were first and foremost presented as protests against religious intolerance. As the fliers, posters and video commercials, as well as blog posts produced by the events' activist organizers emphasized, the marches aimed to bring public visibility to Candomblé practitioners' violent confrontations with Evangelical Christians. This agenda was also prominently displayed during the marches through banners that were carried by participants and hung on the *trio elétrico* trucks that led the marches broadcasting speeches and Candomblé rhythms and songs through their powerful sound systems (see fig. 2).²⁶ In addition, it was highlighted by the numerous speeches that were made during the events. These

23. This march was first organized in 2004. The neighborhood of Engenho Velho de Federação holds an emblematic role in the local imaginary of Candomblé, as it is home to a large concentration of religious temples, including a majority of the city's oldest and most famous Candomblé temples.

24. In 2005 and 2006, this march was described as a symbolic embrace of the Dique de Tororo pond in central Salvador that features a set of sculptures of Candomblé *orixás* at its center (see fig. 1). The event concluded with participants circling the pond hand in hand. In 2007, the march was called the Caminhada do povo de santo (March of the people of saint [i.e., Candomblé practitioners]). In 2008, the event was called Caminhada pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa (March for life and religious liberty). In 2009, it took on a national character when organizers invited Candomblé organizations, temples and practitioners from other Brazilian states to participate in the march. In that year, the march was renamed the Caminhada Nacional pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa (National march for life and religious liberty).

25. In addition to these annual marches, marches against religious intolerance were organized in 2009 in the Cajazeiras and Subúrbio areas of Salvador as well as in the neighboring municipality Lauro de Freitas by temples and practitioners located there. However, since I did not have the opportunity to participate in these events, I do not discuss them here.

26. *Trio elétricos* are trucks that are commonly used to provide high-powered mobile sound systems as well as a stage for itinerant events in Salvador. They are especially central to Carnival parades but they are also frequently used by large marches. The CEN and Itapuã Candomblé marches that I attended between 2008 and 2010 featured *trio elétricos*.



Figure 2. *Trio elétrico* leading Caminhada pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa Candomblé march on November 23, 2008. Photograph by Elina I. Hartikainen.

speeches would typically draw attention to the gravity of the situation for Candomblé practitioners by reminding their audiences of the few exceptionally outrageous cases of religious intolerance that had occurred in the preceding years. The ways in which these marches portrayed Candomblé practitioners as active citizens who both knew their right to religious freedom without fear of discrimination and demanded government recognition for them through a politics of visibility effectively evoked the chronotopes of active citizenship and politics of visibility. However, the marches did not only draw the general public's attention to Candomblé practitioners' efforts to counter Evangelical Christian intolerance. In addition, they positioned Candomblé practitioners in a third political chronotope, that of peace and antiviolence activism.

As the rates of drug-related and police homicides skyrocketed in the favelas in Rio de Janeiro in the 1990s, residents of these neighborhoods turned to the organization of peace and antiviolence marches in their efforts to draw public attention to the violence. These marches drew heavily on a broader imaginary of peace and peace marches. While some of them, most notably the Mães de Acari 'Mothers of Acari' who sought justice for the 1990 police massacre of their children, displayed photographs of the deceased in similar ways as the interna-

tionally known protests of the Argentine Madres de la Plaza de Mayo 'Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,' others called on their participants to wear white (Birman 2004; Farias 2007; Leite and Farias; Leite 2009). Indeed, apart from the Candomblé chronotope of concealment, across Brazil the wearing of white is most commonly associated with the practice of donning white clothes on New Year's Eve in attempts to invite peace for the new year and repel negative influences. However, the color white, and especially white clothes, have also long been employed by Brazilian social movements to highlight their concerns with peace. In Salvador, the most famous of such movements is the *afoxé* group Filhos de Gandhi 'Sons of Gandhi', which has marched under a banner of peace dressed in white since its founding in 1949 (Morales 1988).

By the 2000s, the imagery of favela peace marches had taken on a chronotopic character that could be invoked by the wearing of white and the designation of a protest event as peace march. Temporally, the chronotope continued to be anchored in a present-day moment of structural inequality and escalating drug-related but also police violence, while spatially the chronotope's coordinates had expanded with the growth of such violence across Brazil to include self-constructed neighborhoods in most of the country's urban areas. This was also the case in Salvador, where protest marches that invoked the chronotope of the peace march became a common occurrence in the second half of the 2000s as the rates of violence and insecurity in the city grew exponentially.²⁷ These marches were organized by a heterogeneous set of groups that included neighborhood associations, Catholic parishes, and friends and relatives of homicide victims, but they all drew on an imagery of antiviolence activism that evoked the peace marches of Rio de Janeiro.²⁸

The ways in which the Candomblé marches that were organized in Salvador in the late 2000s were described by their organizers positioned them directly in

27. The rate of crime and drug-related homicides increased 371.1% in Salvador between 2000 and 2010 (Waiselfisz 2011). By the end of the decade, the homicide statistics of Salvador qualified it as the fourth most violent city in Brazil and the twenty-second most violent city in the world ("San Pedro Sula (Honduras) la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Juárez la segunda," <http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/sala-de-prensa/541-san-pedro-sula-la-ciudad-mas-violenta-del-mundo-juarez-la-segunda>). The effects of this increase in violence were especially palpable in the poorer neighborhoods of the city, where confrontations between criminals and the police frequently resulted in the death of residents. However, many homicides were also the product of robberies and theft gone awry.

28. For media reports on peace marches in Salvador in late 2000s, see Cirino, Helga. "Moradores de Sao Cristovão pedem paz," *A Tarde Online*, July 25, 2007, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1269231-moradores-de-sao-cristovao-pedem-paz>; Bouza, Ricardo. "Silêncio e oração marcam o dia pela paz," *A Tarde Online*, August 1, 2008, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1284141-silencio-e-oracao-marcam-o-dia-pela-paz>; Bahia, Içara. "Caminhada pela paz reúne cerca de mil pessoas do Largo de Roma até o Bonfim," *A Tarde Online*, November 28, 2009, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1249176-caminhada-pela-paz-reune-cerca-de-mil-pessoas-do-largo-de-roma-ate-o-bonfim>.

this chronotopic envelope. Consider the names of the marches organized in 2009: the March against Violence, Religious Intolerance and for Peace, the March for Life and Religious Liberty, and the March against Religious Intolerance and for Peace of Itapuã. All these names explicitly framed their purpose in an idiom of peace. This agenda was also emphasized by the ways in which the events' organizers described the marches to representatives of local media outlets. For example, in 2007 one of the organizers of the Engenho Velho march explained to journalists from Salvador's oldest daily, *A Tarde*, that the event constituted a call for peaceful coexistence with the neighborhood's evangelicals who were constantly intimidating Candomblé practitioners and disrespecting them with efforts at conversion.²⁹

These associations were further supported by local media reports on the marches that frequently drew explicit attention to the parallels between them and these other examples of peace and antiviolence activism. This was especially the case for the Caminhada contra a Violência, a Intolerância e pela Paz organized by Candomblé temples from the notoriously violent and crime-ridden Engenho Velho neighborhood. Much of the reporting on this event suggested that the Candomblé practitioners who organized it were motivated to act not only by their experiences of religious intolerance but also by the overall increase in violence in their everyday lives.³⁰ The 2007 *A Tarde* article on the Engenho Velho march went even further as it paired the report on Candomblé march with a report on a "similar manifestation" of antiviolence activism that took place in the neighborhood of Boa Vista do Lobato. The other similar event was a peace march organized by a local Catholic parish to protest against growing rates of violence in that neighborhood.³¹

The ways in which the Candomblé marches variously invoked an imaginary of peace and antiviolence activism effectively guided the general public to view them in a chronotopic envelope of peace and antiviolence activism instead of the chronotope of concealment. In doing so, they aligned Candomblé practitioners with a new social persona: that of the socially engaged peace activist. This was a figure that also was associated with the color white, but in radically

29. Sombra Emanuella and Danile Rebouças, "População vai as ruas em nome da paz e da fé," *A Tarde Online*, November 15, 2007, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1276429-populacao-vai-as-ruas-em-nome-da-paz-e-da-fe>.

30. See esp. Luciana Rebouças, "Caminhada pela paz no Engenho Velho da Federação," *A Tarde Online*, November 15, 2008, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1249182-caminhada-pela-paz-no-engenho-velho-da-federacao>.

31. Sombra Emanuella and Danile Rebouças, "População vai as ruas em nome da paz e da fé," *A Tarde Online*, November 15, 2007, <http://atarde.uol.com.br/bahia/salvador/noticias/1276429-populacao-vai-as-ruas-em-nome-da-paz-e-da-fe>.

different ways than in previous configurations of Candomblé practitioners. Instead of gesturing to a reality that was concealed, the white of the peace activist stood as a straightforward index of peace and calm.

The Candomblé marches did not, however, only position the religion's practitioners' efforts to confront Evangelical Christian intolerance within a chronotope of peace and antiviolence activism. They were also designed to forward an argument on Candomblé as a religion of peace. This was evident in the ways in which the events' organizers called on participants to wear white when participating in the events (see fig. 3) and the ways in which they explained their reliance on a discourse of peace. Although they did not deny the interdiscursive linkages between their marches and those organized by other groups, the organizers emphasized that their concerns with peace as well as their use of the color white were religious. In proposing peace as a response to intolerance and aggression, the organizers and participants of the Candomblé peace marches were informed by a religious emphasis on peace and calm. Such peacefulness, they claimed, was ingrained in the religion's theology in the figure of Oxalá, the most senior of Candomblé's African *orixá* deities.



Figure 3. March participants wearing white at Caminhada Nacional pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa, November 22, 2009. Photograph by Elina I. Hartikainen.

One of the creator deities of the world according to Candomblé theology, Oxalá is associated with social harmony, calm and peace. In Candomblé ceremonies he is invoked last of the *orixás* with slow tempo rhythms and dances that are understood both to reflect his peaceful and calm character and to bring the ritual cycle to a harmonious and peaceful close. Accordingly, Candomblé ceremonies end with the laying of a white sheet, the *alá* of Oxalá, on the heads of participants, an act that is commonly described as the laying of a cloak of peace on them. It was this peace and calm of Oxalá that the organizers of Candomblé marches were hoping to bring to their political struggles with Evangelical intolerance. This argument was variously supported by the ways in which march organizers and participants claimed a religious grounding for the events' visual resonances with publicly salient signs of peace activism. As they argued, the color white, but also white doves, were closely associated with the Oxalá in Candomblé theology and practice. For them, the use of white clothes provided a means to invoke and channel the serenity and creative power of Oxalá to their struggles with Evangelical Christians. The white doves operated in similar ways as they constituted a privileged sacrificial offering to the *orixá*.

Notably, the ways in which the marches associated Candomblé practitioners' use of the color white with the peacefulness of Oxalá did not only reimagine the social persona of the peace activist. They also worked to reconfigure the ways in which Candomblé practitioners' use of white clothes, and by extension Candomblé practitioners and the Candomblé religion in general were viewed in Salvador's public imaginary. In addition to his associations with peace and serenity, Oxalá's other qualities lent themselves to this task especially well. Unlike the other *orixás* revered and worshipped in Candomblé, offerings to Oxalá cannot be cooked with palm oil, an ingredient that is so strongly associated in the local imaginary with Candomblé "black magic" that many Evangelical Christians avoid using it altogether. Thus, the Candomblé marches against religious intolerance and for peace did not only draw the general public's attention to Candomblé practitioners' struggles with discrimination, but they also responded to the negative stereotypes about them. In this respect, the marches both rendered Candomblé practitioners' struggle against religious intolerance visible to the general public and produced a Candomblé public subject consonant with broader social concerns in the city. All this emerged from activists' effort to shift the general public's chronotopic orientation from the historically dominant space-time envelope of concealment to that of peace activism.

But, why did this Candomblé public subject resonate so strongly with government concerns with Salvador's growing rates of violence that a Candomblé

practitioner was appointed to head the Brazilian federal government's Women of Peace program in Bahia? Indeed, considering the array of peace marches organized in Salvador in the late 2000s that were focused directly on the problem, how can the appointment of a Candomblé activist like Mãe Jaciara to the position be explained?

Candomblé Practitioners as Mothers of Peace

The Women of Peace program was one of a set of efforts developed by the Ministry of Justice of the Brazilian federal government for the Programa Nacional de Segurança Pública com Cidadania 'National Program of Public Security with Citizenship' (PRONASCI). The task of PRONASCI was to develop policy and programs that drew on grassroots social action to prevent urban violence at the "socio-cultural roots of criminality" in order to "unite state and society" in favor of public security (*segurança pública*) (Sorj and Gomes 2011, 151; Rocha and Tavares 2014, 296). The focus of these programs was to be on youth at risk to become victims of or involved in violence in urban areas with high rates of violent crime and homicides.³² The Women of Peace program was one of the most widely known of these programs as it was put into practice in all of Brazil's state capital cities and metropolitan areas. In Salvador, the program was initiated in 2009, one year before Mãe Jaciara was appointed as its head.

According to Bila Sorj and Carla Gomes (2011), the Women of Peace program was motivated by an effort to harness the political energies of a plethora of women's movements and organizations commonly identified as *Mães da Paz* 'Mothers of Peace' for the PRONASCI agenda of combating urban crime and promoting a "culture of peace." These groups of mothers whose children had fallen victim to urban violence had strategically mobilized motherhood in the service of their calls for peace and an end to violence and police impunity in Brazil's poor urban neighborhoods.³³ Although some of the developers of the program advocated for a conception of women's peace activism that extended beyond the model of the Mothers of Peace—a development that led the program to be named Women rather than Mothers of Peace—in practice, at least in Salvador, it continued to envision its participants in the frame of motherhood (Sorj and Gomes 2011; Rocha and Tavares 2014). Fabiana dos Santos Rocha and Márcia

32. The programs focused on youth and young adults ages 15 to 29. Those understood to be at risk were youth who had been in prison, who were in conflict with the law, and/or who were members of family exposed to violence (Rocha and Tavares 2014, 296).

33. The most famous of these organizations was the *Mães de Acari* 'Mothers of Acari,' a group of eleven women who fought for the localization of the bodies of their children who had been the victims of a massacre performed by the police in Rio de Janeiro in July 1990 (Sorj and Gomes 2011).

Santana Tavares (2014), sociologists who studied the Women of Peace program in Salvador in 2009, argue that it envisioned their work for the program as a form of social mothering that was an extension of the kinds of action they engaged in efforts to protect and care for youth in their own families.

The figure of the peace activist motivated by maternal love that undergirded the Women of Peace project resonated especially well with the figure of the religiously motivated Candomblé peace activist produced by Candomblé practitioners' peace marches. Indeed, while the Candomblé marches distanced the religion's practitioners from the chronotope of concealment and the social figures it invoked, they did not do so in regards to the nostalgic chronotopes of the *mãe preta*. Instead, the chronotope of peace activism was layered onto those that configured the Candomblé *mãe de santo* as the quintessential *mãe preta*. This was clearly reflected in the ways in which the organizers of these marches foregrounded the leadership of *mãe de santos* in the event's public portrayal. For example, as I learned in conversations with activists on the marches, female identity and senior religious status were key criteria to their choice of speakers and lead singers for the events. Similarly, the photographs of the events that were circulated on blogs and to media outlets tended to feature well-known activist *mãe de santos*.³⁴ In this regard, it was no surprise that Mãe Jaciara had come to stand as the figure head of Candomblé activism against Evangelical Christian intolerance. While there is no question about the significance and efficacy of Mãe Jaciara's activism, her identity as a woman and a *mãe de santo* also fit well with Candomblé activists' overall emphasis on female leadership in the religion.

The march organizers' foregrounding of Candomblé's female leadership was without a doubt in dialogue with black movement conceptions of the *mãe preta* as a figure of racial resistance. Many of them held close ties to black movement activists and groups. While some viewed their Candomblé activism as a form of black movement activism, some had been or continued to be involved in other activist groups that were connected to the black movement. In consequence, not only were they well-versed in the black movement discourses on the *mãe preta* but many of them also forwarded these discourses themselves. However, ultimately the ways in which their religious activism positioned Candomblé prac-

34. For examples, see "Começa hoje aquecimento para VII caminhada dos terreiros do Engenho Velho da Federação," *Mundo Afro*, November 1, 2009, <http://mundoafro.atarde.uol.com.br/tag/a-intolerancia-religiosa-e-pela-paz/>; "Caminhada contra a intolerância," *Bocão news*, November 15, 2009, <http://www.bocaonews.com.br/noticias/principal/geral/2995,caminhada-contra-a-intolerancia.html>; "Povo de Santo pede paz e respeito," blog entry, November 23, 2009, Caminhada pela Vida e Liberdade Religiosa, <http://caminhadapelevidaeliberdadereligiosa.blogspot.fi/2009/11/povo-de-santo-pede-paz-e-respeito.html>.

tioners in relationship to government actors also served to invoke the figure of the politically nonconfrontational *mãe preta* of the seigneurial chronotope of racial democracy. It was this latter configuration that rendered them especially attractive partners for the federal government's efforts to mitigate urban violence.

Notably, the chronotope of peace activism was ambiguously positioned in relationship to the chronotopes of active citizenship and political visibility. Although the ways in which the peace marches were framed as demands for government protections to the right to peaceful existence fit the figure of the active citizen, the ways in which they cast government actors, especially the police but also government institutions more generally, as the perpetrators of urban violence did not. Such a framing was especially prominent at marches organized by groups that viewed themselves as part of Brazil's black movement. Pointing to the fact that the majority of victims of urban violence in Brazil, both police and drug traffic induced, have been young black men, many of these groups accused the Brazilian state of perpetrating an Afro-Brazilian genocide. Such accusations have struck a sore spot for Brazilian government efforts to reimagine state-citizen relationships, especially in respect to such socially and politically marginalized groups as impoverished Afro-Brazilians, in a framework of active partnership. Perhaps not so surprisingly, the government response to marches organized by such groups has tended to range from ambivalence to violent suppression (cf. Smith 2016).

Candomblé practitioners' peace activism, however, entailed a different relationship to government actors. In contrast to the peace marches organized by other black movement groups, Candomblé practitioners' marches were not positioned against the state. Instead, their primary enemy was Evangelical Christians, a force that many in Brazil consider to be almost as, although of course differently, disruptive to Brazilian society as criminal gangs. What is more, the peace marches organized by Candomblé activists positioned the state as an arbitrator rather than a perpetrator of violence. They addressed it as a guarantor of rights and as a partner in the effort to quell Evangelical violence. Not only did they call on government representatives to recognize and provide support for their struggles with religious intolerance, but also, they emphasized their interest in and commitment to collaborating with them to fight such violence.

It was such an orientation toward engaging the state in efforts to combat violence that rendered Candomblé activists ideal candidates for leading and realizing governmental projects of community-based pacification like Women of Peace. In looking to state actors as partners in their struggles with Evangelical

Christian violence they expanded the social persona of the Afro-Brazilian anti-violence activist to include activists invested in collaborating with rather than combating state institutions. Mãe Jaciara fit the part particularly well. In addition to being a well-known Candomblé activist and *mãe de santo* who resided in one of Salvador's more violent neighborhoods, she had significant professional experience with another government program for youth at risk. Indeed, before becoming involved in Candomblé activism in Salvador, she had coordinated a center for juvenile offenders in the city of Curitiba in collaboration with the *Fundação do Bem-Estar do Menor* 'Foundation for the Well-Being of the Minor', the government office tasked with developing and managing policies and programs for youth at risk.³⁵

Conclusion

In 1994, Micaela di Leonardo argued that identity politics in the United States was predicated on a commensuration of fundamentally noncomparable groups. While groups formed around such identity features as gender, race or ethnicity, and sexual orientation had differing grievances, structural locations, political strategies, and goals, the frame of identity politics positioned them as comparable units. According to di Leonardo, the differences between the groups were veiled by a history of semiotic infiltration and political mimicry across movements. For di Leonardo, such equation of identity categories was politically debilitating. It hindered the ability of groups to gain recognition for their particular political concerns and grievances.

The fact that commensuration requires the downplaying or erasure of difference is of course not a novel observation to linguistic anthropologists. As linguistic anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated, it is not so much the fact that commensuration conflates, equates, downplays, or erases differences that is interesting or politically consequential, but instead it is the semiotics means by which such commensuration happens and the social conditions that drive it that demand analysis (see esp. Briggs and Bauman 1992; Irvine and Gal 2000; Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Queen 2005). Indeed, commensuration does not happen in only one way nor are its political effects unitary.

In this article, I have traced how Candomblé practitioners in Salvador, Brazil came to be aligned with the social figure of the maternal peace activist in such a way that they appeared as ideal candidates for heading the federal government's Women of Peace program. As I have demonstrated, this alignment

35. "Mãe Jaciara vai coordenar o projeto Mulheres da Paz na Bahia," *Koinonia*, June 24, 2010, <http://koinonia.org.br/noticias/mae-jaciara-vai-coordenar-o-projeto-mulheres-da-paz-na-bahia/1196>.

was the product of Candomblé activists' framing of protests against Evangelical Christian intolerance as peace marches. Such a framing effected a reordering and recalibration of a multiplicity of intersecting religious and political chronotopes that pivoted on the multivalent indexicality of the color white, especially white clothing, and the gendered and raced figure of the Candomblé *mãe de santo*.

Although the figure of the religiously motivated black mother of peace that was produced through these chronotopic alignments and realignments was not that of a political revolutionary but instead that of an active citizen invested in collaborating with government actors in the mitigation of urban violence, it was nonetheless a politically transformative one. Indeed, despite its reliance on the figure of the *mãe de santo* as *mãe preta*, the gendered and raced social persona of the Candomblé activist was not that of the *mãe de santo* whose love extended to white elites just as unconditionally as it did to her black religious children nor was it that of the *mãe de santo* whose politics of resistance were predicated on resilience and seclusion. Of course, neither one of these models ever accounted for the breadth of ways in which Candomblé practitioners actually engaged with dominant society. Rather, the figure of the Candomblé peace activist that was produced through Candomblé practitioners' peace marches was one whose politics were inherently public and confrontational, even if ultimately, their target was not so much dominant society as it was a religious group that drew the majority of its followers from the same demographic as Candomblé practitioners: Afro-Brazilians who lived in the nation's impoverished and crime-ridden urban peripheries.

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