

---

# African Gods in Contemporary Brazil

## *A Sociological Introduction to Candomblé Today*

Reginaldo Prandi

*University of São Paulo*

**abstract:** Religious systems brought over by African slaves in Brazil gave rise, especially throughout the 19th century, to Candomblé and other modalities of worship of African deities, especially of Yoruba deities known as orishas. This article seeks to provide a general description of Candomblé, of its main orishas, initiation rites and view of the world. It also proposes an interpretation of the fact that this Afro-Brazilian religion is no longer an ethnic religion exclusive to the black population, but a universal religion, without racial, ethnic or geographical barriers, a religion that congregates followers of all racial and social groups.

**keywords:** Afro-Brazilian religions ♦ black religion in Brazil ♦ Candomblé ♦ orishas

---

### Popular Religions in Brazil

In Brazil, Catholicism has historically been the major religion, Protestants and other faiths being a small minority (de Camargo, 1973). Within this second group are the so-called Afro-Brazilian cults, which, until the 1930s, could be included in the category of ethnic religions that preserved the traditions of the former African slaves and their descendants (Bastide, 1978a; Carneiro, 1936). These religions existed in different areas of Brazil with different rites and local names derived from diverse African traditions: Candomblé in Bahia (Rodrigues, 1935; Bastide, 1978a, 1978b), Xangô in Pernambuco and Alagoas (Motta, 1982, 1985; Pinto, 1935), Tambor de Mina in Maranhão and Pará (S. Ferretti, 1986; M. Ferretti, 1985, 1993; Eduardo, 1948), Batuque in Rio Grande do Sul (Herskovits, 1943; Corrêa, 1992) and Macumba in Rio de Janeiro. It seems that the reorganization of these black religions in Brazil was fairly recent: since the African

people brought to the New World during the final period of slavery (the last decades of the 19th century) were located mostly in cities for urban jobs, they were able to live physically and socially closer than they did before, and this fact provided the propitious social conditions for some African religions to survive. At the end of the 19th century, several Protestant denominations as well as French Spiritualism (founded by Allan Kardec) were introduced in Brazil. These religions flourished, but Catholicism continued as the preference of more than 90 percent of the Brazilian population until the 1950s; although, in the country's most industrialized regions, the southeast, there has always been a lower percentage of Catholics. It is here that there was a more expressive increase in the number of Protestants, Kardecist Spiritualists and also followers of Umbanda, an Afro-Brazilian religion that emerged in the 1930s in Brazil's most developed urban areas and which, despite its origins in the black population, does not seek to preserve an African cultural patrimony in a 'pure' form.

The recent process of religious conversion in Brazil is complex and dynamic, with the incorporation and even creation of some new religions. But the three most important religious groups in terms of the number of followers are: Catholicism in both its traditional and innovated forms; Protestantism, which presents multiple facets; and a diverse array of Afro-Brazilian religions. Nowadays, Afro-Brazilian religions, Pentecostalism – Protestantism originally from the USA (Rolim, 1985) – and two recent forms of popular Catholicism called Christian Base Communities (CEBs) (Pierucci and Prandi, 1996) and the Charismatic Renovation Movement – also from the USA (Prandi, 1997) – have become increasingly more popular. As a result of syncretism, the followers of the Afro-Brazilian religions continue to identify themselves as Catholic. For this reason it is extremely difficult to calculate their numbers. Estimates indicate they account for about 8 percent of the Brazilian population, while approximately 70 percent characterize themselves as 'officially' belonging to the Catholic church and Pentecostalism represents somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of the total.

Umbanda, Brazil's most important popular religion, has an identity native to Brazil but draws heavily on African, American and European religious traditions (de Camargo, 1961; Brown, 1987; Concone, 1987). As a religion, Umbanda has sought to legitimize itself by erasing some features of Candomblé, especially those referring to Africa, slavery and tribal behaviours and mentality (Ortiz, 1978). Compared to Candomblé, the Umbanda initiation process is simpler, cheaper, and its rituals do not demand blood sacrifices. The spirits of *caboclos* (Indians) and *pretos velhos* (old slaves) manifest themselves through the bodies of the initiated when they are in a ritual trance in order to dance, give advice and cure those

who look for any religious or magical help. Umbanda absorbed from Kardecist Spiritualism something of the Christian virtues of charity and altruism, thus making itself a more occidental religion than the other Afro-Brazilian ones.

Since their early times, the African cults of orishas in Brazil have adopted syncretism with Catholicism and Brazilian indigenous religions to a certain degree, with one of the most important characteristics being the worship of saints, in keeping with the Catholic traditions that existed prior to the reforms of Vatican II (Verger, 1957, 1985a, 1985b; Valente, 1977; S. Ferretti, 1994). Contributions from French Kardecist Spiritism were added later, especially the idea of communications with the spirits of the dead by means of trance with the goal of practising Christian charity, since the living should help those who suffer in this world as well as the dead who still have not achieved eternal peace. As I have already mentioned, around 1930, in Rio de Janeiro, the traditional Afro-Brazilian religion gave birth to Umbanda, a major step towards making these religions with African roots fully Brazilian. This step moved it closer to Catholicism, indigenous faiths and Kardecist Spiritualism, rather than to a source in Africa. Until recently, many social researchers believed that Candomblé was related to the groups of blacks and mulattos in Bahia and Pernambuco, with Rio de Janeiro and other Brazilian states having fewer followers. Umbanda, however, became a religion that transcended colour and race.

Since the 1950s, Umbanda has been a very popular religion among the poor and the lower middle classes. It is inconceivable to imagine any synthesis of Brazilian contemporary popular culture without considering the devotion to the orishas as one of its fundamental elements. The cultural influence of the Afro-Brazilian religions is present in all areas: music, theatre, cinema, arts in general, literature, cuisine and so on. The largest religious festivity in Brazil today is the event which takes place on beaches throughout the country on 31 December – the tribute paid to Yemanjá (goddess of the seas, the Great Mother). Every year some hundreds of thousand people from the city of São Paulo celebrate this event at the beaches of Santos (50 miles from the city of São Paulo).

### **Candomblé Today**

By the 1950s Umbanda had become a religion for all sorts of people regardless of colour, race, social or geographical origin. In fact, many Umbanda followers are of European descent. Although Umbanda has no fixed social class boundaries, most of its followers are poor – maybe because most of the Brazilian people themselves are poor. Because Umbanda developed its own outlook on life, a kind of bricolage from Catholicism, Kardecist Spiritualism and Candomblé, it could present itself

as a source of transcendence able either to replace the old Catholic traditions or join Catholicism as a supporting vehicle to provide a renovated religious sense for life. After consolidating features of a universal religion in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Umbanda then spread throughout the country, and can be found now in Argentina and in other Latin-American countries as well (Oro, 1993; Frigerio, 1989; Prandi, 1991b).

During the 1960s, something surprising started to happen. With the large emigration from the northeast (the poorest and most traditional region of Brazil, with an agrarian economy subject to prolonged periods of severe drought) to the southeast of the country (the modern and industrialized region that absorbs the workers who come from the poorest areas), Candomblé began to penetrate Umbanda's well-established territory, and followers of Umbanda began to convert to Candomblé and abandon Umbanda. The movement grew and it led Umbandists back to the old Candomblé, to the so-called true, original, more mysteriously sacred, religious matrix that Umbanda had once derived from. During this period of Brazil's history, these older traditions had found a more favourable economic situation in which to develop, since Candomblé's religious ceremonies require significant expense. Also, it was a time when important middle-class movements searched for what could be taken as the very original roots of Brazilian culture. Intellectuals, poets, students, writers and artists participated in that quest, which wound up at the front doors of the old Candomblé houses in the city of Salvador, the state of Bahia's capital, in the northeast. Travelling to Salvador to have the future read by the *mães-de-santo* of Candomblé (the high priestesses of the *terreiros* [shrines] of the religion of orishas) became a must for many, a necessity that filled a lack of transcendence that had flourished in the secularized, modern lifestyle of the big, industrialized cities in the southeast (Prandi, 1991a).

Candomblé found all the social, cultural, economic conditions it needed to be reborn. From then on, it was no longer a religion whose followers would only be black. Poor people of all ethnic and racial origins could be found at the *terreiros*. To give some idea about the social significance of the Afro-Brazilian religions, our latest estimates indicate approximately 50,000 Afro-Brazilian worship centres among the 16 million inhabitants of the larger São Paulo city (which includes neighbouring municipalities), 4000 of which are Candomblé and the others Umbanda.

Candomblé can be divided into 'nations', according to the ethnic origins preserved in the rites (Lima, 1984). Basically, the ancient African cultures that have been the main sources of the current 'nations' of Candomblé were brought from Bantu cultural areas (today corresponding to the countries of Angola, Congo, Gabon, Zaire and Mozambique) and Sudan cultures from the Gulf of Guinea: Yoruba and Ewe-Fon (today in Nigeria and Benin). However, they overlap.

In the so-called Ketu 'nation', in Bahia, the Yoruba pantheon of orishas and initiatory rites predominate. The ritual language also has a Yoruban dialectal source, although, over time, the meaning of the word has been lost and the sacred songs can no longer be translated. The following 'nations' are also of Yoruban origin: the Nagô in Pernambuco, the Efan in Bahia and the Batuque in Rio Grande do Sul. The Angola 'nation', with a Bantu source, adopted the pantheon of the orishas of the Yorubans as well as many of the initiation practices of the Ketu 'nation', but its ritual language, also untranslatable, is originally from the Kimbundo language. In this 'nation', of primary importance is the worship of the *caboclos* (indigenous spirits, considered by the Angola 'nation' as the true Brazilian ancestors). It was probably the Angola Candomblé that gave rise to Umbanda. The Jeje-Mahin 'nation' of the state of Bahia and the Mina-Jeje 'nation' of the state of Maranhão are related to the Fon traditions. The Jeje 'nations' worship *vodoons* instead of orishas, and their ritual language is of Fon origin.

### ***Celebrating Mãe Menininha do Gantois***

The Candomblé that enjoys the greatest prestige and is most well-known throughout Brazil is that of the Ketu 'nation'.

During the week of 2–7 February 1994, in the city of Salvador, Bahia, there was a series of events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mãe Menininha do Gantois, who died in 1986. She was the third *mãe-de-santo* (high priestess) of the Terreiro do Gantois, the second oldest *terreiro* of Ketu Candomblé in Bahia and an important point of reference for both followers of Candomblé and researchers ever since the end of the previous century. The commemoration included an official opening of a square named Largo de Pulchéria, presided over by the mayor of the city of Salvador and the governor of the state of Bahia – Pulchéria was the second priestess of the Terreiro do Gantois and a great-aunt of Mãe Menininha – a seminar on Candomblé's traditions; an exhibition of sculptures; the release of a postage stamp commemorative of the 100th anniversary; and a concert that assembled followers from different *terreiros* and some very important Brazilian singers, such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Maria Bethânia, Gal Costa and Daniela Mercury, which was all televised by Brazil's major network. The American writer Steven White, who attended the commemoration of Mãe Menininha, provided me with the following observations:

One of the fundamental ideas underlying the 'Seminar on Afro-Brazilian Religion and Continuity of Tradition' was that of putting aside differences between the various 'nations' of Candomblé and any difficulties between and within the hierarchies of the *terreiros* as a way of coming together and reflecting on the future of Afro-Brazilian religion. The seminar was held in the ritual

dance area (*barracão*) of the Terreiro do Gantois. Outside was a sacred *iroko*, a massive tree wrapped in a long white ribbon of cloth called an *ojá*; atop the *terreiro's* unmistakable and elegant facade, a white flag was flying. Inside, Mãe Cleusa, daughter of Mãe Menininha, sat in a wicker chair with a high, round back beneath longer-than-life photographs of the three *Iyalorishas* ['priestesses' in the ritual language] who preceded her. At the front table, bathed in the bright light for television cameras (the events were given national coverage), Prof. Júlio Braga (director of the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais da Universidade Federal da Bahia and the high priest of a Ketu *terreiro* and one of the organizers of the seminar) invited Mãe Stella (who, after the death of Mãe Menininha, became Candomblé's foremost living figure) from the *terreiro* Axé Apô Afonjá to bless the gathering and preside over it. The public was so numerous that it filled the *barracão* of the *terreiro* and overflowed into the street. There were many *mães-de-santo* present, dressed in all their ritual splendor. Salvador, a city of 2 million inhabitants, has at least 1000 *terreiros*.

The issue of alliances between 'nations' was a central theme of the history of Candomblé in Bahia that Prof. Renato Silveira gave on the second day of the seminar. He described the conflicts that existed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries between the Bantus, who were the first to arrive in Bahia, and the Yorubans, who arrived as slaves in Bahia later than the Bantus, but soon became more numerous. Each of the many ethnic groups that came to Bahia as slaves brought different orishas, which in Africa were worshipped individually. The new social conditions in Bahia facilitated the creation of a cult of many orishas together, a cult that mixed different ritual practices from different 'nations'. This reality complicates the tendency to idealize Africa as the source of Brazilian Candomblé. Also, it might be that many followers of Candomblé are seeking something in Africa that Africa no longer has (or perhaps never had) to offer.

For me, as an outsider, one of the most interesting parts of the seminar was the so-called 'questions and answers' period after the lectures each evening. These became intensely emotional debates on the crises facing Afro-Brazilian religions. There are essentially two great threats to Candomblé, according to those who spoke. The first concerns Evangelical Protestants. Until relatively recently, the followers of Candomblé were the victims of police persecution of the most violent kind (according to a recent article by Júlio Braga, the police records in Bahia from 1920s to the 1960s remain closed to the public). Now there is a 'holy war' against the followers of Candomblé and part of Evangelical Protestants who have a strong presence in the poorest neighbourhoods and actively campaign against the orishas, saying they are diabolical. One speaker said that in Rio de Janeiro there are Evangelicals who enter the *terreiros* during ceremonies and violently disrupt the proceedings. This battle is unequal in structural terms, since Candomblé, which is an initiatic religion, does not contain the proselytizing and missionary elements of Protestant Evangelism.

But the general consensus among the speakers was that the gravest danger for Candomblé was its commercialization. In Salvador, 'the Tourist Capital of Brazil', as the T-shirts say, anything that can be sold is sold. The process of marketing black culture in an official way through state-run tourism offices has wide-ranging consequences. On the one hand, there are, for example, all the

T-shirts, caps, etc. of the musical group Olodum (best known in the United States for their collaboration with Paul Simon in 'Rhythm of the Saints') in the tourism heart of Salvador called do Pelourinho, now in the process of being restored so as to attract more tourist dollars. On the other hand, however, there is also a commercialization of the sacred: people doing the *jogo de búzios* and 'dances of the *orishas*' for foreign and Brazilian tourists in giant shopping malls.<sup>1</sup> Also, the media's attention to Candomblé can be transforming it into something increasingly more akin to folklore, rather than a vital religion with an angering tradition. There is an ironic side to the discussion. I discovered that an entire exhibit of some 60 exquisite sculptures entitled 'Iyami Oxum' (My Mother Oshun, in Yoruba) by Marcos Castro and Adriana Martins (proposed in conjunction with the centenary events and displayed at the Casa do Gantois) was purchased from the artists by Salvador's biggest shopping mall (Shopping Center Barra) and, in turn, donated by the shopping mall to the Casa do Gantois, which has the right to reproduce the figures and sell them. Nevertheless, for Mãe Stella and others who spoke, Candomblé must not be a product to sell to tourists interested in the 'exotic' aspects of the black culture or to surrender to politicians who would exploit Candomblé as a way of getting votes. She called for a general *closed* meeting of *mães-de-santo* and *pais-de-santo* to discuss these and other issues currently affecting the fate of Afro-Brazilian religion. Surprisingly, at least for me, there was very little mention of a need to continue to 'Africanize' Candomblé by eliminating those parts of its rituals with Catholic origins [Prandi, 1991a]. And Mãe Stella de Oxóssi has been a national leader of the Candomblé's movement against syncretism.

The gods and goddesses, the Yoruban *orishas*, are syncretized with Catholic saints, Jesus Christ and the Virgin. It is very common for the ritual practices of Candomblé to be accompanied by Catholic rites. For example, if on a particular night there is a ceremony to honour a certain *orisha*, in the morning the followers attend mass at the church of the saint that is syncretized with that *orisha*. Also, after the initiation ceremonies, it is common for the newly initiated person to undertake a pilgrimage to seven Catholic churches.

### ***The Ketu Candomblé Initiation***

The priesthood and the organization of rites for the worship of these divinities are quite complex. At the same time, there is one pivotal religious mechanism – the rite of trances that allows the gods to manifest themselves through the bodies of the priests during the ceremonies in order to dance and be admired, praised, worshipped. The initiates, called *filhos-de-santo* or *filhas-de-santo* (*iawo* in ritual language), are also called 'horses of the gods' since the trance is basically a means of allowing oneself to be 'mounted' and 'ridden' by the *orisha*. But the process of becoming an initiate is a long, expensive and difficult road, whose different stages in the Ketu 'nation' can be summarized in the following way.

To begin with, the *mãe-de-santo* (or *Iyalorisha* in the ritual language) needs to ascertain by means of the oracle of the 16 cowries (the *jogo de búzios*) which orisha is the 'owner' of the head of the particular individual (Prandi, 1996; Bascom, 1969; Braga, 1988). He or she then receives a necklace of beads of the colours that symbolize his or her orisha (see Appendix) and begins the apprenticeship. The first private ceremony that the novice (*abian*) will undergo consists of a series of votive sacrifices to the novice's own head (*eborí*), so that the head may be strengthened and prepared to receive (someday) the orisha in a trance of possession. For the initiation as a horse of the gods, the novice must obtain enough money to cover the costs of offerings (animals and a wide variety of foods and objects), ceremonial clothing, ritual utensils, not being able to work during the initiation period that ends with a festive ceremony in which the novice's orisha is presented to the community.

As part of the initiation, the novice remains in seclusion in the *terreiro* for a minimum apprenticeship of 21 days. During the final days of this period, the novice's head is shaved and body painted. A material representation of the orisha (*igbá-orisha*) of the novice is washed in a preparation of sacred leaves (*amassi*) and the blood sacrifice (*orô*) occurs. Depending on the orisha (see Appendix) the following animals may be offered: goats, kids, sheep, hens or roosters, or ducks and snails. Finally, in a big, public festive ceremony, the newly initiated person is presented. He or she is incorporated, and his or her particular orisha utters the name by which the orisha will be praised when the orisha mounts the *filho(a)-de-santo* and then dances. The entire ceremony is sung to the rhythm of the three sacred drums (the three *atabaques*, that are called *run*, *rumpi* and *lê*).

In Candomblé there is always drumming, singing, dancing and eating (Motta, 1988). At the end, there is a great communal banquet (*ajeum*, which means 'let us eat') made from the meat of the sacrificed animals. This new *filho(a)-de-santo* (*iawo*) will offer sacrifices and festive ceremonies (on a more reduced scale) on the first, third and seventh anniversaries of his or her initiation. After this seven-year period, the person becomes a full priest or priestess (*egbomi*, a person who is a senior), and will offer the festive ceremonies every seven years. When the *egbomi* dies, the funeral rites (*asheshe*) are carried out by the community so that the orisha that resides within that head returns to the parallel world of the gods (*orun*) and so that the spirit of the dead person (*egun*) is set free, to be born again some day and thereby be able to enjoy the pleasures of this world.

### ***Religion, Ethics, Ritual***

Candomblé works in an ethical context in which the Judeo-Christian notion of sin does not make any sense. The difference between good and



evil basically depends upon the relationship between the follower and his or her personal god, the orisha.

As I tried to show briefly, the initiation is endless, gradual and secret. The worship itself demands sacrifices of animal blood, offerings of food and various ingredients. The meat of the animals slaughtered during the ritualistic sacrifices is eaten by the members of the religious community. The blood – as well as certain parts, such as the head, paws, specific internal organs – are offered to the gods, the orishas. Only initiates have access to the sacrificial ceremonies carried out in the private chambers of the orishas (*quartos-de-santo*), the same space in which the cult's apprenticeship is imparted. Since the religious learning always takes place far from public eyes, performed during periods of seclusion in rooms allowed for initiated devotees only, the religion itself is shrouded in mystery.

Nevertheless, all the dances (which are the culminating point of the celebrations) occur in an open area, or *barracão*, and this space is open to the public. As I have already mentioned, these public ceremonies (called *toques*) mark the end of several days of 'obligations' that include the sacrifice of animals, food and sexual prohibitions for those being initiated, and seclusion. A *toque* is a ceremony performed with song and dance, to the beat of the sacred drums. One by one, each orisha is honoured: his or her sons and daughters fall into a trance, 'receiving' the divinity in their bodies that are then dressed with the proper garments and regalia of their personal gods who then dance and dance and dance. This sequence of songs and dance is called *shirê*, which means 'let us play', in Yoruba.

### **Gods, Followers and Clients**

Apart from serving the initiated, Candomblé meets the demand for magical-religious services from a large clientele which does not necessarily take part in the worship ceremonies. The 'clients' seek out the *mãe-de-santo* or *pai-de-santo* for the cowries game (*jogo de búzios*), the orishas' oracle, and through it predictions are made, problems are solved and ritualistic means to manipulate circumstances are prescribed. The client pays for the cowries game and, eventually, for the carrying out of the propitiatory sacrifice (*eboh*) that is recommended for the client's specific case. The client always finds out which orisha is the 'owner' of his or her head and can attend one or more festive celebrations, to which the client might make some financial contribution, even though he or she has no religious commitment to Candomblé. The client knows next to nothing about the initiation process and does not even participate in it. The client, however, is a figure with a double importance: first of all, his or her demand for services helps legitimize the *terreiro* and the religious group in social terms; second, it is from these clients that a substantial part of the funds necessary for the expenses of the group is derived. In general, the

Candomblé priests and priestesses who achieve high levels of prestige have influential members of society as clients.

Devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions may also worship mythical entities other than the orishas from Africa, such as the *encantados* (charmed beings who lived a long time ago) or *caboclos* (spirits of dead Brazilian Indians). During the ritual trance, the *encantados* talk to their followers and friends, offering advice and forms of treatment for all kinds of problems. The organization of African divinities and *encantados* in the *terreiros* varies within each 'nation' of Candomblé. *Encantados* or *caboclos* are the centre of worship in Umbanda and in Candomblé de Caboclo, where they play a sacred role even more important than the orishas themselves (dos Santos, 1995).

### **Candomblé and Human Behaviour as Mythical Heritage**

According to Candomblé, each person belongs to a certain god, 'master' of his or her head and mind and from whom physical and personality characteristics are inherited (Verger, 1985a; Prandi, 1991a; Augras, 1983; Lépine, 1981; Ligièro, 1993). It is a religious prerogative of the *pai-de-santo* or *mãe-de-santo*, by means of the 16 cowries game (*jogo de búzios*), to find out to which orisha (god or goddess) one belongs. This knowledge is absolutely imperative to begin the process of initiation of new devotees and even to foresee the future for clients and solve their troubles. Even among non-believers, it is a Brazilian custom of knowing one's orisha.

Despite the approximately 400 orishas worshipped in Africa, only about 20 are revered in Brazil. Each one has his or her own characteristics, elements of nature, symbolic colour, garments, songs, foods, drinks, type of personality, desires, faults and so forth. There is no orisha entirely 'good' or 'bad'. As I mentioned before, the religion of orishas in Brazil has no notion of sin. Followers believe that men and women inherit many of the orishas' attributes, particularly those related to behaviour and personality. People believe that one behaves in ways that resemble the conduct of one's orisha in the same situation. This legitimizes both one's failures and achievements.

Let me briefly present here some of the orishas and the characteristics that their 'children' or followers are believed to hold from them. I have selected those that have been the most popular orishas throughout Brazil and also at the 60 'terreiros' I have studied in the city of São Paulo (see Appendix).

*Eshu* – messenger god, a trickster divinity. At any ceremony, always the first god to which homage is paid in order to avoid his anger and consequent disruption of everything. Overseer of crossroads and exits to the

streets. Syncretism with the Catholic Devil. His symbol is a clay phallus or iron prongs. Followers believe that people consecrated to Eshu are intelligent, sexy, fast, carnal, licentious, hot, erotic and dirty. They like to eat and drink too much. One should never trust a son or a daughter of Eshu. They are the best, the hottest for sex, but they decide when they will be so. They never marry, so reckless, too smart, all alone through the streets, drinking and watching over the crossroads forever. Pay Eshu some money, some food, some attention, whenever he does you a favour. Eshu's people never do anything for nothing, at least according to ancient African myths and current Brazilian popular usage.

*Ogun* – god of war, iron, metallurgy and technology. Syncretism with St Anthony or St George. The orisha which has the power to clear all paths. Stereotypes show Ogun's children as stubborn, passionate, cold and rational. They fit a workaholic mind well. Although they usually do anything for a friend, Ogun's sons and daughters do not know how to love without hurting; they're heartbreakers. Ogun's people are believed to be as good at sexual fulfilment as Eshu's. Ogun and Eshu are brothers. People usually say that the 'families' of both are particularly well built physically and mentally geared to sex. Nonetheless, they also do many other interesting, practical things as well. They are more suitable for blue-collar work than for intellectual jobs. They also perform well as warriors.

*Oshossi* – god of hunting. Young and a warrior. Syncretism with St George and St Sebastian. Affluence orisha. His people are slender, cute, lovely, curious, snooping. They just can't be monogamous, for they have to run around night and day. Yet they make good fathers and good mothers. They are friendly, sometimes a little simple-minded, and very patient. They are known as lonesome people. They know that, so they don't get uptight if and when they find themselves all alone in the middle of the night. An Oshossi person looks for and enjoys lovers, but if he or she doesn't have a lover, he or she is satisfied with discreetly masturbating. 'Life is just like that', he or she would say. The Oshossi people are eternal adolescents. Just don't ask the people of the god of hunting to wait for you. They live free to break commitments; they hardly understand making or keeping appointments. So tradition says; so tradition teaches.

*Obaluaye* or *Omulu* – god of small-pox, plagues, illness. Nowadays considered the god of AIDS. Connected to all kinds of illnesses, cures, cemeteries, soil and subsoil. Syncretism with St Lazarus. These people seem to be the real depressed and depressive ones. They are negative, pessimistic and spiteful. They look as if they are unfriendly, but really they are shy and ashamed of their awful appearance. Be friends with them and you will find out that all they need to be the best people in the world is some attention, and a little bit of love. When they get old, some become incredibly wise, while others die stupid.

*Shango* – god of thunder and justice. Syncretism with St Bartholomew. Appeals to him are made in matters involving business, justice and red-tape. People of Shango are born to be kings and queens, but they usually aren't. Children of Shango are stubborn, resolute, gluttonous; greedy for food, money, power and wives. A Shango person likes to have many lovers even though he or she does not have the sexual heat to maintain more than one relationship for much time. They live to fight, to involve people in their own personal war. They enjoy war, in spite of getting fatter and fatter. However, it must be said that a Shango person is the fairest judge anyone could ever wish for. They make good friends and excellent parents.

*Oshun* – goddess of fresh water, gold, fertility and love. Syncretism with Nossa Senhora das Candeias (Our Blessed Virgin of the Candles), among other names given to the Virgin Mary. Mistress of vanity, she is Shango's favourite wife. Oshun's people are attractive, seductive, foxy and real flirts. They know how to manage love affairs; they are good at witchcraft; they foresee the future; they guess secrets and mysteries. They enjoy the beauty they think they rightly bear. They can be very vain, conceited and arrogant. They know everything about love, about dating, about marriage, about having a family and raising children easily, carelessly. They never get poor, they never face loneliness. At least this is the appearance a son or a daughter of Oshun always likes to give.

*Yansan* or *Oya* – goddess of lightning, wind and storms. A woman warrior, she is the orisha who takes the souls of the dead to the other world. Syncretism with St Barbara. Shango's most important wife. Sons and daughters of Yansan like sex too much and have many lovers. Goddess of eroticism, she is a kind of feminist entity. Yansan people are brave, talkative, brilliant. They dislike running errands for they feel they are queens or kings. They are communicative; they like to show off, and be the centre of attention. They can lay down their lives for their beloved, but they never forgive any treason, particularly in matters of love.

*Yemanjá* – goddess of the seas and oceans. Worshipped as the mother of several orishas. Syncretism with Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Our Mother of Conception), including Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida, patroness of Brazil for Catholic people. Represented by a mermaid, her statue can be seen in almost every town along the coast of Brazil. Sons and daughters of Yemanjá are good mothers and fathers. They protect their children, friends and relatives like lions. Their biggest fault is to talk too much; they can't keep a secret. They like to work and overcome poverty.

*Oshala* – god of creation. Syncretism with Jesus Christ. Followers dress in white on Fridays. Always the last to be praised during Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies; revered by all the other orishas. As creator, he

moulded the first human beings and blew the breath of life into them. When revealing himself via trances, at Brazilian Candomblé ceremonies, Oshala presents himself in two forms. Oshalufan is old, bent and tired, moving slowly and hardly able to dance; Oshaguian is in his youth, and dances like a warrior. This young god invented the wooden mortar for pounding yam, his favourite food, and is considered the creator of material culture. Oshala is the only divinity who doesn't like sacrifices of warm-blooded animals (goats, sheep, fowl and so on), preferring the cold blood of molluscs. People of Oshala like power, they appreciate being treated like a king, or at least a boss, preferably *the* boss. Some of those consecrated to the old Oshala are said not to be very good lovers, being too tired to make love. However, these people are brilliant and eager to learn and have a talent for understanding. Challengers, they are great helpers for friends, and great foes for people who oppose them. They never give up.

I think this brief illustration is enough to facilitate an understanding about how each orisha can religiously provide his or her human son or daughter with a not so ordinary, divine pattern of behaviour, elaborated from Yoruban mythology about the orishas who survived in Brazil.

In fact, the Candomblé followers can either take their orisha's attributes for granted as though they were their own characteristics and try to look like their god or goddess or just recognize, through them, symbols that legitimate their conduct. The patterns of behaviour presented by the orishas' myths may in this way be used as a model to follow or a kind of social validation for what one is already like. An initiated person could turn over a new leaf when he or she is told which orisha his or her head belongs to, or could just keep acting the way he or she always does. This, however, does not change or invalidate the meaning of those symbols.

In addition, every initiated person is supposed to have a second orisha who works as an associate (*juntó*) of the first one. For example, a person would say 'I'm a son of Oshala and Yemanjá'. Therefore, this second divinity also has an important role in this process of constituting behavioural patterns. Besides that, every private orisha has his or her own particularity, depending on what stage of his or her mythical biography a particular legend addresses.

Sometimes, when well-known characteristics of an orisha do not fit a person consecrated to the god at all, it is not uncommon to state that god is 'wrong' for that person. This means that a change of divinity must be ritually performed at once, or to find out some 'forgotten' myth that justifies those discrepancies. Other times, the attributes of the orisha itself do not fit the life or the patterns of behaviour in our current society. In this case, they must be changed. The social construction of religions, with their divinities, symbols and meanings, is far from being completed.

## **The Religions of the Orishas in Brazilian Cities Today**

If religions, like sciences and other institutional practices, are organized sources of meaning for life, codes of behaviour, or languages for interpreting the world, for the followers of Candomblé, today, in Brazilian urban centres, what this religion offers is something different from what the religion of the orishas used to offer until a while ago. When Candomblé was established in northeast Brazil, at the beginning of the 19th century, the religion enabled black slaves to recover their lost communitarian-tribal world of Africa. This religion represented at the time a mechanism by which black Africans and Brazilians could distance themselves culturally from the world dominated by the white oppressor. The black slaves could count on a black 'world' from a symbolical African source of resistance to the adversities of the New World, that was kept alive in the religious life of the *terreiro*, juxtaposed with the white world, which was the world of work, slavery and misery. Roger Bastide comments on this ability on the part of blacks during the colonial period in Brazil to live in two different worlds at the same time and still avoid tensions and conflict: the conflict of contradictory values as well as demands in the 'two societies' (Bastide, 1978b).

With the changes of Candomblé into a universal religion, it is no longer focused on 'racial' differences and organization of social and cultural mechanisms of resistance, although Candomblé still continues providing those instruments for black populations that live in some more traditional regions of Brazil. The new context changes radically the sociological meaning of this Afro-Brazilian religion, and what was related to 'racial' segregation in a traditional society some decades ago, now has the meaning of a personal, free and intentional choice: someone joins Candomblé not because he or she is a black, but because he or she learns and feels that Candomblé works in order to make life easier. Of course, the religion's efficacy only can be evaluated by the person who elected it, although the process of religious option and conversion can have strong social consequences for the whole society (Prandi, 1992).

The undoing of ethnic ties that transformed Candomblé over the last 25 years into a religion for everyone, also provided a significant expansion in the supply of magical-religious services for a population outside the religious group. This clientele was already used to composing particular world visions from fragments from different sources of interpretation of life, so that it can now use the Candomblé to provide new elements for the construction of a kind of a private, kaleidoscope-made world vision. The middle-class client that usually goes to Candomblé seeking magical services is, in general, a bricoleur that also goes to many

other non-rational sources seeking solutions to life problems. Certainly, Candomblé for this client is quite different from the Candomblé of an initiate, a devotee. But both are non-contradictory parts of the same reality.

Candomblé is a religion in which the ritual process is of primary importance. The differentiation between good and evil in the ethical sense of Christian religions is of little consequence in Candomblé. As a religion that is not dominated by ethical sermons, Candomblé (and, to a lesser degree, Umbanda, which is heavily influenced by the Christian code of Kardecist Spiritualism) is an important religious alternative for different social groups that live in a society in which ethics, moral codes and strict standards of behaviour may have little value or very different values.

Candomblé is a religion that affirms the world, recognizing its worth, and that also esteems many of the things that other religions consider bad: for example, money, pleasure (including that of the flesh), success, domination and power. The initiate does not have to internalize patterns of morality that indicate a world different from the world in which he or she lives. The initiate learns rites that facilitate living well in *this* world, that is full of possibilities for well-being and pleasure. The follower favours the orishas in a constant search for the best possible balance (even if it is temporary) between that which the initiate is and has as a human being and that which the initiate would like to be and have. In this process, it is extremely important for the follower to completely trust the *mãe-de-santo* or *pai-de-santo*. Guided by them, the follower will learn and repeat the ritual formulas *ad aeternum*. One cannot be a follower of Candomblé without constantly repeating the rite, just as one cannot be an Evangelical without constantly examining one's conscience in search of guilt that can be exorcized (de Souza, 1969). The good Evangelical, in order to save him- or herself from eternal damnation, needs to annihilate his or her most hidden desires; the good *filho(a)-de-santo* needs to fulfil his or her desires in order to make the sacred force of the orishas that moves the world (*ashê*) stronger and more dynamic. By accepting the world as it is, Candomblé accepts humanity and, furthermore, situates humanity at the centre of the universe, presenting itself as a religion that is quite appropriate for the hedonistic and narcissistic society in which we live.

Because Candomblé does not distinguish between good and evil in the occidental Christian sense, it tends to attract all kinds of individuals who have been socially marked and marginalized by other religions and non-religious institutions. This also demonstrates Candomblé's acceptance of the world, even when it has to do with the world of the street, the underworld, the vendors of sex and those who have walked through prison doors. Candomblé possesses a truly exemplary ability to join saints and sinners, the blemished and the pure, the ugly and the beautiful. But, if Candomblé liberates the individual, Candomblé also liberates the world.

Candomblé has no message for the world: it would not know what to do with the world if it was given the chance of transforming it. Candomblé is not a religion based on the word and, therefore, will never have salvation as its ultimate goal. Ultimate concerns for Candomblé mean the concrete issues of life: illness and pain, unemployment, lack of money, food and shelter. It is, without a doubt, a religion for the urban centres, though only partially, which is also the destiny of the other religions in today's world. Candomblé could be the religion or the magic for the person who is already fed up with the kind of transcendence made up from reason, science and technology, and who has stopped believing in the meaning of a thoroughly disenchanting world that has left magic behind in favour of that efficiency of secular, modern thought and techniques. Candomblé could be the religion for the person who cannot reach in this disenchanting, demystified world any sense of social justice sufficient to solve many of the problems that each individual faces over the course of a lifetime.

As Candomblé affirms and expands itself as a socially legitimized institution of magical practices, it takes part in a public movement of multiple aspects by which each group of individuals or even each person individually is able to construct particular sources of transcendence and explanation that make them able to act on the world in a way full of meaning. The pragmatic dimension that Candomblé reveals when it accepts people as they are, or imagine themselves, gives Candomblé an advantage in the religious market in which moralistic religions (such as Catholicism and Evangelical denominations) compete for followers, especially in situations in which the consumers are not inclined to change their values systems.

Candomblé also provides its initiated and non-initiated followers with a very particular enjoyment of its Afro-Brazilian aesthetics and the fascination of the cowries game and its way to contact the magical universe of the orishas. And a client does not have to be a member of the religion to enjoy its practices. He or she just pays for the *jogo de búzios* and its propitiatory offerings in order to get help from the African deities in a way widely accepted as a legitimate part of the Brazilian culture. Candomblé teaches that each person has his or her own god or goddess who can be worshipped. But no orisha can be honoured before sacrifices are offered to the head of the person. The head of the human being, which means his or her personality, is the only way to get to the gods. A Yoruban proverb frequently heard at the Candomblé meeting says 'Ori buruku kossi orisha', which means 'there is no orisha if the head is not good'. And Candomblé teaches how to make heads good. It makes a great difference in terms of self-esteem.

In metropolitan contemporary society, if the construction of systems of



meaning increasingly depends on the will of the groups and individuals, the relevant religious themes may be chosen according to different private preferences. Now religion also is a matter of preference. The extreme would be each individual with a personal model of religiosity independent from the great 'totalizing' religious system that, until quite recently, characterized the history of humanity (Luckmann, 1987). For this reason, the tribal African gods appropriated by the South American metropolis are no longer gods of the tribe. They are gods of a civilization in which religious and magical meanings come to depend on the subjective choices that each person makes, either alone or in groups. To the initiate, Candomblé can also mean the possibility for someone, usually poor and socially marginalized, to have a private god that everyone in the community has to honour and praise. In those moments in which the person is ridden as horse of the god, he or she will be in the centre of the *barração*, the Candomblé stage, alone to dance, be admired and acclaimed by everybody, and some times envied. And, all night long, the horse of the gods will dance and dance and dance. No one has never seen an orisha as beautiful as that one.

### Appendix: Basic Attributes of the Orishas in Candomblé ('Nation' Ketu: Bahia and São Paulo)

Orishas	Attribution	Sex	Natural element	Patronage
Eshu	Messenger orisha, guardian of the house's entrance and crossroads	M	Iron ore	Communication, transformation, sexuality, sexual potency
Ogun	Orisha of metallurgy, agriculture and war	M	Wrought iron	Open roads, blue-collar jobs, soldiers and police
Oshossi	Orisha of hunting	M	Forests	Abundance of food
Osaniyin	Orisha of the leaves	M	Leaves	Effectiveness of cure
Oshumare	Orisha of the rainbow	M and F (androgynous)	Rain and atmospheric conditions	Wealth that comes from harvests (rain)
Obaluaye or Omulu	Orisha of plagues, illness	M	Earth, soil	Cure for physical ailments
Shango	Orisha of thunder	M	Thunder and stones	Justice, white-collar jobs
Oya or Yansan	Orisha of lightning, master of the spirits of the dead	F	Lightning bolts, wind and storms	Sensuality, carnal love, atmospheric disasters
Oba	Orisha of rivers	F	Rivers	Domestic work and female power
Oshun	Orisha of fresh water and precious metals	F	Rivers, lakes and waterfalls	Love, gold, fertility, gestation, vanity

Orishas	Attribution	Sex	Natural element	Patronage
Logun-Ede	Orisha of rivers that flow through forests	M or F (alternately)	Rivers and forests	The same as Oshun and Oshossi of whom he is a son
Ewa	Orisha of fountains	F	Headwaters and streams	Domestic harmony
Yemanja	Orisha of great waters	F	Sea and great rivers	Maternity, mental harmony, family
Nanan	Orisha of the bottom of the waters	F	Swamps, mud	Wisdom, seniority and death
Oshaguian (Young Oshala)	Orisha of creation	M	Air	Material culture
Oshalufan (Old Oshala)	Orisha of creation	M/F (the origins of human beings)	Air	Creation of humanity, breath of life

Orishas	Fetish/material representation	Mythical element	Colours of clothing	Colours of beads in necklace
Eshu	Laterite, iron prongs	Fire and earth	Red and black	Red and black (alternated)
Ogun	Iron agricultural tools (miniature)	Earth	Blue, green and white	Blue or green
Oshossi	Iron bow and arrow (miniature)	Earth	Turquoise blue or green	Turquoise blue
Osaniyin	Iron rods with a bird and leaves	Earth	Green and white	Green and white (alternated)
Oshumare	Two intertwined metal snakes	Water	Yellow, green and black	Yellow, green and black, or cowries
Obaluaye or Omulu	Clay bowl with holes	Earth	Red, white and black; straw clothing	Red, white and black
Shango	Meteorite in a wooden bowl	Fire	Red, brown and white	Red and white (alternated)
Oya or Yansan	Pebble	Air, water and fire	Brown and dark red, or white	Brown or dark red
Oba	Pebble	Water	Red and gold	Red and clear yellow
Oshun	Pebble	Water	Yellow or gold and blue	Clear yellow
Logun-Ede	Pebble and metal bow and arrow	Earth and water	Gold and turquoise blue	Gold and turquoise blue (alternated)
Ewa	Iron snake	Water	Red and yellow	Cowries
Yemanja	Pebble from the sea	Water	Blue, white and bright green	Clear glass
Nanan	Pebble and cowries	Water	Purple, blue and white	White and cobalt blue
Oshaguian (Young Oshala)	Pebble	Air	White	White and royal blue
Oshalufan (Old Oshala)	Silver or tin circle	Air	White	White

*Prandi African Gods in Contemporary Brazil*

Orishas	Sacrificial animals	Favourite foods	Numbers in the cowries game	Day of the week
Eshu	Black goat and black rooster	Manioc meal with palm oil	1 7	Monday
Ogun	Goat and rooster	Black beans boiled with bits of meat, pork, and sausage ( <i>fejoadá</i> ); roasted yams	3 7	Tuesday
Oshossi	Birds, rabbit, pig	Cooked corn with slices of coconut; fruit	3 6	Thursday
Osaniyin	Male and female birds; nanny goat and goat	Cooked yellow corn decorated with tobacco; fruit	1 7	Thursday
Oshumare	Goat and nanny goat	Paste made from cooked sweet potato	3 6 11	Sunday
Obaluaye or Omulu	Pig	Popcorn with coconut	1 3 11	Monday
Shango	Sheep and turtle	Chopped okra and dried shrimp cooked in palm oil ( <i>amalá</i> )	4 6 12	Wednesday
Oya or Yansan	Female kid and hens	Dumplings of beans and shrimps fried in palm oil ( <i>acarejé</i> )	4 9	Wednesday
Oba	Female kid and hens	Omelette with beans and okra	4 6 9	Wednesday
Oshun	Nanny goats and hens	Beans cooked and kneaded with five cooked eggs on top ( <i>omolocun</i> )	5 8	Saturday
Logun-Ede	Pair of kids; birds	Cooked corn; fish; fruit	6 7 9	Thursday
Ewa	Nanny goat and hens	Black beans with cooked eggs	3 6	Saturday
Yemanjá	Duck, goat, sheep (all female)	Rice covered with egg whites; baked fish	3 9 10	Saturday
Nanan	Nanny goat and restless cavy	Porridge made from manioc	3 8 11	Monday
Oshaguan (Young Oshala)	Snail (periwinkle)	Crushed yams	8	Friday
Oshalufan (Old Oshala)	Snail (periwinkle)	Grits	10	Friday

Orishas	Ritual objects	Catholic syncretism	Taboos for the initiate
Eshu	Phallic staff ( <i>ogô</i> )	Devil	Carrying objects on the head
Ogun	Sword	St Anthony St George	Getting drunk
Oshossi	Metal bow and arrow ( <i>ofã</i> ); Fly-whisk ( <i>eru</i> )	St George St Sebastian	Eating honey
Osaniyin	Spear and three gourds	St Onofre	Whistling
Oshumare	Metal snake and sword	St Bartholomew	Crawling
Obaluaye or Omulu	Sceptre made of vegetable fibre and cowries ( <i>shashará</i> )	St Lazarus St Rocco	Going to funerals
Shango	Double-headed axe ( <i>oshé</i> ) and metal rattle ( <i>shere</i> )	St Jerome	Having contact with the dead and cemeteries; dressing completely in red
Oya or Yansan	Sword and fly-whisk ( <i>eru</i> )	St Barbara	Eating sheep of either sex; eating squash
Oba	Round shield and sword	St Joan of Arc	Eating mushrooms; using earrings
Oshun	Gold metal fan ( <i>abebe</i> ) and sword	Our Lady of Candles	Eating fish that have scales
Logun-Ede	Metal bow and arrow ( <i>ofã</i> ) and gold metal fan ( <i>abebe</i> )	St Michael the Archangel	Wearing brown or red clothing
Ewa	Sword and rattle made of vegetable material	St Lucy	Eating hens
Yemanjá	Silver fan and sword	Our Lady of Conception	Eating crabs; killing mice and cockroaches
Nanan	Bowed sceptre made of palm tree fibres ( <i>ibirí</i> )	St Anne	Using metal knives
Oshaguián (Young Oshala)	White or silver pestle and silver sword	Jesus	Eating food with palm oil; drinking palm wine; not wearing white clothing on Fridays
Oshalufan (Old Oshala)	Silver shepherd's staff with symbols of creation ( <i>opashorô</i> )	Jesus	Eating food with palm oil; drinking palm wine; not wearing white clothing on Fridays

### Note

1. There has always been fierce competition between the *mães-de-santo* and *pais-de-santo* of the different *terreiros* and 'nations'. In the early times of Candomblé, they used to accuse each other of sorcery, which was, in Africa, forbidden and severely punished. Over time, being a sorcerer became a kind of virtue and a means of prestige. Nowadays, the *mães-de-santo* and *pais-de-santo* usually accuse each other of commercialization of Candomblé. In fact, Candomblé's economy depends strongly on some commercialization and even the most famous *mães* and *pais-de-santo* allowed themselves to practise their magic for money. They say that, by using this strategy, they can afford Candomblé's rites, which are very expensive. Since São Paulo is the most affluent state in Brazil, branches of almost all the traditional *terreiros* of Bahia can be found there. On the other

hand, in our society, commercialization means publicization as well. And many people who work with elements of Candomblé for many non-religious institutions or agencies, such as the *escolas de samba* and the film and television industries, are followers of Candomblé.

## References

- Augras, Monique (1983) *O duplo e a metamorfose: a identidade mítica em comunidades nagô*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Bascom, William R. (1969) *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bastide, Roger (1978a) *O candomblé da Bahia: rito nagô*. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Bastide, Roger (1978b) *The African Religions of Brazil: Toward a Sociology of the Interpenetration of Civilizations*. Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Braga, Júlio Santana (1988) *O jogo de búzios: um estudo de adivinhação no candomblé*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Brown, Diana (1987) 'Uma história da umbanda no Rio', in *Umbanda y política*. Rio de Janeiro: ISER and Marco Zero.
- Carneiro, Edison (1936) *Religiões negras*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.
- Concone, Maria Helena Villas Boas (1987) *Umbanda, uma religião brasileira*. São Paulo: Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo.
- Corrêa, Norton F. (1992) *Antropologia de uma religião Afro-Rio-Grandense*. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.
- de Camargo, Candido Procopio Ferreira (1961) *Kardecismo e umbanda*. São Paulo: Pioneira.
- de Camargo, Candido Procopio Ferreira (1973) *Católicos, protestantes, espíritas*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- de Souza, Beatriz Muniz (1969) *A experiência da salvação: pentecostais em São Paulo*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades.
- dos Santos, Jocélio Teles (1995) *O dono da terra: o caboclo nos candomblés da Bahia*. Salvador: SarahLetras.
- Eduardo, Octavio da Costa (1948) *The Negro in Northern Brazil*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Ferretti, Mundicarmo Maria Rocha (1985) *Mina, uma religião de origem africana*. São Luís: SIOGE.
- Ferretti, Mundicarmo Maria Rocha (1993) *Desceu na guma*. São Luís: SIOGE.
- Ferretti, Sérgio Figueiredo (1986) *Querebentan de Zomadonu: Etnografia da Casa das Minas*. São Luís: Editora da Universidade Federal do Maranhão.
- Ferretti, Sérgio Figueiredo (1994) *Repensando o sincretismo*. São Paulo and São Luís: Edusp and FAPEMA.
- Frigerio, Alejandro (1989) 'With the Banner of Oxalá: Social Construction and Maintenance of Reality in Afro-Brazilian Religions in Argentina', PhD thesis in Anthropology, University of California at Los Angeles.

- Herskovits, Melville J. (1943) 'The Southernmost Outpost of the New World Africanisms', *American Anthropologist* 45(4): 495–590.
- Lépine, Claude (1981) 'Os estereótipos da personalidade no candomblé nagô', pp. 11–32 in Carlos Eugênio Marcondes de Moura (ed.) *Olórisa: escritos sobre a religião dos orixás*. São Paulo: Ágora.
- Ligiêro, Zeca (1993) 'Candomblé is Religion-Life-Art', pp. 97–120 in Peryllis Galembo (ed.) *Divine Inspiration*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Lima, Vivaldo da Costa (ed.) (1984) *Encontro de nações de candomblé*. Salvador: Ianamá.
- Luckmann, Thomas (1987) 'Social Reconstruction of Transcendence', in *Secularization and Religion: The Persisting Tension*, published proceedings of 19ème Conference Internationale de Sociologie des Religions, Lausanne.
- Motta, Roberto (1982) 'Comida, família, dança e transe: sugestões para o estudo do xangô', *Revista de antropologia* 25: 147–57.
- Motta, Roberto (ed.) (1985) *Os afro-brasileiros: Anais do III Congresso Afro-Brasileiro*. Recife: Massangana.
- Motta, Roberto (1988) 'Meat and Feast: The Xango Religion of Recife, Brazil', dissertation, University of Michigan, An Arbor.
- Oro, Ari Pedro (ed.) (1993) 'As religiões afro-brasileiras no Cone Sul', in *Cadernos de antropologia*.
- Ortiz, Renato (1978) *A morte branca do feiticeiro negro*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Pierucci, Antônio Flávio and Prandi, Reginaldo (1996) *A realidade social das religiões no Brasil: religião, sociedade e política*. São Paulo: Hucitec.
- Pinto, Roquette (ed.) (1935) *Estudos Afro-Brasileiros*. Rio de Janeiro: Ariel.
- Prandi, Reginaldo (1991a) *Os candomblés de São Paulo: a velha magia na metrópole nova*. São Paulo: Hucitec and Edusp.
- Prandi, Reginaldo (1991b) 'Adarrum e empanadas: uma visita às religiões afro-brasileiras em Buenos Aires', *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 21(December): 157–65.
- Prandi, Reginaldo (1992) 'Perto da magia, longe da política', *Novos estudos CEBRAP* 34(November): 81–91.
- Prandi, Reginaldo (1996) *Herdeiras do Axé: sociologia das religiões afro-brasileiras*. São Paulo: Hucitec.
- Prandi, Reginaldo (1997) *Um sopro do Espírito: a renovação conservadora do catolicismo carismático*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo.
- Rodrigues, Raimundo Nina (1935) *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos*, 2nd edn. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.
- Rolim, Francisco Cartaxo (1985) *Pentecostais no Brasil: uma interpretação sócio-religiosa*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Valente, Waldemar (1977) *Sincretismo religioso afro-brasileiro*, 3rd edn. São Paulo: Nacional.
- Verger, Pierre (1957) *Notes sur le culte des orisha et vodun à Bahia, la Baie de Tous les Saints, au Brésil et à l'ancienne Côte des Esclaves en Afrique*. Dakar: IFAN.
- Verger, Pierre (1985a) *Orixás: deuses iorubás na África e no Novo Mundo*, 2nd edn. São Paulo: Corrupio and Círculo do Livro.
- Verger, Pierre (1985b) *Lendas africanas dos orixás*. Salvador: Corrupio.

**Biographical Note:** Reginaldo Prandi is full Professor of Sociology at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He works on Afro-Brazilian religions and new religious movements in Brazil. His most recent books are *Candomblés de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1991), *Herdeiras do axé* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1996), *Um sopro do espírito* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1998), *Encantaria brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2000) and *Mitologia dos orixás* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000).

**Address:** Universidade de São Paulo, Rua Cel. Gomes Pimentel 77, 04111-040 São Paulo SP, Brazil. [email: rprandi@usp.br]