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*Sacred Art: Catholic Saints and Candomblé Gods in Modern
Brazil* by Henry Glassie, Pravina Shukla (review)

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her focus from scholarly writing to visual art. Her contacts with the Sámi, her experiences in Sápmi, and even her ethnographic notes took another form. It was her interest in Sápmi, its environment and people, that became central to her art. Instead of scholarly publications, Demant focused on “capturing and reinterpreting Sápmi in artistic form” (p. 284). She participated in various exhibitions, including a national retrospective of Danish women artists, events in Charlottenborg, the gallery of the Royal Danish Academy of Art, and other venues, although she never received recognition as a visual artist.

The final section of the book also accounts for the work of Demant after her fieldwork and collaborations in Sápmi. Her travels continued to be sources of inspiration in her art, for instance when she joined her husband on expeditions to New York, the US Virgin Islands, the Antilles, and Greenland.

Sjoholm’s writing is rich and detailed. She describes Demant’s experiences and encounters with people and places and how these influenced her to become an ethnographer, scholar, and artist. Sjoholm’s book also provides insights into aspects of Sámi culture at the beginning of the twentieth century, and her descriptions give the reader valuable knowledge about the historical, ideological, and political contexts of the time.

Black Fox is, without a doubt, the result of a tremendous amount of research. Sjoholm reconstructs the life of a bold, curious, and colorful ethnographer and artist through an impressive number of sources, including various archives, sketchbooks, correspondences, ethnographic journals, and other historical documents. The richness and exhaustive detail of the work may even overwhelm the reader.

The volume will appeal to both students and professionals, who will find Sjoholm’s work a useful contribution to scholarship on early Sámi ethnography. It is especially valuable to non-Scandinavian audiences, since few works about Sámi culture have been translated into English, and most source materials exist in Scandinavian languages or Sámi. With *Black Fox*, Sjoholm has succeeded in positioning an undiscovered ethnographer and her publications in an international context, characterized by changing ide-

ologies toward minorities, the development of anthropology, and gender barriers within academia, making the book significant beyond an exclusively Sámi or Scandinavian framework.

Sacred Art: Catholic Saints and Candomblé Gods in Modern Brazil. By Henry Glassie and Pravina Shukla. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018. Pp. 1 + 540, table of contents, introduction, dedication, color photographs, illustrations, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, and index.)

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Henry Glassie and Pravina Shukla’s book is the highly descriptive and richly photographed culmination of a decade of ethnographic research conducted between 2007–2016 in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco in northeastern Brazil. The authors’ principal emphasis is on the artists and master craftspeople, whose creation of religious art represents the spiritual character and religious identity of northeastern Brazil. The book examines the practices and sacred aesthetics of European Catholicism and West African religious traditions brought during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slave trade. Candomblé art and belief demonstrate a fusing of Catholic saints with the deities of West and Central Africa (Fon, Bantu, and Yoruba), resulting in a syncretic belief system similar to Santería in the Caribbean and Vodú in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and parts of the Southern United States.

Having worked in Bangladesh, Turkey, India, Ireland, and various other countries, the authors bring their substantial knowledge concerning traditional craft and regional art to Brazilian religious art. The decision to highlight this sacred form of craftsmanship came about after Glassie and Shukla realized that they had collected an immense amount of information on both the sacred and secular art of northeastern Brazil; consequently, they had to “split” the results, leaving the non-sacred (quotidian) art for later publications. Glassie and Shukla’s work privileges their participants’ words. They offer

descriptive observations and commentary, but only enough to complement the narrative. The interviews were recorded in Portuguese and translated by Shukla, who speaks the language fluently. The chapters are divided (loosely) into two sections. First, the reader is introduced to the Santeros, those who create, in various mediums, the Catholic art of saints and the Holy Family. The second half of the book looks closely at the art of Candomblé and the artists who portray the Orixás (Candomblé deities) in their craft. Many of the artists work comfortably within each faith, recognizing that both belief systems are indicative of a resilient and complex part of their cultural heritage.

In chapter 1, Glassie and Shukla take the reader through the streets of Salvador da Bahia on the Holy Feast Day of St. Francisco. From the ornate Portuguese-inspired Church of St. Francis to the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary—originally constructed for a Catholic lay order of African descent—the reader is introduced to the religious ritual and pageantry indicative of the Indigenous Catholicism. The authors note that here, half the saints, as well as the Stations of the Cross, are of Black heritage. The flavor of the feast day at the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary—where drumming and dancing display Afro-Brazilian influences on the religious practices and artwork of European Catholicism—has a distinct Candomblé flavor indicative of the devotees' cultural heritage. This descriptive account paves the way for subsequent chapters by detailing the similarities and differences between two religious traditions: one distinctly European and the other African.

In chapter 2, Glassie and Shukla introduce the reader to Edival and Izaura Rosas at their home and workshop outside of Salvador. Having taught himself the craft of woodworking, master carver and teacher Edival brings to life the sacred beauty of the Catholic saints through his intuitive knowledge of where “accuracy is tempered with idealism to capture otherworldly beauty” (p. 47). Izaura, in turn, paints the creations in vivid detail—something she initiated early on to help Edival concentrate more on his woodworking. In her work, Izaura treats each carving as she would a child, relishing the beauty that she brings to each statue. Over time, she has become a master at her art in her own

right, complementing Edival's work with her eye for color and detail. Edival and Izaura's polychrome wooden statues have become their bread and butter. Edival receives commissions from various churches for their altars—many of which have found their way around the world, into the hands of art collectors and devotees. The admiration that the authors feel toward Edival and Izaura and their craftsmanship comes through in the detailed portrayal of their work. As with the other artisans they introduce, the authors allow Edival's and Izaura's words to fill the pages as they highlight the artists' broad knowledge and mastery of their subject.

The authors mention early on that they are looking to the recent past to find the forerunners of the carvings that they see in today's market. There are few examples left, but what they do find in the antique shops and secondhand stores display the same European flourishes, such as baroque and neoclassical, that are evident in the work of carvers today. With this in mind, the authors press on to interview other craftspeople and artists who build on conservative elements with their own dynamic and creative individuality. In subsequent chapters, we meet various artisans such as Rosalvo Santana, who uses the medium of clay to produce elaborate religious statues of the Madonna, saints, and angels, both large and small, which he sells to the religious and non-religious alike. He notes that people buy his art not because they are religious, but “because it is art” (p. 179).

In chapter 8, “Painting in Olinda,” we meet Flávio da Silva, a painter of saints and a devout Catholic. Here, we begin our travels into the world of Candomblé art. Flávio is a painter of Catholic devotional figures that work similarly to the *ex-votos* in the Mediterranean world; they are commissioned in thanks for prayers answered. As part of his creative practice, Flávio also paints colorful murals—both indoors and out. The authors are taken by Flávio to a Candomblé *terreiro*, a place of worship where he has been commissioned to paint 15 *orixás* (deities, also referred to as *santos*) on the walls. Here, there is a melding of saints and gods into single forms. Some are recognizable as Catholic saints, such as St. George who represents the orixá Oxóssi; others are Afro-Brazilian religious figures that stand as Candomblé *santos*, such as Yemanjá, goddess of the sea. Much like the Holy

Family, the orixás are interrelated and familial, one of several attributes that made it translatable into Catholic theology. Flávio brings to bear his artistic creativity and sensitivity to the wall murals just as he would to his Catholic art; he sees both through the eyes of devotion.

In the following chapters, the authors interview artists whose work is distinctly Afro-Brazilian Candomblé. The social stigma of the past on peripheral beliefs has changed in Brazil. Notably, one artist states that “[today] Candomblé is well respected. . . . There is no more prejudice” (p. 292). Many of Glassie and Shukla’s participants identify deeply with their African roots but translate them into the context of Brazilian cultural awareness and aesthetics. Their art displays multi-layered meanings, revealing the complexity of the socioreligious blending of several ethnic groups. One of the popular painters of the orixás, Francisco Santos, whom the authors interviewed over 3 years, is proud of his *cultura Afro-descendente*, or African culture and descent. He says, “The figures of the orixás have a certain beauty, an immeasurable beauty” (p. 432), all of which is displayed through the vitality and rich colors of his sacred paintings.

As we near the end of chapter 14, Glassie and Shukla deliberate on Brazilian sacred art through the visual and conceptual integration of the sacred. What was once thought of as naive by Western scholars of art, the authors reason, is now in line with the world masters of modern conceptual art. Worrying less about realistic depictions, the creators of religious objects in Bahia and Pernambuco work from the premise of bringing forth the “vital essence” in their creations. As Edival indicates, “you have to learn how to feel it” (p. 48). It becomes as much about intuitive knowing as it is about craftsmanship. Through the beauty of form and representation, the believer is able to meet the deities face-to-face and to see and be seen by the spiritual controlling forces in their lives. The authors maintain that all—both Candomblé and Catholic artists—work at “the spiritual center of world art” (p. 457). This center is alive and well in northeastern Brazil, where creativity materializes the sacred.

Overall, this is an insightful and in-depth ethnography on the sacred creativity of Brazilian art. The text and striking photography com-

plement each other. The authors’ sensitivity for their subjects (and subject) comes through with thoughtful observation and commentary. The appreciation that they ascribe to their collaborators is evident through their attentiveness to each individual’s unique relationship with his or her sacred art and the intimate connection these individuals have to their heritage and lived beliefs.

It is a lengthy book, but it is the kind of work that invites the reader to page through, looking at the photographs and stopping to read the affiliated chapters. It asks you to take your time, with the realization that you will be going on a journey with the authors through a rich, multifaceted world of sacred meaning. There are only a few things that would have enhanced the work. First, I would have appreciated a short, generalized chapter at the beginning of the book, on Catholicism and Candomblé in Brazil from a sociocultural perspective, in order to provide a contextual base for the rest of the work. Also, a glossary would have helped the reader to navigate through the many names and Portuguese and Candomblé terms.

This book will appeal to readers interested in ethnography and the material culture of religion, including folklorists, art historians, religious scholars, and material culture specialists. As a folklorist, I would recommend this book for use in courses that focus on material culture, vernacular religion, and religious folk art. Finally, this book is a must for those interested in sacred materiality, vernacular art, and the creative and imaginative blending of two diverse but congruent belief systems.

Abidjan USA: Music, Dance, and Mobility in the Lives of Four Ivorian Immigrants. By Daniel B. Reed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 309, preface, acknowledgments, notes on language, glossary, notes, bibliography, index.)

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Abidjan USA: Music, Dance, and Mobility in the Lives of Four Ivorian Immigrants by Daniel Reed recounts the life stories of Vado Diomande, Samba Diallo, Sogbety Diomande, and Dr. Djo