

# WOMEN IN THE FIELD

---

## ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES

Second Edition, Expanded and Updated

EDITED BY  
Peggy Golde

CONTRIBUTORS: Jean Briggs  
Laura Thompson  
Peggy Golde  
Laura Nader  
Ruth Landes  
Helen Codere  
Niara Sudarkasa  
Ernestine Friedl  
Cora Du Bois  
Hazel Hitson Weidman  
Ann Fischer  
Margaret Mead  
Diane C. Freedman  
Rena Lederman

# WOMEN IN THE FIELD

ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
EXPERIENCES

Second Edition, Expanded and Updated

EDITED BY  
Peggy Golde

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
Berkeley • Los Angeles • London

In the United States, the 1930's was the epoch of "The New Negro," also the "Negro Renaissance," when black men's genius was acclaimed in the arts, sciences, and humanistic disciplines. A truly Renaissance man among them was Paul Robeson, singing and acting like a god not far from my New York undergraduate college. Another was Alain Locke, already then appointed professor of philosophy at New York's prestigious City College. W. E. B. DuBois, the great historian; James Weldon Johnson, the diplomat and poet; Walter White, brilliant writer and politician, all held the scene, the first two as retired heads of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the last as the incumbent head. There were many others, including the anthropological woman novelist, Zora Neale Hurston. I had met them all, originally through my family, and they directed my interests for life. The West Indian leader, Marcus Garvey, had just been jailed in Jamaica on British and American charges that concealed fears of his tremendous revolutionary impact on New World lower-class blacks; but his program lingered in New York's Harlem and elsewhere. The deep South's peasant blacks were streaming into northern cities, continuing a trend begun in the first World War, creating terrible ghettos, and substantially displacing the Jews in Harlem. They brought with them the folk cults then enshrined in so-called storefront churches. While at college, before ever thinking about anthropology (but studying psychology, sociology, biology, and history), I began a four-year field study of Negro Jews in Harlem (Landes, 1967b), composed of Garveyites and Southern migrants in "storefronts." The NAACP pursued civil rights issues, the Urban League pursued employment issues, but both voiced mistrust of Garveyites and "storefronts." This was the decade of the Great Depression; it saw the establishment of Nazi power and racism. I was in the avant-garde, with my parents' encouragement, of those who had social relations with Negro peers.

The study of Negro Jews led me to Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, teaching anthropology at Columbia University, and so to the discipline that

has occupied me since. It could have been any other discipline, so far as my predilections went—from medicine to the arts. But Boas and Benedict, by their persons and intellectual commitments, decided me. Every other profession or gainful learned activity restricted women with a severity that, in our circle, we likened to the prevailing restrictions on blacks. These two scholars appeared to distinguish, not the sexes, but only ability. It was their overriding concern. Never before had I met it in a working situation, nor had I cared about being a Ph.D. bluestocking. But Ruth Benedict was beautiful and married. After a year of pondering their invitation to enter graduate anthropology and reflecting on the confines of my early marriage, I decided that their pursuit would be mine.

Because of my established interest in Negro-White relationships, they offered me, for my first field work, the choice of studying Negro life anywhere or examining the life of an American-Indian tribe. Though I hated the idea of a reservation, I chose the latter for the gross cultural variations I would meet. This decision resulted in trips to several reservations and the lapse of some years. Then we thought it was time for me to go to Brazil because we had heard—through the great sociologist Robert E. Park and others—that Brazil's large Negro population lived decently among the general population; and we wanted to examine the details.

I knew no Brazilian person and no Portuguese speech, and it was nearly impossible to encounter either in New York. However, I had studied intensively the literature about American Negroes, from the learned disciplines and the arts; I had read widely among the anthropological (including British colonial officers') studies of African cultures, even submitting these as an area for questioning by my doctoral examiners; and I read the new Brazilian materials generously made available to me by Professor Park and his student, Donald Pierson. More, at the joint invitation of Park and his great disciple in sociology, Charles S. Johnson of Fisk University, I went for a year to Fisk, in Tennessee, to teach and learn from this Negro campus something at first hand of American "racial etiquette," in Bertram W. Doyle's classic phrase. Only then did I embark on the 4,000-mile Atlantic journey.

I knew that Brazil in 1938 was governed by a severe dictatorship; that American pressure had barely forced Brazil's army to give up its Nazi-style ideology, called *integralismo*; that the so-called Axis powers, led by Germany, were prominent in Brazilian commerce; and that this was a land in the full plenitude of patriarchal authority. I was scared, with ample reason; but that was no reason not to go. I had been scared on my Indian field trips, also with reason—a girl anthropologist in the field had been killed by an Indian the year before I entered anthropology; a man anthropologist had been killed in the Pacific some years earlier, while doing field research. The

pressure to go, despite such facts, was my own; and my father always said, "Come back whenever you want."

During that period Boas and Benedict also sent four men students to Brazil to study Indian groups in the great forests—Jules Henry, William Lipkind, Buell Quain, and Charles Wagley. My study of Negro life was to carry me, however, to the coast's capital cities of Rio de Janeiro and Bahia. On our first journeys, each of us worked alone, except for Mr. and Mrs. Lipkind. This solitariness rested chiefly on the factors of few students, limited funds, and resourceful temperaments.

The anthropologist's strong bent for field work begins, I suggest, before the individual ever dreams of the profession. I felt so when, despite police cautions, I entered Negro Harlem at the age of twenty. Field work serves an idiosyncrasy of perception that cannot separate the sensuousness of life from its abstractions, nor the researcher's personality from his experiences. The culture a field worker reports is the one he experiences, filtered through trained observations. Noted writers say that their craft cannot be taught, though it can be perfected. In the same sense, field work probably can only be perfected. The great founders of the discipline of anthropology were not taught specific field-work techniques; nor was our group of students at Columbia, who studied theory and research findings with Kroeber, Boas, Klineberg, Mead, and Benedict. Instead, we were taught to conjecture, to experiment, to use every tool we commanded, to venture. The last impressed me powerfully. I knew the great Arctic explorer, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and pondered his injunction always to "live off the land," materially and in every other way. For a social anthropologist, this injunction meant entering deeply into the field culture, joining it twenty-four hours a day, each day, all the months or years of research. This could only be done superficially on an Indian woodlands or plains reservation, since the United States and Canada disapprove of "going native" in these Agency-supervised, harshly separated communities. It could be done in Brazil, for the newcomer (or visiting anthropologist) *must* conform to the rules of the host society.

No one told me, a young woman of conventional upbringing and advanced New York ideas, about the life sphere of my kind in a preindustrialized, postcolonial, natural resources economy, where the latifundium and the Catholic Church dominated, as they still do. Partly this was because no one of us had been there. Partly, there was this thing about overlooking sex differences, to prove a woman was a person, "as good as a man." Actually, my field work among American Indians, like my later field work in Brazil, made poor sense without explicit attention to women (hence the second book I wrote about Indians was entitled *The Ojibwa Woman*). I guessed, from materials Park and Pierson showed me at Fisk,

that black women would figure importantly in Brazil, as they did in the West African Yoruba and Ibo regions, from where they mainly derived. But about white or upper-class women of the genteel rank, among whom I would belong in such a severely stratified society as Brazil's, not a word. My Ph.D. had unsexed me. The only contrary indication was my young husband's ultimatum about the marriage, because he raged at me for preferring scholarship to domesticity, for preferring its lonely exposed world and hazards to my private wifely place in our family undertaking.

In the end, I dreaded *not* going more than I feared to *go*. Perhaps this is a test of the field worker, that he feels restive when settled long or exclusively in familiar, especially his own, native routines. There is no question of not loving the familiar. (Someone asked Ruth Benedict how she felt about her own America after examining "culture patterns" of the world. She said, "I just love it the more.") But such a scholar must dip into earth's paintbox of cultures; he needs the changes they light up and ring on the familiar, the insights they release, the sharp awareness they bring him of his own self. The field worker finds this pursuit basic to his life, so emotionally dear that the field culture studied becomes "my culture." The poet Robert Graves was amused, he tells us, to hear two British women anthropologists, one his niece, talk of "my" African tribe. Thus do all field workers talk, for we have birthed the novel culture we experience and often show in print.

From our Columbia teachers we heard the view that field work was our discipline's rendering of the natural sciences' laboratory methods, for these were still the model of "objective" discoveries. But no scientist ever spent twenty-four hours daily in the laboratory for months on end, to become one with its complex whole, solely to understand the phenomena of interest. Field workers live this way, and there are no short cuts. One learns a culture by living it; the next best resort is to live *in* it.

It seems evident to me that the methods of an effective field worker are rooted in his personality, expressing some genetic potential evoked and shaped by the cultures he has lived in. Margaret Mead admired the "empathy" of certain field workers with the cultures they studied, as she told me. Obviously the field worker brings to his novel culture field a special, perhaps aberrant, personality; his mother culture's alien forces; his colossal ignorance of the new people; but a mighty, even zestful intention to yield himself to the field and ponder his and others' responses.

Boas used to say that a great liability of education is its injunctions about what to fear and avoid. He therefore told his students chiefly to *go out and get the material*. I recall that he would not waste time with a new student until after he had been in the field. Experience taught us, who were his disciples, that in the field anything worked, even large mistakes, short of being killed. Mistakes were, conceptually, evidences of cultures or culture

bearers in conflict and, in that perspective, were instructive. This stoicism was shared by Park, also a great field worker. At Fisk University he explained to me the genius of certain Negroes in handling the offenses of American life, starting with his youthful observations as Booker T. Washington's secretary; and he advised me to emulate them—specifically, to note everything as "research data," never merely as personal shocks.

Field workers situated alone often feel private panic at being stranded in the oceanic vastness of a foreign people. One's concept of self disintegrates because the accustomed responses have disappeared; one seeks restoration through letters from home, addressed to the remembered personality. There are loneliness, uprooting, fears, true and marked physical hardships, diseases, lack of diversions to relieve tensions—all of these nurture melancholies and spiritual fatigue. I have known at least one person who toyed with the idea of suicide and another who actually committed it. Lucky breaks, the habit of living, and bull-headed obstinacy pull one through. (An American zoologist collecting for a museum once wrote to me in Brazil, while he was sailing along the great Xingú River of the Mato Grosso; he addressed the envelope to Mrs. R. Mallet-Head Landes.)

Probably in these grim stages the field worker discovers that the culture is "mine," for he or she has invested in it much emotion, self-regard, determination, and sheer physical reserve. That is, he or she invests the energies required for survival anywhere—but in the field the effort has heroic dimensions. The trials, the idealistic pursuit of knowledge, all touch poetry. Most jobs are paths to comfortable ends. But the solitary field work, whatever the eventual by-products in books and academic promotions, remains unique, stirring the researcher's optimum sense of himself as he tests himself continually against enviroing strangeness.

Some testings may be more severe or more startling when the worker is a woman. The woman anthropologist is a professional worker, which means that she is measured by standards attached to men, since the work is in a public sphere—the sphere controlled by men in our world. But her training as "a man" did not start until her anthropology did. So much is obvious. Even then, the training in "manhood" was spotty. For example, I carried my husband's name, was not supposed to "desert" marriage by taking a doctoral degree, and was supposed to lean on a man's financial and social support. This was standard; all departures were considered temporary, incidental, and guilt-arousing. I recall discussing these one summer with Ruth Benedict, who was also troubled. (Despite the many years between us, we agreed that the "ideal" husband would be Chekhov! Because he understood everything, with a warm humanness.) One knew, no matter how young, from one's own husband, that one had not been brought up as a man. The importance here is that, though the woman field worker might be considered

an honorific man by title, she was appraised and censured as a *private* woman-person by the patriarchal culture she studied as well as by most of her men colleagues. My own experiences in Brazil exposed this fact amply, even for decades after I had left the country. But every woman scholar has had her share. In part it is in the nature of human competitiveness to attack the rival at his or her most vulnerable point. A competing male Negro, Latin, Oriental is attacked for his scorned minority rank; a male Jew, Catholic, or Jehovah's Witness is belittled for his low-ranked or embattled religion; until recently male homosexuality constituted egregious vulnerability for a professional person, regardless of the truth of the allegation. With a woman for a rival, many men and women have no need to seek her secondary traits of race, religion, or national origin; her sex alone suffices. When I mentioned this circumstance years ago to a British colleague, a man much my senior, who was interested in the UN's Commission on the Status of Women, he told me, "Don't say that! It doesn't sound nice." I had thought that he was my friend and would understand; perhaps he did, but he would not pursue the matter.

Because tradition assigns women to specific private or domestic status—places in our world's societies governed by men, occasional literary efforts to represent daring—anthropological characters have focused on women. These efforts cast the women's ways in an unfavorable light, making them appear ludicrous, suggesting they are also astray socially. I have noticed this inclination in at least one or two Broadway musicals, a 1967 film, novels, and journalistic accounts, the last including a spine-chilling King Features piece about my stay in Brazil. The characters were shown as inherently farcical or weird; and the works fell flat. Also, there is a general impression, even among academic folk, that "most" anthropologists are women. Colleagues in sister disciplines are astounded at the actually minuscule number, when they start counting on their fingers, compared with men. The mere presence of women is riveting and disrupting.

To enter Brazil was to find a world, then and now, where women are situated in one social domain and men in another, such that women are ranked below and men above. I struggled to follow Park's philosophy: it's all research data, okay. Others did not do the same, obviously, unaware of Park's culture or subculture. Many years later, my second husband, a Latin-American of another country, told me that it was a great matter to be a man, the best; and it was another great matter to be a woman, it was "even beautiful," but vulnerable. The qualification may have occurred to him because he was educated (or "shaped," as Spanish puts it) at the University of California. Though not an anthropologist, he had heard of my Brazilian happenings years before we met; rather, he had heard about a woman stumbling into men's affairs.



In the field—Brazil, 1938–1939—emotions surge, habits struggle, for the researcher is captive to the reflex or second nature of usual practices. Can he control the pupil's dilation in the dark? Suppose the woman wants to take a walk—in Rio de Janeiro, let alone Bahia? Or attend the movies alone? Perhaps leave the hotel or house after sunset alone? Buy an item and carry it home? Pay the bill herself? Visit a restaurant, a theater, any place, alone? Journey to a friend by public transport alone? Pay the physician's bill herself? Get a decent job? Interview a male colleague, possibly alone? The woman cannot commit these acts without incurring reprisals. These lessons were knocked into me so profoundly over a period of fourteen months that, when I returned to Brazil after twenty-seven years, the memories enchained my movements as agoraphobia did those of William Ellery Leonard (see his *The Locomotive God*). Writing now, a year later and over 4,000 miles away, the anthropologist in me would not alter one detail, for all these constitute tradition's drama. But to do field work under the traditional conditions meant rising each day and tossing each night to the hardest doubts of oneself, privately, and of the struggle, professionally.

How does the "field" perceive the woman researcher from foreign parts? One can only infer, and only after the event. For example, two and a half decades after my first departure, I was confronted with evidence in public print, documented by events of the intervening twenty-five years, that 1938–1939 had left me one bitter enemy and one enduring friend, both reacting to my field work and my publications. I was the same ethnoprofessional specimen to both—or wasn't I? Did their individual temperaments and vested social interests, which differed somewhat, find support in their common Brazilian heritage? The self-proclaimed enemy, the late Dr. Artur Ramos, was a good dozen years older than the proven friend, Dr. Edison Carneiro, who was about my age; the men were senior and junior colleagues, famous in the great realm of Negro-Brazilian, or Afro-Brazilian, studies; the former was white, the latter a "man of color" (*homem de cor*) in a class society that ranked this trait low by implication. Since similar phenomena occur in our own society, often to the bewilderment or even amusement of onlookers, one might discard the whole matter on the assumption that "these things happen," as the Latins say (*acontece assim*, in Brazil). On the other hand, they do affect the field worker's job and life; in my case, the consequences were drastic, as I have told elsewhere (Landes, 1947) and as I describe in the following pages.

From the start, the "field" had its views of my status. I did not trouble to accommodate to some of them, considering that to do so would nullify my goals and wipe out my finances. For example, in May 1938, soon after reaching Rio de Janeiro (then an exquisitely lovely and grand city), I left my costly tourists' hotel for a charming, reasonably priced Brazilian one, on

the Praça José de Alencar, called the "Foreigners' Hotel" (Hôtel dos Estrangeiros). Through a mutual acquaintance in Washington, I had met Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs; later I told him of my move to a place where I could hear Portuguese conversation and eat national foods. This worldly man answered that he was "ashamed" to have me in a "national" hotel, that he had planned for his daughters to call on me, but now. . . . In short, the visit was never paid. At the time I supposed that he wanted me to fulfill the stereotype of the wealthy, daring American girl; there were such in Europe who wrote and painted; indeed, he said I looked like an "artist." Years later, a Brazilian woman friend told me that I wasn't all wrong and that men of his class kept paramours in the rich hotels. But now I think the underlying reason for his rejection was that with my move I had gate-crashed the traditional world, where a female needed patrons or "protectors" through her family or a male connection outside; the move raised basic issues of propriety and morality that were irrelevant to the tourists' strip of no-man's-land. I thought only that I was behaving efficiently and that the Minister behaved snobbishly. So I blundered upon the "field's" crucial conventions without comprehending.

Occasionally, I went to the movies in Rio's *cinelândia*, where I amplified my Portuguese by hearing the actors' American talk and comparing it with the Portuguese subtitles. My clothes and bearing were often recognized as American, from the films; the title of a current song was *Americana, quero teu amor* ("American girl, I love you"), which children would yell at me in the street. Once I was standing in line for a movie ticket, and a young man joked about me with his friend, in slang, "I wonder who runs that [American] garage?" It was a legitimate issue, for a Brazilian of my sort would not have been alone. The Americanness of my presence introduced an amusing dimension for ridicule.

In Bahia, where I went after three months in Rio for my principal field work, most people did not recognize an American by his traits, and I was never taken for one. Instead I was thought to be German, because Hitler's representatives were omnipresent and I seemed to resemble them; besides, I spoke Portuguese, albeit with a "gringo" manner, whereas Americans and British were known to avoid Portuguese speech and most of Brazilian life. (In 1966 I was no longer taken for American in Rio either. Over a long period a host people's confusion of one's culturo-national identity becomes as exasperating as any other rejection of bona fides. They—taxi drivers, servants, maitres-d'hotel, shopkeepers—thought that I came from any of half-a-dozen European countries, because of how I spoke Portuguese and because I did not dress "showily.") In Bahia, literate but generally uneducated black folk told me, when I asked, that the United States was "somewhere in Europe." This blur was consistent with a general belittlement of

American accomplishments in all humanistic arts, balanced by a worship of France's achievements and an admiration of Germany's efficiency.

Nearly every step I made or that was attributed to me, as it advanced my special goals of field work, *pari passu* drew upon me the threatening notice of army and police. But I did not know this until the crisis that obliged me to depart after eight months of rich work in Bahia (Landes, 1947). I'll give details in later pages. Others did know of my difficulties, gathering hints as everyone does from the atmosphere of one's world. However, it was not my world and not my language. When a Negro cult priestess, of my age, treated me with herbal recipes and formulas against mysterious persons' "envy," I recorded these on the simple-minded assumption that she was merely revealing cult practices and amiableness. She was telling me, rather, what any *Bahiano* would have understood. But I was a New Yorker, immeasurably alien, lacking the instinct that keeps most women everywhere functioning in the place assigned them by tradition.

Brazil is a vast stretch of land, physically larger than the continental United States, excluding Alaska. In the 1930's, as now, most of the population clung to the Atlantic coast. Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil, and Bahia, once capital of the brief Empire of Brazil and Portugal, were and are centers of a brilliant culture that includes a marvelous folk culture led by Brazilians of African and slave origins. Bahia's folk culture is the more celebrated; the city was dubbed the "Negro Rome" by a nationally renowned black woman, the cult priestess Aninha. The huge folk world in Bahia and Rio had organized itself around many separate temples of religious and mutual-aid nature, drawing upon African, Latin Catholic, and Brazilian slave elements. The followers were not wholly black, but the leaders were Negroes; and the greatest cult leaders in Bahia were Negro women. I describe this Bahia world in *The City of Women*. (Carmen Miranda sang of it in New York and in Hollywood films, as well as in Rio.) The cults were a fashion among the intellectual and artistic elite, but they were also dangerous, because the police were persecuting them on the excuse that they harbored criminals and "Communists" in addition to practicing black magic. Secretly persons from the highest social levels patronized them. In this setting I had to study "race relationships."

My most pertinent introductions came from Park and Pierson. One was to the highly esteemed American missionary Dr. Tucker, whose residence in the country had begun in the last century and in the reign of the last monarch, Don Pedro II. Beloved and enlightened, D. Pedro had received the missionary as a friend. Rio's first great *favela*—a slum climbing a rocky hillside where the poor, chiefly blacks, took squatters' hold on unclaimed terrain—was patronized by Dr. Tucker's mission. In 1966 it was a sort of showplace, for postwar Rio, like postwar São Paulo, had spawned acres of

menacing favelas. Dr. Tucker, originally from Tennessee, had seen both slavery and the abolition of slavery in Brazil, and he was not impressed by my "race relationships" concern; but, aged and kind, he said little. From the noted school attached to his mission he sent me my teacher of Portuguese, a cheery, tightly scheduled young woman with a physicist husband and two sons; promptly at eight each morning Dona Dina arrived to give me my lesson.

Another vital introduction was to Dr. Artur Ramos, also living in Rio. He had been a *medico-legista* (the official practitioner of forensic medicine) of the State of Bahia, where his duties had brought him in contact with the black cult folk. He had written books of repute about them, following the interests uncovered by Brazil's great initiator of cult studies, Dr. Nina Rodrigues. He and his wife eventually gave me letters of introduction to people in Bahia and agreed that this was the place for me to settle down. Their key introduction, as events developed, was to Dr. Edison Carneiro, a junior colleague.

Never in the history of field work, I am confident, has anyone been more fortunate than I in the association with Edison. Apart from Edison's repute as a scholar and writer, and apart from his high talents and character, the fact was that I could not have stirred a step in Bahia without his, a man's, "protection." I saw this each day that I tried to move about on my own, when I became a vulnerable minor and a potential sexual target. My *City of Women* shows my great esteem for Edison and our friendship, as do my articles (Landes, 1940a, 1940b, 1947, 1953). Of course, Ramos learned of our joint labors, especially after Edison and I arranged to meet his ship in Bahia, where it stopped briefly en route to elsewhere from Rio. It did not occur to either of us that he would resent our enterprise; on the contrary, as our respected elder and the recognized scholar in the Afro-Brazilian "vineyard" we had also chosen, we thought he would be pleased. Subsequently my Latin husband assured me that Ramos saw, rather, that I had switched allegiance from him to Edison and so was guilty of a client's treachery. In that highly personalized world of factions, as in our American Old South, one must not act solely on his private initiative but only as the leader directs. In view of later recorded events (Carneiro, 1964), it seemed that Ramos expected "gratitude" of a far-reaching order for his kindnesses; his slanderous retaliations (bald statements that I used sexual lures to get informants—that professionally I was untrained and unreliable) followed me to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Africa. Also, he found an American ally (now deceased)<sup>1</sup> and late in 1939 the two wrote a voluminous letter about me to Gunnar Myrdal, for whom I was working in New York on his American Negro study, and he showed me the letter while

1. Melville Herskovits

ridiculing its fixation on my alleged eroticism and incompetent scholarship. Those aspects, indeed, Ramos reiterated over the years in "vulgar, vindictive" articles and in lectures to university students (as three students told me). I had heard verbal reports of all this in the 1940s and 1950s from colleagues residing in São Paulo, London, and Kampala in Uganda. To anticipate one of Ramos' actions by several years, the time came when his written language about me obliged São Paulo's leading social-science journal to refuse one of his articles, despite his established reputation; so the editor told me in New York and so Edison reports (Carneiro, 1964, p. 227). After Ramos' death a woman colleague in Europe sent word to me that, because of him, it was said I had "run a brothel" in Brazil.

The gossip also conveys the idea that my presence mattered in Bahia and that it was to be tested relentlessly. Edison, who must have known the risks, was my sole shield. He introduced me to nearly everyone I worked with, and I know that the blacks admitted me because he vouched for me. The absoluteness of his patriarchlike responsibility is inconceivable to the average American, brought up to let women (or any individual) look after themselves, the devil taking the hindmost. The condition of respect for a woman in Bahia was the word of a worthy man. Often I recalled, as I do now, young Dona Dina's incredulous laugh at my plan to move to Bahia: it's a fine place, she would quote from a popular song, but leave it there and leave me here. I thought she meant because Bahia was so near the equator, and 900 miles north of Rio.

I had sailed for Bahia on a Nazi boat, where portraits of Hitler covered the walls, where officers saluted with "Heil Hitler," where dozens of large German families from the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina were passengers heading for the "Leader Schools" (*Führerschulen*) of Greater Germany, where the purser pitied me for having to stop in "black" Bahia. I took a room in Bahia's best hotel because there was no other accommodation for a single female. I heard from the United States consul that I might be thought a "Communist spy," and I heard from the annoyed German hotel manager that the colonel in command of the army of the northeast, also a hotel guest, thought I might be a fancy prostitute from the south. The body reacts to such blows, at least when it is American. My inflamed sinuses bugged my eyes so far out of my head that I lay for hours each day with icepacks, on medical order. I developed bleeding intestines that were incurable until long after my return to the United States. A year of diarrhea left me gaunt and yellow; the consul's secretary said that I seemed to lose weight as he looked at me. The resulting anemia took four years to handle. I thought of suicide, though I never really planned it. When I mentioned this to a friend in Rio, before my departure, she said coolly, "Why? One can always be dead."

There was an American colony in Bahia, 200 strong. Except for one

unhappy young matron, they wanted nothing of the place, the people, the life. As the consul said, "I live for the age of forty, when I'll retire." They thought my enterprise was very amusing and wanted to hear about cult "orgies." They constituted a living death—far worse, I thought, than the threats in Bahian life. So I turned entirely to Edison and the cult life that absorbed us.

We had implicitly agreed to pool our work resources, I contributing taxi money and Edison nearly everything else. As he says in his article (Carneiro, 1964, p. 225), he escorted me everywhere all the months of my stay so that (my translation), "Never, absolutely never, has any scholar, Brazilian or other, had so much intimacy [as R. L.] with the *candomblé* [a cult tradition outranking all others] of Bahia." He reported cult events for the daily newspaper that employed him; and he assembled materials for his later books and articles. He bought me a library of volumes that no one else had ever suggested and that was a foundation for all my understandings of Brazil. He listened to my observations, examined them, discussed them. Never was there time off, and he too got sick. We visited people day and night, ate in their homes, chatted long afternoons and evenings with them in the forests, in the city, out on islands, passed days and weeks at tedious parties and rites, took pictures that still live.

Edison's university friends joined us occasionally and, whether poets or medical men, concentrated on the fabulous cults. The zest and color of the folk life somehow fed the university as well; the great class gap was bridged and yet maintained by the mutual interest. We, young ones of the upper class were inspired by the cult people and their acts. Years later, I thought, "There is a joy of life in Bahia, tangible as the young palm trees" (Landes, 1947, p. 15). The life had elegance, content, ideals, and injustices, it was centered on people, for good or ill, everyone mattered, there were great concerns about honor, sacrifice, brutalities, inequities, and they were all worth fighting and dying for. It was exhausting and satisfying, and it fostered what the Brazilian lovingly calls *saudades* ("nostalgias").

The threat of being labeled a Communist was real; this was an official tactic for destroying any political opposition. A well-known scholar of northern Brazil, despite the social qualifications of his excellent family, was labeled "Communist" and thrown into jail, as the American press reported and as I heard upon reaching Bahia. The official explanation was that he had studied at Teachers College, Columbia University; and the University was presented as a hotbed of Soviet interests. The actual reason for his imprisonment was that he and his family supported an opposing political faction. Now here was I, also from Columbia; and under suspicion even though the predeparture New York police certification of me, routinely required, had been approved. The dictator's former army comrade, Luis

Prestes, led the Brazilian Communist opposition when he was not in jail. Students and university personnel, as everywhere in the Latin-American world, were suspected of political deviation. During my Bahia stay there was a round-up of such "Communists," who were put in jail for about a week; among the gentlemen, as they were by class, was Edison. And I was inseparable from Edison. Both of us were inseparable from the cult leaders, who, suspected of harboring "criminals," were also believed to shelter political suspects (as was not unlikely). Looking back, it seems that Latin women rarely were placed in this political category, either in 1938 or in 1966; women were absent from this eminently male domain throughout Brazil, though occasionally a woman's voice was lifted in Spanish-speaking lands. Largely because of my uncorrupted political innocence, I did not imagine jail for myself; but I suffered anxiety increasingly, a realistic enough mood at the time. Often I told myself that this enterprise was a case of (female) fools rushing in where the well-known angels would fear to tread. Edison was the only person I trusted, and I leaned on him entirely. He never objected, nor even made me aware of the burden I put on him. Against this rich friendship, Ramos' later published protests about my neglect (meaning that I did not write him and use his letters of introduction to Bahia's officials) seem irrational, apart from their extraordinary language. Having never done field work, as everyone told me and as his books show, he perhaps did not realize that parlor courtesies flourish only in protected soil; he was a "gentleman" office scholar, not a "working" field one, like myself and like Edison. Indeed, he had counseled me not to take pictures; not to talk with the disaffected lower class, who felt the general great inflation; not to ask questions. I was to be a "lady" and read.

The "prostitute" threat was real also, and it employed against me the "evidence" of my location in the central hotel. It seemed that there was an annual trek north from São Paulo of such well-groomed ladies and that the good hotels were their headquarters. Eventually the colonel who lived in my hotel abandoned the notion, but his vanity, wounded by my indifference to him and preference for Edison, engendered notions similar to those of Ramos and moved him to suggest to the authorities (who leaked the news) that I must be conniving politically with the cults. The light broke for me when, puzzled, I showed Edison a book (Zweig's new novel, *Maria Stuart*, about the Scots Queen) sent to me, through the head porter, by a hotel guest (who ran a car agency), asking me to "teach him English." It seems that this was a known Brazilian ploy. Edison went wild—without raising his voice—and ordered me to return the book, even taking it from me. He saw, where an American could not, that it was a smirking gesture to my literacy, which made me not any less an available woman. It had not escaped me that the men occupying the lobby, all business or military men,

eyed the slight young intellectual "of color" who waited daily among them to escort me out. Indeed, the next year in Rio I was to hear, for the first time in my life, an American call me "nigger lover"; he sent me the epithet via his Brazilian wife, who added that hereafter she would have to meet me secretly. (We learned also that Edison, solely because of his physical appearance, and despite his obvious social quality, would not be admitted to Rio's Urca night club, where Carmen Miranda was singing.) All she understood was that "nigger lover" and "prostitute" were the same, which confused and shocked her; yet, on her own, she respected Edison.

Before I had met Edison, who soon ordered me never to leave the hotel alone after five in the afternoon, I had tried to walk in the fascinating streets at night, after the equatorial heat had eased. I naturally wanted to see what was happening. People ordinarily crowded their windows and balconies to see life. I knew that I was conspicuous with my fair coloring and rather tailored American dresses, but it was my shoes that proved crucial. For walking I had a handsome pair of shoes of laced black leather and suede, called "ghillies." About eleven one night a young woman approached me from an opposite direction, on the prowl in a trailing evening gown. Catching sight of me, she stopped, stared, then shrieked. I fled. The following day I learned that she was a properly licensed streetwalker, who knew that I was none but resented my competition on her beat—because my ghillies resembled shoes of the profession!

It was a problem, being a woman out of doors. Until Edison could include me in his schedule, I had traveled the city occasionally with the American consul's Bahian secretary, Jorge, at the consul's suggestion. Though meagerly schooled, Jorge spoke fine English, looked like a red-haired Englishman (but he had small use for any foreigners), wore immaculate white linen suits, and was fragrant with toilet water. He was of the modest middle class and all but penniless. Believing in aristocracy, he criticized me for using my hands, besides my feet—I was not to *carry* anything, not even writing pads. When he met me with my mail bundle, he would say that he felt "ashamed" at the sight. It was the gallant sentiment, but he also meant it. On a tour among some of Bahia's 365 churches it was impossible to avoid slums and here too he felt "disgraced"—not by the indecent, hopeless poverty, but that I, a lady, rich beyond his dreams, was walking there. "Dona Ruth, my fiancée would never walk there. Any Brazilian lady would be ashamed to." He decided that I was showing American courage, but thereafter I had to engage taxis, which he loved. Once we blundered into a better prostitutes' quarter, where a woman yelled to Jorge, "Is that your wife?" He knew she meant to insult him and, outraged, he declared, "Of course not!"

If I had lived as he saw fit, the police would have ignored me and would



not have set up the twenty-four-hour daily watch that terminated my stay in Bahia. But I should then have learned nothing about the blacks and their cults, which Jorge feared and detested: "They murder! The *candomblé* is black magic! It's superstition! They hypnotize people! They're not civilized. No, forgive me, but never can I accompany you there. Please do not ask." Nor did he trust church priests, he said, and he forbade his fiancée to make confession; but such was a man's right in his world.

Years later, in California, my Latin husband understood poor Jorge. I should have been accompanied by some staging of womanliness; for this, even a small boy-child would have served to "protect" me, symbolizing my mother status of dependence on a patriarch. No one trusts females except under lock and key, my husband believed; and trusts the American least of all—"why should they?" As to the "Communist" smear that finally reached me—he thought that was a flattering admission of my human or intellectual quality. Flattering? Attending the movies in Rio during 1939, I was handed a program featuring an article headed (my translation), "Can education help a girl to be a good mother?" The ferocious argument of "No" rested on such points as the need of good lactating mammary glands and of tenderness, which could only be ruined by education, certainly not bettered; besides, men do not want educated women and do not marry them. The last point was difficult to deny, as one met educated women who were beautiful, of good families, and financially sound but not married; there were rare exceptions, like the poetess Cecilia Meireles. On the whole, there was no place for an undomestic woman in respectable Bahia or Rio, though these were societies of high sophistication. Still in my twenties, a married woman but without my husband or child, with a doctoral degree that lacked true significance there, I had been sent to a world without a place for me.

One cannot believe this quite, partly because the "field" is not one's real life. It is like the riskiest gaming, rather, from which one can pull out if necessary. Hence the police angered me, as did Ramos' outrageous actions; but I also thought them ludicrous. To Edison, on the contrary, the "field" was his life as well; and so he wrote the "Falseta" de Artur Ramos" even as late as 1964. When Ramos and his American colleague wrote to Myrdal, the "field" did merge briefly with my real life. Field work can be so taxing to physical and emotional states that it would seem well to maintain a large distance between it and one's private world. Yet an anthropologist may pursue his or her interests as his chief way of life, marrying from the "field" or bringing the spouse into it, sometimes with children. The last possibility, which I have never tested, may cushion the intruding field worker against personal shocks and may add to information, but it may also reduce exposure to the alien culture as emotional dependence is reduced. We behavioral scientists are not in the position of novelists, who say they are free to write

about states they have never experienced but can imagine through empathy. We are supposed to have gone through the ice and the fire we describe. Are we supposed to shatter ourselves? It is easy to say no, certainly not. But some have done so, leaving work as a monument—notably William Jones and Buell Quain. I have a small inkling of the emotional loneliness, boredom, and exhaustion Quain suffered in Brazil because he wrote me about these in 1939 shortly before he died there.

Edison used to ridicule my bookish Portuguese; through him I realized how extraordinarily idiomatic the present language is. He and fellow-craftsmen, like the Bahian novelist Jorge Amado, listened to the black folk and others, then handled the ornate and complex language with some such liberties as, in the 1960's, the Beatles were to take with popular commercial music. I listened to Edison and to the cult people and polished my speech. Edison's article (Carneiro, 1964, p. 227) remarks about me that I "spared no energy to understand [the cult people's] religious manifestations in Bahia"; for this I had to speak and understand in the folk modes. Happily, the cult people spoke well, and the chief ones also wrote little things for me. When I returned to Rio in 1939, and again in 1966, people noticed my Bahian accent, not an American one! It was like an American's noting a "Southern" accent. A Rio friend who was bilingual said to me in 1939 that my "personality changed" when I switched languages; years after, in Lisbon, my Portuguese labeled me a Brazilian (and a colonial). By comparison with French and German, I thought Portuguese very difficult, and Brazilians agreed; besides, certain sounds are uncouth by general English and European standards, so that it took determination to achieve them. And they clung. After twenty-seven years' absence, and despite my second husband's typically Spanish-speaking distaste for any other language, Edison told me in 1966, "One really couldn't place you by your Portuguese pronunciation"—meaning that it was not offensively foreign. So had the cult world clung to me. Taxi drivers and servants, even in 1966 Rio, assumed from my speech that I was Argentinian, French, or anything else Latin from elsewhere, or that I had lived years in Brazil.

In 1938–1939 Edison and I were endlessly available to the cult folk, endlessly patient and cheerful, always alert, mindful to take notes and snapshots. We never used a tape recorder or a comparable instrument. Edison rarely took detailed notes, but he had a highly sensitized memory. He produced feature stories for his newspaper about cult doings; he wrote books; he wrote memos for me, which I still keep. One saw all of him as an instrument for sopping up impressions. From him I learned to listen—a technique that cannot be matched for garnering insights. Watching me in the field years later, my husband said that I gathered information the way a busy stream runs underground through woods; I must have modeled my technique after Edison's way.

Finally, toward mid-1939, the end was imposed on my work. I was apprised by these incidents: one day as we awaited a tram into the forest, or *mato*, for our cult-temple destination, Edison muttered to me in labored English, "There's a spy following us—he wants you, I think. Speak English." As this was our code for anything serious, I believed he sensed instant trouble. But how could he know? He replied that "every Brazilian" gets acquainted with the police! But why me? Because of him; and the blacks. How could he recognize *this* spy? Well: "Look at him, he's not flirting! Spies are the only men in all Brazil who are forbidden to flirt. He's black but he's wearing a dark [gentleman's] suit. What black wears a dark suit in this climate?" We deduced that the suspect had been directed to dress up to my, or our, social class. Alarmed and fascinated, I glanced toward him some yards off. (The direct gaze especially between the sexes is improper and can be dangerous, as Edison had told me more than once.) Called then *jogo de olhos* ("the game of eyes"), it could signal titillating love information and settle rendezvous. In an open streetcar I would watch some individual, then find myself cracked down by Edison's scorn: "What is this? Are you hunting trouble?" Nor did the full gaze ever convey the American suggestions of honesty and courage, honored proverbially among us. On the contrary, there it was impertinent, vulgar, an invitation to reprimand. In a Rio bus during 1966, I happened to glance at an arresting young *mulata* forgetting the *jogo* rule (prohibiting direct eye contact); she hurled herself into a fit of abusive words. When I reported this to an American diplomat there, he answered feelingly, "I too have met lots of crazy people in the buses."

In 1939 the police spy we suspected did indeed look away, sullenly. He would not flirt. "Take care," Edison said, as I examined the laborer's build and the tough leathery face. When the tram halted for us, Edison decided on the last row of seats, where the "spy" could not breathe down our necks. But we studied him easily after he had seated himself a couple of rows ahead. Nearly an hour later we reached our stop in the woods, got off, and picked up the faint trail to the secluded cult ground. Where was the suspect? We found the building, where a birthday party was in force and the people were dancing *fox*. Girls fluttered to Edison, but he refused to dance with them because this would have left me open to invitations from the men—class rules and those separating the sexes forbade me to be available for dancing here. True, the musicians and the dancers lumbered frightfully, I thought. But the study required me to join them, I protested to Edison. No, he replied with Chinese calm, I'll explain everything. He proceeded to psychoanalyze the dance holds with devilish point when—"What?"—I thought I heard him say in English, as startling to sense as a typesetter's errors, "There's your man."

Across the floor he stood, looking uncomfortable, his dark garb and

face like soot among the others' dress pastels, his glance carefully absent. "Can't flirt," Edison chuckled. "No man. Just a spy." Damn all, I decided, I'll let him know I'm an American! I trotted around, tapped the black, and said gently in my careful Portuguese, "Do you want me? Or did you come to dance?" His eyes rolled white, like those of a frightened horse, and he ran. I was shaking when I got back to Edison. He said I had been foolish; he meant, I thought, that it was beneath my station to have recognized the fellow. And he said, "In this land that God forgot, we all come to know the police."

Later, when we reached the home of a young priestess I knew well and I told her the story in astonishment, she answered quietly, "*Minha Senhora*, we've known this a long time. We didn't tell you because we didn't want to frighten you."

The next spy trailing us in the open was younger, was light-skinned, wore starched whites and almost a smile, and generally was more polished. He entered the temple ground after us and did not run when I addressed him. "Do you like these people, *Senhora*?" he responded. Now the spy assignments were stepped up to eight-hour shifts around the clock, watching the hotel's doorways, placing anonymous phone calls. It was crazily nerve-wracking, but it roused my fighting will and took me out of the long-standing depression bred by the strains of perpetual humid heat, poor food, social isolation, insults to status and ego, want of light diversion, want of the barest social approval, my acute sense of responsibility for the research, my acute sense of obligation to Edison, my dislike of the German employees who showed arrogance and pruriency, my resentment of the army officers who watched and watched from their dining-room tables and lobby armchairs. And during this time Edison had his week in jail.

When he was free again, he agreed to accompany me to the police for an explanation, a reason for the espionage. They denied that spies had been set on me. There was no explanation, only feeble words about an alleged passport irregularity. "But I have a letter from the President's office!" Aha! Soon there came an order of expulsion, with a firm date for me to be on the high seas. Later, in Rio, I learned that the governor of the state, though appointed by Vargas, was a political enemy; that Bahia would have liked to rebel against the federal administration; that a ministry head in this governor's administration was one of those to whom Ramos had given me a letter, which I had not used (fearing to expose myself to the politicians).

A woman friend was visiting me from Rio, the anthropologist Maria Julia Pourchet; now she assured me that we would escape safely, not out of Brazil, but into the capital and her home. I asked the American consul's aid in finding ship bookings before the date of my ultimatum, for the carnival season was at hand. Quaking with fear, he refused, saying that I might well

be a spy, for all he knew. The British consul ridiculed the intimidation and helped me amply. But I had to move secretly because, for mysterious reasons, the police wanted my notebooks, my many snapshots, the wonderful priestess dolls made for me by cult women, anything coming from the field study. Between Edison's family and Maria Julia, however, we smuggled everything safely aboard ship. In Rio the federal police chief turned out to be a Bahian. But his politics were Vargas', and he assured me that now I was safe. Two Columbia fellow students met me at the boat, and I felt I was back among the sane. We could laugh at the nightmare happenings in the field—well, sort of. Edison was still there. Rio was calm only under the clamp of the dictator's *estado forte* ("strong state"); actually, soon after my 1938 arrival army rebels had tried to assassinate Vargas in his residence, down the street from my hotel.

Certainly each culture fleshes out its own nightmares. I was the American she-bull in Brazil's china closet. But there is no she-bull in nature, and there was no accustomed place for a woman field anthropologist in Brazil. If I had been Brazilian-reared, I would have known what to avoid—perhaps, indeed, I would have known to avoid the whole enterprise. My luck in meeting Edison and having his escort produced a miraculous approximation to Brazil's model for female conduct. If "spy" means "nosy, alien intruder," the Brazilians were right, symbolically, in so classifying me within their social scheme. They could not have believed this literally, as they could not have believed the prostitute stereotype. But the notions lingered, becoming handy formulas for levering me out, which Bahia finally did. Edison tells of liberties taken with truth by a Rio reporter to whom I refused an interview upon first arriving in 1938 because I did not command Portuguese. The reporter's stereotype-weighted fancy led him to publish, as Edison quotes (Carneiro, 1964, p. 224, my translation), that I would "sweep across Brazil's highlands and jungles . . . [to study] Indians . . . [hence I needed] vigorous men" for my baggage. The leering nudge of sex given the reader here was to appear much more crudely in Ramos' writing; on the same page Edison quotes Ramos' printed equivocal assertion that I had come to study "the sexual life of Negroes"; and Edison observes (p. 227, my translation) that he and another colleague expressed outrage over Ramos' "vulgar insinuations" about my work.

One may ask why my field presence did not disturb Edison. Of course it did, as I have illustrated repeatedly, but clearly it did not threaten his self-concept. My Macmillan editor observed that he came through well in my account in *City of Women*; I and others always saw him free of pettiness. He hated "American imperialism" but could not hate a woman for being that special bearer of the culture. A young Turk of an intellectual, his slingshots were aimed at abusive systems and their political representatives.

Partly this was why he studied the cults and defended them. A writing craftsman of quality and national repute, he applied a craftsman's standards to his significant acts. He never dreamed of playing me down as a woman, as an American, as a colleague, however hard others tried to do this, as I indicated earlier, where the culture let them. He notes (p. 227, my translation) that Ramos' "injustice" to me, his "indelicate and vengeful pages" about my work, "flow[ed] solely from [his] pride and vanity." False and shaky pride was never Edison's.

Through field work at the pleasure of the host culture one learns one's place there and that it is one's only vantage point for penetrating the culture. Mistakes and mishaps in the field are great lamps of illumination if one survives; friendships there are the only greater source, besides being a divine comfort. One gets to love the culture if one meets friends among its bearers; through friends' love, the foreign tradition becomes "mine." Brazil brought this fruit to me in huge measure. In August 1967, when the Brazilian version of my book and articles about the 1938-1939 field work first appeared, it was not just a foreign-language edition—it was a coming home. So field work permits one to live further, beyond the ordered arrangements of one's origins, in a personality and a society with other borders. Briefly one lives two or three additional lives. How much does this cost the psyche? A great deal, I think, if the heart sinks roots, as it does when the mind is stirred. I have worked intensively in six or more cultures beside Brazil's, have absorbed some of each, and left pieces of me with them. My mind balks at the thought of taking on still another, partly because I do not want to lose those I have taken unto myself.

But does one lose? Or is it rather that one knows so much about the hardships of field work? However, the addicted field worker does not really care for ease any more than does the competitive athlete. The lure of another culture can never be discounted, for it is the lure of self, dressed otherwise. Moving among the world's peoples, one sees that personalities here may resemble personalities there, underneath and despite the culture differences. So one comes home, again and again, to friends and kinsmen. Underneath culture's variations we are not all the same, but we are recognizable. When the field worker recognizes personalities this way in the alien culture, he discovers his own. This gives the human depth to information he gathers and will interpret for scholars and others. Back at home he sees his own people afresh, himself among them. The stance of field work becomes a private philosophy of living. What counts in the field and after is that one glimpses, over and over, humanity creating.

## References

- CARNEIRO, EDISON. 1964. *Ladinos E Crioulos. Estudos Sobre o Negro no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira. (This volume contains the article, "Uma 'Falseta' de Artur Ramos," pp. 223-227.)
- LANDES, RUTH. 1940a. "A Cult Matriarchate and Male Homosexuality," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 35, 386-397.
- . 1940b. "Fetish Worship in Brazil," *Journal of American Folklore*, 53, 261-270.
- . 1947. *The City of Women*. New York: Macmillan.
- . 1953. "Negro Slavery and Female Status," *Les Afro-Américains-Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire* (Dakar), 27, 265-268.
- . 1967a. *A Cidade das Mulheres*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira. (This is a translation into Portuguese of all the Landes titles above.)
- . 1967b. "Negro Jews in Harlem," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* (London, World Jewish Congress) December.

EAST CENTRAL AFRICA

# Field Work in Rwanda, 1959–1960

*HELEN CODERE* is a professor emerita of anthropology at Brandeis University and a past member of the executive board of the American Anthropological Association. Her field experience includes work among the Salish and Kwakiutl of British Columbia, about whom she has written monographs and articles that have been published in the professional literature. She retired in the spring of 1982.