

# **Reversed racism: fundamentalist genealogies in African-American religions**

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As one of the consequences of the Atlantic slave trade, distinct religions evolved among the descendants of the Africans brought to the Americas. As a rule, Afro-Americans in Latin America developed their own religions (like Santería in Cuba or Candomblé in Brazil), based on West or Central African cultural matrices using elements taken from other traditions the slaves were exposed to, like Christianity and Spiritism. In contrast to Latin America, in North America under colonial rule and in ante-bellum USA there emerged, for the main part, evangelical forms of Christianity among the African Americans. In the class of those new religious groups outside mainstream Christianity that came into being amidst African Americans at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we find so called “messianic-nationalist sects” (Baer / Singer) that have in common a criticism of American society, a central myth about a glorious past of the “black race”, and the strive to re-establish black supremacy in a golden future of the “black race”. The mythical background concerning genealogies of races these religions share can be described as an inversion of white dualistic racist theories within the framework of Abrahamic religions: Dark skinned Africans are either regarded as the true Hebrews or as the true Muslims, “whites” as members of an inferior race. Some of these groups are openly separatist, whilst others have a more integrationist stance. This paper reads the development of some of these groups on the background of a sketch of African-American religious history and interprets it as a more or less fundamentalist reaction to a situation of incongruence.