

valuable resource for any social scientist preparing to do research. ♦♦

**Blessed Anastácia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil.** John Burdick. New York: Routledge, 1998. 246 pp.

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In this innovative study of the complex relationship between ideologies and social movements, John Burdick exposes and analyzes three types of popular Christianity in relation to their impact on the everyday consciousness of people living in the throes of unequal class, race, gender, and sexual relations. Burdick, a white anthropologist from the United States, has produced an ethnographically and empirically rich portrait of the variety and complexity of forms of racial consciousness in Brazil. This study ultimately leads to a “dialogue” with the black consciousness movement in which he challenges political activists to reconsider their standard position with regard to religious conviction, suggesting they might seek support among previously rejected groups.

Carrying out in-depth interviews with the help of two female Brazilian field assistants, Burdick drew 4/5 of his sample from the vast Zona Norte and Baixada Fluminense—the “periphery” of Rio de Janeiro—a population self-identified as poor or within standards of what they consider to be “reasonable” living conditions. He examined three different forms of popular Christianity: Pentecostalism, popular Catholic devotion to the slave-saint Anastácia, and the “Catholic inculturated Mass.” Burdick evenhandedly presents the political position of a significant number of black activists who are less than enthusiastic about both Pentecostalism and the slave-saint Anastácia. But he also provides rich ethnographic material revealing “complex ways of understanding and coping with the experience of blackness in Brazil” (p. 21), convincing the reader that a broader perspective on the variety of religious persuasions is necessary. In the process, he argues that such religious proclivities cannot simply be dismissed as breeders of false racial consciousness—a boon to anthropologists who still struggle to find meaning and logic in a more emic perspective. Likewise, he is critical of the inculturated Mass—the recently formed Catholic black pastoral response to official Catholic racism. Despite its good intentions, the inculturated Mass tends to Afro-essentialize its practitioners, a characteristic that mirrors some of the political symbolic iconography of the black movement itself.

Racism, according to Burdick, works primarily through the perception of color and its gradations, producing especially negative consequences for dark black-skinned women. Burdick explains the logic whereby women with “bad” (nappy) hair are considered ugly while lighter-skinned women (*mulata*, *morena*, *mestiça*) are considered sexually appealing. His discussion of racial prejudice at a more practical and phenomenological level significantly advances his main argument: while *pardas* (mixed-race) and *pretas* (blacks) may statistically have the same poor chances of social mobility (according to scholars who have analyzed the 1990 census), their divergent experience in the

worlds of love, dating and marriage, sibling relationships, and work must be considered when attempting to understand black consciousness.

Burdick brings a wealth of experience studying the Catholic Church (see his first book, *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena* [University of California Press, 1993]) to his analysis of the inculturated Mass. From the Church's perspective, this Mass represents an attempt to “salvage the history and culture of Afro-Brazilians from oblivion to which racist society seeks to consign them, by imparting knowledge about African culture, especially its dances, rhythms, instruments, dress, and food” (p. 57). Burdick finds, however, that in the space of the inculturated Mass there was little or no consciousness of the problem of sexism among black men. This, he argues, may help to explain the attraction of alternative religious forms, such as Pentecostalism, among the poorest, darkest-skinned women—a suggestion proponents of the inculturated Mass will no doubt find disconcerting.

Pentecostalism, Burdick reminds us, has typically been viewed by the organized black movement as a “religion of ethnic assimilation.” Toward the end of the book, Burdick presents the position of some well-known black activists toward pentecostal adherents (known as *crentes* in Portuguese):

“First of all,” [Isabel] insisted, “these women put everything into the hands of Jesus, and then they wash their hands of everything. They are passive before the problems of the world, they just say ‘Let us pray.’ They are so dogmatic, so puritanical about sexual matters, that they will refuse to sit through a discussion about them. How can you work with that? And what is more, they say you don’t need to fight racism because all you have to do is become a *crente* and the problem is solved. So I have to say, I haven’t had much to do with them.” [p. 188]

Later, this same black activist informant adds, “The truth is that *crentes* will always be dead set against us, against our movement, against our religion and culture. Because they want one thing only: to be white.” Burdick, however, argues that despite Pentecostalism’s rejection of, among other things, the African spirits, it “includes a host of other beliefs and practices that encourage believers to focus attention on their color and to reflect on the spiritual and social meaning of racial identity, as well as on the immorality of racism” (p. 124). Further, through its emphasis on inner rather than on outer beauty, Pentecostalism enables adherents to become their own observing eye regarding the most pernicious form of racism—the internalization of invidious comparisons. For example, Burdick found that “white evangelical women were about two to three times more likely to marry a black man than were white Brazilian women more generally” (p. 134), and that “church precepts appear to have led light-skinned evangelical boys to be more willing than their non-evangelical counterparts to be serious about *pretas*” (p. 135). Putting a new twist on the discourse of self-esteem in the organized black movement, Burdick challenges activists to at least consider an alternative interpretation of Pentecostalism, other than that which simply reduces potential adherents to subjects lacking consciousness. Indeed, as Burdick argues, the fact that more black pentecostal women marry whiter men may be the result of a strengthened sense of black pride rather than some

sort of "false consciousness" propelling them toward whitening.

Burdick argues that one result of Pentecostalism is the creation of a new social identity. Assessing the impact of conversion on women, he found that it "had brought about an intensification of the opprobrium they felt toward racism. Almost all the black female evangelicals we interviewed said that involvement in the church moved them from the simple commonsense feeling that prejudice was wrong, to a much stronger moral stance bolstered by their new evangelical understanding" (p. 144).

Yet another object of skepticism for the organized black movement is the popular Catholic devotion to the slave-saint Anastácia. Activists tend to see her as a distraction from black ethnic identity-building and inimical to the struggle against racism. Burdick, however, seems to understand the slave-saint as a kind of racial projective litmus test: *negras* and *pretas* (both words are used to self-identify as black) saw her as a black woman—not as a *mulata*—and emphasized one particular interpretation of her story, namely that Anastácia refused to sleep with her slave master in order to protect her dignity (not her virginity). This, explains Burdick, is why black devotees were horrified when one of the black activist organizations, IPCN (Instituto de Pesquisas de Culturas Negras), wanted to remove Anastácia's face mask, a symbol of her torture, her heroism, and her towering "no" to the master (p. 11). By contrast, Burdick discovers that for *mulatas*, Anastácia is envisioned as a virgin slave in the midst of a "generally licentious lot of slave women" (p. 166), and, consequently, they emphasized the reading that the master had become enamored of her.

Anastácia, Burdick claims, is not favored in the black movement because her devotees concentrate on individual health and miraculous healing, a focus perceived by activists as reinforcing fatalism vis-à-vis racism, accepting an ideology of whitening and promoting facile racial conciliation. Burdick concedes some validity to many of these criticisms, but also responds to the black movement with ethnographic evidence depicting devotion to Anastácia as multifaceted, possibly even inspiring certain forms of black racial consciousness. He also argues that black activists must take existing gender issues more seriously rather than postponing their consideration to some imagined postrevolutionary period in black consciousness.

Burdick's book is ultimately successful in positing a dialogue within the organized black movement, and activists may now choose whether to address or ignore his findings (which he made available to them in Portuguese). His book demonstrates that ethnography can flesh out in elegant and detailed fashion competing perspectives within a popular constituency and portray them more sympathetically than their simple reduction to "alienated" subjects from other vantage points. He also demonstrates that research undertaken by anthropologists can be useful in gathering, and rendering intelligible, a wide range of political views. Finally, he reassesses the scope and impact of social movements in an interesting way: "although a particular group activity may be understood from an academic perspective as a social movement, it is, more often than not, perceived by local people as but one of a number of concurrent, and by their lights, more or less coequal, activities occurring in the neighborhood" (p. 199).

This innovative book, written in very accessible language, is a must-read for anyone interested in using ethnography as a tool

to reveal and analyze controversy and debate among protagonists in contemporary political and social movements. ♦♦

**The Legacy of Shingwaukose: A Century of Native Leadership.** Janet E. Chute. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1998. 359 pp.

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Janet Chute has written a detailed study of leadership among the Garden River and Batchewana bands of Ojibwa near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Among other things, this study documents the rise to leadership of Shingwaukose or Little Pine (1773–1854) and his successors into the early 1900s.

Chute's central thesis states that Little Pine's career among the northeastern Ojibwa offers a contrast to the prevailing view that "self-interested action came to characterize leadership among south-western Ojibwa bands by the mid-nineteenth century, [but] this position is appropriate mainly to western groups defiantly resisting U.S. Indian policy" (p. 5). She claims that the Ojibwa chiefs in the northeastern Upper Great Lakes region in Canada had come to regard U.S. policy as hostile and authoritarian, and had thus "actively sought creative policies which might enable bands to preserve the reciprocity of interest and intention that traditionally characterized relations between leader and group" (p. 5). In addition, Chute builds on the findings of Mary Black-Rogers and A. I. Hallowell that emphasize "that Ojibwa views of power and power relationships differ substantially from modern western conceptions of competitive self-interest" (p. 6). Chute goes on to say that an interview with a grandson of Shingwaukose, Dan Pine, in 1982, made her realize how wary and reticent Ojibwa could be in order to keep "ties of special significance . . . from outsiders" so that "the true nature of the tie is never made known to outsiders" (p. 6). Later, Chute, following Black-Rogers, elaborates the concept of personal spiritual power, which she suggests led to autonomy and self-sufficiency among men like Shingwaukose (p. 17).

However, if Chute's intent is to show that such leadership traits were not important among southwestern, U.S. Ojibwa, who perhaps due to U.S. policies were motivated more by what she calls "self-interested action" (p. 5), which—if I understand it correctly—excluded the ability to place oneself at the service of others in the band in a reciprocal fashion, Chute fails to include reasons for the absence of this kind of traditional Ojibwa leadership pattern among southwestern Ojibwa bands. The reader is left wondering if harsher U.S. policies were to blame for its absence, or weaker, less resistant personalities, or both. Examples of differences in patterns of leadership between Ojibwa in the United States and those in Canada would have been helpful. Perhaps these differences could be investigated in a future study.

Certainly there is evidence that Shingwaukose was concerned about the U.S. Removal Policy in the 1840s and early 1850s (p. 7). Chute stresses that Shingwaukose's goal was maintenance of sufficient good, rather than constant adaptation to limited good within the emerging nation-state that was Canada in the nineteenth century (p. 19). Apparently this strategy