

Mikelle Smith Omari. From the Inside to the Outside: The Art & Ritual of Bahian Candomblé. UCLA Monograph Series, Museum of Cultural History, 1984.

CANDOMBLÉ—THE MICROCOSM

Candomblé is the Portuguese term most commonly used in Bahia to describe Afro-Brazilian religion.¹⁵ In the singular it denotes the large body of ritual practices brought to Brazil by African slaves; in the plural it refers to sects or temples of the religion. Candomblés also referred to huge festivals and parties held on the slaves' free days which provided opportunities for honoring Afro-Brazilian deities. In current Bahian usage, the term Candomblé includes the ideological corpus of the group—its myths, cosmogony, rituals, and ethics—as well as the physical locality where the ceremonies are held.

Candomblés may be viewed as extended family units with descent traced through initiation. Frequently allegiances are formed which supersede biological family ties (pc:Oxunlade, September 12, 1982; Costa Lima 1967:65-83). The numerous ethnic "nations" formed during the period of slavery gave rise to the various types of Candomblés. Gege (Jeje) Candomblés derive from Ewe or Fon rituals brought from Dahomey (now the People's Republic of Benin).¹⁶ Their deities, known as *vodun (vodu)*, dances, languages, and rituals vary only slightly from the Yoruba. This similarity is due to socio-religious amalgamation in Africa which reflected frequent contact and wars between the Yoruba and the ancient kingdom of Dahomey (Mercier 1963:210-234). The striking Yoruba ascendancy in Brazil may be attributed to the great number of slaves of this ethnic group brought in prior to the mid-nineteenth century (Verger 1981a:55; Nina Rodrigues [1905]1977:105).

Angola and Congo Candomblés are derived from Bantu-speaking slaves from Zaire, Cabinda, Angola, Mozambique, Zanzibar, and other central and south African countries (Nina Rodrigues [1905]1977:24). Their ritual language is Bantu or a modification of Bantu, Portuguese, or Amerindian languages such as Tupi or Tupinamba. Deities in these Candomblés have Bantu names although many of their attributes and ritual paraphernalia are derived from the Yoruba (Carneiro nd:60,77-78, 86-88,97,109). Bantu dance and music differ from the Yoruba although they clearly pay homage to Yoruba models. At every major festival I attended

in Bate Folha and Bogum (two very old respected Angola [Bantu] Candomblés), all the Yoruba gods had to be summoned, danced for, and sent away before the festival could end successfully. A factor which distinguishes Angola ritual is the corporate manifestation of Exú (the Yoruba god of chance and unpredictability). Exú never manifests in Yoruba-derived Candomblés in either the United States or Brazil but rather is represented by a conical clay form (7.6 cms to 122 cms in height), with eyes, nose, and mouth made of cowries and sacrificial materials inside and out.¹⁷

Caboclo (Indian) Candomblés are the only ones clearly inspired by indigenous Amerindian or Brazilian deities, but even these are frequently mixed with Angola, Gege, or Yoruba cosmology and ritual. Their deities are called *encantados* (enchanted or conjured ones), and all their ritual songs are in Portuguese. Surprisingly the dances are derivations of the *samba*, a Yoruba word and the national Brazilian dance (pc:Taiwo Ijaola, March, 1981). The Caboclo *encantados* are the only gods manifested in the Candomblés I visited who demonstrated the non-African traits of dancing with their eyes open, smoking cigars, and giving consultations and advice with intention of healing during public festivals. Feathers and brightly-colored costumes of Amerindian derivation dominate their public festivals. The yellow and green of the Brazilian flag predominate in liturgical garments and cult house decorations. According to Edison Carneiro (1948:88-89) *encantados* are mere duplications of Yoruba Orixá (e.g., Sultan of the Forests [Sultao das Matas] and Pure-blooded Indian of the Forest [Caboclo do Mato] are both identified with Oxossi, the Yoruba god of the forest and hunt).

Candomblés Nagôs are the most numerous and influential cults in Bahia as major portions of their ritual and cosmological systems and liturgical vestments have been adopted by the Gege, Angola, Congo, and to a lesser extent, the Caboclos. The word *nagô* is derived from *anago*, a term applied by the Fon to Yoruba-speaking peoples residing in the People's Republic of Benin. *Nagô* is used in Bahia to designate all Yoruba and their Afro-Brazilian descendants. Distinct Yoruba nations in Brazil such as

the Oyo, Ketu, Egba, Jebu (Ijebu), Ijexa (Ijesha), and others from Lagos and Ibadan were noted as early as 1890 by Nina Rodrigues ([1896]1935:104).

The first Candomblé Nagô in Bahia was founded in 1830 in Barroquinha (an area now in the town center) by three African women—Iyá Deta, Iyá Kala, and Iyá Nassô (Carneiro nd:63-65). This Candomblé was named Ilê Iyá Nassô (the house of mother Nassô). It was moved sometime in the late nineteenth century to its present location in Vasco da Gama near the Post São Jorge. It is currently called the "White House," Casa Branca. Quarrels over the succession of chief priestesses led to the formation of two additional houses: the Candomblé of Gantois in Engenho Velho where Nina Rodrigues conducted his research and the Beneficent Society of Saint Jorge, also known as Axé Opô Afonjá (the sacred force of the staff of Xango Afonjá). Afonjá was founded in approximately 1918 by Aninha in São Gonçalo do Retiro on the hill of Cabula and is where I did the majority of my research.¹⁸

Although there are a few rural sects (e.g., in Cachoeira and Santo Amaro), Candomblé Nagô is now an essentially urban phenomenon. One or more houses may serve as a temple area (*terreiro*). More than five hundred cult sects (*seitas*) existed in 1983 (pc:Seu Vicentio, July 26, 1983); these were especially concentrated in Bahia. They included both elite founding houses and the much more numerous proletarian neighborhood Candomblés. I found that many of these ritual areas consisted of only one or two tiny rooms in a small house.

At Axé Opô Afonjá, many of the initiates live in the Candomblé during annual rituals and initiation cycles. They commonly refer to this residence as the *roça*, a Portuguese term meaning country, rural region, or backwoods plantation. The frequent use of the term *roça* when discussing Candomblé activities and the fact that a special uniform is worn in the sacred space support the interpretation of the Candomblé as a separate reality. There is a sense of leaving urban openness and entering a rural, cloistered space. During this period, the head priestess (*iyálorixá*) moves into the major shrine and living area (the house of Xango, which now includes a basement museum). Her residency signifies a heightened spiritual collective force which adds to the general excitement and sense of community.

The *roça* is organized around older committed initiates and devotees who are destitute or infirm. Each permanent resident is provided with at least a private room or, if means permit, a separate house. Rooms are equipped with all basic accoutrements

although some cooking and all washing and bathing are done in communal areas. Sometimes rooms are shared by close friends or members of the same initiation group (*barco*, literally a small open boat). My own residence at Afonjá was a sleeping room in the house of Oxalá which I shared with Oxunlade, an *iyálorixá* from Brasília.

Two tenets of Candomblé Nagô are the preservation of "pure" African ideas and the maintenance of the basic religious rituals of Yoruba-speaking peoples. Some unavoidable alterations occurred in the transatlantic crossing because of the oppressive conditions of slavery. Many of these changes were adaptive and defensive; the syncretism of Orixá with Catholic saints is an example of this accommodation.¹⁹ In some cases the pressure to assimilate into modern Brazilian society resulted in the incorporation of Catholic altars into the ritual dancing space of the Candomblé.²⁰ However, based on observation in the field, it can be asserted that values held by the upper and middle classes (and mimicked by the lower) in the society at large are reversed in the religious realm. In Candomblé Nagô value is placed on direct descent from Africans, especially the Yoruba, and black skin confers prestige. Mastery of the Yoruba language which is used in chants, songs, and esoteric rituals; familiarity with the medicinal properties of herbs and the spiritual force of leaves; and the ability to dance well are some of the criteria that accelerate upward mobility in the cult. Attentiveness to one's Orixá, willing performance of duties (*tarefas*) necessary for maintenance of the temple, and participation in the preparation for annual festivals also affect how rapidly one moves to the top of the cult hierarchy. Authority and activity are based on length of initiation. Tasks associated with initiations, the collection and treatment of herbs and leaves, and responsibilities in the shrines of specific gods are seen as earned privileges that bestow prestige and honor upon the recipient. Someone who is not permitted to work in the sacred space is relegated to the spiritually valueless status of a visitor. It is also deemed an honor to be able to offer an animal, vegetable, or material (art) sacrifice to an Orixá. In the megacosm it is desirable to be as far away from the gods as possible (except when asking for favors), whereas in the microcosm closeness to the gods is desired. Proximity to the deities is achieved through the performance of certain tasks, a prodigious investment of time as an active member, and the experience of trance.

The majority of people currently participating in Candomblé Nagô are of African descent.²¹ Devo-

tees are primarily from lower socioeconomic classes and generally hold blue-collar jobs. A small but rising number of cult members hold white-collar jobs and are professionals.²² Such examples are usually encountered in the older, wealthier, more prestigious ritual houses such as *Menininha de Gantois*, *Axé Opô Afonjá*, and *Ilé Morôailaje*. R.F. Thompson has suggested that these Candomblés occupy the apex in the hierarchy of Candomblés Nagôs and thus constitute an elite (pc: April 15, 1981).²³

In the Candomblés Nagôs which I studied, only persons of clear African descent held important ritual posts.²⁴ Significant numbers of whites, however, do observe public ceremonies and participate in secular aspects of the Candomblé organization. This is especially true in well-known temples, although it applies to lesser-known ones as well. The attraction of whites to Candomblé was first noted in 1896 only eight years after slavery was abolished in Brazil (Nina Rodrigues [1896] 1935:155).

In contrast to the Europeanized capitalistic sectors of Bahian society which emphasize private property, individualism, and conspicuous consumption in the secular realm,²⁵ Candomblé emphasizes the welfare of the group as a whole. Material display and embellishment are a form of sacrifice to the Orixá, who dispense spiritual rewards. Rituals and large public festivals are financed by members, although money for extraordinary expenditures such as the repair of a shrine may be solicited from secular officials and patrons of the Candomblé (Ogans or Obas; Costa Lima 1967). While there is no cost for initiation into *Axé Opô Afonjá*, clothes and animal and vegetable sacrifices are provided by the initiate (these are usually obtained by saving for years or through the help of family and friends). My observations of Candomblé members over a three-year interval revealed that their greatest expenditures were in the service of the gods and not for personal secular needs. Land belonging to the Candomblé is held in common; it is dispensed by the head priestess to those who need it to build houses (pending civil approval). This practice may have its roots in Yoruba principles of land ownership and allocation. Food and economic aid are provided for devotees who experience unforeseen need. In this respect Candomblé Nagô functions as a mutual aid organization.²⁶ The overriding focus of the Candomblé is communal rather than individual and, indeed, one of the highest compliments that can be paid to an initiate is that she is obedient, meaning that she places the interests of the group in the service of the Orixá above herself. Candom-

blé Nagô offers Afro-Bahians a channel through which they may gain a significant measure of self-esteem, social solidarity, prestige, and social mobility in a system which celebrates African values, behavior, and skin color. Thus, Candomblé fulfills a critical need for its members who are otherwise denied full participation in Brazilian society.

In terms of ritual structure, Candomblé Nagô is characterized by belief in and worship of a pantheon of divinities of which Olorun is the supreme, although non-worshiped, head.²⁷ The sixteen major Orixá (gods; Fig. 1), who are thought to reside in Africa, are manifested in human beings of the deities' choice. These individuals are ascertained when, after persistent misfortune or illness, they seek divination to determine the cause. It is then that the will of the Orixá is revealed—the deity requests initiation.²⁸ After a series of rituals and seclusion lasting three months to a year depending on the instruction of divination, these individuals are considered adequately prepared to serve as mediums for the Orixá (*iyawo*)—junior wives (whether male or female), daughters (*filhas*), sons (*filhos*), or carriers (*adoxu*) of the sacred cone on the head.²⁹ Orixá are regarded as forces of nature (e.g., Xango represents thunder, lightning, and fire), socio-political and economic forces (e.g., Ogun is the god of war and metal, and Oxossi, the god of the hunt), or actual heroes deified after death (e.g., Obatala is regarded as the "real" king of Ife, and Xango was once a king of Oyo, both Yoruba towns in Nigeria). Orixá are also thought of as having human characteristics. In this respect they are observed and characterized by dance, music, and costume during public festivals: the quarrels and amorous rivalries of the male Orixá Ogun, Xango, and Oxossi over the female Orixá Oxum (goddess of fresh water and sensual love) or the jealousy of Oxum for Obá (another of Xango's wives) who was tricked by Oxum into cutting off her ear and serving it to her husband in a soup, thereby causing their eternal separation.

A complex symbolic system identifies each Orixá by songs, beads, colors, dance steps, leaves, and herbs. According to Lepine (1981:13-23) each Orixá possesses a distinct personality which gradually becomes integrated with the devotee's personality. Thus an *adoxu xango* becomes forceful, noble, jealous, impulsive, unfaithful, proud, and stubborn (ibid.:21). Each Orixá has an aspect characterized by chance or unpredictability (*Exú*) that Bastide (1978b:170-198) defines as a seventeenth Orixá.³⁰ Within the shrine, each Orixá is localized and ritually consecrated in a stone, sea shell, piece of metal,

or some natural element, as well as in the liturgical objects symbolizing him and containing his force (e.g., Fig. 2). The symbolic elements receive part of every sacrifice offered to the Orixá. The liturgical implements are taken out of the shrine (*peji* or *ile orixá*) precincts only when it is being cleaned or when they are used by incarnated Orixá.

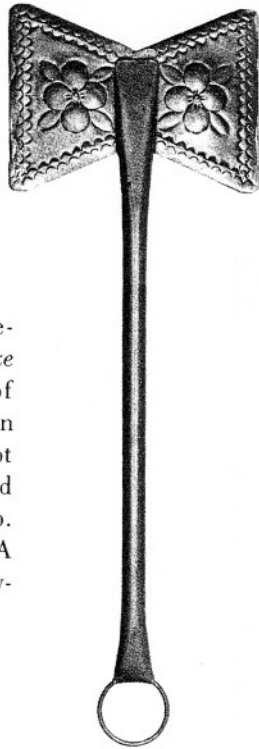


Figure 2. Double-bladed ritual axe (*axe Xango*). Symbolic of the Orixá Xango in Brazil and Africa. Kept in shrine with sacred rattle (*xere*) of Xango. Copper. 35.8 cm. UCLA MCH X83-523. Anonymous gift.

Among the West African Yoruba, there are separate temples and a specialized priesthood for each Orixá, but in Bahia each temple is used to house and worship all of the Orixá honored by that Candomblé. A devotee, therefore, becomes familiar with symbols, songs, rhythms, and costume elements of many Orixá while remaining in command of those belonging to his own deity. In contrast a Yoruba devotee of Osun (Oxum) is likely to be completely ignorant of the ways of Yemojá (Yemanjá in Brazil; Abimbola 1976:14-15).

There seems to be no consensus among Candomblés regarding hierarchical ranking of the Orixá. As a rule, however, public festivals begin with celebrations of the youngest, most hot-headed Orixá (such as Ogun) and progress to the increasingly cool-headed ones, usually ending with celebrations of Oxalá, the oldest and father of all the Orixá.

Features which qualify Afro-Bahian Candomblé as a religion are (1) consistent, systematic, and

active worship of a number of gods and activation and maintenance of their combined sacred force (*axe*); (2) manipulation of sacred liturgical objects representing and imbued with the force of these gods; (3) wearing of designated liturgical vestments during private and public rituals, *always* confined within the physical and spiritual limits of the sacred space of the Candomblé;³¹ (4) initiation of new recruits, insuring the continuity of traditions; and most importantly, (5) the phenomenon of trance whereby a human medium is possessed and serves as the vehicle through which an Orixá or saint (*santo*) is believed to corporalize (Pl. I). Trance functions as religious communion and reinforces the solidarity of the group. Prestige and admiration accrue to an individual who can easily become entranced by his Orixá. I have witnessed numerous occasions when an initiate desired trance but it would not come or was delayed. The usual reaction to this occurrence is increased group support expressed by louder singing in a more rapid rhythm and enthusiastic hand-clapping to the accompaniment of an extremely rapid drum beat (*adarrum*) designed "to bring the Orixá to the initiate's head." In the event that all efforts fail, everyone is disappointed. The facility of trance is evidence of the Orixá's satisfaction with rituals and sacrificial offerings. Regarded emically and etically, the possession trance is the central core of the religion. Through trance the gods come from Africa to Brazil and bring with them the sacred force needed to revitalize and sustain the religion. Ideologically and in reality there could be no Afro-Bahian religion without the spiritual and ritual transformation of the possession trance.³² The achievement of trance is communicated by visual symbols easily recognized by members of Candomblés Nagôs: body postures, behavior, and changes of costume elements. During the great annual festivals, special liturgical outfits appropriate to each god are worn at public and private rituals. As soon as a devotee enters a trance, his (or her) feet and head are bared to allow contact with the earth and air believed to contain the force and presence of the Orixá. Clothing is loosened, and the hands are placed crossed over one another on the small of the back, unless the Orixá is dancing. The eyes are kept closed. In the Ketu Candomblés, each Orixá is identified by his particular yell or sound (*ika*; e.g., all initiates possessed by Oya [Yansan] shout something like "Hay-eee!"). In private rituals there are minor changes in the ritual dress discussed below, while in public festivals there is a complete change of elaborate clothing during intermission (Pl. II).

Figure 1. SYMBOLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE GODS

Ogun	Rules all metal, especially iron, and war. Aggressive, bold, athletic. Dances in a warlike manner. Wears a special crown (<i>akoró</i>) and armor. Carries two metal cutlasses. Color is green or dark blue. Preferred sacrifices are he-goat, guinea fowl, rooster. Preferred food is <i>feijoada</i> . Syncretized with Santo Antonio. Mythical relationships vary from the husband of Yemanjá Ogunte to son of Iyá Tanan and Yemanjá Assaba. Ceremonial greeting is "Ogunhe!"
Omolu Obaluaiye Xapanã Soppona	Rules smallpox, fever, and epidemic diseases. Secretive, stubborn, antisocial. Dances bent over very low to the ground. Carries a ritual broom and is covered with raffia. Color is black combined with white or red. Preferred sacrifices are pig, rooster, he-goat. Preferred foods are popcorn (<i>abadô</i>), finely chopped meats cooked with palm oil (<i>arampatere</i>). Syncretized with São Lazaro, São Roque, or São Bento. Son of Nanan. Ceremonial greeting is "Atotô!"
Nanan	Rules water and is the eldest of all Orixá linked with water. Austere, hardworking, celibate. Dances rocking an <i>ibiri</i> (palm rib staff similar to the <i>xaxara</i> of Omolu). Wears a non-beaded, cloth crown. Colors are dark blue and white. Preferred sacrifices are hen, nanny goat, guinea fowl. Preferred food is a starchy mass made with finely ground, cooked black-eyed peas (<i>anderê</i>). Syncretized with Sant'Anna. Mother of Oxumare and Omolu. Ceremonial greeting is "Salubá!"
Nana Buruku	
Oxumare	Rules the rainbow. Inquisitive, intelligent, artistic. Dances in a snake-like motion or in a frontal march with hands alternating towards the ceiling and floor. Holds a metal snake in each hand. Colors are green, pink, yellow. Preferred sacrifices are he-goat, rooster, guinea fowl. Preferred food is boiled white corn mixed with coconut. Syncretized with São Bartolomeu. Son of Nanan. Ceremonial greeting is "Arô Moboi!"
Oxossi	Rules the hunt and is connected with the forest. Introverted, unstable, intellectual. Dances as an aggressive hunter pursuing and capturing game. Wears two powder horns, holds a bow and arrow (<i>ofá</i>) and one or two horsehair flywhisks. Color is turquoise blue. Preferred sacrifices are he-goat, pig, the head of a bull, rooster, guinea fowl. Preferred foods are boiled yellow corn slightly sweetened and mixed with coconut (<i>axoxó</i>), yams, black beans. Syncretized with São Jorge. Ceremonial greeting is "Okê Arô!"
Longunede	Hunter who is female during certain periods and male during others and is linked with the forest. Calm, refined. Dances with bow and arrow (<i>ofá</i>) and fan in modified hunter's dance. Wears powder horns. Colors are turquoise blue and crystal yellow. Preferred sacrifices are castrated bull (<i>odá</i>), armadillo (<i>tatu</i>). Preferred foods are <i>axoxó</i> and black-eyed peas mixed with boiled eggs (<i>omolocum</i>). Syncretized with São Miguel Arcanjo. Son of Oxossi and Oyá Pondá. Ceremonial greeting is "Logun!"
Ossaim	Rules the force in sacred leaves and medicines and is linked with the forest. Intuitive, elegant, sensitive. Dances rapidly in hopping, skipping movements. Carries an iron staff with seven or more points and a bird in the middle extending upwards from the base. Color is mint green. Preferred sacrifices are he-goat, rooster. Preferred foods are black beans, manioc meal. Syncretized with São Benedito. Ceremonial greeting is "Ewe O!"
Xango	Rules thunder and lightning. Formerly King of Oyo, Nigeria. Proud, aggressive, stubborn. Dances rapidly to a rhythm called <i>bata</i> in a royal yet warrior-like manner. Holds a double-bladed metal or wooden axe (<i>oxe</i>) which is brandished from side to side. Colors are red and white. Preferred sacrifices are sheep, turtle, rooster. Preferred food is whole okra cooked with beef and served with yam (<i>amala</i>). Syncretized with São Jeronimo. Husband of Yansan, Oxum, and Oba and son of Yemanjá. Ceremonial greeting is "Kawo Kabiyesile!"
Yansan Oya	Rules tempests and, in the aspect of Yansan'Bale, cemeteries and the dead. Sensual, forceful, unfaithful. Dances rapidly from side to side with arms waving. Carries one or two flywhisks and a sword. Colors are bright to earth red. Preferred sacrifices are nanny goat, hen, guinea fowl. Preferred foods are fried cake of ground black-eyed peas (<i>acarajê</i>), cooked okra cut in circular rounds (<i>caruru</i>). Syncretized with Santa Barbara. Wife of Xango and mother of Egun. Ceremonial greeting is "Epa Hei!"

- Obá** Rules the river Oba. Timid, charming. Dances covering her left ear. Holds a sword in one hand and a small shield in the other. If the Orixá Oxum is manifested at the same time, a fight between the two usually ensues. Colors are red and white. Preferred sacrifices are nanny goat, duck, guinea fowl. Preferred food is ground black-eyed peas wrapped in banana leaves and steamed (*abará*). Syncretized with Santa Catarina. Wife of Xango. Ceremonial greeting is “*Obá Xirêê!*”
- Oxum**
Oxun Rules the river Oxum. Beautiful, vain, acquisitive, deceitful. Dances as if preening herself at a river bank—looking in a mirror and adjusting her adornments and clothing. Dances in a rhythm called *ijexa*, holding her skirts up and on her tiptoes. Carries a fan. Colors vary from crystal yellow-gold to opaque chartreuse. Preferred sacrifices are duck, hen, guinea fowl, nanny goat. Preferred foods are a mixture of black-eyed peas, onion, and shrimp (*mulukun*) and corn meal mush mixed with honey and vegetable oil (*adun*). Syncretized with Nossa Senhora das Candeias. Youngest wife of Xango. Ceremonial greeting is “*Ore Yeyé O!*”
- Ewa** Rules the river Ewa. Emotional, devoted, kind. Dances as if fighting. Holds a harpoon in her left hand and a sword in her right. Colors are red (maroon) and yellow. Preferred sacrifices are white pigeon, guinea fowl. Preferred foods are sweet potatoes, fried bananas, ground corn. Syncretized with Joan of Arc. Ceremonial greeting is “*Ri Rô!*”
- Yemanjá** Rules the river Ogun. Calm, serious, dignified. Dances in movement simulating waves—two or three steps forward and one backward. Carries a fan. Colors are crystal white and crystal blue or green. Preferred sacrifices are duck, guinea fowl, nanny goat. Preferred food is boiled white corn mixed with onion and palm oil (*ebo*). Syncretized with the Virgin Mary (Nossa Senhora da Conceição). Mother of all the Orixá except Omolu and Oxumare. Ceremonial greeting is “*Odô Iyê!*”
- Onile** Rules the earth and does not incorporate in humans. Symbol is a large triangular mound of hard-packed earth. Preferred sacrifice is he-goat. Preferred food is palm oil.
- Oxalá**
Oxaguian Youthful aspect of Oxalá, the creator god. Dynamic, brave, warrior-like. Dances very actively and aggressively in a warrior mode. Holds a small shield in his right hand and a short thick staff (*pilão*) in his left. Colors are periwinkle blue (as in *segi*, the tubular blue beads made in ancient Ifê) and opaque white. Preferred sacrifices are guinea fowl, hen, she-goat. Preferred food is unsalted pounded yam. Syncretized with the adolescent Jesus Christ. Ceremonial greeting is “*Epá!*”
- Oxalá**
Oxalufon Elder aspect of Oxalá. Rules birth and creativity. Tranquil, moral, inflexible. Dances in a very slow rhythm bent low to the ground in the manner of a very tired old man. Frequently covered by a white cloth, the ends of which are held protectively by other Orixá manifested in the festival. Carries a multi-layered staff (*paxoro*) and at times a fan. Color is opaque white. Preferred sacrifices are white pigeon, white hen, white goat. Preferred food is boiled white corn or unsalted pounded yam. Syncretized with the mature Jesus Christ. Father of all Orixá and husband to Nanan and Yemanjá. Ceremonial greeting is “*Epá Bâbá!*”
- Exú** Rules all areas of the world without restriction. Serves as an intermediary between the gods, ancestors, and men. Each initiate, Egun, and Orixá has a personal Exú with a specific name and specific duties. Exú is the first deity to be propitiated in any ritual but does not incorporate in humans except among Bantu Candomblés. Colors are red and black. Preferred sacrifices are black he-goat, black rooster. Preferred food and drink are palm oil, manioc flour (*farinha*) mixed with palm oil (*farofa*), and plain white rum. Erroneously syncretized with the devil. Ceremonial greeting is “*Tutu Laroye!*”

AFRO-BAHIAN ART IN THE SACRED SPACE

The world of Candomblé is a peripheral one, especially in comparison to European and American-oriented sectors of Luso-Brazilian culture. In fact Candomblé constitutes a distinct subculture; it is a separate reality where African behavior norms are emphasized. This was underscored many times during my field research, especially during my residence at Axé Opô Afonjá.



Required Candomblé dress for suplicants, visiting dignitaries, and all but the most casual visitors is a ritual uniform composed of five elements, one of which is optional (Fig. 3). The *camizu*, the name of which is derived from the Muslim burial tunic (Nina Rodrigues [1896] 1935:152), consists of a short-sleeved blouse trimmed in lace and attached to a slip (Fig. 4). The *saia* is a full ankle-length skirt gathered at the waist and fastened by long ties extending from a very thin waistband. The *ojá* (or *torço*) is a long narrow piece of cloth (30.5 cm x 163 cm) which serves as a headtie in the African fashion when the initiate (*adoxu*) is in a normal state of consciousness. I have observed that when possession trance occurs, the *ojá* is immediately taken off the head and placed on another part of the body, indicating not only the changed state of being but also the identity of the Orixá possessing the initiate. For instance female Orixá (*ayabá*) including Yansan, Oxum, and Yemanjá, have their *ojá* tied over their breasts, under their armpits into a big bow at the small of the back (Pl. III). Oxossi, a male Orixá, has two *ojá* crisscrossed front and back, ending in a bow on each shoulder. Oxalá, another male, has two *ojá* crisscrossed in the manner of Oxossi but with the bows ending at the hipline. This symbolic system allows one to identify immediately the Orixá possessing the *adoxu*. Bead necklaces (*ileki*) are the fourth part of the uniform and indicate the generic type and quality of the Orixá by the color(s) and sequential arrangement of beads. The type of bead communicates initiate or non-initiate status. *Iyawo* (recent initiates) are distinguished by a special necklace called *kele*. Consisting of large tubular beads worn close to the neck in choker fashion, the *kele*'s color indicates the new initiate's Orixá.³³ The *kele* is a sign of submission to the Orixá and is only taken off after the initiate's

Figure 3. Liturgical costume. Blouse (*camizu*), full skirt (*saia*), headtie (*ojá*), and ritually prepared beads symbolizing the initiate's link with the Orixá. Cotton, synthetic fabric. Skirt length: 91.4 cm. Skirt: UCLA MCH X83-543; UCLA MCH X83-542a-c. Gift of the author.



Figure 4. Blouse and attached underskirt (*camizu*). Cotton. Length: 115.5 cm. Loaned by the author.

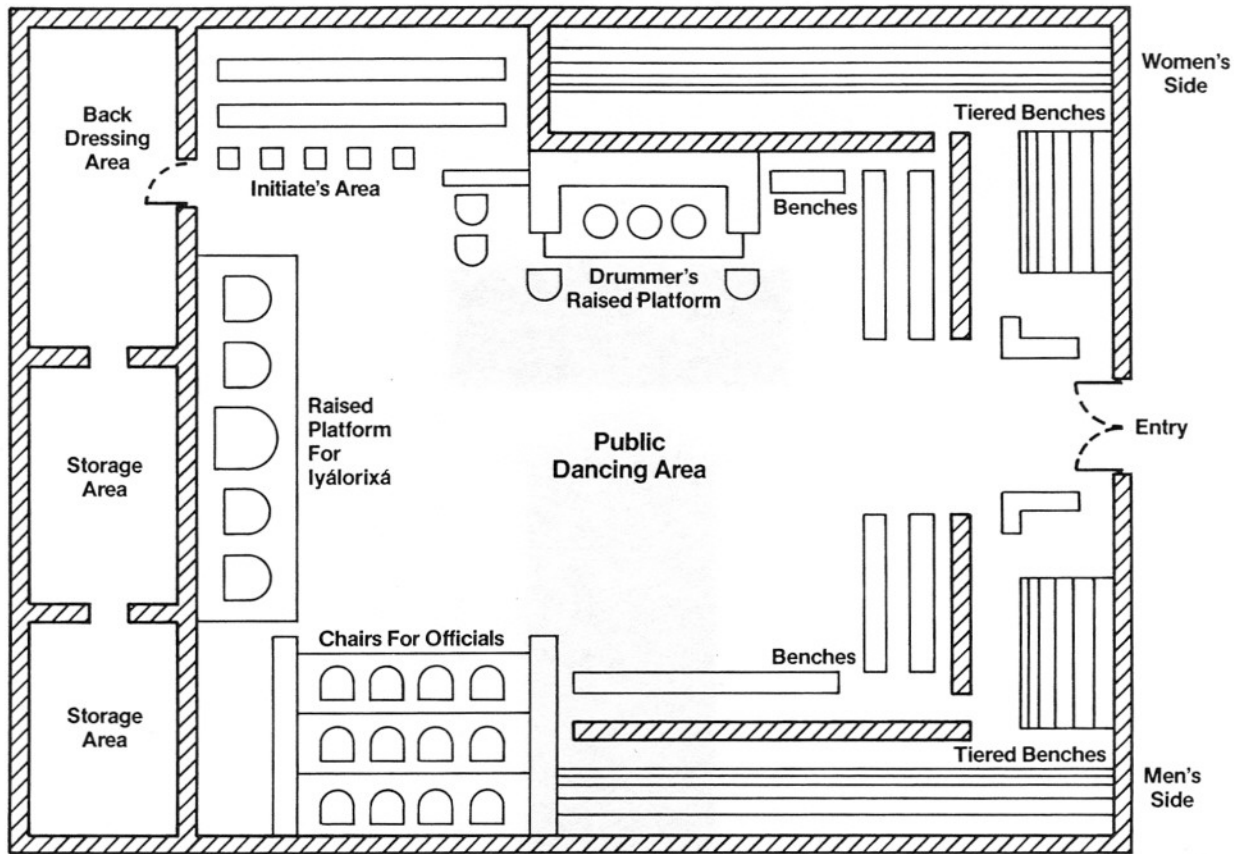
first public appearance (*orunkô*) which is also the day she first utters her new initiate name. Removal of the *kele* marks the end of strict ritual seclusion and total dominance by the Orixá (pc:Pai Crispim, Bahia, November 13, 1982). It may also symbolize the initiate's newly acquired sense of power since a major part of initiation is devoted to teaching control of trance so that the Orixá may not come at their wills but only during rituals as a response to specific cues or "summons." Once the *kele* is off, the *adoxu* places the necklace in her ritual core of sacred objects along with the stone (*itá* or *otá*) in which her Orixá is localized and consecrated. (This complex of objects is commonly known as *assento* or *assentamento*, meaning seat or foundation in Portuguese.) A tubular bead or shell (*firma*), slightly larger than the other beads on the necklace, symbolizes the initiatory status of the wearer as well as the mythic relationship with other Orixá. An *adoxu* of Yansan would always have a *firma* for Xango, her principal husband, while an Omolu devotee would always have a blue-and-white striped *firma* for

Nanan, his mother. Thus only someone who actually had ingredients containing *axe* placed in slits in his head would be entitled to wear a *firma* on his necklace. The absence of a *firma* indicates either an initiate at the lowest stage or someone who wears the beads as a protective device.

The optional costume element is the *pano da costa*, a wide rectangular piece of cloth (60 cm x 92 cm or 123 cm depending upon the wearer's girth) derived from Yoruba strip-weave cloth (*aso-oke*).³⁴ It is customarily worn during annual public festivals or formal rites such as the occasion of gift giving to Yemanjá in November. *Pano da costa* vary in quality and color depending on the ritual, the Orixá of the initiate for whom the festival is held (*dono da festa*), and the economic means of the initiate. Sacred implements also form an integral part of an Orixá's individual shrine and costume and are brought out for use only by an incarnated Orixá during an annual festival, a three- or seven-year obligation (*obrigação*),³⁵ or the first public festival of a recent initiate (*saida de iyawo*).

Public rituals take place in the sacred space known as a *barracão*—a large square whitewashed building made of cement-covered mud. In the past roofs were thatched but now are covered with red half-cylindrical tiles. In Afonjá and other major Candomblés, the *barracão* serves as a dancing arena during public festivals as well as a storage area for the Orixá's ritual clothing. Each initiate (*filha de santo*) stores the special clothes for her Orixá in a large trunk in one of three special rooms isolated from the major public area (Fig. 5). When the *barracão* functions as an arena for the drama of the Orixá, seating is hierarchically arranged. Against the wall opposite the entrance is the throne of the *iyálorixá*, the highest authority in the Candomblé. This chair is larger, taller, and more elaborate than any other in the *barracão*, befitting and symbolizing her status. There are two smaller chairs on each side of the throne, but these are still larger than all others. They are reserved for the Obas of Xango (the highest posts in civil hierarchy).³⁶ Near the west wall is a designated area for initiates furnished with long narrow wooden benches and square wooden stools. Directly opposite, along the east wall, are several tiered rows of chairs for officials and distinguished guests. Along the north and south walls are bleachers for spectators. Men sit on the left side of the public entrance and women on the right. On either side of the entrance is found a reduced version of this type of seating. Drummers are situated on a raised area immediately behind the initiates in front of the audience. Everyone pays

Figure 5. Plan of *barracão* at Axé Opô Afonjá, São Gonçalo do Retiro, Cabula.



careful attention to the seating arrangements.

Each level in the Candomblé hierarchy (*iyálorixá*, *ebomin*, and *iyawo*³⁷) is distinguished by mode of social behavior. Within each level status accrues with length of membership—even a few minutes difference in time of initiation confers seniority and, by extension, prestige. Marked deference is paid by *iyawos* when addressing the *iyálorixá*—the bowing and baring of heads is similar to the respect Yoruba pay their kings.

Socio-religious positions are also communicated by modes of dress. During public and private rituals the *iyálorixá* wears a *pano da costa* folded into a rectangle which is thrown over her left shoulder. This is often the highly prestigious *aso oke* imported from Nigeria, and the colors of her personal Orixá dominate. The special rich and unusual fabrics comprising her items of dress may not be duplicated. (These are frequently gifts from clients who solicited divination which is given without charge at Afonjá.) Special necklaces and beaded bracelets or other materials of unusual size, shape, and combination are part of the costume. A special item of dress is the *bata*, a loose blouse

resembling the West African Yoruba *bata* but with flaring sleeves of medium length, worn loosely over the *camizu* and *saia*. It is usually made of a richly embroidered transparent material, predominantly white with various colors, and trimmed in handmade lace. The *bata* is a symbol of the completion of the seven-year ritual marking the transition from the state of *iyawo* to *ebomin* (Pl. IV).

An *ebomin* is entitled to a *bata* of lesser quality than the *iyálorixá*; they are the only ones entitled to wear this garment. *Ebomin* wear it tied at the waist with a long thin rectangular cloth (*ojá*) during public ceremonies. During public festivals they must wear the *pano da costa* wrapped around the torso over the skirt and under the armpits, over which the *ojá* is tied in a big bow on the breast.

Ordinary material possessions are indicative of ritual level. In her own home an initiate uses whatever utensils she prefers, but in the sacred space only the *iyálorixá* uses fine china, crystal, or chrome plates, cups, and glasses. An *ebomin* is entitled to a lesser quality dinnerware, while other initiates must use only inexpensive enameled tin plates and cups symbolizing their low status. Usu-

ally lower initiates are required to eat with their hands.

Architecture and site also reflect ritual status. The *iyálorixá* lives in the largest, most well-appointed house, usually at or near the location of the sacred force of the Candomblé's patron Orixá. Other living areas are hierarchically arranged.

In principle upon fulfilling the seven-year *obrigação*, any initiate with money, spiritual powers, and the blessing of the *iyálorixá* may undergo a ritual to prepare him to open his own Candomblé. The new shrine must contain sacred items (*deká*) including the sacred implements of the initiate's particular Orixá in order to implant *axe* in the new *terreiro*.³⁸ This process requires the help of many ritual specialists and elder priests and priestesses of other Candomblés (pc:Oxunlade, October, 1983; Pai Crispim, November 21, 1982).

In Brazilian society the head priestess may possess the social status, dwelling, and clothing of the elite or she may come from the lowest socio-economic class. Some, such as Mae Estella³⁹ and Olga do Alaketu, are well educated and traveled. Nevertheless the Candomblé imposes its own status, and within its parameters the *iyálorixá*'s position as the keeper and manipulator of the sacred force (*axe*) makes her position paramount.

While Afro-Bahian religions affect and are affected by Luso-Brazilian society, they constitute autonomous psychological and behavioral spheres. Afro-Bahian ritual art developed in this context and thus sustains and mirrors internal social and religious values. Afro-Bahian ritual art originally was and still is multifunctional. On an emic level, it recalls the legendary past and thereby maintains conceptual and formal historico-ritual links with Africa. Rituals and symbols reiterated during religious ceremonies further ingrain the connection to the mother country (Fig. 6). Furthermore public festivals (*xire*, Yoruba for play, gala, party) provide an opportunity for aesthetic and theatrical display.⁴⁰ Initiates are able to be "onstage" and the focus of attention for a time. When viewing these attempts to please the Orixá through a rich and colorful exhibition of beautiful and unusual costume elements, an etic interpreter will discern a competitive aspect to Afro-Bahian ritual art—attempts by initiates to outdo "sisters" or fellow initiates with their display (Fig. 7).

Since the beginning of this century, and increasingly since 1972 with the appearance of Ilê Aiyê, the first Bloco Afro (Carnaval parading organization) composed entirely of Blacks, the Afro-Bahian liturgical costume has appeared in the

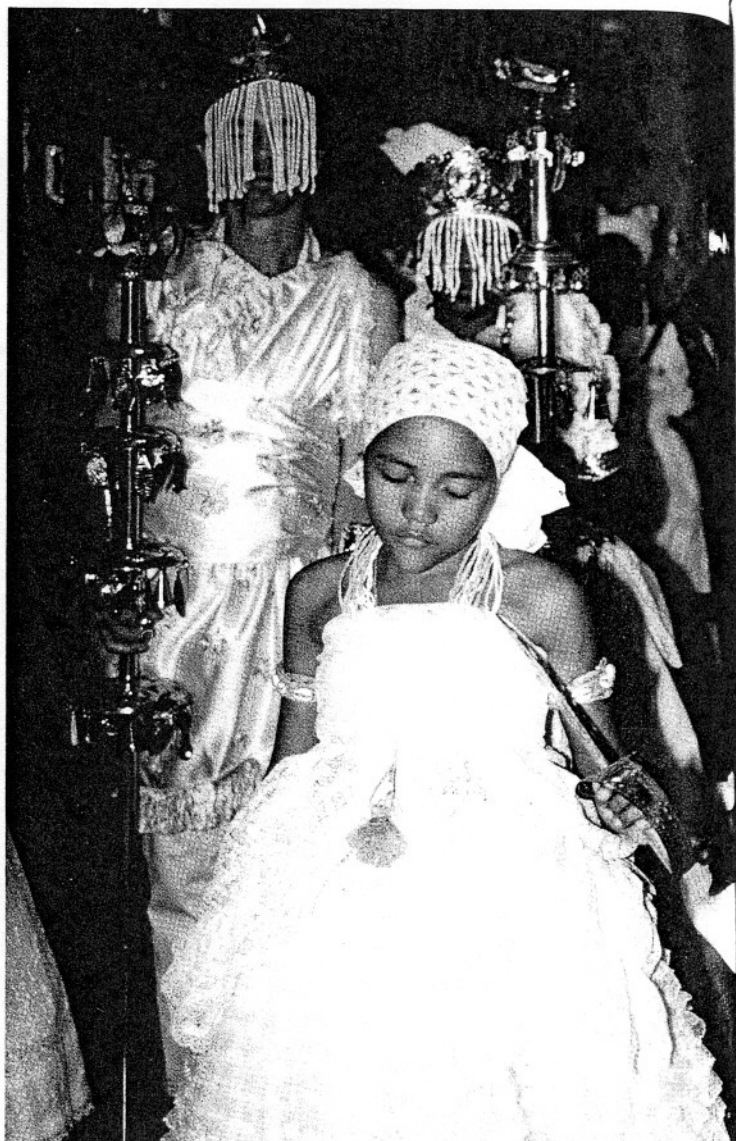
festival of Carnaval. Particularly pervasive are the vestments worn by initiates when possessed by the Orixá. Traditionally these garments were seen for only a short time in the dance arena during the enactment of myths and legends about the lives of the Orixá. According to leaders and serious members of Candomblé, the greater visibility of ritual dress and objects detracts from the status of Afro-Bahian religion and relegates it to a position of folklore or popular culture.⁴¹

Bastide (1978b:95-97) records the Bahian expression: "*candomblé de brincadeira no afoxê*" literally, "Afro-Bahian religion [just] for fun in the *afoxê*." The term *afoxê*, a Bantu derivative, is used to distinguish the Carnaval group which begins its rehearsals (*ensaios*) and public performances (*sai-das*) during Carnaval with authentic Candomblé rituals such as the *pade* or *despacho* (to please or send away in a ritual context) for Exú.⁴² *Afoxés* usually address the Orixá in their songs (a mixture of



Figure 6. Orixá Ogun dancing in full liturgical dress. He wears the crown peculiar to Ogun (*akorô*) and a kind of metal armor (*coraça*). The female Orixá accompanying him is Yansan'Bale, mythical mother of Egun. Candomblé of Dona Hilda, Curuzu, January 25, 1981.

Figure 7. Orixá Oxalá holding his liturgical implement (*paxoro*), dancing behind Orixá Yansan-'Bale. Candomblé of Dona Hilda, Curuzu, January 25, 1981.



Yoruba and Portuguese). These groups contrast with the Blocos Afros who are concerned with issues of negritude, liberty, and politics (Crowley 1984:28). The ritual drums used in Candomblé ceremonies also have been appropriated by the Carnival *afoxés*, but since they are not ritually prepared, the rhythms do not provoke the possession trance in the dancers. Trance is, however, simulated in Carnival. Those older leaders and members of Candomblé who refuse to participate in Carnival feel this is a profane use of sacred symbols, a cari-

capture of religious rites (pc:Pai Crispim, 1982; Flaviano, March, 1982; Bastide 1978:95). Alternatively the term *candomblé de brincadeira* may suggest that Carnival is a Candomblé without trance or possession by the Orixá (Bastide 1978b:96). Since emic and etic definitions of Candomblé as a religion include the central and requisite phenomenon of the possession trance, it seems reasonable to propose that *candomblé de brincadeira* represents a mime or theatrical production employing elements of Candomblé.⁴³

LITURGICAL VESTMENTS OF THE ORIXÁ

Elements of liturgical costume and liturgical implements are the leitmotifs of each Orixá. Individually or in combination they communicate the supernatural presence of a particular god in the sacred dancing arena of the *barracão*. This manifestation is guaranteed by successful private sacrifices and rituals performed earlier in the day and by the compelling combination of decorations and music which summon the Orixá from Africa. The paraphernalia of each Orixá are made of the most elaborate, luxurious, and expensive materials available, surpassing the furnishings of the *iyálorixá*. Silver-, gold-, and copper-colored brocades are used with lace, velvet, and other prestigious materials in the characteristic colors of the Orixá (Pl. I). These vestments symbolize the spiritual transformation of the *adoxu* on the dance floor. The furnishings of the Orixá are made by designated initiates, usually *ebomin*; metal ritual objects are made by smiths of at least lower initiate status (*abian*). Objects and clothing are made in isolation and involve a number of ritual precautions (e.g., a woman must not be menstruating or having sexual relations). Before use objects must be consecrated; after use they may not be washed, dry-cleaned, or touched by a profane person (pc:Daisy, Tia Lelinha de Oxum, July 1982; October 1982). Since they are worn for only a limited period of time (forty-five minutes to an hour) during public ceremonies, this does not pose a problem. Implements are removed from their altars in the main collective shrine and carried in white cloth wrappings to the back room of the *barracão* until the Orixá reappears carrying them into the sacred dancing space. Once the Orixá returns and the rituals are performed to release the *adoxu* from the Orixá, the special clothing and implements are put away carefully. The *adoxu*, while still in trance, is dressed in daily ritual attire but with a modification: the skirt is tied under the arm and onto one shoulder (made possible by a slit in the side; Fig. 8). This signifies the infantile trance of *ere*, a state of relaxation in which the *adoxu* runs, jokes, giggles, and plays like a child.

Purchasing liturgical vestments and implements involves great expense, and many initiates borrow large sums which they try to repay in install-



Figure 8. Liturgical costume. The skirt worn over the left shoulder communicates the state of infantile trance (*ere*). Cotton, synthetic fabric. Skirt length: 91.4 cm. Skirt: UCLA MCH X83-543; UCLA MCH X83-542a-c. Gift of the author.

ments (*à prestação*). This financial outlay is partly justified by the appreciation of the spectators and initiates who scrutinize and discuss each costume and performance. The Orixá of Oxunlade, an initiate of Oxum and visiting *iyálorixá* from Brasília, illicited much enthusiastic commentary with her lavish costumes which included an unusual

transparent gold-colored skirt draped into scallops with tiny gold and pink flowers. Oxunlade gained a great deal of recognition and prestige, and the beauty of the dance and costume of her Oxum were discussed for weeks after the event; no one knew that the expense left her without funds for a month. She believed that her efforts to please her Orixá aesthetically would result in spiritual benefits which would more than compensate her for the hardship (pc:Oxunlade, October 12, 1982).

Attempts to please the Orixá with aesthetic excellence are evident among the Yoruba of West Africa (pc:Mogbá Sango, Ibadan, May 1982; Baba Ibeta, Ketu, April, 1981; Babatunde Lawal, Bahia, September, 1982). Beautiful wood carvings provided for the shrine of the Orisa (Orixá) are thought to result in spiritual and material benefits. Another motivation for aesthetic donation is a sense of responsibility to do whatever possible within one's means. While the shrine (*ojubo*) of a poor man might have only a few carvings, the shrine of a rich man or high official is expected to have many. When asked why he had so many large sculptures in his shrine for Sango (Fig. 9), the Mogbá (highest official of the cult) replied that they were "*ebo fun orisa*" (offerings for [pleasing] the Orixá; May 16, 1982). According to Awolalu,

All sacrificial acts whether they involve the offering of plants or animals, are known in Yoruba by the single term *ebo*. A man may be able to offer his dress (*aso*) as a sacrifice just as he may be asked to offer a goat (*ewure*). Both materials of sacrifice will be referred to as *ebo* (1979:162-163).

Regarding art and objects of aesthetic value as suitable offerings to the gods by the Yoruba may elucidate the function and meaning of liturgical costume and implements in Candomblé. Many of my Bahian sisters and informants have emphasized the interpretation of festivals as "*festejar os Orixás*;" *festejar* in Portuguese means to praise, applaud, caress, or celebrate with a feast or party (pc:Daisy, July, 1982; Pai Crispim and Iyatola, November, 1982) and it implies "do something big or extraordinary for someone or something elevated." The Yoruba view persists in Afro-Bahian Candomblés: the Orixá can be manipulated by aesthetic display. Thus large public festivals (*xire*) are collective tributes to the Orixá with the expectation of spiritual benefit. Ritual objects and attire are seen as individual offerings (Pl. II). The consecration of these items is evidence of their spiritual force, and they are appropriate elements of the sacred object complex.



Figure 9. Mogbá Sango, highest official in the Sango cult, in the main shrine with the elaborate carvings which are offerings to the gods (*ebo*). Ibadan, Nigeria, May 16, 1983.