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Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage

ISSN: 2161-9441 (Print) 2161-9468 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yjaf20

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To cite this article: Samuel Lira Gordenstein (2016) Planting Axé in the City: Urban Terreiros and the Growth of Candomblé in Late Nineteenth-Century Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, Journal of African Diaspora Archaeology and Heritage, 5:2, 71-101, DOI: 10.1080/21619441.2016.1204791

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/21619441.2016.1204791

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN DIASPORA ARCHAEOLOGY & HERITAGE,
Vol. 5 No. 2, July, 2016, 71–101

Planting Axé in the City: Urban Terreiros and the Growth of Candomblé in Late Nineteenth-Century Salvador, Bahia, Brazil

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Documentation from the second half of the nineteenth century suggests that *Candomblé*, the religion formed by African slaves and their descendants in Brazil, flourished in the crowded urban blocks of Bahia's capital city. Nonetheless, in contrast to some of the surviving, large congregations established in the sparsely populated outskirts of Salvador, very little is known about the spaces of worship located in the ground-level houses and basements where much of the city's Afro-Brazilian population lived. This article suggests that their existence hinged on an ability to neutralize the police repression and procure natural resources for ritual use. But even more so, their practices demanded access to the ground to "plant" the prerequisite materials underground before inaugurating the space for religious observations. Evidence from archaeological research in a late nineteenth-century house basement is presented to discuss the role played by buried "axés" in the religion. Ethnographic analogies with past and contemporary Candomblé practices are used to demonstrate continuities in the choice of locations and some of the characteristics of the objects whose roles were to protect the space and consecrate the soil for ritual practices.

KEYWORDS Salvador, Candomblé, nineteenth century, urban archaeology

This article comes on the heels of the author's participation in excavations that occurred in the historic center of Salvador from 2006 to 2010, as part of an archaeological team embedded in a broader governmental housing revitalization project. Most of the archaeological research occurred on the ground-level floors and basements of ruined town houses (*sobrados*) originally built in the colonial era. One

 DOI 10.1080/21619441.2016.1204791

of the homes, located on what was once the important residential street Rua do Tijolo (Brick Street), in the centrally located neighborhood of Freguesia da Sé, eventually became the subject of doctoral studies that investigated the house basement's possible use as a *Candomblé terreiro*, the religion's physical space of worship (Gordenstein 2014). This dissertation argued that in the late nineteenth century, the house basement was completely reconfigured for religious use, a new function which required the placement of a series of objects in strategic locations in the house. Many of the materials were inserted in cavities that were eventually covered by the nineteenth-century clay floor, while others were installed on top of architectural features such as the wall foundations. In all, 48 archaeological features placed between the years of 1871 and 1926 were interpreted as having a function related to the practice of Candomblé,[1] the Afro-Brazilian religion.

The building blocks that led to the nineteenth-century establishment of the religion eventually known as Candomblé first appeared in the late eighteenth century, when there was evidence of gatherings that involved more than just divinatory practices and medicinal healing, and included animal sacrifice and ritual offerings at altars constructed for specific divinities (Parés 2007: 116). Candomblé's formation is generally correlated with the arrival of the slaves known as "jejes" in Bahia, originally from the territory controlled by the Kingdom of Dahomey, and the later arrival of Yoruban slaves, called "nagôs" in Brazil, in the city's ports. According to one estimate of the origin of Salvador's African slaves for the 1821–1850 period, 53.2 percent were from West Africa (Parés 2007: 72). Studies have generally focused on the interpenetration of jeje and particularly nagô ritual practices and their roles in Candomblé's consolidation, while largely overlooking the role played by West Central Africans (Parés 2006).

Conventional thinking about the growth of Candomblé in Salvador posits that the terreiros moved to the city's semi-rural areas to escape police persecution and take advantage of the abundant natural resources that play important roles in the religion. However, nineteenth-century documentation suggests that Candomblé also thrived in the crowded domestic spaces in the central neighborhoods. The first goal of this article is to examine three factors that permitted a small basement to be transformed into a space appropriate for divinity worship. This study will demonstrate that alliances were important to help keep the police at bay, and that the yards adjacent to the houses resulted in green spaces within the city blocks that were put to good use by local residents. Most importantly, this article argues that given the era's residential living patterns, basements were frequented almost exclusively by people of African ancestry, making them convenient and relatively safe locations for candomblés.

This article will also discuss three of the archaeological features associated with a basement's use as a Candomblé terreiro. They will be interpreted using analogies with ethnographic sources, most of them gathered in Bahian candomblés between the 1890s and 1940s. Although Candomblé's rituals are in "perpetual movement" (Capone 2009: 327), comparison of these older sources with more recent ones seems to indicate that much of the religion's broader cosmology and a number of ritual practices have persisted from the late nineteenth century to the present. One of these entails the burial of select materials underneath the floor of a terreiro.

The buried materials known as axés will be the focus of the second part of the article, which discusses the integral role played by objects placed in the subsoil of every Candomblé terreiro. Here, the article's analogic interpretive framework draws extensively from information shared by religious specialists representing five of the region's hundreds of terreiros.[2] A recent survey demonstrated that Salvador alone had more than 1,000 Candomblé terreiros (Santos 2007). The specialists' opinions, along with more current information gathered by ethnographers in Bahia, are used to try and make sense of the findings from Rua do Tijolo. With few exceptions, this article does not make an attempt to compare or contrast with specific African practices, choosing to concentrate instead on highlighting some of the continuities within Brazilian Candomblé over time.

Escape from the city: The story of Candomblé da Barroquinha

The genesis of the Candomblé da Barroquinha is part of the archetypal narrative regarding the formation of Candomblé in Brazil. The first published version, based on the oral history compiled by Carneiro (1985), intimate connoisseur of the city's terreiros, contended that an important candomblé existed behind the Barroquinha church, in a central location of Salvador. According to this original version, three African women founded the terreiro Ilé Iyá Nassô around 1830, later moving to a more remote location in the outskirts of the city. Carneiro's informants explained that almost immediately internal strife caused by succession disputes eventually led to the branching off of important members and the inauguration of the Gantois terreiro, followed, years later, by the foundation of the Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá. Modified versions of this narrative, written by influential scholars such as Santos (1962), Lima (2010a), and Verger (1981), appeared subsequently. More recently, historical anthropology research (Castillo 2012; Castillo and Parés 2007; Parés and Castillo 2015) has revealed new facets of this narrative.

Edison Carneiro also shared details of life in the transplanted Candomblé da Barroquinha. Established in what was at the time an area distant from the central urban neighborhoods, the Casa Branca, as it's commonly called, was located in a river valley known as Caminho do Rio Vermelho, along with many other candomblés. There, the terreiros thrived in an area with ready access to the waterway and the lush vegetation that clung to the sloped topography.

In the maps provided by Carneiro (1985), the focus is mostly on the architecture, particularly the room for festivities, called the *barracão*. In a small room attached to it but accessible only from the outside, an altar to Oxossi can be seen. Next to the walls of the rectangular-shaped barracão are assigned spaces for the visiting public, the terreiro hierarchy, and the percussionists involved in the festivities. Other features include a Catholic altar, the divinity Exu located behind one of the two doors that open to the outdoors, and in the middle, a central column.

A long corridor connects the barracão to a kitchen on the other end of the building. On either side of the corridor are eight small rooms, two of which are dedicated to divinities Xangô and Oxalá. These rooms certainly housed their altars, and access to them was highly restricted, as evidenced by the scarcity of doors and lack of windows. The architectural design lays bare the necessity for privacy in these spaces.

Perhaps one of the unidentified small rooms also without windows served as the *runcó*, the space used for isolating novices during initiations. Outside the main building, Carneiro describes several small houses, some dedicated to divinities, others serving as living accommodations for some of the members of the terreiro. To this day, the terreiro has a reasonably sized outdoor space with trees and plants, some of which serve as natural *assentos* (altars). Although there are examples of studies that investigate the genesis of other centenary terreiros such as Alaketo (Castillo 2011), the saga of the Candomblé da Barroquinha, with its move from the crowded city to the green outskirts, has historically dominated much of the academic discourse about Candomblé's origins. In contrast, the countless small and largely anonymous terreiros that remained in the city have been largely overlooked. Although known to exist in the nineteenth century, due mostly to the limitations of the documentary source material available, their role in helping to consolidate the religion remains underexplored (Graden 1998; Harding 2003; Lima 2010b; Parés 2007; Reis 2008; Santos 2009). As a result, the narrative describing Candomblé's formation is incomplete, lacking the finer details needed to paint a fuller picture of this crucial time period. This is what the following section attempts to do, by demonstrating how dozens of nineteenth-century candomblés creatively made use of the packed urban infrastructure to practice their religion.

Candomblé in the city: Historical background

A newspaper account in *O Alabama*, a favored venue for denunciations of Candomblé practice during the second half of the nineteenth century, documented its growing popularity in Salvador: "To the Illustrious Mr. Dr. Chief of Police, I ask for your forgiveness for everyday raising the issue of candomblé, however the abuses practiced are so numerous, that one cannot prescind from constantly bringing them to your attention" (*O Alabama* 1867b). The newspaper, amply cited in this article due to the descriptive nature of its Candomblé-related entries, was edited by Aristides Ricardo de Santana, an Afro-Bahian abolitionist. Historian Dale Graden explains that the journalist yearned to be accepted among the local educated elite and viewed Candomblé as an outdated practice, incompatible with "progressive thinking" (Graden 1998: 59).

Santana's public obsession with rooting out Candomblé has proven to be a treasure trove for researchers, the newspaper's dozens of citations exposing its pervasiveness during the nineteenth century. In fact, they provide a foundation for Luís Nicolau Parés' argument that by mid-century there are enough terreiros in Salvador involved in relations of synergy and conflict with each other to suggest the existence of a "Afro-Brazilian religious community" (Parés 2007: 119).

Between 1855 and 1872, Salvador's slave demographic dropped from 27 percent to 12 percent of the city's total population (Nascimento 2007: 164). There is a link between the diminishing numbers of enslaved persons and the consolidation of the religion. Candomblé is both "part and product of liberty" because it grew alongside the increase of the *liberto* (emancipated) and *crioulo* (Brazilian born blacks) population, whose movements were less controlled. Freed from the restrictions imposed by slavery, Africans and their descendants had greater leeway to participate

in the extended initiation rites necessary for the religion, and to organize the liturgy that provided the calendar of events and the physical space necessary for the religion's practices (Parés 2012: 112).

In 1890s Salvador, Candomblé's first ethnographer Nina Rodrigues cited the increased demand that existed for African ritual objects to supply the city's growing number of congregations (Rodrigues 2006: 108). Matory (2005) has demonstrated that there existed a transit not only of objects, but also of people and ideas, and it was not unidirectional, from Africa to its diaspora, but rather, occurred as part of a "transatlantic" dialectic process, which, like a dialogue, helped to mold cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. This is certainly applicable to Candomblé, whose religious specialists regularly crisscrossed the ocean during the late nineteenth century (Castillo 2012; Parés and Castillo 2015).

Most of the well-known candomblés were founded in the semi-rural neighborhoods of Salvador, on properties with extensive wooded patches and waterways that were inhabited by some of the divinities being worshipped, and which provided the botanical resources necessary for many ritual aspects. These locations were also isolated enough to muffle the noise from the singing and percussion instruments that are integral to the religion, and to provide the privacy for the ritual dancing and other activities frowned upon by the conservative sectors of society and repressed by local police. However, the green areas on the outskirts of Salvador were not always available, and were far from the urban neighborhoods where most Africans and crioulos lived.

This helps to explain why roughly half of the candomblés identified via historical documentation were located in the crammed downtown living quarters (Parés 2007: 138–139; Santos 2009: 14). These urban terreiros are poorly understood in the historiography because unlike centenary candomblés like Gantois, Casa Branca, and Opô Afonjá, they ceased to exist before the advent of modern ethnographic studies. Many were located in the Sé neighborhood, the city's most opulent during the colonial period, which had a slightly different resident layout than most of the rest of the city. The streets in this central neighborhood were filled with large, multi-story homes, some with ornate facades, others with simple finishing, and a smaller number of small, single story homes. While the 1855 census reveals that 72 percent of the city's homes were simple, ground-level residences, 62 percent of all Sé homes had at least two floors (Nascimento 2007: 69).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, many property owners of the larger homes began renting out their properties, choosing to live in newly established bourgeois neighborhoods like Vitória or closer to the bustling commercial district in the Lower City. Once the abode of its wealthy owners and aggregates, the sobrados became home to several families living under the same roof. Their spacious rooms were divvied up and rented to a population always in search of the most affordable rent. The description in the newspaper *O Alabama* (1869a), in its characteristic biased language, narrates this process:

> An African rents a house and is favored over any national that seeks it out; he reduces the living rooms, bedrooms and kitchen into small cubicles divided by boards, mats and even covers, and overnight all of these hovels are occupied.

To increase profits, sometimes additional rooms were built in the backyards and rented out. The diminishing economic status of the Sé residents did not eliminate the social hierarchy within the living spaces. The more affluent lived in the less stuffy first and second floors, while the least comfortable and more affordable spaces, namely the basements, the cellars and ground floors, were generally populated by the poor.

Basement living could be deplorable and often served as slave quarters. Nineteenth-century visitor Graham (1956: 163) noted these sub-human conditions during her visit in 1822 to Bahia: "Below the houses there is generally a type of basement where the slaves live. I truly wonder how it is that human beings can exist in such places." Graham's observations notwithstanding, there is evidence that by mid-century a sizable portion of the basement residents were not slaves. Costa (1989: 115) presents data based on a sample from the 1855 census related to the residents of Salvador's *lojas*, which were a sobrado's ground and below-ground floors. Almost 60 percent of the lojas were located in the Sé neighborhood, and according to the author, its residents were mostly freed slaves, with some slaves also living in the sobrados. These data also demonstrate that 9 out of 10 loja residents were black. Thirty percent of the loja residents worked as day laborers, with the rest spread out among professions that included masons, seamstresses, shoemakers, and carpenters, to name but a few (Costa 1989: 204). Post-abolition, many domestic workers slept at the workplace, often using a room in the back or the house basement to raise their own children, who were commonly required to engage in small chores around the house (Vianna 1973: 5).

However, the Sé sobrados were not used exclusively for residential means. On Rua do Tijolo during this time, the sobrados hosted art studios and galleries, private and public schools, a legal office, a resting home for smallpox patients, a political party, a civic-minded organization, a coal deposit, a meeting place for freemasons, and several taverns. It is also clear that the ground levels and basements were especially singled out for African-inspired religious practices, on this and other streets of the urban neighborhoods. Analysis of the *O Alabama* reveals that 17 of the descriptions of divination, drumming, or other activities related to African-inspired practices occurred in living spaces with access to the ground (Gordenstein 2014: 129).

Green spaces in the city

An often overlooked element in discussions about nineteenth-century Salvador was the presence of "green areas" in the city. Until the second half of the century, a river (Rio das Tripas) separated two of the central regions of the city. Its swampy valley, home to dense vegetation and amphibians, was duly noted in the late 1790s by Vilhena (1969).

Even more ubiquitous were the backyards that existed in even the most populated city blocks. The urban yards were often hidden behind walls, and their presence gave nineteenth-century Salvador a unique landscape that led the visiting European scientists Spix and Martius (1938: 105) to comment: "the most beautiful ornaments of this extensive agglomerate of houses are the many gardens located between them … . The beauty of the tropical vegetation makes up for any lack of gardening."

These backyards were intensely used and served as an important compliment to the crowded and hot buildings. Van Holthe (2003) describes the many activities related to cleaning, food preparation, personal hygiene, animal raising, cultivation of fruit trees and herbs, and leisure, that occurred in Salvador's urban backyards. The "nagô yards," a reference to the Yoruba-speaking slaves brought to Salvador, caught the attention of Bahian folklorist Antônio Vianna, who chronicled life in the capital city. Vianna's descriptions suggested that the yards were used for Candomblé-related activities. He mentioned the presence of "goats and rams for sacrificial use in the compulsory obligations, and, also, for commerce with the butcheries. In the background and fenced in, the locale of the killing, with the belongings for each situation" (Vianna 1979: 42). Here, he highlights the presence of a reserved spot for ritual sacrifice, and most likely, a storage space for objects associated with that act. Vianna (1979: 42) also cites the "plants for healing" that could be found in the yards. Nineteenth-century documentation corroborates what the folklorist hints at. Like the lojas, the city yards also served as the setting for Candomblé gatherings (Harding 2003: 297; *O Alabama* 1867c; 1867d). Therefore, the extra spaces afforded by the yards and their use for gathering some of the plants needed for ritual practice are additional variables that help to explain how urban candomblés functioned despite the tight quarters.

The dynamics of Candomblé repression

The Bahian authorities used various mechanisms to stop religious gatherings. Harding (2003: 135–136) found 25 municipal ordinances that prohibited meetings of blacks in Salvador and the Recôncavo region between 1807 and 1885. Meanwhile, the pattern of Candomblé repression was inconsistent: Parés (2007: 139) suggests "simultaneous and alternative tendencies of repression and tolerance" vis-à-vis the candomblés during this period. This is evident in reading the pages of *O Alabama*, for in addition to descriptions of police repressing the terreiros, they suggest a lack of initiative or even complicity with the candomblés: "If the police does not want candomblés, how can they consent to them in their whiskers?"; or, in commenting about a candomblé in the Freguesia da Conceição da Praia, another entry suggests that it occurs "maybe, with the police's assent" (*O Alabama* 1869b; 1868).

However, Candomblé in the second half of the nineteenth century (during the time of publication of *O Alabama*) was increasingly practiced by non-slaves, which diminished the effectiveness of various municipal ordinances that were intended to bring them to a halt. Manuel Querino suggests that increasingly, *ogãs* (members of Candomblé's hierarchy) of social standing were recruited and dispatched to procure the proper licenses with the police to organize gatherings (Querino 1938: 90). At the time, some police chiefs instituted a "psychology of fear" to stifle the city's candomblés (Reis 2008: 38). Nonetheless, independent of the ideology of those directing the police actions, it was practically impossible to control the various sub-commissioners and their subordinates. Reis demonstrated this by carefully evidencing the relationship between João Henriques, a Chief of Police and avowed enemy of Candomblé, and his subordinate João Piapitinga, a white man who was a sympathizer and resisted his superior's pressure to repress

the terreiros in his neighborhood. As the script unveils, other members of the state's repressive apparatus are introduced, like a Police Commissioner from the Freguesia de Santo Antônio who collaborates with a *pai-de-santo* (the terreiro's spiritual leader) from his district, and two justice officials who are assiduous clients of another religious leader in the Freguesia de São Pedro (Reis 2008: 39, 216).

Candomblé's allies within the state's repressive apparatus could include guards and soldiers, usually recruited from the same socio-economic sphere as many of the religion's participants. Lower-level police officers also appear in the pages of *O Alabama*: Henrique Hilário Lapige, a mixed-race policeman from the 4th battalion, is denounced for "playing tabaque," a reference to a percussion instrument, in a candomblé in the Freguesia da Penha. In another case, at a funerary ritual occurring on the same street as a police station, the commissioner's orderly watched as soldiers João de Deus Britto and Agostinho Francisco "ate, danced and played at the *segun*," a reference to a jeje funerary ritual (*O Alabama* 1864; 1867a).

It is clear that supporters also included citizens higher up on the socio-economic ladder. Ignácio Alberto de Andrade e Oliveira was the protagonist of a well-known incident in 1855, when Police officers sent to put an end to a candomblé occurring in a loja were intercepted by the owner, whose name is listed in that year's "Almanak" as a justice of the peace. The owner cited the constitution as he ousted the police officers from his property (APEBA 1855; Masson 1854). While Oliveira's level of involvement with the religion is not entirely clear, it falls somewhere on a spectrum from ardent supporter to leadership figure.

Also, religious specialists offered divination consultation and medicinal cures to individual clients, services that appealed to extensive swaths of the city's population. These sometimes cozy relationships with those charged with the religion's suppression constitute yet another variable to explain, despite all the drawbacks, the continued presence of Candomblé in the city.

"Any old house"

The ground-level residences inhabited by most Africans and crioulos had much in common with the urban terreiros. Carneiro (1985: 33) described the early 20th century candomblés as similar to the "homes of the poor." The architecture relied mostly on inexpensive adobe, pug, wood, and straw, and usually sported dirt floors, characteristics that can be seen even today in the Recôncavo region of the state (Velame 2011).

In the smaller candomblés, which occurred in "any old house," the space for public festivities, the barracão, could be in the backyards of the houses or even in the living room (Carneiro 1985: 34). During her youth, Mãe Stella — today in her nineties — remembers participating in rituals inside homes in the city. To avoid repression, the customary percussion instruments such as atabaques were not used, and animal sacrifices occurred in a random room: "when the door was opened, all you could see was a bunch of feathers" (interview, 28 October 2011).

The overwhelming presence of clay and mud in Salvador's terreiros left a lasting impression on Carneiro in the 1930s and 1940s. In his description of the Engenho Velho (Casa Branca) candomblé, mud is everywhere:

> The rooms are small, without light. In the summer, the heat is stuffy, unbearable. A cloud of dust is always rising from the ground, giving all the objects a muddy color as a result. In the winter, the humidity freezes people's feet: the ground seems wet, given how muddy and slippery it is. There is sludge on the exterior walls and soot in the interior ones. The mud dirties everything. (Carneiro 1985: 37)

The members of the candomblé described must have felt quite comfortable with the conditions, for mud figures prominently in the religion's cosmology, as the domain of divinities such as Exu Yangi, Nanã Buruku, Onile, and Obaluaiê (Santos 2008: 81; Santos and Santos 2014: 97). In terreiros with dirt floors, it is common to bury leftovers from the food offerings to honor the earth mother (Onile) and Obaluaiê (inteview, Pai Antônio, 16 September 2014).

On the surface, a Candomblé terreiro might appear like any old house. However, the apparent simplicity of the architecture and internal layout stands in contrast to the complexity and power of what lies below ground, unseen. As Bastide (2001: 77) succinctly put it: "The candomblé terreiro does not become a place of worship unless it's consecrated, and consecration consists of burying axes." In any terreiro, axés, meaning "vital energy" in the Yoruba language, need to be "planted" underground to protect the space and enable its use for worship. Failure to do so can put a terreiro at risk. Rabello (2014: 261) shares the story of Mãe Beata, who during a transitional period was forced to store her candomblé's assentos inappropriately, the motive of great anxiety for the terreiro's priestess, known in Brazil as an *ialorixá*: "Even more grave, Beata knew that the *orixás* could not stay without contact with axé in the ground, in the earth. They could not be maintained in an apartment (without ground)."

For all of the disadvantages, it offered as a living space, the basements of urban Salvador, used almost exclusively by the population of color in the city, offered unfettered access to the ground. For all its limitations as a space of worship, the possibility of planting axés, coupled with some access to the natural resources necessary for religious practice, might account for the persistent presence of small urban terreiros.

"Planting" axé

As a person becomes more experienced and moves up Candomblé's hierarchy, she becomes more skillful in the manipulation of axé. Its transmission occurs through initiation and specific rituals that include offering animal parts and blood to divinities, which is arguably the most effective mechanism to circulate axé in a terreiro (Parés 2007: 345; Santos 2010: 89). The religious leader plays a prominent role in this process: "the iyalorisa is both the Orisá mother and Axé mother, and gives meaning to the sacred elements. It is whom unites man to the Orisá through the Initiation process and distributes Axé" (Santos 2010: 68). Axé here refers to an energy that circulates, with the emphasis on movement.

Axé can also refer to objects, plants or liquids, powerful material versions of the vital energy, which are buried in specific locales of a terreiro. The plant metaphor used to describe the act of burying material underground is useful, for in order to

grow roots and spread, the terreiro's axés require nurturing. One might say that axé has a "living quality," which can be activated through ritual or lost via neglect (Sansi 2007: 40).

The spot underneath the center of the barracão is widely viewed as the most important locale of buried axé, and is often marked by a square on the floor or a pillar that rises towards the ceiling. But axé can be buried in other locations as well, including during the terreiro's construction. Carneiro (1985: 35) detailed the special rules that apply:

> In general, a foreman is in charge of construction, never an engineer, and after digging the foundation, there is a mighty ceremony, where the head of the candomblé deposits on it a little of water from the axés, feathered animals, current coins and newspapers, holy water, flowers.

"Axé is like DNA," explained *tatapocó* Raimundo, who is responsible for handling animal sacrifice in his Bantu-influenced terreiro (interview, 4 November 2012). This is likely why Carneiro's Gantois informants told him that the terreiro's founder brought buried axés with her from Barroquinha (Carneiro 1985: 48). The object's presence at the new terreiro would have served to establish an unbreakable bond between the two candomblés while also underlining what Johnson (2002: 48) calls "religious pedigree." Johnson also noted that Candomblé objects, including axés placed on the house foundations and underneath the floor, have indexical qualities that extrapolate mere representation. They are not conventional symbols, but rather, signs that participate in the action by transmitting their power to participants above ground (Johnson 2002: 105). Lawal (1974: 244) has characterized altar objects similarly.

Candomblé objects also have "specific histories" that transcend their symbolic function (Sansi 2007: 39). Knowing these histories is important, and using objects of unknown provenience can be risky. As a religious leader manipulates an object ritually, she is in fact attempting to control its historicization, defined by Pietz (1985: 11) as "the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event." Mãe Stella illustrates this concept when clarifying that for divination purposes, one must buy cowries whose backsides have yet to be cutout. The ialorixá explains that this modification — commonly associated with shells used for the *jogo de búzios* — must be done by her; to do otherwise is to risk using a ritually modified shell whose former owner has died or had acquired them using dubious methods (theft, for example). This could result in unintended negative consequences for the new proprietor (interview, 9 August 2012).

Buried materials are crucial elements in the protection of the house. As explained by ogã Buda, all the rooms in a terreiro need to be *firmados*, or ritually protected (interview, 6 September 2013). This practice is reminiscent of the "safety zone" established by African-American families in Annapolis, Maryland through the burial of caches of ritual objects within residential floor spaces (see Leone 2005: 234).

At his candomblé, Pai Antônio literally walked over the materials placed at strategic points in the terreiro, and explained the connection between the distribution of the axés underground, and the rituals executed above:

> Today, you put an *assentamento* [altar] in a space that is sacred, which has *fundamento* in the ground, with all of the necessary protective measures of a terreiro, because to "make" an orixá, you have to go through various rituals, for the place to be considered sacred. For example, at the entrance, near the door, there needs to be something, in the middle there needs to be something, in the sacred spaces there needs to be something specific, so that the energy of the universe connects exactly at that spot, and so that when you are chanting, the rituals, everyone is in harmony (interview, 18 November 2011).

The doorway to the terreiro, in this case underneath it, is one of the locales identified by Pai Antônio as needing protection. In most terreiros, this is the location for the "guardian" Exu (Capone 2009: 63). As seen in the earlier example described by Carneiro at the Casa Branca candomblé, the entrance to the terreiro's barracão is another common location for Exu. In the pai-de-santo's explanation, the buried materials both protect and restore the terreiro's balance by helping to circulate axé in all of the rooms.

Altars

Rodrigues (2006: 53) described in the 1890s a Gantois altar as a slightly elevated "wall," surrounded at ground-level by a variety of ceramic vessels filled with food and water. It is likely that the ceramics were produced in the nearby Recôncavo region of Bahia. Earlier in the nineteenth century, visitors commented that locally produced ceramics were being sold in locations as far as Pernambuco and Rio de Janeiro (Graham 1956: 139; Tollenare 1956: 317–318). The *quartinhas* (small, amphorae-shaped ceramic vessels used for storing water), basins, vases, *caborés* (small jug-like vessels) and the other ceramic forms described by Rodrigues, are fabricated today in the Recôncavo village of Maragogipinho. According to a local ceramist, the vessels are sometimes purchased directly from them by Candomblé practitioners, although most of the merchandise is bought in Salvador at well-known markets such as the Mercado de São Joaquim (interview with Elísio Almeida [Seu Nené], 7 July 2013).

The Instituto Feminino da Bahia's ceramics collection boasts a Maragogipinho vessel from 1930 with characteristics similar to those being produced today in the village's rustic kilns. In fact, preliminary analyses of Salvador collections demonstrate that the village's ceramic forms as well as manufacturing and decorative techniques have changed very little during the twentieth century (Cardoso *et al.* 2013). Thus, it suggests continuity over time in the use of an important class of altar objects.

To the assentamento described above by Rodrigues one could add a large gamut of possibilities, but they almost always include some combination of ceramics recipients, botanical ingredients, stones, and, depending on the divinity honored, metal artifacts. While Rodrigues provides a valuable description of this secluded space, there is more to an altar than meets the eye: underneath the myriad visible objects are several ingredients below ground. As pointed out by Serra (2005: 189), axé is also buried under the bases of orixá (divinity) altars. The oldest historical evidence of this dynamic can be traced to a Pasto Street home in Cachoeira, Bahia, where in 1785 several altar objects where found by the police, mostly on the ground, but also buried below (Reis 1988).

Arguably the most important object of a Candomblé altar is the large stone, the home of the divinity which is generally hidden within a ceramic vessel and is known as an *otá*. Sansi (2007: 25) has highlighted the dialectic relationship between this altar object and the Candomblé initiate. The stone needs to be constantly ritually cleansed and fed, generally through animal sacrifice, so that its axé grows, and in the process, the axé of the initiate increases as well. Although in contemporary candomblés, it is generally placed above ground, the otá shares with the buried axés the need to remain in secrecy, stowed away, unveiled only in select moments to "explode" in the human body via possession (Sansi 2007: 27).

The house on Rua do Tijolo

The sobrado number 21, located on the old Rua do Tijolo, was built with its back nestled into a topographic depression. The result is that in addition to its two above-ground stories, it also has two floors below the street level, the bottom one being the basement. At the turn of the twentieth century, a yard of 90 m² was located behind the house (Figure 1).

The owner of the house during this period was João Baptista Barbosa Marques, a Portuguese who arrived in Brazil as an adolescent and seems to have made his fortune in the profitable trans-Atlantic commerce between the Old Continent and his new home in South America.[3] He died in 1899, leaving to his heirs a considerable fortune that included more than 70 properties (APEBA 1899). In his 1898 testament, he states never having married, but mentions Emiliana Maria de Jesus, mother of his five children, "who lived in my company until her death." Emiliana almost certainly was a woman of color: two of the children baptized in the 1870s are listed as mixed race, as is a third child, whose race appears in his 1924 death certificate (which was annexed to his father's will) (ACMS 1873; 1875). It is presumed that the Portuguese Marques was white.

While Marques' 1899 probate records demonstrate that he owned several properties in the rural freguesias of Salvador, at least one which lists extensive slave quarters, the documents uncovered thus far do not provide further details about his relationship with Emiliana. Nonetheless, testaments examined by Graham (2013: 50) demonstrate that commonly the offspring of enslaved or free concubines were voluntarily recognized as legal heirs, as in the case of Marques' children. Reis (2012) states that in colonial and nineteenth-century Bahia, liaisons between white men, generally of Portuguese origin, and women of color, could result in enduring relationships, even marriage.

This revelation about Emiliana's racial heritage is pertinent, as candomblés during this period were led and frequented mostly by Africans and their Brazilian descendants (Reis 2001). Thus, Emiliana's presence lends greater credibility to the case to be made for the Marques' family direct or indirect involvement in the candomblé installed in the sobrado basement. After the patriarch's death, the house stayed within the family until 1926, when a Spanish immigrant appears as its owner (AMS 1926).

Late nineteenth-century layout of the basement: The construction and initial use of the terreiro

The findings discussed in this article are the result of an archaeological excavation focused on unearthing and registering the basement's use as a terreiro starting in the late nineteenth century. As such, every effort was made to gather as much evidence as possible associated with the clay floor used during this occupation. Customary archaeological field methods were used to register the findings, such as photographs, plan (often point provenience) and profile drawings of relevant features and statigraphy. The goal was to plot the exact location of the basement's scores of intentionally constructed features. Artifacts in the soil were recovered through the use of screens with one-eighth-inch mesh. The soil from site's features was collected in its entirety, and subjected to flotation. This resulted in the separation of botanical, faunal (mostly fish scales and small bones), and miscellaneous evidence too small to be seen in the field, such as the occasional seed bead. A number of soil samples were stored for organic residue and micro-botanical analysis. The zooarchaeological and material culture analysis identified the materials, a small number of which were datable. This resulted in the creation of a database of the basement's features, whose characteristics were known across space and time. This information was compared and contrasted with available historical and ethnographic information regarding the location and characteristics of objects intentionally placed in Candomblé terreiros. In this manner, the methodology aimed to interpret the archaeological findings by using the painstakingly detailed contextual approach chosen by Samford (2000) in her examination of subfloor pits in African slaves' homes in the Southern region of the United States.

The sobrado, likely built in the late seventeenth century as a single story house, eventually expanded into the valley behind it, resulting in the addition of two below-ground floors (Figures 1 and 2). No architectural or archaeological evidence of internal subdivisions was found in the basement until the second half of the nineteenth century, when renovations in the house's basement resulted in a configuration with seven small rooms, which were accessed through the back of the building or from a newly built stairwell that descended from the floor above. In five of the rooms, there are *terminus post quem* artifacts that point to the purposeful re-configuration of the physical layout of the basement during this period (Gordenstein 2014).[4]

A large number of features from the terreiro's inaugural period consist of materials placed underneath the clay floor before its construction. Some caches were bundled together, while a larger number were placed in cavities whose openings were subsequently sealed by the clay floor. In two cases, objects were associated with wall foundations. The corners and the passageways from one room to another were common locales for these features. At the back entrance to the basement, four ceramic vessels were placed upside down prior to the construction of the clay floor.

A room in the northern corner of the basement concentrated the largest proportion of features: 26 in all, 18 of which were interpreted as having a ritual function. Three of the room's corners presented features that suggested the presence of altars, which bolsters the argument that it served as the *quarto-de-santo*, whose

FIGURE 1 The ruined back entrance to the Marques sobrado, being held up by metal beams. In the left corner, in the background, the facade of the Jesuit's famed *Catedral Basílica* can be seen. *Photograph by the author.*

sole purpose is to house the divinities' assentamentos. The careful ritual preparation of all the rooms, the protection of the passageways, including the back entrance, and the establishment of a room with multiple altars are the main evidence of the basement's use as a candomblé.

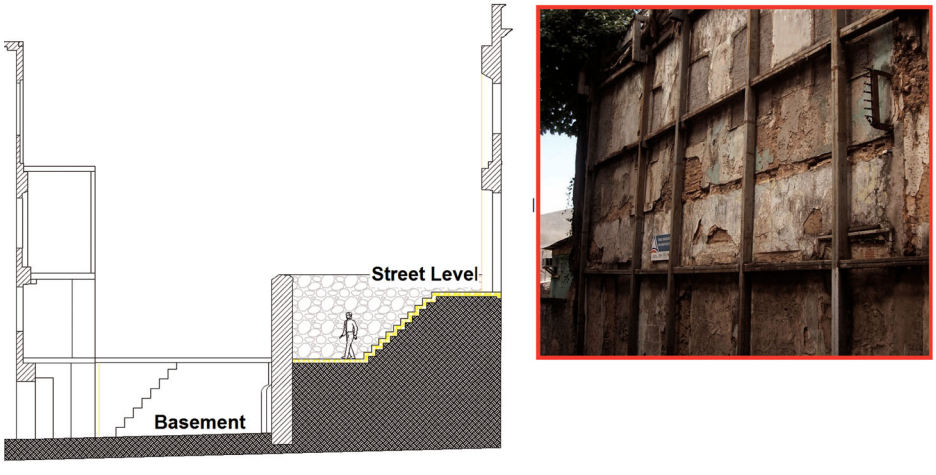

FIGURE 2 The street-level access to the basement. On the right, a photograph of the front façade of the Marques house. *Photograph by the author; illustration by the author and Geovana Frois.*

The possible correlation between the events that occurred in the house basement starting at the end of the nineteenth century, and its owner, is premised by the extensive architectural interventions made there. Although Marques lived in another one of his homes, significant reforms to the basement meant that a considerable financial investment was made. It would be unusual for tenants to foot the bill, meaning that the wealthy owner likely financed the reconstruction of a house basement rebuilt specifically for the purpose of housing a candomblé.

Less intensive use and abandonment

Sometime after 1892, 10 bottles, none manufactured with machines, were placed above the clay flooring, remaining undisturbed until exposed by the archaeological excavations. This date was derived from the maker's mark of "CS & Co. Ld." found on three of the bottle bases (Figure 3). The mark references the "Limited" status of British manufacturer Cannington, Shaw and Company, from Saint Helen's, Lancashire, England (Lockhart *et al.* 2014). Placed in groups of two and three near the entrance to the quarto-de-santo and in the corner of the room, the bottles appear to be altar items. The bottles remained in place, on the terreiro's clay floor, even surviving the later construction of cement flooring that premised a new use of the space, and which unwittingly helped preserve them.

To build this modern floor, first a thin layer of fill was placed underneath. Subsequently, during the laying down of the cement surface, a small amount of the material became encrusted inside the neck of a fragmented glass bottle located in another room. This container had a crown finish and was fabricated by a narrow mouth, blow, and blow machine for beer and soft drinks. According to Lindsey (2010), these characteristics point to a 1905 TPQ, an inference that is corroborated by an Owens mark found on the base of another bottle that was also associated with the construction of the cement floor. Unlike the earlier set of bottles placed on the clay floor, some of these containers exhibit signs of machine-aided production, with at least four of them produced in the twentieth century. This differentiation is important, for it suggests that the former set of bottles, manually produced and mostly unfragmented, remained visible on the ground for a number of years, most of them in the quarto-de-santo, until all Candomblé-related objects were permanently sealed with the cement flooring. As the only Candomblé-related feature or set of objects with a TPQ in the 1890s, the bottles marked the beginning of a period of less intense use of the space.

There exists a synchronicity between this period of virtual abandonment of the space and the patriarch's death. Perhaps the demobilization suggested by the decrease in material evidence on or below the clay floor was the result of lessened empathy by the heirs toward the terreiro located in their property. Or, if the couple participated directly in the religious activities, then it might point to a state of ambiguity that commonly exists after a candomblé's leader dies and before a new one is anointed. This line of thought would suggest that the basement's abandonment followed by the house's sale to a Spanish immigrant is evidence of a lack of a successor to lead the candomblé.

FIGURE 3 Bottle base with Cannington, Shaw and Company Limited maker's mark. It established a TPQ for a period of less intense ritual use of the basement. *Photograph by the author.*

Buried axé on Rua do Tijolo

The three features from the candomblé on Rua do Tijolo presented here provide contrasting examples of the manner in which the buried axés can act (Figure 4). Through a detailed presentation of the data, it is expected to shed new light on the manner in which buried materials protected the space and enabled the circulation of axé.

Feature E4-9

This feature, which consists of four bottom halves of upside down gardening pots, is associated with the oldest of two clay floors in the area. Placed at one of the points of entrance to the basement, the pots have circular holes on the bottoms and no evidence of use for gardening, thus appearing to have been used solely for ritual purposes (Figure 5). Inside the first pot were mostly seed beads (two white, two black, one gray, and a dark brown rosary bead), a locally produced clay smoking pipe, three nails, two bones from one bird, eight bones from one mammal (*Artiodactyla*), 15 bones from one catfish (*Siruliformes*), and five ceramic fragments from at least three different recipients (Figure 5).

The second pot had one cow bone (*Bos taurus*), one bone belonging to a small mammal and six bones belonging to another mammal (*Artiodactyla*), along with 14 more from a catfish (*Cathrops* sp.). The third pot had one cowry (*Cypraea* sp.) shell, a white seed bead, three cow bones belonging to one animal, one ram bone (*Ovis aries*), three bones belonging to a small mammal and six to another (*Artiodactyla*), as well as two bones belonging to two catfish (*Bagrus marinus*), a fragment of a bivalve shell known as *chumbinho* (*Anomalocardia brasiliana*) and another from a

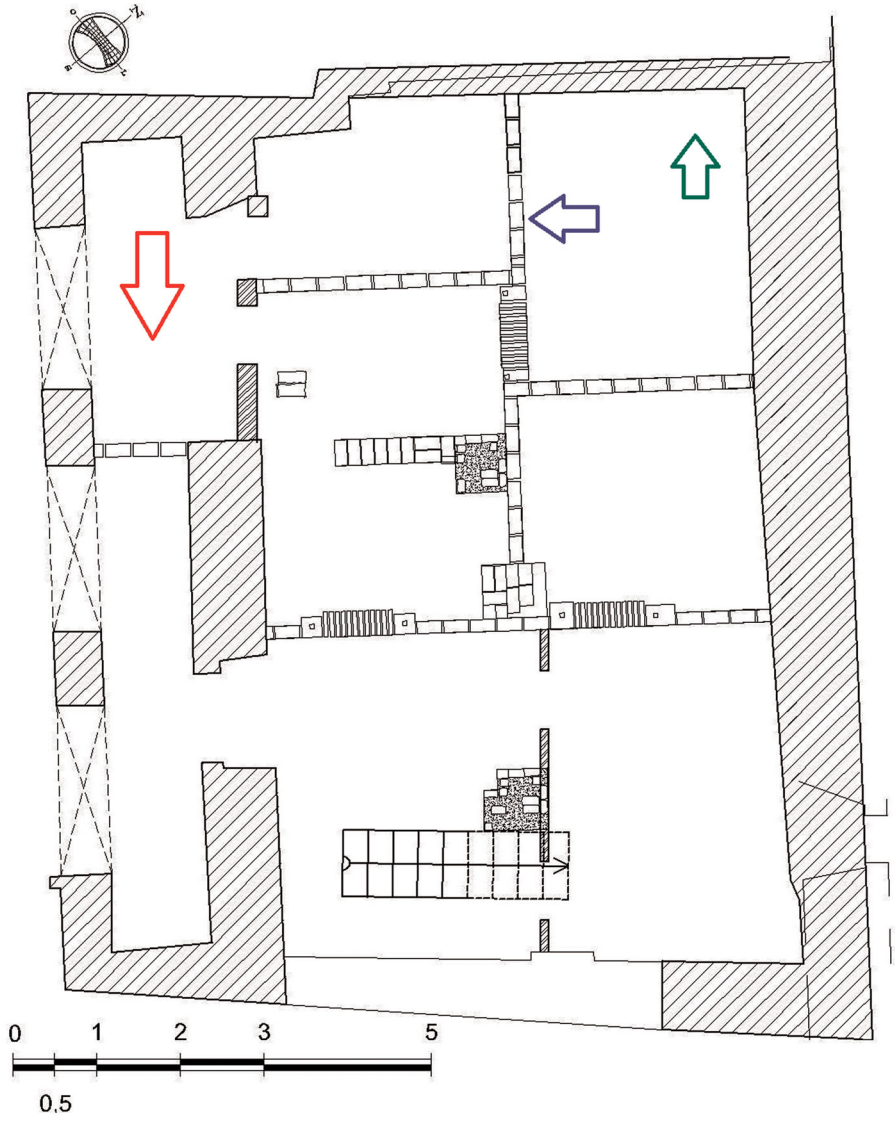

FIGURE 4 The house's late nineteenth-century basement plan. This map was drawn based on the archaeological evidence unearthed, except for the stairwell, whose location is presumed, and is based on documentation from a few years later (1926). The map also shows several small internal rooms and back entrances to the basement. The arrows identify the locations for the three features discussed in the text: E4-9 (left-most arrow), E10-1 (middle arrow), and E20-1, in the north corner (right-most arrow). *Illustration by the author and Geovana Frois*.

mangrove oyster (*Crassostrea rhizophorae*). Other objects included a whole nail and nine fragments from a second one, 12 fragments from at least two hollow recipients, 11 fragments from at least seven refined earthenware vessels and three fragments from three different faience vessels likely of Portuguese origin. Inside the gardening

FIGURE 5 Feature E4-9. The four inverted gardening pot bases, placed before being covered by the brown clay floor, that can be seen in the profile at the top of the photograph. Vessel number one is on the right, with numbering ascending towards the left. *Photograph by the author.*

vessel were four fragments from the second pot, already described above. Placed inside the fourth pot were eight seed beads (three black, three white, one wine colored) as well as a light brown, long truncated bicone-shaped wound bead, and another brown colored rosary bead. The fourth pot also contained a cow bone, a pig bone (*Sus scrofa domesticus*), six bones belonging to one mammal (*Artiodactyla*), an avian bone, and 25 catfish bones belonging to one specimen (*Siruliformes*).

Feature E10-1

A complex feature, it is among the room's oldest, for it was placed on the inner wall foundation. After digging a trench, a base made of clay and rock was placed to support the soon-to-be-built wall. However, before this occurred, a series of carefully selected objects was deposited, along with a sandy-silt brown soil matrix (Figure 6). These materials included 11 seed beads (four white, four black, one caramel, one light green, and one orange), a mandrel pressed ultramarine colored bead, a large mother of pearl bead, a spherical "cornerless cube" shaped black glass bead, a coin of five French francs from 1857, a metal awl, a small piece of lead, four nails and three pins, two of them vertically stuck (Figure 7). This layer also had two rocks and two stones, a fragment of plaster with orange colored mortar, a fragment of white refined earthenware and a small button commonly used with underwear. Included in the assemblage were faunal bones belonging to at least one chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*), one cow, a pig, and a small mammal, as well as one catfish, 15 coral fragments (possibly from three different

FIGURE 6 Feature E10-1. After the removal of a thin layer of the dirt floor, the darker coloring of the surface of the feature becomes visible next to the remnants of the room's south wall. *Photograph by the author*.

species), an indeterminate bivalve, and eggshell fragments. Finally, above the central portion of the aforementioned layer only, a fine lens of beige mortar was placed.

Two seed beads were discovered (one light turquoise, the other black) at the bottom of a small cavity located next to the wall foundation and below the clay floor. Slightly above, two small pieces of mortar were found, one perpendicular to the other, and on top of the horizontally positioned fragment were scapulae from two different small animals. Close by, next to the cavity wall, a cowry shell and a few fragments of charcoal were encountered.

The cavity was partially filled with brown sandy-clay soil and a series of materials that included two seed beads (one caramel and one yellow) as well as two large mother of pearl beads, eight bones belonging to at least two catfish, a small indeterminate metallic fragment and a small rock. At the surface of the cavity, a beige sandy-clay lense was placed, which included also fragments of charcoal and eggshell, along with 16 fish bones, six coral fragments (*Siderastrea stellata*) and three seed beads (one light brown, one cream colored, and one white). Other materials

FIGURE 7 Feature E10-1. A pin, stuck into the soil directly above the wall's foundation. *Photographs by the author*.

included a pin, two metallic fragments (one made of lead), two fragments from a small ceramic vessel, a brick fragment and two pieces of weathered rock.

Feature E20-1

The materials here seem to have been placed synchronically, some above the clay floor and others underneath it. To do this, the natural clay soil was removed from an area of roughly 50 cm^2, with a series of objects, most notably four ceramic vessels, placed and then promptly covered by the soil. Other materials, these found above the surface of the clay floor, included a gastropod, possibly a *peguari* (*Strombus pugilis*), a small ceramic vase and a caboré. All of these items, which are now described in greater detail, were placed in a circle, which had at its center a large stone (Figure 8).

The excavation uncovered a caboré (Caboré 1) filled with a layer of sand, humus, and particles of charcoal; within this matrix was a beige colored bead, three bones from a small animal, seven fish bones (*Micropogonias* sp.), two coral fragments and a body sherd from a medium-sized vessel decorated with red paint on its exterior. Also inside the vessel, plugging its opening, a large piece of plaster made from orange clay mortar was placed above a sandy-clay layer. Close by, a nail was stuck at a 45 degree angle, below the surface of the clay floor. This stands in contrast to a large spike that was firmly driven into the clay surface, leaving its head slightly above ground and visible during the lifespan of the terreiro.

Another caboré of similar size (Caboré 2) was buried, this one without part of the body and none of its rim. Its interior was filled with a compacted clayey sand matrix mixed with segments of humic soil. Artifacts included 22 beads, all but one of them seed beads (12 white, 7 cream, 2 black, and 1 brown rosary bead), in addition to fragments of copper sheets and four bones from a small animal. Also identified were particles of charcoal and particularly close to the vessel's base, a large amount of egg shell (Figure 9).

FIGURE 8 Feature E20-1, located in the north corner of the room. The photograph details the five ceramic vessels and the large gastropod shell encircling a 700 g stone. *Photographs by the author.*

Placed nearby was a small wheel-turned pan, made with a yellowish slip. According to a Maragogipinho ceramist, this small vessel was commonly used to store baby food, thus its name of "papeiro" (interview with Seu Nené, 17 July 2013). Filled with a brown sandy-clay soil which formed small, friable clumps, artifacts inside it included 3 cowry shells, 9 bones from 1 bird, 23 from a very small indeterminate animal, 1 nail, and 1 water-worn sherd of refined earthenware. The vessel was placed upside down and firmly lodged into the natural clay.

There was evidence of combustion nearby, which resulted in a dark stain and a small quantity of charcoal. Also present at this spot was a 700 g stone, which was placed next to a large fragment that likely belonged to the lid of a hollow vessel. A cowry shell was also placed next to the stone and resting on the clay surface; the stone remained visible during the site's occupation period. Finally, a 2 cm layer of white colored lime was spread over the inverted pan and part of the stone. A few artifacts were found inside this thin lens, including six seed beads (three black, one white, one green, and one of indeterminate coloring), two ceramic tile fragments, two small indeterminate bones, four fragments of the coral *Montastraea cavernosa* and a polyp of the *Siderastrea* genus, as well as 12 fragments of corals that were not identified.

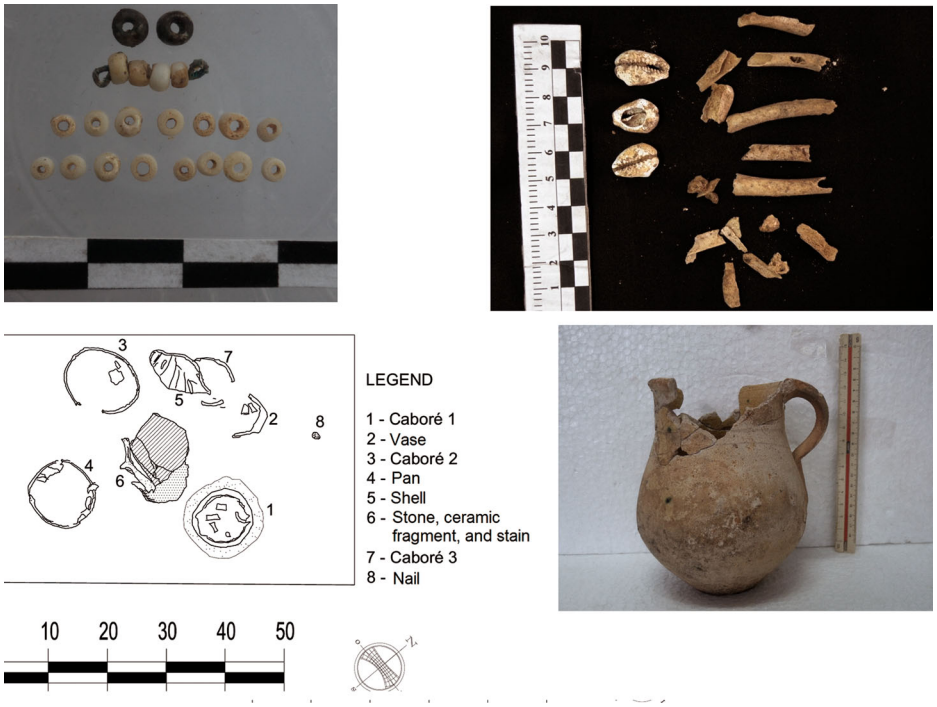

FIGURE 9 Beads that were found inside Caboré 2, while the three cowry shells and avian bones were associated with the pan, which was placed upside down and then buried. The ceramic vessel in the photograph is Caboré 1. *Photographs by the author; illustration by the author and Geovana Frois.*

A few centimeters to the north, the base of a small caboré was uncovered (Caboré 3). This vessel remained visible above the clay floor during the nineteenth century, but was likely destroyed by trampling and other post-depositional activities. Nearby and partially fragmented, a small vase was found; it is still produced today in Maragogipinho, and sold as a cup to be used with an accompanying jar (interview with Seu Nené, 17 July 2013). This vessel was also visible above the clay floor, next to the large gastropod. A number of artifacts found inside the clay floor are also associated with this feature, and most likely were altar goods. These items included a black bead, a transparent multifaceted bead, seven white beads, a cowry shell, a *figa*, a fragment of copper sheeting, a fragmented lower human molar, a small transparent glass bottle fragment, and a small beige pebble.

Interpreting the features

While the rationale behind the specific ingredients used can only be approximated, the features' locations and other general characteristics were consistent with examples found in the literature, and recognized by the religious specialists consulted. Feature E20-1, located in the north corner of the quarto-de-santo, served as an altar, and would have required ongoing replenishing of the water and food

intended for the divinity being honored. Feature E10-1, laid down on the room's wall foundation, harkened to the temple's inauguration, with a focus on the space's legacy and that of its founder. Meanwhile, Feature E4-9, installed at the terreiro's main point of access, seems to have played the role of the guardian-like figure that protects the entrance to every candomblé.

Feature E4-9 is located underneath a crucial access point to the terreiro; after entering through the back of the basement, a visitor would necessarily pass over the inverted pots. This feature's physical location suggests a defensive function. However, the feature's characteristics strayed from those generally associated with Exu, Legba, and Bombongira, the divinities charged with protecting the entrances to most ketu, jeje, and angola "nation" candomblés.[5] The fact that the pots were upside down reminded two informants of an assentamento for the orixá Obaluiaê, although Mãe Stella pointed out that typically vessels meant for him have several perforations, to symbolize the smallpox associated with this divinity (interviews with Mãe Stella, 3 February 2011 and Buda, 6 September 2013). Upon reviewing the evidence, Everaldo Duarte commented that at locales with human burials, a ceramic vessel is placed upside down (interview, 18 October 2012). This practice is not bound to Bahia. Robert Farris Thompson observed the decoration of African-American graves in the United States with upside-down flowerpots. For him, these represent traditional African practices meant as gestures to the dead (Thompson 1984: 142).

Another reference to ancestors can be observed in Buda's comment that the presence of catfish suggested their presence, which to him then meant that the divinity Aizan might be involved. In Bahia's jeje candomblés, Aizan is the guardian of the terreiro and linked to the ancestors, with whom he mediates for the living (Parés 2007: 335, 339). The position of the feature, at the back entrance to the terreiro, is characteristic of a guardian-like figure such as Aizan.

The catfish bones seem to merit further analysis, given that all of the 56 fish bones belonged specifically to this Order (*Siluriformes*). While it is true that they are more robust and easier to identify, which might inflate their pervasiveness, none of the bones from this context failed to be identified, thus limiting such an inflation factor (Schweitzer 2013: 46–47). Described as flavorful and available on the Bahian coast during the nineteenth century, white catfish seemed to have had some appeal in the past (Academia Real das Sciencias 1825: 254–255).

Today, catfish is commercialized in Bahia, but it is not in high demand by consumers (Soares *et al.* 2009). Ritually, João do Rio briefly mentions its use as part of a set of ingredients necessary for a *babalaô* (a specialist in Ifá divination) initiation, but no other Brazilian references could be located (Barreto 1906: 49). In Africa, catfish's presence in ritual practice is due to its anomalous status, a result of its lack of scales and ability to leave the water and emit sounds (Insoll 2015: 126–127). An important additional trait should be considered as well; given the pervasiveness of venomous catfish — more than 1,250 species — and consequently the animal's strong association with venom, this particular feature could explain its concentrated presence at the candomblé's entrance (Wright 2009). Given the feature's likely defensive function, the catfish could have helped to metonymically thwart unwanted

visitors. If this were the case, it provides us with an example of the indexical agency of objects in Candomblé.

Once inside the terreiro, most visitors were likely barred from entering the small room in the north corner of the basement. All of the religious specialists consulted agreed that room in the north corner was a quarto-de-santo, whose main function was to store the divinities' altars. The importance of the space can be perceived in the care taken to ritually *firmar*, or protect, the room during its construction. As its threshold was crossed, a visitor would need to walk over a white lime stain placed below the clay floor. Mãe Stella explains that in Candomblé lime is called *efun* and can be used ritually for "defense" (interview, 8 August 2012).

During the room's construction, after digging the trench and inserting the wall foundation, and before laying down the clay floor, a series of materials was placed. In this manner, it is very similar to the terreiro construction observed by Carneiro in the 1930s and 1940s and cited earlier. Mãe Stella explained that objects can be placed on house foundations to "consecrate" them (interview, 28 October 2011). More specifically, this ialorixá believes that the feature (E10-1) has, as one of its functions, the terreiro's protection (interview, 3 February 2011). Feature E10-1 can be separated into three segments based on the characteristics of the materials found. The middle segment had the highest proportion of metallic artifacts, including an awl, an instrument photographed in a terreiro in 1938 by Oneyda Alvarenga and identified as being one of orixá Ogum's tools (Alvarenga 2000: 165, 228). Unlike the rest of the foundation, this segment in its center was covered by a layer of mortar before construction of the clay flooring. Its placement only above certain items seems to suggest an intentional separation of the foundation segments (Figure 10).

The southern segment of the foundation is close to the door, and the artifact that stood out for the specialists interviewed was a coin with carbonized wood next to it (Figure 11). According to Mãe Stella, this coin was there to honor the "ancestors" (interview, 28 October 2011). The objects placed near the room's entryway might also evoke Exu, given his penchant for guarding doorways, and his association with commerce.

The foundation's segment furthest from the door had the greatest concentration of ocean-related materials, such as corals and fish bones, as well as egg shells and white or cream colored objects. According to the religious specialists, eggs are synonymous with "life" as well as "uterus," "renovation," "procreation," "fertility," and "birth" (interviews with Mãe Stella, 28 October 2011 and Pai Antônio, 16 January 2013). Eggs also have a protective function "against people with bad intentions" and can be placed above or below ground (interview with Everaldo Duarte, 18 October 2012). According to Mãe Stella, the whole egg resting on the foundation is meant for Oxum, although she is not the only divinity that appreciates this ingredient. In sum, the objects in this segment seem to appeal to the water-based, female divinities from Candomblé's pantheon.

Animals considered to have a high degree of axé are on the foundation, specifically a cow and a pig. Noteworthy as well is the presence of a catfish spine, specifically the means by which the animal releases its venom. This characteristic highlights the importance not only of the room, but also the role played by the group of

FIGURE 10 Objects associated with Feature E10-1, with a focus on the awl, which was likely manufactured to pierce leather but here is being used for religious purposes. *Photographs by the author.*

materials inserted close the wall: they are materials with lots of axé, to circulate within the quarto-de-santo and protect it.

But the feature has an additional role; in Mãe Stella's opinion, it was also designed to "revere" the soil (interview, 3 February 2011). Thus, its installation was a sacred act, a link to the terreiro's inaugural moment, meant to ritually prepare the space for the religious activities. In two separate interviews, when asked to comment about this feature, this ialorixá mentioned that Mãe Aninha's necklace was buried during the Opô Afonjá's construction. It is clear that she is suggesting that at least one of the objects, which was not identified, has an equivalent role. This object, perhaps the awl, provides a link between the founder and all of the terreiro's activities. The feature is "ground zero" in the construction of a future lineage, which is why it is important that a datable marker, like a newspaper, or in this case, a coin, was included.

The objects that makeup Feature E20-1, which has many of the classic traits of a Candomblé altar, appear to be ritually interconnected (interview with Mãe Stella, 8 August 2012). This impression is seconded by the stratigraphic evidence, which also suggests synchronic deposition of the objects above and below ground. The buried materials likely also had a dual role of protecting and consecrating the space above. Unlike E10-1's broad action radius, this feature's buried axé likely communicated with the smaller altar space above. Among the materials visible above the surface, the stone seems to have had the key role. According to Mãe Stella, "it could have served all of the vessels .... They arranged [them] in this position, in a circle"

FIGURE 11 Objects associated with Feature E10-1. On the wall foundation, and next to the doorway, which is to the right of the photo, just outside the frame, a coin minted in 1857 and fragments of burnt wood, can be seen. *Photographs by the author.*

(interview, 8 August 2012). Therefore, one can deduce that the stone was an otá, and that the ceramic vessels contained offerings to the divinities. This configuration, in a circle, was noted not only by Rodrigues (2006: 94), but also by Manuel Querino, at the beginning of the twentieth century: "Around the sacred vase are quartinhas of several sizes, plates, china" (Querino 1938: 54).

Important complementary evidence came via organic residue testing conducted on 12 objects (10 stones and 2 ceramic vessels) and 24 soil samples (Yohe and Gibbons 2012; 2013). The E20-1 otá surface and the soil underneath it tested positive for rabbit protein. It is possible that the otá was repeatedly bathed in blood, at different moments; if this occurred, it occurred only with rabbits, for no other animal residues were identified by the chemical analysis. In any case, the presence of this residue signals an intent to ritually engage with a Candomblé divinity. As early as the 1930s, folklorist Souza Carneiro listed rabbit as an animal offered to the divinities (Carneiro 1937: 160). In compiling the opinions of two the specialists consulted, rabbits were observed to serve as offerings to Oxossi, Logunedé, Oxalá, and Iemanjá, but in reality there is some flexibility regarding their use; in some situations, such an offering could please other divinities as well (interviews with Raimundo, 4 November 2012 and Pai Antônio, 16 January 2013). Generally, an otá is placed inside a ceramic vessel whose characteristics are compatible with those of the divinity. The specimen from Rua do Tijolo was different, for a large ceramic fragment was used instead, stuck into the ground next to the stone. The reasons for this substitution are not clear, but this preference for a fragment instead of a whole recipient, as is generally the case in Candomblé, occurred in two other instances in the terreiro.

The small vase, nearby, probably also played an important role. It likely served for the divinity to "drink" and its water would have been frequently refilled by terreiro members charged with this task. The cleaning of altar objects and replenishing of its food, the oxé, is an important ritual activity in all terreiros. Three of the vessels were caborés, which also had more mundane uses, for storing coffee, according to folklorist Vianna (1973: 35).

Axés placed underground are not simply buried and forgotten. All three of the features would have required nurturing in order to remain effective. Although E4-9 and E10-1 were entirely invisible underground, certainly the candomblé's leadership knew of their existence. The fundamentos, the secret, hidden foundational materials, are frequently referenced in terreiro ritual life, and in some situations these axés under the floor play a pivotal role. For example, the "padê" for Exu ritual that occurs before public celebrations at nagô candomblés purposefully ensues literally on top of the axé buried in the center of the barracão (Santos 2008: 188).

Conclusion

Once its axés were properly planted, the basement on Rua do Tijolo was prepared to host a Candomblé terreiro. Its presence in the city was no anomaly, given that on any given night percussion instruments could be heard in many of the urban neighborhoods. Left unresolved is the reason why so much material with axé was left onsite after the candomblé's deactivation. Normally, objects with axé, are not left uncared for at a terreiro (interview, Mãe Stella, 8 August 2012). After the death of a member, it is necessary to unlink the deceased from earth and the terreiro itself. Part of this process requires ripping, breaking and later, a ritual deposing of their personal and religious belongings (Binon-Cossard 1970: 253).

Although at least part of the religious objects was left behind, the religious specialists consulted are in agreement that those items no longer have axé. Without nurture, it was lost. The abandonment of materials that once had axé might suggest that a sudden or unexpected event occurred, possibly even the death of the congregation's leader. This would have resulted in the interruption of the basement's religious activities and a search for a successor. Whatever the reason, ritual life for this small religious congregation seems to have waned around the time of Marques' death, finally ceasing completely after the sobrado ended up in the ownership of a Spanish immigrant.

Acknowledgements

The research that led to this article occurred during my doctorate at UFBA, which was supported by a Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado da Bahia (FAPESB) grant. I would like to thank Carlos Etchevarne, Luis Nicolau Parés, Rosana Najjar, and Urano Andrade for their roles in helping to bring this research to fruition. The zooarchaeological collection cited here was analyzed by Chimene Kuhn Nobre, Manoel Gonzalez, Albérico Queiroz, and Cristiana de Cerqueira

Silva Santana. I would also like to express my gratitude to the religious specialists who kindly and patiently shared their insights with me regarding Candomblé and the objects discussed in this article.

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Notes

1 The word "Candomblé" can refer to the religion, in which cases it will appear capitalized. It can also refer to a specific religious congregation or the physical space where the religion is practiced; in these cases, it will appear ("candomblé") without capitalization.

2 They are: in Salvador, *ialorixá* Mãe Stella de Oxossi (Maria Stella de Azevedo Santos) from the Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá terreiro; ialorixá Mãe Bebé do Buraco da Gia (Albertina de Souza Dantas) and her son, *tatapocó* Raimundo, both from the Nzó Mdemboa-Kenã terreiro in the Acupe de Brotas neighborhood; babalorixá Pai Antônio de Almeida from the Ilê Ashe Ijinu Ilu Orossi terreiro in the Cidade Nova neighborhood; *ogã* Everaldo Duarte, from the Bogum terreiro (Zogodo Bogum Male Rundó); and, in the city of Cachoeira, Bahia, ogã Buda (Edvaldo Jesus Conceição), from the *Roça do Ventura* (Kwe Sejá Húnde) terreiro.

3 Newspaper logs mentioned that he imported 127 tons of "several goods" and exported "ticum foliage," a plant with very resistant fibers (*O Monitor* 1876, 1879, 1880).

4 Terminus post quem, or "TPQ," means "the date after which," and is based on the observation that an artifact could only be deposited at a site after its known date of manufacture.

5 "Nation" in this case is a reference to the liturgical practices that govern a given candomblé, and whose origins are meant to be correlated with specific African regions.