

# The death of Vivaldo da Costa Lima (22/09/2010)

Homage to a Bahian scholar and teacher<sup>1</sup>

*Jeferson Bacelar<sup>2</sup> and Carlos Caroso<sup>3</sup>*

Vivaldo da Costa Lima was born in Feira de Santana, Bahia, on April 10, 1925. He won a degree in dentistry, which he practiced only for a short period because of his passion for Anthropology. With sophisticated erudition and a familiarity with European anthropology, he founded the Federal University of Bahia's Center of Afro-Asian Studies in 1959 together with the Portuguese scholar George Agostinho da Silva. He then moved to Africa where he became Reader in Brazilian Studies at Ibadan University in Nigeria, and then at the University of Ghana. In 1966 he succeeded Professor Thales de Azevedo to the chair of Anthropology at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the University of Bahia.

Vivaldo did not confine his activities to the university. Determined to participate actively in the social life of Salvador he founded and became the first Director of the Foundation for the Artistic and Cultural Patrimony of Bahia whose first actions were to be the restoration of the Largo do Pelourinho in Salvador. He was responsible for criticizing current notions on urban renewal and social exclusion creating what he called a "university in action", bringing together a multidisciplinary team of architects, educators, restorers, doctors and anthropologists who would combine theory with practice, aiming to restore the physical structures of the Pelourinho without expelling its predominantly poor inhabitants.

More than a simple teacher, Vivaldo was Master for generations, for, as

---

1 First published on the home Page of the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA), <http://www.abant.org.br/noticias.php?type=outranoticia#451> Translated by Peter Fry

2 Researcher, Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais, Federal University of Bahia

3 Professor of Anthropology, Federal University of Bahia, President of the Brazilian Anthropological Association

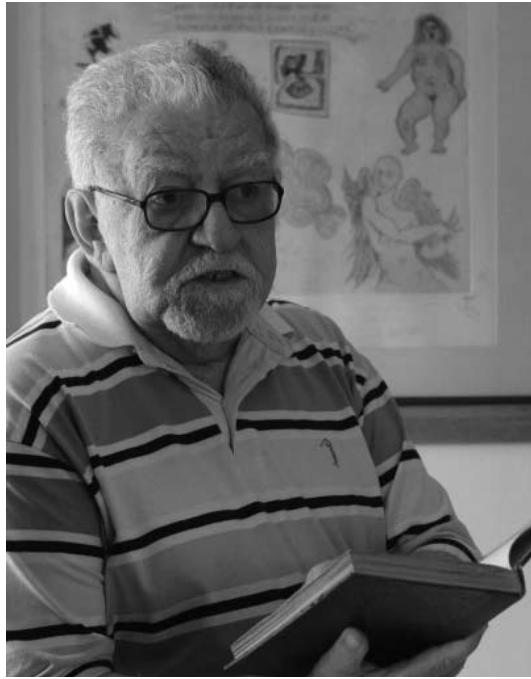
he often repeated, teaching and transmitting knowledge were basic to his life. His lectures were conducted with what he termed “rigorous indiscipline”. Each lecture text was carefully prepared as if he wanted to submit it to a learned journal. As he read it he would pause regularly for comments on each phrase, each idea, entralling everyone, students, colleagues and people from without the university. All were entranced by his comments that were lit up by irony and an actor’s timing calculated to excite the intellectual curiosity of his audience. What memorable lectures in all senses, even the impertinence of his words and the unpredictable direction they would lead him in.... All of them, however, critical, instigating and challenging. They keep on reverberating in the ears of all those who were delicately challenged and made uncomfortable by his ideas. He forged personal relations with all his students, asking about their genealogies, including ancestors and descendants. Whenever he met his friends and former students he would ask after their family, parents, brothers, wives, husbands, children which although always expected always surprised.

In 2005 he reached the age of 80 a group of his disciples brought a number of his friends and admirers to pay homage to Vivaldo. He thanked them with a marvelous and unforgettable rendering of his famous text on the *acarajé*, one of the best known and best loved products of Afro-Bahian cuisine. He was made Professor Emeritus of the Federal University of Bahia and received the Brazilian Anthropological Association’s Roquette Pinto Medal for his contribution to Anthropology.

Always averse to ending things, Vivaldo wrote and re-wrote constantly to the frustration of those who knew his work and wanted to have it in writing. He published only occasionally, and then often through the mediation of third parties, usually against his wishes since he generally considered the texts unfinished. His best-known and most important text is “Família-de-santo nos candomblés gêge nagôs”.<sup>4</sup> Over the last few years he returned to the Anthropology of food and prepared books for publication by the Editora Corrupio of Salvador. Lucid to the very last, he died today, September 22, 2010.

---

4 Lima, Vivaldo da Costa. 2003 [1977] *A família de santo nos candomblés jejes-nagôs da Bahia: um estudo de relações intragrúpicas*. Salvador: Corrupio.



**Vivaldo da Costa Lima (1925-2010)**