

# Axé<sup>1</sup> Vivaldo, Professor Emeritus

*Luiz Mott*<sup>2</sup>

I first met Vivaldo da Costa Lima 30 years ago; we were both taught anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia. We exchanged visits from time to time. He was a generous man and once when tidying up his library he gave me some books on sexuality for the Gay Group of Bahia of which I was president.

Everyone knew that Vivaldo was a man of many contradictions. He was a committed intellectual and a careful researcher but his perfectionism kept him from publishing more. He never finished a doctorate that he began at the University of São Paulo for example. And yet some of his books and articles became important references, especially those on the saintly families of the Bahian *candomblé* and on Afro-Bahian food.

I always asked Vivaldo for his blessing for a number of reasons: his anthropological culture, the precision of his argumentation and his encyclopaedic erudition. He had an enviable memory: once, during a telephone conversation I cited Schopenhauer who summed up marriage realistically as “during the day an exchange of bad humours, at night, bad odours.” Quite suddenly Vivaldo asked me to wait a minute and a few seconds later he had found in his library the exact page of the quote which he proceeded to read in impeccable French. In fact his polyglotism and his profound knowledge of Bahian culture brought him into contact with many a celebrity visiting Bahia in the second half of the twentieth century, among them Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

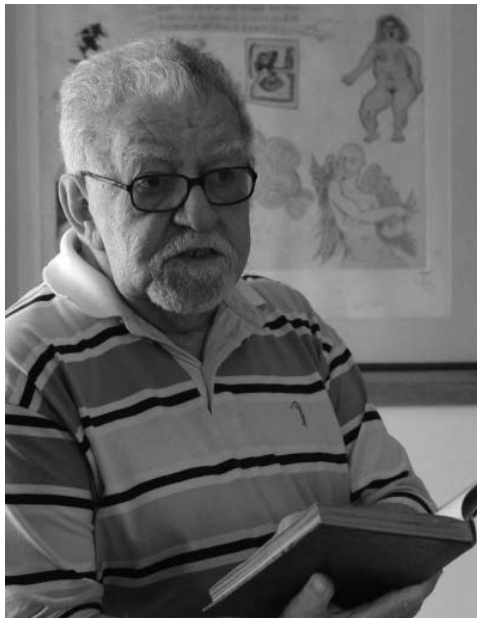
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1 Axé has many meanings in the cosmology of the Afro-Bahian *candomblé* of which Vivaldo was an aficionado. Somewhere between hail (as in Hail Mary) and mystical power (grace). (Translator's note)

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In the collective memory of the Faculty of Philosophy at São Lázaro, Vivaldo stood up to the soldiers who invaded our campus during the dictatorship, and, in his younger days gave a good beating to more than one idiotic homophobe when targeted by the humiliating “timum”<sup>3</sup> which is how it was possible to discover who practiced the love that dare not speak its name in the streets of old Salvador.

The contradictory side of Vivaldo, in all truth, was his explosive temperament. He showered abuse on those who disagreed with him even though he was not always in the right. Genial, jealous, vain, he fought noisily with many of his friends and colleagues. But this was all a result of his perfectionism: severe with himself and just as severe with others. Axé, Vivaldo, Professor Emeritus.



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

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<sup>3</sup> Luiz Mott tells me that “timum” referred to the noise of a gun shooting a *viado*. This is a common enough play on words since *viado* (gay, fag) rhymes (more or less) with *veado* (deer). (Translator’s note)