

Under the Berlin sky

Candomblé on German shores

Joana Bahia

Abstract

Migratory phenomena produce ethnicities, and a number of migratory studies consider the representation of identities created by individuals and groups by their cultural symbols. This study analyzes the cultural and religious dimension of migration, using as an example the Brazilian community in Germany, and the way in which it reconfigures the local religious field. In this study we look at the ethnic symbols in the religious field, based upon fieldwork begun in 2009, which analyses the importance of the Candomblé terreiro or temple, Ilê Obá Silekê in the city of Berlin. I seek to understand how the construction of the terreiro is important in the production of symbols related to Brazilian culture, and how these are perceived by local society.

Keywords: Ethnicity and religion, expansion of Afro-Brazilian religiousness in Europe, Brazilian migration, religious field in Germany.

Resumo

O fenômeno migratório produz etnicidades, e alguns dos estudos migratórios contemplam a representação da identidade construída por indivíduos e grupos por meio de seus símbolos culturais. Analisamos a dimensão cultural e religiosa da migração tomando como exemplo a presença de brasileiros na Alemanha e o modo como reconfiguram o campo religioso local. Neste artigo, tratamos da circulação de símbolos étnicos no campo religioso, abordando, com base no trabalho de campo iniciado em 2009, a importância do terreiro de candomblé Ilê Obá Silekê, localizado na cidade de Berlim. Buscamos compreender de que modo a construção do terreiro é importante para a produção de símbolos relacionados com a cultura brasileira e de que modo estes são percebidos na sociedade local.

Palavras chaves: etnicidade e religião, expansão da religiosidade afro brasileira na Europa, migração brasileira, campo religioso na Alemanha.

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Introduction

A century ago, Brazil was a country that received many more immigrants than it exported. But since the 1980s, it has become a country that exports more workers than it receives.¹ This change isn't solely demographic, but denotes a complex social and political scenario that has diverse implications.

Brazilian emigration took on significant proportions since the mid-1980s, according to Teresa Sales (1999: 20-21). Since the first half of that decade, Brazil has constantly experienced a negative migratory balance, and because of this, it is currently considered an "emigration country". The presence of Brazilians in Europe has grown due to international socio-economic changes, particularly the tougher U.S. immigration policies as a consequence of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

Recent statistics from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and recent studies on Brazilians in the United States and Europe, indicate that most Brazilians emigrate to the USA, followed by Europe (Povoá Neto 2007; Oliveira Assis 2013; and Siqueira 2014). In general, these studies are based upon migration networks that already exist in the destination country. Immigrants are increasingly associated with criminalization, particularly women (Pontes 2004), a phenomenon that intensified after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA. This fact was highlighted by the European media (Oliveira Assis and Martins 2010a and 2010b). Within Europe, most Brazilians go to Portugal, followed by Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland and Belgium.

I would like to highlight the case of Germany, because along with Great

¹ Notwithstanding the current situation in which many Brazilians are returning to Brazil, and many qualified professional Portuguese citizens are emigrating from Portugal to Brazil and Africa. This movement of people and symbols is also worthy of analysis. To what extent does the insertion of Brazilians not only occur in the marketplace, but also in the symbolic reconstructions of Portuguese and European religious fields as a whole? And in what way will new symbolic circuits be created? Many Brazilians and Portuguese are now migrating to Switzerland, and since 2011, there has been a slight increase in Brazilians migrating to Germany.

Britain, Ireland and Italy, Germany was the European country with the highest emigration rates in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This emigration declined with the rise of National Socialism and World War II. At the peak of European industrialization, Germany experienced labor immigration from Italy, Portugal, Eastern Europe and Asia, becoming the country with the highest immigration levels in Europe (Birsl and Solé 2004: 44).

Germany, has 216,285 officially registered residents from Latin America, of which 32,445 are Brazilian, with a predominance of women. According to official statistics, 2,532 Brazilians live in Berlin. It is estimated that there are 8 thousand Brazilians in Berlin if illegal immigrants or those with European citizenship are considered. It is important to note that many Brazilians, particularly professionals or those who emigrate to study, establish their right to remain with a European passport, whether issued in Germany or another country. This makes it difficult to precisely ascertain the number of Brazilians in Germany's capital cities (Berlin, Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich). According to 2012 data obtained from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are 95,150 Brazilians in Germany, making it the fourth leading recipient of Brazilians.

Gradual changes have occurred in Germany's migration patterns since the 1980s, with the inflow of groups from Asia, Africa and Latin America, particularly Brazilians. The fall of the Berlin Wall changed relationships, not only among Germans but also between Germans and foreigners. To complicate this cultural chessboard even more, large numbers of Germans who had migrated to other regions in Europe, returned after the fall of the Berlin Wall. We must also consider the presence of migrants and refugees from Eastern Europe after geopolitical changes in the Balkans, USSR and other countries of the former Soviet block.

Brazilian immigrants have not only inserted themselves in global labor markets, but also participate in a symbolic recreation of the religious field. The practice and expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions in Latin America (particularly in Uruguay and Argentina) since the 1960s have been studied by Frigério (1999), Segato (1991, 1994 and 1997) and Oro (1998). In the 1970s, they crossed the Atlantic and expanded into Portugal (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009). They can now be found in Spain, Belgium, Italy, France (Capone and Teisenhoffer 2002), Germany (Bahia 2012), Austria, Switzerland, and the United States of America.

Brazilians don't have a close linguistic proximity to Germany, nor a strong colonial relationship as they do with Portugal, because Brazil was not colonized by Germany.

Meanwhile, Brazil is perceived as "exotic" by Germans, many of whom have a highly romanticized view of Brazil. An image of Brazil as a beautiful country, with lush forests has been propagated by travelers, naturalists and German emigrants since the 19th century (Neumann 2005). Certain ideas come to the minds of Germans when someone says "I am Brazilian". Positive images are associated to Brazilian nationality, which are converted into an intermediate category. In other words they support dominant discourses about the belonging of the other and not judging, upon viewing people for the first time with a previously developed position. (Said 1990). Brazil is also a place where many Germans settled colonies where they rebuilt an idea of Germany in the tropics, reinventing the European map on Brazilian soil, because the essence of being German is based upon a concept of *jus sanguinis*, which is understood to mean, I am German in any part of the world.

The same concept can be used to classify Brazilian emigrants. Notwithstanding changes in migrant rights, and variables in German policies with regard to this issue, the concept of *jus sanguinis* remains intact in German legislation (ever since the German Constitution of 1913). In other words, only children born of German parents are considered German. The term *Ausländer* is used for a person who isn't in his or her country, literally a foreigner.² Regardless of their legal standing, this category is widely used for people who are defined as non-white, according to the definition of "being white" as it is understood by members of the dominant society (Thränhardt 1984).

The idea of a nation as a cultural construct is based on the concept of *jus sanguinis* (Brubaker 1984), and clearly affirms what it means to be German or not German. There are other defining concepts such as *Mischlingskinder*, which is used to describe children of mixed race and *Schutzbefohlene*,³ which is to describe the status of a population colonized by Germany (such as

2 There are variations on the idea and term *Ausländer*, which may be used to refer to foreign migrant workers or even a worker who was invited to the country, under German policies.

3 Blacks in German colonies were commonly called *Eingeborener* (native) in public German discourse. When these people go to Germany to work or study, they become *Ausländer*, a term that doesn't denote skin color the same way as expressions such as *Mohr* and *Neger* do. There are derogatory expressions such as *Bimbo* which are not mentioned here. Many authors affirm that black immigrants have less rights than white foreigners in Germany (Nagl 2007).

Nigerians). The latter term has a racial connotation and is strongly based on physical appearance. In 1998, a new term was introduced into the official discourse to avoid or smooth over the negative tone of *Ausländer*: a *mit Migrationshintergrund*⁴ (person from a migratory background).

Culture is objectified in the body, musicality and religiosity. These are spaces occupied by Brazilians. Brazilian bodies have a cultural representation for Germans, who exoticize Brazilians and expect them to use their bodies and senses artistically.

Stereotypes related to corporality, are created by tourist propaganda, in particular by The Brazilian Tourist Board, Embratur. Since the 1980s, a feminized imagery of Brazil has been emphasized that incites sexual tourism in Europe (Piscitelli 2007).⁵

Changes in the German religious field

The German religious field is undergoing a transformation due mainly to migration from Turkey, Africa and other Arab countries, and more recently because of Cuban and Brazilian emigration. Many Turks migrated in the 1960s when Germany had temporary work programs to supply industrial labor. At the time, the aim was for these workers – recruited from countries such as Italy, Yugoslavia, Portugal and Turkey – to remain in the country for a limited period of time, but return to their countries when their work contracts terminate. But controlling immigration proved to be a challenge, given that it involves professional and family ties, and those who were meant to only be temporary workers, became permanent residents.⁶

There have been various forms of Brazilian immigration to Germany, the importance of which can be recognized in the internal differentiation

4 According to the Statistisches Bundesamt (2009: 6), this term refers to: “all those people who migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, and all foreigners born in Germany who have at least one parent who migrated or was born as a foreign national in Germany”.

5 Although this specific topic will not be discussed in detail in this article. I would like to highlight the exoticism of gender. If on one hand it offers an illusion of admiration and fascination, on the other it also encourages a policy that converts the other into something inferior, an object of domination hidden by a mystification, something that oscillates between the extremes of strangeness and familiarity. On this subject, see Kempadoo (2004). Lidola (2011), based on studies by Kahrsch (1996) and Engel (1998), which depict the way in which Brazilian women have been perceived by Germans as an exotic object of desire, from a perspective of hyperfeminisation. This opposes ideas held by German women who may be considered to have lost this characteristic (femininity) in virtue of their emancipation.

6 I will not delve further into this issue in this article. Suffice to mention the bibliography on this subject.



Picture 1. Cuban pai de santo Joaquin La Havana representing Oxum in afoxés parade at Karneval des Kulturen, in Berlin. Photo by Joana Bahia.

within the group. During the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964 to 1985), many intellectuals moved to Germany for political reasons, some of Jewish origin. Some emigration is related to German companies with business interests in Brazil. There is also emigration related to studies of the German language and insertion into the academic world, particularly for technical professions (engineering and industries that use state-of-the-art technology), because of the well known German exchange services, the Daad (Deutsch Akademischer Austauschdienst), in Latin America. There are also middle class Brazilians seeking better working conditions, who left Brazil between 1985 and 1994 due to the economic crisis. The large majority of Brazilian immigrants have married Germans, which is the most recent migrant profile (becoming important since 2000) and relies upon existing migration networks. There are also those who migrate to work in the sex industry, and who may continue in this profession or take a different direction, . they may marry or change their profession. Recent studies of Italian and German descendants in the southern Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul found that in the mid-1990s, some emigrated to Italy and Germany, either to study or to work in services (Oliveira Assis 2013). As I have stated, the reasons for many of these migration patterns are not always clear. In many cases, family and work ties and motivations are entwined and difficult to isolate. The field work carried out in Berlin encountered this migratory diversity. The terreiro of Candomblé studied include Brazilians ranging from middle-class workers, to those married to lower-class German men and women, although there is a predominance of artists, musicians, capoeiristas and dancers, including the pai de santo himself. There are also many Brazilians working in body waxing, at some 45 beauty salons in the city of Berlin (Lidola 2014).

According to German statistics, it is possible to note a feminization of Brazilian emigration in Germany (and also in Berlin) (Lidola 2011), most frequently illustrated by marriages between black – or dark-skinned women from the lower-classes to German men. However, the field work also found black or dark-skinned Brazilian men married to German women.

In addition to an expectation of hard work, what do the Brazilians take with them? Various studies indicate the importance of relationship networks, sociability and changes in the social and religious fields where migrants settle (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009; Beserra 2006; Dias 2006; Martes 1999).

Among the religions practiced by Brazilians in Germany over the past 10 years, we highlight Kardecist centres, Umbanda (a Brazilian religion that blends African religions with Catholicism, Spiritism, and considerable indigenous lore), Candomblé temples, and Santo Daime,⁷ which were all founded by Brazilians in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and other German cities (Spliesgart 2011). The Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), and other evangelical denominations also exist. Although the religions of Brazilian immigrants in Germany has not been the focus of considerable study, information is found from the “Conference on Brazilian Communities Abroad”. Although there are pais de santo and mães de santo⁸, without terreiros or temples and various practitioners who don’t have ties to any casa de santo (saint house), there are currently two ilês [temples]⁹ registered in Germany, these religious practices are found throughout Germany. This serves as an indicator of the presence of practitioners.

Mãe Dalva (Mother Dalva) and the Berlin Wall and Mãe Habiba (Mother Habiba) in Appenzellerland

One of the first Brazilians to arrive and work with Afro-Brazilian religions was Mãe Dalva.¹⁰ As she herself states: “Today you log on to the Internet and see that it is full of *Dalva de Exu*, *Dalva de Pombagira*. In the past, there were no *Dalva*’s, I was the only *Dalva* in Germany. Now there are many.”

She arrived in Germany in 1979. She was born in 1945 in the village of Capanema, Vilaguaí, in the municipality of Maragogipe in Bahia state. She went to Germany to get married, and worked cleaning houses until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Thus in 2009, she celebrated 30 years of living in Germany. Her personal story is intertwined with references to

7 A syncretic spiritual practice founded in the 1930’s in the Brazilian Amazonian state of Acre. Santo Daime is syncretic in that it incorporates elements of several religious or spiritual traditions including Folk Catholicism, Kardecist Spiritism, African animism and indigenous South American shamanism, including *vegetalismo*.

8 A high priestess in a terreiro or temple; meaning mother-of-saint, where saint is the synonym of *Orixá*, as a consequence of the Afro-Brazilian syncretism in Candomblé.

9 “Casa de santo e ilê are other terms used to refer to Candomblé temples.

10 Brazilians in Germany have differing opinions about Mãe Dalva. Many state that her religious practices have no credibility. Many of her *filhos de santo* (children-of-saints) don’t give interviews about her. Some mentioned a lawsuit filed against her by Brazilians, but I was unable to obtain more information about this. The information I have comes from a one-hour interview she granted me, and a documentary about her called “Mutter Dalva”, but this has little biographical information

Germany, the Berlin Wall and Europe. She speaks of the Wall in a very interesting way, and mentioned an incident in which she felt German hatred for foreigners. She sensed that during a discussion her neighbor was going to slap her. She reacted and both ended up at the police station.

Notwithstanding accounts in academic studies that indicate there was little prejudice against foreigners before the Wall fell (Behrends 2003), the period which followed the fall of the Berlin Wall is not considered that in which the most hatred was felt against foreigners (namely those in Eastern Germany). The period prior to The Fall was, according to various Brazilians, a difficult time for emigrants because Berlin was a very racist and discriminatory city (studies show this changed after Germany was united). Many Brazilians circulated very little around the city, and avoided being seen. The period is described as one of restricted mobility.¹¹ In Mãe Dalva's opinion, the Wall was considered something of a liminal space, in part because of the energy of the place, where in the past she made offerings to the souls (Exus¹²), because it is believed that many people died when crossing the Wall, making it a place of death, equivalent to a cemetery. According to her, The Wall was and still is a place for *eguns* (the dead).

According to Mãe Dalva's account, the destruction of the Wall also symbolizes the arrival of Brazilians to the city of Berlin and Germany. She believes that those who arrived before the Fall were a different class of Brazilians, they were "better" than the generations that arrived from 1990 onwards. As she stated:

I helped many Brazilians before the Wall opened up [sic]. There were many good Brazilians here. We still have an influx of good ones, but it used to be better, they weren't jealous of what you had or didn't have. It was very difficult for a Brazilian to enter Germany. They needed papers. And you couldn't enter without a visa. So, after the Wall opened up, many people entered the country.

11 I believe that among the Brazilians who arrived at this time, few spoke the language or were familiar with German culture. This was compounded by the fact that they were also not familiar with the spaces of circulation in the city, and practiced a religion that at times conducted practices in public spaces. The fact that some had suffered instances of discrimination, led them to have this opinion of the Wall. Since 2000, the number of Brazilians in Berlin and Germany as a whole has increased (Lidola 2011), resulting in a greater diversification of this type of emigration. I believe this is what Mãe Dalva meant when she stated that the "good Brazilians" arrived before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

12 Exu in candomblé is an orixá, though whose intercession communication takes place between the other gods and human beings. In Umbanda, exu is a disincarnated spirit (exu-egun).

They thought that what I had, what I brought with me, that I earned it through *macumba* (a pejorative term meaning “witchcraft”).

It was only on the 24th July 2003 that she received official registration for her store and work from the German government. Her store *Casa de Oxum* was closed in 2009 due to non payment of taxes. In her working papers, she is listed as a *Lebensberatung* (advisor) who practices the following activities: *massage an bekleideten Personen* (massage with clothes on/spiritual healing channeled through ones hands), *Unterricht Tanz Ritual Candomblé* (teaching of ritual dances), *Ausübung Von Candomblé* (*Candomblé* practice), *Karton legen* (card reading), *Muschel* (cowrie shell divination), *Lebensberatung* (advisory services), *Verkaut Von Figuren* (sale of images), *Blumen Kleidung* (clothes adorned with flowers), *Glücksbringern amuleten* (and lucky charms). On the door a sign had read: “*Hilfe bei Problemen. In Liebe, Partnerschaft und Arbeitsuche. Immer Mittwochs. Meditationen mit Tanzt und Orakel*” (I can help you with relationship problems, partnerships and job searches. Every Wednesday. Meditation with dancing and oracle readings).

In addition to Brazilians who took their religion to Germany and neighboring countries such as Austria and Switzerland, Germans also seek these practices in Brazil.

Mãe Habiba de Oxum Abalô is of Austrian origin, she is the mother-of-saint responsible for the expansion of Umbanda (known by many as Omolocô because it mixes elements of Umbanda with Candomblé) in Berlin and Landsberg in Germany, Graz and Vienna in Austria, and Trogen and Zurich in Switzerland. The Terra Sagrada temple is used for giras, or Umbanda sessions, and is the central space of her spiritual work. It was created in 2006 and is located in Appenzellerland, Switzerland. Most of the participants are Swiss and German, while some of the “filhos” or children of the “casa” or temple are Brazilian. Most of the public is comprised of Brazilians and Portuguese due to the increased migratory flows of both nationalities to Switzerland. A Brazilian leads the co-ordination of the gira in Vienna, and for this reason there is a strong presence of Brazilians in the audience because he has many contacts.

She became acquainted with the religion when she first met Pai Buby (father Buby), leader of the Templo Guaracy which was founded in 1973 in São Paulo. Father Buby is largely responsible for the expansion of Umbanda throughout the world and regularly hosts activities in Geneva (Switzerland), Paris and Strasburg (France), Graz (Austria), Quebec (Canada), Washington,

California and New York (USA) and Sintra (Portugal). The Templo Guaracy is in Cotia, 30 minutes from the center of São Paulo, and its initiation rituals take place in a small forested area recently incorporated to the temple known as the Mataganza.

Due to her interest in combining non-European traditional knowledge with his work in psychotherapy, and also because of her pursuit of traditions that dialog with nature, Mãe Habiba had already had contact with Asian beliefs, but nothing that related to Brazilian traditions. New age elements also stand out in this type of Umbanda, which doesn't conduct animal sacrifices, and places strong emphasis on spiritual healing. The practice can be transmitted easily in German (which is not the case with Candomblé), because many songs have already been translated from Portuguese into German and CDs have been produced in German. It must be noted that most of the Umbanda mediums are German speakers, who have great difficulty speaking and understanding Portuguese. These factors have helped the religion proliferate through Germany and Austria. The Terra Sagrada in Switzerland is the center of the movement.

Habiba met with Father Buby at a congress of shamans in Marrakech in 1992, and was invited to attend an initiation into the religion in São Paulo. This initiation took place two years later. According to Habiba's testimony: "The Templo Guaracy is well organized in the European sense of the word. Father Buby always had contact with Europeans, and to a certain extent the Temple is marked by this mixture from São Paulo, which is different from the culture of Rio and Bahia."

It has somewhat of a "European style" organization, and one of Umbanda's syncretic principles – universalism – stands out at the temple's site¹³

The philosophical principles of Umbanda are by nature universal and are independent of any culture or tradition. Nevertheless, each Umbandista Temple has the right to interpret them and practice them in accordance with its foundations. Thankfully it is like this because otherwise we would have yet another religion stagnated in dogmatic codifications, rather than being dynamic like life.

Another aspect that finds resonance in the European perception is the

13 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

idea of nature, as indicated in this excerpt that describes the community philosophy of the Templo:¹⁴

The elements of nature, its laws and processes, are the basic components for the creation of the Xirê. Consistent with its cosmogonic principles, Templo Guaracy recognizes Nature as its Sacred Scripture The Xirê of Templo Guaracy recognizes in the four Elements (Fire – Earth – Water – Air) and in the combination of their sixteen qualities (Elegbara-Ogum-Oxumarê-Xangô-Obaluãe-Oxossi-Ossãe-Oba-Nanã-Oxum-Iemanja-Ewa-Iansa-Tempo-Ifa-Oxalá) the forces and basic energies responsible for the composition of life and its dynamic in the world of form. From the perspective of Templo Guaracy, both the elements and their sixteen qualities are forces and energies of nature which, through the effects of anthropomorphism, are transformed into Orixás.

The cosmogony and ritualism are also not limited to the so-called historical aspects that mark Umbanda in Brazil, this is seen in this description of the ritualistic tradition.

Nevertheless, one of the aims of the Templo is to eradicate religious syncretism from the representative context. The relationships established between the African Orixás and the Catholic Saints during the period of slavery, are perceived by the Templo Guaracy as historical data, not as liturgical foundations. Because it is a spiritual institution, and not a dogmatic religion, the Templo Guaracy supports its rites in the spiritual light contained in the philosophy of all masters. All notions of wisdom, whether Western or Eastern, are welcome. Umbanda, as a ritualistic revival, is considered Brazilian, and like Brazil itself, it is still in the process of being formed.¹⁵

The Portuguese language began to be used as the language of incorporation. The body is also an important theme in the production of meanings in the ways the religion is adapted to a European reality, because Orixás move the bodies.

While Brazilians are found in Zurich and Vienna, there is a difference in the giras or ceremonies. Some are open to the public and some are closed (because they still not completely organized). Brazilians have strong

14 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

15 Available at: <<http://temploguaracy.org.br/>>.

difficulty accepting the presence of Germans and Swiss in the religion:

But this is normal, because first of all there is a structure of giras before opening up to the Brazilians[the public]. Brazilians have an idea of how it ought to work. They always have some kind of experience, even if they don't. They are Brazilian, and know how it works. The Brazilians are quite prejudiced against the Germans. It is something like...for example a white girl, a foreigner, doesn't have this connection with the entities, much more in Candomblé than in Umbanda. There is also prejudice between Candomblé and Umbanda. In the same way that there is prejudice against the Umbanda done here, and I understand it is something people want to defend as their roots, their treasure.¹⁶

Despite the separation of what Mãe Habiba considers different work, the spiritual research into other traditions has always been a part of her routine at congresses and meetings in the field of psychotherapy (which is quite popular among the Swiss and German followers of her *ilê*). This spiritual choice does not exclude other philosophies or traditions, as is the case when one converts to Pentecostal religions. The possibility of aggregating or diversifying in Umbanda allows the spirits to speak in German or in Portuguese with an accent, and gives rise to the recreation of entities that have a more direct relationship with the locations and character that is similar to the pagan pantheon present in the European imagination, and which through this movement is renovated using a verb that is not commonly heard in German and Swiss on a regular basis: *improvisieren*.

This improvisation also applies to the use and adaptation of materials (handmade pottery for instance), to the planting and use of herbs that are rarely found growing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, in the purchase of food from Asian stores in Zurich and to the importing in various ways of products that cannot be adapted, such as *azeite de dendê*, which is an edible Brazilian palm oil.

It is also worth highlighting the presence of Afro-Cuban religions, which are important in the expansion of the Afro-religions. According to Gruner-Domic (1996) and Rossbach de Olmos (2009), faith in Orixás arrived in Germany in the 1970s, brought by Cuban students and young workers. The Orixás first port of call was on the communist side of the two German

¹⁶ Interview with Mãe Habiba in October 2011 in the city of Berlin.

states, in the German Democratic Republic, with its Prussian brand of socialism, characterized as atheist. Rossbach de Olmos (2009: 485) states that the Cubans who arrived in the 1970's were benefitted

with the framework of a bilateral agreement between Cuba and the GDR about the exchange of professional workers, satisfying at the same time the high demand for manpower in socialist Germany. Within approximately one decade between 1978, when the agreement was signed, and the unification of the two German states in 1990, it is calculated that between 20,000 and 30,000 Cubans came to the GDR for the period of four or eight years.

The author states that many Cubans brought religious objects with them to the German Democratic Republic, particularly after returning to Cuba on holiday, because German control upon arrival was less strict. Following the unification of Germany in 1990, a large number of Cubans remained in the country. According to the 2001 *Statistisches Bundesamt*, the number of Cuban immigrants increased from 295 in 1989 to 3,361 in 1991.

The number of Cubans continued to grow strongly until 2004 when it stabilized at about 9 thousand people. There are now some 12 thousand Cubans residing in Germany, of which 3 thousand are considered illegal immigrants.

Rossbach de Olmos (2009: 484-485) shows that the reasons for the diffusion of Santería have changed. In the past few years, mixed marriages, vacation travel to Cuba and an increasing interest in Afro-Cuban music have provided Germans more contact with the religion. The same motivations have increased German interest in Brazilian culture and *Candomblé*.¹⁷

There are also many afro-brazilian religious specialists of Brazilian origin (those who practice *Umbanda*, *Candomblé* and other religions) who work in German cities promoting services such as: "I will bring you your loved one in three days", disease healing, solving work problems and others. These services are also easily found in large Portuguese cities, and are generally offered by Africans who call themselves "masters", following in the footsteps of master Fati, who is well-known thanks to leaflets distributed at the main

17 I would like to point out that Cubans and Brazilians collaborated in the maintenance and support of the *ilê* analyzed in this study. Cuban priests and initiates take part in public events (such as the parade of *afoxés* at the *Karneval des Kuturen*, in Berlin). They also participate in Brazilian *Candomblé* rituals, and circulate among artists, because there are many artists in the Cuban community. The difficulties encountered by Europeans in adapting to Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban religions, namely those in which rituals are carried out, are very similar and will be treated throughout this study.

subway stations in Portugal and in the advertising section of the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper.¹⁸

Scholarly texts about the expansion of Candomblé in Latin America (Frigério 1999, Oro 1998 and Segato 1991, 1994 and 1997) and Portugal (Pordeus Jr. 2000 and 2009, Saraiva 2010), highlight the malleability and flexibility of the religion in adapting to different contexts and societies. Authors such as Saraiva (2010) believe that this expansion transforms Brazil into a “Mecca” for the religion, and doesn’t relate it to Africa as the center of production of Afro-religious symbols.

Orixás open up the doors to Frankfurt airport

How did the first temple in Berlin come to exist? How does its leader manage the ethnic symbols as an ethnic broker? And in what way does he attract the German public?

To answer these questions we will focus on the Ilê Obá Silekê temple and the *Forum Brasil Interculturelle Zentrum* (Forum Brasil, Intercultural Center), both located in Berlin and run by the pai de santo Murah. They were officially founded in 2003 and 2005 respectively, and are frequented by Brazilians (most of whom are participants), Germans and people from other nationalities such as Americans and Italians. Murah is well-known in the city and throughout the country because he was one of the first to institutionalize Candomblé in

¹⁸ Although the Portuguese religious field isn’t the focus of this study, I am quite familiar with it because of the post-doctoral studies that I conducted at the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Lisbon in 2011 and 2012, and from three months of field work financed by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (from April to June 2013). During both periods, I analysed the expansion of Afro-Brazilian religions in Portugal.

Although it is also not the focus of my study, it is worth noting that many musical practices of traditional African religions are incorporated in neo-Pentecostal churches in South America, in particular the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God), with its expressive plasticity and capacity to adapt to local demands. And even though there is an Evangelical and Muslim presence on the African continent, sorcery in parallel as a contemporary and urban element in various African countries and the urban context in Portugal. In this sense, the idea of Brazil as a Mecca, a producer of African symbols, ought to be reconsidered, and we should look deeper into the way in which the Portuguese learn about their relationship with Africa, noting that African presence and contacts are often not preserved in Portuguese historiography. This was visible at the exhibition “African heritage in Portugal”, which looked at the African neighborhood of Mocambo. Held between 2011 and 2012 at the Belém Tower, the exhibit was organized by historian Isabel Henriques. It is also worth noting that the persistence of this presence is currently recreated at sorcerer-led by Africans, and attended by Portuguese and Brazilians in Portuguese cities. Many Brazilians and Portuguese who feel they were harmed by African sorcerers (because they did not solve their problems, or performed evil on their clients or who lost large amounts of money), resort to Brazilian Candomblé. It is also worth noting the production of racial theories in Portuguese social thinking, such as the work of Oliveira Martins “*As raças humanas e a civilização primitiva, 1881*” (Human races and primitive civilization, 1881).



Picture 2. Iansã's party in November. Photo by Fernando Miceli.



Picture 3. Ekeki and *pai de santo* Murah . Photo by Fernando Miceli.

Germany, and because of his work as an Afro-Brazilian dancer for the past 20 years, which has taken him all over Europe.

Although the Forum Brasil and the temple are based at the same location, they are not the same institution, but they are related. Many of the capoeira and Portuguese language teachers, as well as teachers of other activities, also participate in the rituals and the religious life of the *ilê*, and symbols circulate from one side to the other.

The temple is open everyday, but most of the rituals are closed to the public, and take place when there are no other activities at the cultural Forum. Sessions with the *caboclo Ventania*¹⁹ take place once a month.

There is a schedule of festivities and rituals, some of which are public and others private. The private rituals are: the *ebó* for the new year (in January), waters of Oxalá (January), Obaluaiê celebrations (August) and the monthly sessions with *caboclo Ventania*. The *caboclo* festivities only take place in September. In accordance with German law, the festivities can only be held every two months, and the beating of the *atabaque* drums can last only four hours. The public festivities are those for *Iemanjá* (in February at the peak of winter), Oxóssi and Ogum (April), Xangô (in June, because July is a holiday period and many *filhos de santo* – or saint children²⁰ – travel at this time), Cosmas and Damian (when the *ilê* is well organized, this ritual takes place in September, as in Rio de Janeiro, or at the beginning of October and *Iansã* (December). In the homages to Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian, some activities for children are carried out, but there is no drumming. The winter festivities draw the largest crowds and have a strong presence of Germans. The period with the least public (when most are Brazilians and are associated to the *ilê*) are the Xangô festivities, because they take place close to the

19 *Caboclo Ventania* is incorporated by the father of saint (who is related to *Iansã* — *Orixá* of the wind, storms, wars and thunder, is one of Xangô's wives). These are the spirits of the old Indians who settled on Brazilian territory, and were chosen by the Bantu slaves as the real "owners of the land". In *Candomblé*, *caboclos* and *Orixás* are treated as different entities, although there is a correlation between *caboclos* and *caboclas* and their respective *Orixás*. 126). The *Umbanda* spirits do not require an initiation process as in *Candomblé*, and the *caboclo* can be baptized and take part in the confirmation ritual. Many of the *Candomblé* followers cultivate their spirits and prepare celebrations for them, because they are part of their life history. The rituals follow the *Umbanda* format in *Candomblé* temples. *Iansã* is the head *Orixá* of the *pai de santo* and also the *Orixá* chosen when the topic of discussion at the temple is Germany, because it is considered a country of war, and he is the best one to represent it. In Portugal, it is *Iemanjá* (translator's note: *Iemanjá* is the Queen of the Ocean, the patron deity of fishermen and the survivors of shipwrecks) an *orixá* associated with the country's past of colonial conquests.

20 They are part of the family of the saint. It signifies religious kinship within the cult group. Complex ritual genealogies link the initiate to different *terreiros* from the same *axé*.



Picture 4. Caboclo Ventania -material representation of an indigenous spirit (which is revered in Umbanda as well as in Candomblé) . Photo by Joana Bahia.

German holiday season.

Even at celebrations which in Brazilian *candomblé* would be public, because of the limits on playing the *atabaque* drums, the *pai de santo* seeks to make them a more private affair, and only the *filhos de santo*, or *abiãs* are permitted to participate.

The Forum Brazil is a company registered under German law that focuses on cultural activities connected to Brazil, in particular those that value black culture. It is also a entity for propagating *Candomblé* in a country in which it cannot be regulated as a religion, and where the practices of animal sacrifices are prohibited by law (Rossbach de Olmos 2009).

The Forum's events include talks on religion, on *Ifá* (Religion, Philosophy and Oracle Divination, given by Babalawo Olayinka Babatunde Adewuyi, who lives in Rio de Janeiro). There are also Afro-Brazilian dance courses given by the *pai de santo* Murah. In these courses he passes on the *modus operandi* of *Candomblé* by means of body movements and its connection with the *Orixás*.²¹

In mid-September and early October Murah organizes what is called "Die Spirits Von Brasilien. Studienreise nach Salvador und Rio de Janeiro". These are trips to Brazil on which he takes Germans who are interested in religion on tours that includes tourist attractions (the beaches of Praia do Forte, Ipanema etc.), and sessions with intellectuals who study the history of religion in Salvador. They also visit the Mãe Beata temple, and other places in the city, and he gives lessons on how to pick herbs and their therapeutic and religious properties. The later activities illustrate not only how Germans view Brazil, but also that they are attracted by a religion in which "nature is found everywhere". This issue will be discussed at greater length further on. It is also important to recognize that Salvador plays an important role on the global black cultural scene as a producer and exporter of symbols. In this sense, Salvador has established itself as a model of Africanity for the black populations of various countries of the African Diaspora, (Pinho 2004: 49), for example the North-American black population. But Murah's excursions also include German tourists who are interested in tradition. Bahia plays a double role in this sense. It presents black cultural objects in the

21 I deal with this subject in my presentation "Dancing with the African gods. The recreation of Africa in *Candomblé* in Germany", which was presented at the 5th European Conference on African Studies, between 27th and 29th June 2013 at ISCTE in Lisbon.

international market and produces and sells tradition (Pinho 2004).²²

In addition to evoking a tradition related to a sense of Africaness through Candomblé, when the pai de santo created the Forum Brasil the German state advised him to create something related to his culture of origin – Brazilian culture. To help him mount his business, its offices and the temple activities, he took a culture management course, in which he learned how to “represent” Brazil and how to deal with aspects of Brazilian culture that could be sold²³ by a company.²⁴ The Forum Brasil has become a place of reference in the city, and is closely identified with Candomblé in Germany

The following activities are carried out at the Forum: Salon für brasilianische Künste (a “Trans-art Salon”, considered the first showcase for Brazilian art /a theatrical show that presents music and cinema), Kinder-Capoeira-Kurs für 3-6-Jährige (capoeira courses for children from 3 – 6), Ferienprogramm Kinder-Villa-Brasil für 6-11-Jährige-Entdecke Brasilien in Kreuzberg (a summer camp with capoeira, sports, games, music and Brazilian cuisine), Brasilianische-Kochkultur (Brazilian culture and cuisine programs) and yoga. Courses in the Brazilian Portuguese language are also offered.

The frequency of these activities highlights the importance of music, dance and the arts and the various ways of using one’s body as elements emphasized by the Forum, as markers of Brazilianity. Two types of cultural content are presented according to categories used by Okamura (1981: 458).

22 “Almost traditional” products such as Black music from Bahia, world music, art by popular artisans, the Candomblé temples, and the “new traditional objects”, such as items created for the Carnival in Bahia such as clothes, musical instruments etc. (Sansone 2000: 102). The author also quotes the Bahian Acarajé Women presented as part of the construction process to represent Black Bahian culture, the purest symbol of “Africanism” in public life (Sansone 2000: 91-92).

23 In this sense, we treat the idea of ethnic trade as something that is very complex, because it isn’t solely limited to ethnic symbols per se, but the way in which they are imagined by the society that receives them and by those who consume them (Machado 2010: 13). The way in which the market receives them will depend on the deep relationship they have with peoples’ imagination (that we can term social, racial and ethnic classifications) within the society that receives the immigrants. According to the Machado, in the city of Porto in 2000, the way in which a Brazilian belonged didn’t depend solely on their behavior as an “ethnic group”, but on a connection with the place that the Portuguese powers that be delegated to the Brazilians at the time. On the other hand, these processes are very flexible and can mutate, depending upon various factors.

24 In everyday language, among Brazilians, when they discuss the notion of what it is like to think or resemble a German way of being, two images are associated. In the German language there are “verbs for everything”. It is a society which is strongly controlled by the State, and there are courses and professions “for everything”. In this sense, they discuss the flexibility of professional options and study opportunities that society offers, and on the other hand, the rigid control of the German state, which provides information and necessary data on how to fit into a “*genau*” society, in other words what is considered correct, with lots of rules. To create a company, depending on the type of business, there are numerous courses available to learn about how to deal with the state bureaucracy. The same course was taken by a group of Brazilian dancers, who also referred to it in interviews.

The first offers signs and signals, diacritic traces that people exhibit to present their identity, such as clothes, language, home decor and lifestyle. The second covers basic values such as standards for morals and excellence, upon which behavior is judged.

In this sense, the Forum is conceived for Brazilians and Germans as a place for Brazilians that offers courses concerning aspects that establish an identity in contrast to that of German identity, and generally based on the Portuguese language (from Brazil). It also offers courses on Brazilian cuisine and religion, in the case of Candomblé rituals. This identity is also expressed in a form of moving the body that does not maintain the corporal distance or control between bodies that Brazilians perceive in German interpersonal relations.

Jenkins (1997) affirms that ethnicity is a collective and individual social identity, which is externalized in social interaction and personal self-identification. It is created through a selection of cultural elements that best express identity. Jenkins criticizes conceptual reifications and an over emphasis on a primordial anthropological model of analysis, which tends to consider cultural elements as immutable essences in the construction of identity.

We thus realize the way in which the endowed corporeality of a religion is activated as an element of identity construction. To get closer to the religion, one “should sing, dance and feel the culture in their body”. Brazilians believe that “the Germans should Brazilianize”, “speak more Portuguese” and be more corporally receptive, incorporating the nature of the Orixás through corporal practices. A certain “incorporation of the other culture”, is demanded of them especially by the pai de santo.

The spirits also make these demands, in particular caboclo Ventania who speaks Portuguese and demands that the Germans do so as well. The German language is imitated mockingly, to show that the language of Candomblé should be Portuguese.

Murah often gives classes at the Forum on “The strength of the Orixás” (*die Kraft*, which can also mean “energy”), which are based on Afro-Brazilian dances. Not only does this course cover aspects of Afro-Brazilian culture, but it also provides information about Candomblé’s *modus operandi*. Many participants were attracted to Candomblé because of the course. The dance courses and bloco de afoxé Loni (also known as street Candomblé, which are



Picture 5. German filha de santo in afoxé. Photo by Joana Bahia.



Picture 6. Ekedí (woman consecrated to a divinity but who does not experience trance) and dofono (first spiritual son) oriented by pai de santo Murah who starts the offerings to Exu, to Oxum and Obaluaie to bring luck, good health and open the ways in Hermannplatz, Kreuzberg, Berlin. Photo by Joana Bahia.



Picture 7. People await the offerings before the Afoxé starts. Photo by Joana Bahia.

street parties organized during carnival)²⁵ at the Karneval des Kulturs are the means by which Germans are seduced to enter Candomblé. The bloco de afoxé has been going on for 14 years and its 300 participants include Brazilians, Germans and Africans. Many Brazilians travel from other countries and other parts of Germany to participate in the bloco.

Relationships of domination exist between cultural practices, and are recognized by the cultural epithet hybridity (Ha 2005). It is important to note that identities are instrumental (Okamura 1981 and Jenkins 1997), because at some times it may seem interesting to be exotic and ethnic, but not at others. This depends on with whom, when and how people interact. Germany has constantly failed in making a transition into a modern society that is accepting of immigration. Yet it is now obsessed by its new immigrants, while Berlin seems to be increasingly multicultural (see *The Culture Carnivals*). From a transnational perspective, this is what makes nations more palatable., Hybridization becomes the concept of a more colorful and more attractive nation (Ha 2005), and a central element in the creation of circuits of production and consumption in modern capitalism.

Is it possible that Brazilians have an interest in being exotic at times? There are ways to transform a stereotype into a strategy to convert forms of subordination into affirmation (Irigaray 1985). Different from the Turkish and African Islamic cultures, Brazilian emigration is not visible in German society, which is notoriously afraid of the presence of Islam in the other groups. Brazilians are “exotic and their culture is not threatening”. They can make their offerings during the afoxé as they wish, and prepare for the religious initiations that are part of the future plans of the ilê.

In this sense, if a perspective is found in German society that sees the other as exotic, it is also true that Brazilians are interested in being exotic to attract Germans, because at least in principle, what is exotic is also fascinating. Yet these qualities are organized almost to perfection. At times they attempt to appear “less ethnic and almost German” when necessary, and to

25 According to Souza (2010: 8), afoxés are artistic-cultural groups based on religious doctrines of Afro-Brazilian cults. Through their relationship with the temples, the groups pay their devotion to Orixás who are their guides, and receive religious care from a babalorixá and/or ialorixá (translators note: the highest rank, for the male and female caretakers respectively of the Orixás). In its cycle of presentations, Carnival is an opportunity to give visibility to the social aspects and values that are the foundation of African culture in Brazil, and the afoxés are part of this. Particular reference is made to music, dance, vocabulary, symbols, gestures, clothing and other elements that circumscribe these groups and make of them a representation of street Candomblé.

stand-out from other Brazilians who do not migrate (those who live in countries considered less organized or economically unstable). The Candomblé terreiros in Germany also seek to distinguish themselves from the terreiros in Brazil (in Bahia or Rio de Janeiro), that they consider to be “not very well organized, never on-time and their Candomblé is sort of improvised”.

Brazilians often find it necessary to act according to an interpretation to avoid discrimination and prejudice. Given that they identify Germans as being “perfectionists,” many Brazilians seek to be even more “organized” than the Germans themselves, and this is clear from the website for the terreiro and the invitations in German explaining ritual procedures.

Bahia is a reference of negritude and legitimacy of Candomblé in a transnational sense, but Brazilians in Germany don't necessarily identify with Candomblé from Bahia. On many occasions, particularly when they need to justify the changes they make to the religion to adapt it to Germany, they affirm that they do Candomblé in Germany. To add Brazilian and Bahian epithets, or even alaketu is important in transnational religious markets and bestows an idea of tradition (although a distinct one). This is interesting, especially in terms of the construction of an ethnic identity that is pure, almost monolithic, but that obviously doesn't exist in practice. There are nuances in this identity construction (Okamura 1981). Demonstrating the fluidity and circumstances of an ethnic construction, we can see how these nuances occur in beauty salons run by Brazilians in Germany.

Ethnicity is also constructed in the beauty salons in Berlin, so much so that ethnicity is a requirement, and the body waxing technique – originally Spanish – has been transformed into a Brazilian brand. To do so names and symbols are used that allude to Brazil and Rio de Janeiro in particular. The salons also present themselves as being organized and aseptic and use a discourse that emphasizes health and cleanliness, to comply with the German imaginery. Entering these spaces it is clear when they must be ethnic, artisan and even exotic and when they should not. Turkish women opened beauty salons, but they were not successful because they were considered too ethnic, appearing to be “Islamicised” according to German women (Lidola 2014).²⁶

²⁶ This fine line between expressing ethnicity in waxing salons or not, also occurs in samba classes. The classes consist of more than just learning how to samba. One must become acquainted with learning the gestures and how to move one's body in a sensual way so as to define the limit between sensuality and sexuality. Brazilians have to manage these boundaries very well so as not to scare off the Germans.

We want to gauge the the importance of the production, not only of the religious sphere, but also of the symbolic and cultural spheres by the participants of the religious field in the city of Berlin. This process reveals the relations between this production and the construction of references for the process of ethnic self-identification, particularly for some types of Brazilians.

The importance of these producers of religious symbols is also highlighted in their participation at cultural and political events that go beyond the religious field, at places and events considered Brazilian. For example, some people who frequent the Ilê Obá Silekê terreiro participate in the bloco de afoxé during the Carnival of Cultures, and at the exhibit on African Orixás (entitled Candomblé Altars) during Black Culture month in February 2012, organized by the Berlin city government.

In this sense, a pai de santo may be considered as an ethnic broker, or someone who constructs stories and ideologies about a group, because he chooses cultural elements to establish a positive valuation of the reconstructed ethnic identity.

We recall that Candomblé essentially combines body, music and dance, elements through which ethnic brokers define the concept of being Brazilian.

The Ilê Obá Silekê terreiro (the house of King Xangô Aganju²⁷), which means the Center of the Volcano, has existed ever since Murah migrated. He was born in 1961 in São Paulo, and moved to Salvador when he was six. He was initiated into the religion when he was nine and was raised by his biological grandmother, Coleta de Oxóssi who was born in Kenya. She fell in love with a Frenchman and was expelled from the family (the family normally choose a woman's husband and did not approve of marriage to foreigners). His French grandfather had land in Salvador, where he raised his family. He spent his childhood on the outskirts of Salvador, in Beiru, which is now known as Tancredo Neves. He and his grandmother were both initiated by Badu de Oxóssi. Murah moved between Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Bahia and Rio de Janeiro were important to his personal religious journey and he visits them on the trips he organizes for Germans who want to know the places that best represent the "production and sale" of the image of African tradition (Pinho 2004 and Sansone 2000): which are in Bahia.

27 Xangô Aganju is a quality of Xangô (God of Justice), a warrior, sorcerer, who has a direct link to Iemanjá and the Ogbonis and wears the color brown .

His relationship with the religion is thus an essential part of his life, and the idealization of the terreiro is related to his history as an emigrant. When telling his life story, he associates it to Candomblé and the Orixás are presented as forces that led him to migrate. As he stated: “If the Orixá opened the doors of Frankfurt airport for me, it is because he wanted me to stay in Germany and take with me his teachings.” His narrative is infused with and inseparable from religion. As a result, his charisma makes it impossible to separate the ilê from the Forum Brasil. It must be noted that Candomblé in Germany began with Murah’s arrival in the country, and the Forum Brasil has been in existence for 10 years. In fact, Candomblé began in Neukölln, in the basement of the apartment where the pai de santo lived for many years. At the time, he still worked at dance schools. The ilê was founded over 12 years ago, it began as the Ilê Axé Oya, because it was devoted to Iansã.

He began to lose energy, because when the pai de santo dies, it is necessary to remove the hand of the deceased, (the vumbe’s hand) from the head of the filho de santo.

Shortly afterwards, he met Mãe Beata,²⁸ she consulted to see which name should be given to the ilê (Xangô) and he delivered his head to Beata. [...] The Orixá placed Mãe Beata in his path twelve years ago to remove the vumbe’s hand ²⁹so that the axê would be reborn and circulate.

Mãe Beata’s presence is important for two reasons: in addition to settling Xangô in the terreiro and causing axê to circulate, institutionalizing the ilê, her presence guarantees Afro-Brazilian legitimacy, having Brazil as a place to exchange knowledge, being a country of Afro-Brazilian cults. The proximity between the pai de santo and Brazil can be noted by the frequency with which he and his filhos de santo travel to the country, and by the presence of other

28 Mãe Beata de Iemanjá. The ilê is located in Miguel Couto, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro. Murah’s filhos de santo are initiated here, and Beata isn’t considered solely as a mãe de santo, but also as avó de santo [grandmother of the saint]. She was initiated into Candomblé on 26 June 1956 by Mãe Olga do Alaketu for the orixá Iemanjá. The following were present at the initiation: Mãe Regina Bangboshê, Dona Pombinha de Oxóssi, Dona Bia de Omolu, Arsênia de Nzazi do Terreiro Bate Folha, Irene de Xangô Bangboshê and Maria Joana do Alaketu de Iansã.

29 Pai de santo, Badu de Oxóssi, passed away, and for this reason a new spiritual guide had to be defined (it is now Mãe Beata), but before this, a ritual must take place to “remove the vumbe’s hand (the hand of the deceased)”. According to Cossard (2008: 199), the deceased pai de santo, had placed his hand on the head of the initiate, and for this reason, the fact that he passed away had left a negative mark on her. Despite the strong ties that most surely existed with her ialorixás [or mãe de santo], the initiate could not maintain this negative factor looming over her. After the grieving period, one must free themselves from this weight, and seek a more elderly person, who may or may not be from his or her house, for this person to remove the hand of *vumbe* (death).

pais and mães de santos at the services that take place in his temple. His connections with other terreiros throughout the world indicate his prestige as a leader in the religious market. Mãe Beata's 80th birthday, and her presence in Germany, was and is still broadcast by German radio stations, and in videos of rituals that are available on social networks. The way that Candomblé is considered in these broadcasts can be noted. Not only as a religion that is tolerant of women, homosexuals and blacks, but mainly as an important symbol of Brazilian identity and as a symbol of negritude. More than a mãe de santo, Mãe Beata is presented as a human rights activist and distinguished personality of the Brazilian feminist movement. She is remembered for her role in "nourishing with faith oppressed blacks and all underprivileged people in Brazilian society".

Another aspect is that all of the candidates for filhos de santo would be initiated in Brazil, under Murah's orientation at Mãe Beata's temple in Nova Iguaçu, in Rio de Janeiro state. The temple in Berlin does not have the infrastructure needed to initiate newcomers. Outside of Brazil, the terreiros have a certain degree of freedom that distinguishes them in terms of organization and performance. This tendency is also found in Brazil, indicating that each temple has its specificities and adapts according to the new social reality (Capone and Teisenhoffer 2002; Capone 2004).

These ties mean that the trips made to and from Brazil by Murah and the future filhos de santo keep them connected. In some cases, they remain connected with the country of origin, while the Germans become connected to a new language, a new culture, which has a special connection with the realm of the senses. Maintaining contact with Brazil is very important for the legitimacy of these cults in a broader religious context.

The Germans turn to Candomblé for a number of reasons. One is that the powers of the religion are elements of nature. The energy of nature is the true power. In Candomblé, the interconnection between sacred and profane establishes the idea that the Orixá is a person with power, a human who is also a god. Orixás feel jealousy, anger and love. This allows Germans to reinterpret the idea of Kraft (strength). In this sense, in addition to speaking fluent German the pai de santo uses metaphors that adapt to his teachings. The metaphors allow him to approximate the Orixás to the gods from Greek mythology, and he often highlights their contrasts with the saints and devil

of the Catholic Church. The Orixás are not defined by an opposition of good and evil, but instead are considered ambiguous figures, such as the gods in the Greek pantheon. They possess an “almost human” personality, with flaws and virtues. The pai de santo reminds his filhos de santo that they must care for their Orixás, and must participate in the celebrations that pay homage to their ancestral Orixás. In this case, they may benefit or punish their children. Another idea of Candomblé that is attractive to the German public is related to the idea that the power of nature can be experienced through movements of the body. The body gains a dimension closer to nature, and moves in accordance. Moreover, it is sexualized. This is very different from the concept of the body of the German identity construction. Sexuality and happiness are fundamental elements in the Orixás dance, and also an opportunity to bring Brazilians and Germans closer together. Many participate in the classes not only with the intention of learning more about Brazilian culture, but also because they have relationships with Brazilians or are looking for a romantic relationship.³⁰

Many African descendants born in Germany, the so-called *afrodeutsch*, are also attracted by the search for Africa as a mark of identity. Many blacks living in German society don't identify with it.³¹ Others feel they are excluded from German society in daily life (Egger et al. 2005; Steyerl and Rodriguez 2003). They thus seek Candomblé as a place where they feel more black, and closer to an original African culture. When asked about Africa itself, they state that it is now largely Christianized and Islamicised, and that little is left from the original culture. In this sense, Brazil is a country that re-Africanized

30 We encountered this issue throughout the fieldwork. Many people reach out to the Forum and its courses, as they do the terreiro, because they are already familiar with the Brazilian culture through friends or even ex-lovers. Another interesting issue of Brazilian immigration in Germany is sexual preferences. Although homosexuality was not identified as a reason for migration, to live freely as a homosexual in a country that legally punishes racism and homophobia is something highly valued in the discourse of the interviews. This issue was often raised by the informers as a parameter for viewing Brazil as a racist country. In addition, there is a strong presence of black men and women in the migration flows to Germany.

31 In Portugal, there is the example of the “returnees”. These are Portuguese who were born in Africa and “returned”, particularly from Angola and Mozambique after the Wars for Independence. Many join Candomblé not only for its healing practices (Saraiva, 2010: 279), but in their quest for a land of origin, which they call the “calling of the land”, in other words, the construction of elements that mark the sense of an ethnic community (Weber). Many claim they come from “sorcerer lands” (as did one interviewee who was born in Quelimane, in Africa), and that through Candomblé they experience a closer tie to their family history and place of origin. The interpretations of disease and healing practices take them back to an African universe and a religion that has its own means of classifying the body and its diseases (Barros and Teixeira 2000), which for many resemble the African mythical universe.

Candomblé (Capone 2004), and keeps it more alive than many African cultures, or those that received African immigrants. Many Africans and their descendants that were born and live in Berlin seek an Africa that they do not find in their everyday lives. They feel the need to have elements to build an ethnic identity. In other words, “to feel black and African”. Nevertheless, even though they want to feel “more African”, the everyday life of the terreiro, is dominated by an idea of Africa from Bahia and of blacks from the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. In other words, there are various manifestations of negritude competing for the same space. It must be noted that to be white is almost the norm in German culture. “Whitening” strategies used by black Brazilians do not work in Germany, because German society does not recognize gradations of being more or less black or brown-skinned (Thränhardt 1984 and Nogueira 2006). In general, blacks are sexualized by Germans, in particular Brazilians. At times, the stereotype is used to gain advantages, but the use of this stereotype reaffirms it even more. To speak the German language very well³² or to do things “almost to perfection” are efforts made by Brazilians to reduce discrimination.

The exotic element is what attracts Germans to Candomblé, particularly the relationship of the body with nature. When the ritual practices are initiated, there is a turning point. The dances, the rituals, the use of herbs are not striking until one confronts the use of blood as part of the sacrifice. Many give up the religion at this point. It is in moments of disagreements between the pai de santo and those who give up on the religion that contrasting elements become clear, the identity markers, when they are accused of thinking like “Germans” and wanting a “vegetarian Candomblé that only exists in their minds”. Or when they become upset about receiving orders from a black pai de santo (who is half Bahian, half *Paulista* [from São Paulo state]), “constructed” in a conception of the familia de santo [family of the saint] that maintains ties not based on blood. These aspects are often difficult for Germans to understand. Although this does not prevent them from establishing emotional ties, the Germans do not consider them family ties, and they don’t understand the religion’s concepts of authority and hierarchy.

32 Many Brazilians state that for those who have every day contact with Germans, they make an effort to speak in English to Americans and other Anglo-Saxon groups. To speak a different language is something hierarchical based upon a geopolitical situation and interests at play, but among Africans and Latinos, no effort is made to speak a different language. German is in fact the language demanded among them on a everyday basis.

Germans who enter the religion (particularly those who are *filhos de santo* of the temple), undergo a strong process of deconstructing their rational approach to life. They must learn to deal with the senses and values that are strongly related to an idea of mystery that isn't verbalized, but literally "incorporated", expressed in the relationship between nature and body. To overcome the difficulties, many begin to write, they use notebooks to write down foods and spells, and they gradually translate the religion, which must generate processes of "resemantization".

When they incorporate music simultaneously to dance, is when they can be initiated, because this indicates that they are ready to understand the meaning of the religion. Dance and a sense of corporal movements are present at Murah's workshops. Changes in the body denote a change in attitude. The exoticism, tropical exuberance, the idea of an "essentialist primitiveness", combined with a rereading of environmental issues are recodified from the standpoint of a certain romantic culture, promoting new meanings in the idea of Afro-Brazilian religiousness.

Therefore, more than a relationship between identity and memory, memories are investigated. In the case of the Brazilians, they preserve the mark of their migration experience and a new perception of their original identity. It has been noted that many of the religious choices made by the Brazilians were made in conjunction with their migration process. In other words, many joined the religion, not in Brazil, but under the condition of emigrant.

Many of the followers and initiates of the *terreiro* are lower middle-class blacks, who perceive the religion as a place to experience their black and Brazilian identities simultaneously. It is a place where they can be a black Brazilian. In this sense, for some people "Candomblé is a black thing". They are black and come from the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro. Many have already experienced or had contact with the saint (some are *ebomis*)³³, and have lived in the Baixada Fluminense region (on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro) or in Rio de Janeiro favelas. This distinguishes them from African Germans and from Brazilians from other regions (these origins are also often triggered as markers of differences). They could not maintain their obligations to their original *terreiros*, and seek out Murah so they do not lose their relationship with the religion. Moreover, the Forum and *ilê* are places

33 A *terreiro* elder, initiated for more than seven years

where they feel “Brazilian”. Nevertheless, their references are the stories from the terreiros in the Baixada Fluminense region, where they still circulate. Knowing how to circulate between the place they came from, and knowing how to live between the Central do Brasil [Rio de Janeiro’s main railroad station] and the periphery of the city, gives them a “certain street sense that allows them to circulate in German society”. They construct a different type of identity that links them to all of these aspects. It is how they see themselves, and how they feel re-experiencing their negritude outside of Brazil. They do this by reaffirming their identity ties with a religion that dates back to former slaves and black Brazilians, in other words, affirming the idea that Candomblé is something Brazilian that kept its “African roots”. All of these images are triggered in different ways.

Other Brazilians not only experience the idea of being black, but also a proximity to a family heritage marked by Afro-Brazilian religiousness. They revive a spiritual destiny in their family history: “my aunt had an ilê in the Baixada, but she had to close it because she was getting old”. Or: “my mother would pray, but my father didn’t allow it”. The ethnic and family origins are triggered when they explain their entry into the religion.

Others resume their relationship with popular religiousness present in the every day lives in the cities where they lived in Brazil. These can only be felt by being close to things in Brazil, represented by the role the Forum has acquired for many of those who attend events there. Or because they work with elements that define Brazilian culture such as the rhythms of Brazilian music such as forró, afoxé and capoeira.

Others manifest their spiritual side when they get sick, normally shortly after they migrate, because to a certain extent, migration is felt as suffering. As is the case of the dofono (the first one to be initiated in the terreiro), who had wounds on his leg until he found out that he had a spiritual problem and had to be initiated. He was aware of Candomblé practice in Brazil, but only grew close to the religion when he migrated.

It is also worth highlighting the importance of family and friendship networks in constructing the migration process. In this case, we must consider the idea of the família de santo and symbolic kinship. Many authors demonstrate the charisma and tolerance of Afro-Brazilian cults in relation to other religious practices that are not excluded from the new daily religious routines.



Picture 8. Brazilian filho de santo who was initiated in a traditional candomblé house Ilê Axé Opó Afonjá , in Coelho da Rocha , Rio de Janeiro. Later he migrated to Germany. He is carrying one food prepared for Iansã's party. Photo by Fernando Miceli.

Many Brazilians initiated in the saint³⁴, state that the religion, aside from permitting an individual expression of emotions, gives them a sense of belonging to a community, or better still, a saint family. Some are attracted by the tolerance of Afro-Brazilian religions towards homosexuals, particularly in countries where the majority of the Evangelical Churches condemn this sexual preference.

By means of religious socialization and symbolic parenthood, there is the projection phenomena, or that of identification with a certain past that is so strong it can be considered an inherited memory. In this sense, it is worth highlighting the importance of Afro-Brazilian cults, not only as ethnic institutions but also as places of memory.

It has been demonstrated that memories are constructed by Brazilians in their process of identifying with Candomblé, and by the Germans and other groups in the process of becoming “foreigners” who seek in this rite to belong to something new, a filiation (a new “Verein”).

The work of those who practice and run these services as “guardians of memory” is also worth highlighting. In other words, they control the image of the ethnic association and its power to “transmit an oral, mystical account” that reconfigures itself as an idea of ethnic and religious belonging.

³⁴ Initiated in Candomblé refers to giving birth to a new orixá in the initiate's body, seating his energy in the head of the novice.

Conclusions

How is this plastic and hybrid capacity realized in the German context? Who practices and attends Candomblé? And in what way will Candomblé bring the Germans who frequent it closer to a romantic ideal?

Currently, Candomblé in Brazil and the world focuses on a romantic appropriation of the idea of nature, to respond to current ecological and environmental discourse (Machado and Sobreira 2008). In what way does this discourse approach the present and shall we say modern European discussion about environmentalism? The forces of nature in Candomblé are represented by Orixás which are as imperfect as mortal men and women.

This concept of magic that correlates the sacred and the profane and connects them to nature becomes interesting to an imaginary, which in the German case was built around influences of the so-called *Lebensreformbewegung* (the Life Reform movement). *Lebensreformbewegung*³⁵ is a term used for various types of reform movements in Germany and Switzerland, which began in the mid 19th-century, arising from German Romanticism and which influenced a number communities at the turn of the

35 A number of academic papers show that many Nazi's adopted some aspects of the life reform, but we cannot reduce such a complex movement to this episode. Historians such as Hugh Trevor-Roper and Laqueur are largely responsible for the dissemination of this interpretation. Many discuss this issue stating that although there are certain cultural affinities, it cannot be stated that sociopolitical alliances between occultists and the state were more effective. Treitel (2004: 26 and 210-242) quotes the work of Helmut Zander (*Anthroposophie in Deutschland. Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884-1945*) and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke about National Socialism's hidden roots, because both show that there are limits and fragile interpretations in the construction of this relationship. As quoted by the author (2004: 26): "Aiming to provide new answers to old questions, Goodrick-Clarke drew on an impressive range of novel primary sources to expose the myths, symbols and fantasies (bearing) on the development of reactionary, authoritarian, and Nazi styles of thinking. He established that the occult figured in Ariosophical thought primarily to legitimate previously conceived notions appealed to Hitler as much as Ariosophical occultism repelled him. All of this led Goodrick-Clarke to conclude, rather anticlimactically, that Hitler and most of his colleagues were not occultists and that their infamous crimes were only loosely connected with occult doctrines." Traditional habits intensified along with the organization of youth groups in cities, in particular everything that concerns *Wanderung* — hiking in the mountains, through meadows, through forests, where it is possible to exercise the body in the midst of natural beauty, making it stronger and healthier. Nazism took hold of this old German habit, connecting it to training its youth and deifying it *Wandervogel*. Hitler was a naturist, admirer of Gaspar D. Friedrich, promoter of *Wandervogel*, who encouraged many of the aspects found in the movement. Many were banned, including nudism. But the whole progressive, psychological, libertarian part of this movement was banned from the daily activities and discussions until the end of World War II. Nazism used some of the characteristics, and this made it a real taboo in the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, the exhibition *Mathildenhöhe* which was held in Darmstadt in 2001 was prepared over the course of years. It wanted to highlight cultural aspects of fundamental importance for understanding Germany and its survival over time, regardless of ideologies. Treitel (2004: 7) German occultism grew rapidly, and in 1900 it brought together a number of beliefs – just to mention a few they include theosophy, astrology, guessing, physics research, graphology and spiritual healing. In the 1940s, when the Nazi regime condemned the movement, hundreds of clubs, associations, institutions, publications and millions of devotee's and consumers of occultist merchandise and products spread throughout Germany.

century. The movement criticizes excesses of industrialization and urbanization and the harm they cause to health and the human body. It supports a certain return to natural life, expanding its meaning to refer to movements of the body and soul (Buchholz, Latocha, Peckmann and Wolbert 2001: 71).

Thus, nature inspires a lifestyle and culture that values alcohol abstinence, vegetarianism (this coincides with the growth of cities and rise in the consumption of alcohol, sugar and meat), sports, certain ways of living and dressing, nudism, natural healing and the idea of bringing nature into the city, as found in the Schreber gardens (*Gartenkolonie*, which is still common).

These ideas that value the individual as a motor of transformation, come from a life reform movement (Krabbe 1998), which influenced the new age movements,³⁶ hippies, the creation of alternative communities and various forms of mysticism. Many aspects of life reform, such as the idea of holism, vitalism and the understanding that individuals create their own vital energy were revised in the new age movement. Many of the ideas from this movement are currently reappearing in ecological discourses, in organic agriculture and a self-sustainable way of life.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the city of Darmstadt was particularly important for the movement. It was here that a colony of artists was founded, architecture was developed and a modern dance school was created by Isadora and Elizabeth Ducan at Mathildenhöhe. Elizabeth directed the school, which sought a break with the highly formal aspects of ballet and to approach the natural movements of the body. The city became a polarizing centre for life reform.

Among the most relevant influences of this movement in Germany, the most representative is the recent ecological discourse (Buchholz, Latocha, Peckmann and Wolbert 2001: 13-21), which Castells (1999: 113-133) calls “the greening of the *self*”. According to the author, what unifies the environmental movements is an alternative temporality that asks society and institutions to accept the reality of the slow evolutionary process of our species in its

36 Authors such as Lewis and Melton (1992: 19) and Ferreux (2000: 9) affirm the difficulty in defining new age, a movement that is diffused, multiple, difficult to grasp. It calls for a return to nature, the qualitative, authenticity, personal development, spirituality symbolizing the pursuit for the creation of an alternative and holistic world. Although it involves old practices such as astrology, and tarot card reading, the sentiment that exists in the new age movement is different. That is, it isn't about divination practices, but of resources that promote self-knowledge and serve to “transform the individual into a better person”.

environment with no purpose for our cosmological being, as the universe expands from the time and place of its/our common origin.

Aside from the limitations created by our submission to time as defined by the clock, still experienced by most people in the world, a historical dispute over a new temporality is taking place between the annulment of time on computer networks and the realization of glacial time by becoming aware of our cosmological dimension (cosmological self). Through this dispute over the appropriation of science, space and time, ecologists induce the creation of a new identity – a biological identity, a culture of the human species as a component of nature. This socio-biological identity does not imply denying historical culture. The ecologists respect folk cultures and the cultural authenticity of various traditions.

These possible correlations don't mean that the hybridization and transnationalization of Candomblé doesn't involve problems or impasses in their new national contexts. These problems are found in the various religious adaptation processes: in linguistic differences (especially for Germans who need to master the logic of Portuguese and Yoruba), in the objects used in the rituals, which are not easily found, and the concept of sacrifice present in these religious practices, involving the death of animals.

There are laws in Germany that prohibit animal sacrifice, and various regulations about conducting other rituals. Many of them thus take place outside of urban Berlin. Similar difficulties are described by Rossbach de Olmos (2009) concerning Cuban Santería. Not only in the search for finding a place for the initiations, but in particular with regard to sacrificing four-legged animals. According to the author (2009: 486),

the sacrifices would be an offense against the German legal regulations for animal protection, as long as they are not protected by the legal guarantee of free religious worship. Since Santería is not a recognized form of religious worship. Since Santería is not recognized as an official religion, it is not protected by this law.

Some of the difficulties described by most followers of the religion include the many trips needed to get objects for the rituals (the ceramic objects are expensive and made in an artisan process that makes them fragile and they don't last very long); that purchasing the objects in Europe is expensive; and the planting and caring for the herbs, particularly those

used in certain rituals and celebrations for an Orixá that occur in winter. It is also difficult to conduct the offerings in public areas, mainly because of the attitudes of the Germans about these religious practices. People often call the police or demand explanations about the use of public space and the intervention in nature. These are compounded by the natural conditions of the country, which has lots of snow and ice that make it difficult to perform many offerings and rituals that require the use of natural elements (how can one make an offering on a frozen lake?).

Brazilians also mention the initial difficulties felt by the Germans, which is influenced by the Brazilian idea of German culture. As one of the *filhos de santo* said: “Their culture is closed, and the geographical location means that they spend a lot of time in cold weather, and this makes them closed-off and less exposed to something that deals with the senses”.

Notwithstanding the difficulties in learning the corporal techniques, many Germans reach out to the religion, seeking to understand their own body. Many experience life-changing processes via changes in their bodies such as tremors, trances, headaches and other signs understood to denote a proximity to their Orixás.

Thus, many conversions among Germans are preceded by existential crises, some with strong bodily experiences such as premonitions. Conversion becomes a spiritual mission aimed at achieving balance and a new meaning for life. The adoption of new values and adaptation to a new experience of the sacred (especially the trance), the search for an explanation of the new order and a new normative framework are elements that serve to organize the mediums’ life. The importance of a fact that initially had no explanation (for example bodily tremors since childhood, frequent headaches and feeling of well being in the religion when entering a temple for the first time, having been taken there by a Brazilian girlfriend) gain meaning when individual life stories are considered.

Conversion is not an automatic transition from one belief system to another, but is thought of as a constant effort to reinterpret life experiences from the internal logic of a new belief system. For example, Halloy studied (2000: 85-86) a *terreiro* in Belgium, and described a forest deity of Slavic or Welsh origin, which is embodied by the *pai de santo* from the Candomblé *terreiro* at Carnières, as well as attempts to adapt the entities from this *terreiro* to Welsh and Roman deities.



Picture 9. Ilé Obá Silekê temple belongs to Xangô Aganju. He is the orisha who protects the temple. People revere him. Photo by Fernando Miceli.

To what extent do Afro-Brazilian cults become a rereading and resemantization of the idea of nature and primitivism found in the German and European imagery? And in what way will this rereading compete with other religions that follow a Brazilian cultural pattern that may come to be appropriated by Germans and other groups as a resemantization? And what if in the expansion and consequent hybridisation of oral religions, in this case of the Afro-Brazilian cults, they incorporate a vernacular culture?

One can see indications of answers to some of these questions in future resemantization processes, but they will also give rise to new questions.

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