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From August 1951 to February 1952, Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre visited Portugal and its colonies at the invitation of the Portuguese government. Freyre's imperial tour included stops in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Portuguese India, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique. While in Panaji, Freyre gave a lecture at the Institute Vasco da Gama, the main cultural institution in Goa, in which he coined the term Luso-tropicalism.¹ However, Freyre's thesis on the Portuguese-speaking world as a distinct civilisational unit based upon racial miscegenation, social assimilation, and cultural integration had begun to take shape two decades earlier. His magnum opus, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, was published in 1933.² The book offered an interpretation of the historical structures that shaped Brazil from its transition from a plantation economy based on slavery in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries into an alleged racial democracy. According to Freyre, Brazilian cultural hybridisation and racial miscegenation ensued from the Portuguese colonisation, which was different and more benevolent than the Spanish and Anglo-Saxon colonial experiences. From his perspective, the distinctive character of the Portuguese resulted from the fact that they were themselves a cultural and biological hybrid, shaped by a longstanding relationship with other peoples in the Iberian Peninsula. *Casa-Grande & Senzala* joined an ongoing debate about Brazilian national identity, introducing a socio-cultural approach to race and greatly influencing the first generation of sociologists in Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s.³

¹Delivered on 24 November 1951, the conference was later published as "Uma cultura moderna: a luso-tropical" [A modern culture: the luso-tropical] in Gilberto Freyre, *Um brasileiro em terras portuguesas: introdução a uma possível luso-tropologia, acompanhada de conferências e discursos proferidos em Portugal e em terras lusitanas e ex-lusitanas da Ásia, da África e do Atlântico* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olímpio, 1953). On Freyre's tour of Portugal and Portuguese colonies, see Cláudia Castelo, "No encaço de Gilberto Freyre pelo último império português (1951-1952)," in *Não nos deixemos petrificar: reflexões no centenário do nascimento de Victor de Sá*, ed. Amélia Polónia et al. (Porto: CITCEM-FLUP, 2021), 25-48.

²Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e senzala* (Rio de Janeiro: Maia & Schmidt, 1933). First published in English as *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

³Elide Rugai Bastos, "Gilberto Freyre: a sociologia como sistema," *Ciência & Trópico* 15:2 (July/December 1987): 157-164; Ria Lemaire, "Rereading Gilberto Freyre. Brazilian Identity, Brazilian Alterity and Their Images", in *Alterity, Identity, Image: Selves and Others in Society and Scholarship*, ed. Raymond Corbey and Joseph Theodoor Leerssen (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1991), 139-150; Simone Meucci, "Gilberto Freyre e a Sociologia No Brasil: Da Sistematização à Constituição Do Campo Científico" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation in Sociology, Campinas, SP, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2006); Maria Lúcia G. Pallares-Burke, "Gilberto Freyre and Brazilian Self-Perception", in *Racism and Ethnic Relations in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Adrian Pearce (Oxford: British Academy, 2012).

In Portugal, Freyre's ideas were initially received with some concern: the Portuguese aptitude for racial miscegenation clashed with eugenic anxieties about racial purity that pervaded most of the political and intellectual debates about the empire. However, as the new international climate after the Second World War became favourable to decolonisation, Gilbert Freyre's ideas and his international prestige came in handy to a political regime that aimed to convince the world that Portugal's colonial experience had led to social assimilation and the peaceful coexistence of culturally and racially diverse populations across the empire.⁴ Turning miscegenation into something positive and presenting aspects of African heritage as a valuable contribution for the formation of Brazil, *Casa-Grande & Senzala* was at first highly appreciated in Portuguese Africa. However, by accepting the invitation of the Portuguese government and generalising his ideas about Brazilian race relations to the entire Portuguese colonies during the 1951-1952 tour, Gilberto Freyre disappointed many of the African intellectuals who had favourably received his work – his ideas had become an instrument for colonialist oppression.⁵

To this day, the reception and enduring legacy of Gilberto Freyre's Luso-tropicalism in the Portuguese-speaking world remains a hot topic for discussion in public and intellectual debates alike. For the past thirty years, it has attracted a great deal of academic interest in both Brazil and Portugal.⁶ While engaging with this literature, Ian Merkel moves beyond the Portuguese-speaking countries. In "Brazilian Race Relations, French Social Scientists, and African Decolonization: A Transatlantic History of the Idea of Miscegenation," Merkel does a great service by showing how Gilberto Freyre's ideas about Brazilian race relations, miscegenation, and racial democracy also had an impact outside the world that had been colonised by the Portuguese. Like Cibele Barbosa (but making use of a larger and more diverse corpus of primary sources),⁷ Merkel explores the reception of Freyre's ideas in France, shedding light on the Brazilian sociologist's personal ties with his prominent French colleagues, such as Fernand Braudel, Lucien Febvre, Georges Gurvitch, and Roger Bastide.

Fernand Braudel had first contacted with Gilberto Freyre's work while teaching history at the newly founded University of São Paulo between 1935 and 1938 as part of the French university missions funded through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Braudel favourably reviewed *Casa-Grande & Senzala* while in a prison camp in Germany during the Second World War and sought Freyre's participation in *Annales* School after the war (807). In his view, Freyre's innovative and colourful work was an important introduction to Brazil, a country whose original experiences and values mattered for all the humanity (802).

Lucien Febvre, who at the time was editor of *Annales: Histoire, sciences sociales*, also played a key role in the dissemination of Gilberto Freyre's work in France. Febvre not only encourage the French translation of *Casa-Grande & Senzala* in 1952, but he also wrote the preface, in which he praised Freyre's methodology of doing social history and his approach to racial mixing

⁴ Cláudia Castelo, "O Modo Português de Estar No Mundo" *O Luso-Tropicalismo e a Ideologia Colonial Portuguesa (1933-1961)* (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 1998); Yves Léonard, "Salazarisme et Lusotropicalisme," *Lusotopie* 1997 (1997): 211-226.

⁵ João Medina, "Gilberto Freyre contestado: o lusotropicalismo criticado nas colónias portuguesas como álibi colonial do salazarismo," *Revista USP*, 45 (May 2000): 48-61, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9036.v0i45p48-61>; Victor Barros, "Lusotropicalismo e Caboverdianidade: O Discurso de Gilberto Freyre e o Contradiscurso de Baltasar Lopes," in ed. Joel Andrade et al., *Daqui e d'além Mar*, vol. 1 (Campina Grande: Editora da Universidade Federal de Campina Grande, 2009), 85-118; Michel Cahen, "A mestiçagem Colonialista Ou a Colonialidade de Gilberto Freyre Na Colonialidade Do Brasil," *Portuguese Studies Review* XXVI:1 (Summer 2018): 302-304.

⁶ It is not possible to cover here the voluminous body of literature on Luso-tropicalism. Among the recent publications, see, for instance, the special issue of *Portuguese Studies Review*: Michel Cahen and Patrícia Ferraz de Matos (eds), "New Perspectives on Luso-tropicalism/ Novas Perspetivas sobre o Luso-tropicalismo", *Portuguese studies review*, XXVI:1 (Summer 2018). See also Warwick Anderson, Ricardo Roque, and Ricardo Ventura Santos (eds), *Luso-Tropicalism and Its Discontents: The Making and Unmaking of Racial Exceptionalism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019).

⁷ Cibele Barbosa, "Casa-Grande e Senzala. A questão racial e o 'colonialismo esclarecido' na França do Pós-Segunda Guerra Mundial," *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* 33:96 (2018): 1-16, DOI: <https://doi.10.17666/339609/2018>.

(809). According to Merkel, Febvre did not seem to be entirely convinced by Freyre's historical treatment of the Portuguese coloniser as inherently benign; instead, he was rather attracted by the promise of racial mixing in the future (811). His reservations and criticisms in the preface had been tempered, largely to the intervention of Braudel and Georges Gurvitch (810).

Gurvitch and Freyre had met at UNESCO, in Paris, in 1948. The exchange of correspondence in the following years was fruitful: Gurvitch was invited for a stay at University of Pernambuco and the Casa Rui Barbosa in Rio de Janeiro in the fall of 1952 (812-813); back in France, he served as Freyre's intermediary with Gallimard's editor Roger Caillois for the publication of *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (812) and invited Freyre for the École pratique des hautes études and, in 1956, a several-day workshop at the Château de Cerisy-la-Salle in Normandy (826).

Roger Bastide, who had moved to Brazil in 1938 in order to succeed Claude Lévi-Strauss at the Chair of Sociology of the University of São Paulo, was the translator of *Casa-Grande & Senzala* into French. Even though Bastide did not always agree with Freyre's conclusions, he maintained a rather harmonious view of Brazilian race relations. Merkel shows how Bastide was left in an ambiguous position as one of the coordinators of the project to investigate race relations in Brazil promoted and funded by UNESCO (1951-1952): on the one hand, he was a long sympathiser with Freyre's work, in particular the idea of Brazil as a *mestizo* country in which the European and African civilisations meet;⁸ on the other hand, the findings of the working group on São Paulo area, which he led together with Florestan Fernandes, questioned Brazil's self-representation as a racial democracy (825). Fernandes, a former Bastide's student, decried Freyre's idyllic world shared by masters and slaves as a fabrication: the long-lasting economic and social effects of slavery limited the progress of the Black working classes in the free labour system and pushed them to the most humble and worst-paid jobs even after abolition; the social division of labour remained the same, reifying racial divisions and showing that race-mixing had not put an end to two separate cultural and social worlds (820-821). Even if Bastide agreed with Fernandes's analysis of the cases under study, he insisted on limiting the generalisations of their results and devalued racial discrimination as individual – “attitudes vary from one individual to another, creating a spectrum that goes from the maximum of prejudice to its total absence” (quoted on 822-3).

Gilberto Freyre had been invited to write an historical introduction to the UNESCO studies on race relations in Brazil, but not to take part in the sociological investigation of any of the various regional surveys. As Merkel stressed, it was clear that the Brazilian sociologist was already losing influence not only in Brazil, but also internationally (825-826). For Merkel, Freyre's having been relegated to a historical introduction while younger scholars, including several non-Brazilians, would take his place as the sociologists of the next generation, may have been humiliating (817). It can also explain why Gilberto Freyre accepted the Portuguese government's invitation to tour the Portuguese empire in 1951: becoming associated with a colonialist regime while decolonisation was gaining momentum may not seem to have been well reasoned; but this voyage – complemented with a copious bibliography acquired at the expense of the Portuguese state – provided Freyre with a unique opportunity to develop his theory on Luso-tropical civilisation, as well as to reassert his place as an international intellectual and a ‘race relations’ expert in a changing world. The idea that wounded pride and vanity were important drivers of Freyre's intellectual journey has long been discussed.⁹

But why did the French intellectuals continue to value Freyre's work even after it began to be challenged in Brazil, in the US, and at UNESCO? And what in the first place attracted them to his work in the post-war period? These are the central questions of Merkel's article. In the early 1950s, the French status quo in Algeria was endangered and tensions were

⁸On the affinities between the two sociologists, it is worth reading Gilberto Freyre's eulogy to Roger Bastide, whom he called “a Brazilian Frenchman”: Gilberto Freyre, “Roger Bastide, francês brasileiro” in *Afro-Ásia*, 12 (1976), 53-59, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9771/aa.v0i12.20772> See also Fernanda Arêas Peixoto, *Freyre e Bastide: os dois lados da luneta* (São Paulo, Fundação Memorial da América Latina, 2000).

⁹See Luiz Antônio de Castro Santos, “O espírito da aldeia: orgulho ferido e vaidade na trajetória intelectual de Gilberto Freyre” in *Novos Estudos CEBRAP*, 27 (Jul 1990), 45-66.

escalating rapidly in a colonial world increasingly divided into coloniser and colonised. Europe's political, economic, and cultural centrality had been radically brought into question after the Second World War. As Merkel puts it:

“The strategies for French intellectuals to cope with these changes, of course, varied enormously. Some allied themselves with Third World revolutionaries. Others embraced anthropology as a means of renewed intercultural dialogue. Many attempted to humanize colonialism and co-opt colonial populations, all while insisting on the intrinsically progressive value of European civilization — and, perhaps above all, of its economy. Freyre became a favorite of those in France who preferred the latter” (831).

As Merkel clearly and convincingly argues, what Gilberto Freyre's work had to offer to French intellectuals was the idea that there was an alternative: they looked up at Brazil's alleged racial democracy as a model for replication in the rest of the world, a model more compatible with French republican ideals and with a type of 'Latin civilisation' that could be used as a counterweight to the United States and the Soviet Union. While Merkel notes that “new combinations of assimilation and association were quite appealing” for those who sought to preserve European empires in the postwar period (803), one wonders in which way – if any – Freyre's work converged with the discourse of “*la colonisation altruiste*” or colonial humanism that emerged in postwar France.¹⁰ Merkel's clever and well-researched article would have benefited from more on the continuities and discontinuities of different visions of empire that surrounded the French social scientists who so positively received Freyre's work. Nevertheless, his article remains a must-read for scholars seeking to understand how French social sciences were influenced by Brazilian intellectual thought, as well as for those who are interested in Luso-tropicalism and its afterlives.

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¹⁰Emmanuelle Sibeud, “La gauche et l'empire colonial avant 1945”, in Jean-Jacques Becker, ed., *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 2 (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), 341-356; Tony Chafer, “Friend or Foe?: Competing Visions of Empire in French West Africa in the Run-up to Independence”, in Martin Thomas, ed., *The French Colonial Mind: Mental Maps of Empire and Colonial Encounters*, vol. 1 (Lincol: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 275–97; Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2020).