

AFRO-BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE: THE ILÊ AXÉ XAPANÃ IN CACHOEIRA, BAHIA, BRAZIL **ARQUITETURA AFRO-BRASILEIRA: O ILÊ AXÉ XAPANÃ EM CACHOEIRA, BAHIA** **RODRIGO COSTA, LAILA MOURAD**

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Abstract

This article deals with the recognition of Afro-Brazilian architectures present in Quilombola territories, taking Ilê Axé Xapanã as a reference, a Candomblé temple located in the community of Santiago do Iguape, municipality of Cachoeira, state of Bahia, Brazil. In the Quilombola territory, the existence of an Afro-centered and Afro-referenced cosmivision is affirmed, where anticolonial movements that build counter-hegemonic architectures are articulated, such as those that constitute the Candomblé Terreiros, essential for the permanence and resistance of these communities. The qualitative methodology was based on social interaction with the Ilê Axé Xapanã community and its rituals, on interviews, oral and photographic records, and on the descriptive and detailed form of Afro-Brazilian architecture and ritual elements. As a result, the relevance of affirming a black / African ancestry is highlighted, expressed in the materiality and immateriality of the Candomblé Terreiro, built from the various existing cultural and religious manifestations. These architectures are composed of material and immaterial heritage simultaneously, driven by the flow of vital Axé that gives is a unique and singular meaning to the architecture of Terreiros in Quilombos.

Keywords: Afro-Brazilian architecture, Terreiro Ilê Axé Xapanã, Quilombola Territory.

1 Introduction

Since the first years of African peoples presence in Brazil, resistance strategies to slavery were constituted in different ways. The colonial period was marked by acts of dehumanization of these peoples, but they were characterized, above all, by constant movements of struggle and resistance, through the exchange of knowledge, goods, movements and transits of different orders, as well as transmigrations of people, objects and religiosity. Slave ships transported, across the Atlantic, for more than 350 years, not only an enormous contingent of black men and women captives destined for various jobs in the Americas, but also their personalities, ways of being and behaving, and their beliefs (Verger, 2018). According to Macedo (2013, p. 100),

[...] by causing massive displacement of African populations, slavery and the slave trade gave rise to a new phenomenon: the transposition of African cultures and the consequent interaction between African sociocultural experiences and the existing sociocultural experiences in the places where Africans and Afro-descendants were taken, in a phenomenon known as African diaspora.

Enslaved blacks were dehumanized and had lives marked by violence, domination and oppression of their bodies, a fact that was perpetuated in years of slavery, post-abolition and post-colonialism. In diaspora, enslaved people brought and resignified, in Brazilian territory, rich cultural expressions: festivities, beliefs, aesthetics, handicrafts, cuisines, economic and political organizations. Coming from different places and different nations in Africa, they arrived in the colonies in America.

In Brazil, African populations organized themselves into communities that, currently and legally, constitute traditional communities and form the Quilombola territories. According to Beatriz Nascimento (2018a), a Quilombo is a social condition. It is a type of alternative social system formed by blacks, which is constituted, according to Nascimento (2018a, p. 70), “more in the human need to organize themselves in a specific way than that arbitrarily established by the colonizer”. The author rescues the concept of “Kilombo” from Angola,

The official order, repression, is what called it Quilombo, which is a black name and means union. So, the moment the black unites, joins forces, he is always forming a Quilombo, he is eternally forming a Quilombo, the African name for union (Nascimento, 2018b, p. 126).

Abdias do Nascimento (1980, p. 263) points out that a “Quilombo does not mean ‘escaped slave’. Quilombo means ‘fraternal and free gathering, [of] solidarity, coexistence, existential communion’”. The author analyzes this inherited collectivity as a memory to be practiced in favor of valuing affective ties and perpetuating Afro-Brazilian culture.

Macedo (2013), in turn, understands that the Quilombos were like “little Africas”, nailed on American soil, which “reproduced traditional community forms, but were open to the incorporation of non-enslaved social groups and to negotiation with social members of the environment in which they were created” (Macedo, 2013, p. 119). The elements and meanings of the different African ethnic groups converged, and each Quilombo developed its culture based on the tradition of the groups that formed it, added to the practices of other cultures, such as the native peoples’ and the Portuguese.

Concerning architecture, Pereira (2011, p. 3) comments that,

[...] in black Africa, around a thousand different languages are spoken. This means that there must be a similar number of different architectural cultures, each of which is diversified into numerous programs (temples, palaces, administrative and communal buildings, squares, urban and rural roads, defense buildings, etc.). These issues directly reflect on the diversity of cultural, architectural and urban formation existing in the [Quilombola] community.

This architecture was produced using traditional African construction techniques, using local materials and adapting to the new environment. In the Quilombola communities of Vale do Iguape, municipality of Cachoeira, Bahia state’s Recôncavo region, the presence of black culture is recalled in the different ways in which the remaining Quilombola communities relate to the territory. Such modes, transmitted orally through generations, are expressed in relation to nature and in their cultural and religious practices, in addition to materializing in the Afro-Brazilian architecture of Candomblé Terreiros.

The architecture of the Terreiro is built from the symbiosis between matter (body) and the relationship with nature (spirit). The rituals evoke and materialize the built space from the divine nature present in the territory and, through the rites, the landscape sacralizes the multiple symbologies designed in the architecture. The architectural body is structured by the dynamic flow of Axé¹, which is driven by the African gods evoked in their rituals. Axé is the fundamental, central and dynamic element of Candomblé, “it is the immaterial element that permeates all beings and things in the world” (Velame, 2012, p. 53).

This article discusses the different forms of expression of the Afro-Brazilian architecture of the Candomblé Terreiro Ilê Axé² Xapanã³ and its sacred territory, located in the Quilombola community of Santiago do Iguape, in the Iguape Valley. Its main objective is the recognition and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian architectures, understanding them as counter-hegemonic architectures that reveal themselves as an important heritage of the resistance of black African culture in Quilombola territory.

In this sense, the qualitative method was used and some techniques for gathering information were employed, such as field visits, recording of the Ilê Axé Xapanã space, photographic records, interviews / listening to accounts, interaction with the community and its rituals. This approach allowed understanding the different perceptions, worldviews and knowledge observed during the research. This conviviality contributed to accessing a particular knowledge of each architectural element, sacred symbol, ritual and meaning of Quilombola territoriality, which led to the adoption of a descriptive and detailed form of architecture and Afro-Brazilian ritual elements.

¹ [Asé] “The term Axé is, for the Yoruba people, an invisible power that transmits a divine and untouchable energy that people can only sense. Called hamba or nguzu by the Bantu nation, and exá, by the Fon people, the word Axé became generalized, popularized and came to be accepted and used by the other sister nations as well. Axé is the force that produces growth. When Olorum created the four basic principles of nature: fire, water, air and earth and breathed into them his ofurufu – the sacred breath – he was distributing his power in the Universe. This power is Axé, which moves in all directions! It is this mobility that allows Axé to be distributed primarily among people, making them able to transform themselves into a sacred altar, where divine forces are more felt and seen. It is also distributed in objects, food, animals, leaves, etc. When Axé is fragmented and divided into small portions, it is called ixé. Without Axé, nothing exists, nothing harmonizes or interconnects, because it is what makes things happen. For this to occur, it is necessary to unite the human being with rituals, with songs and also with the use of incantation words. The spoken Axé, exploding in the air, is redistributed into particles in the elements that form the atmosphere, creating and forming new conditions to bring harmony to the aiê” (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 42).

² [Ilê Asé] “It is the architectural and sacred abode of the deities, a set where natural energies act, which makes the physical connection between them and human beings. A public place, open to all who seek it and which receives various names, such as “house of the sacred forces”, the “house of the powerful elements of nature”, “house-of-saint”, “Axé”, “yard” or “territory”. In the Yoruba nation, Candomblé houses are called Ilê Axé; the Fon call them Kwe, Abassá or Humpame; in the Bantu nation, Mbazi or Canzuá” (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 43).

³ [Sánpónná] Another name for Obaluaiê (Prandi, 2001, p. 570).

Furthermore, the article unfolds into the following sections: the first deals with the understanding of Candomblé Terreiros based on the concepts of territory and territoriality; the second section addresses Afro-Brazilian architecture; and the last one analyzes the sacred architecture of Ilê Axé Xapanã, the House of Obaluaiê⁴, for a detailed understanding of the symbology present in each environment, intertwined by the material and immaterial dimensions.

2 The Candomblé Terreiro, a Sacred Territory in the Quilombo

The Terreiros have the role of territorializing the gods that, in Africa, are worshiped by different nations but are connected in the same space. According to Risério (2016, p. 159),

Geographically, the term Terreiro refers both to a flat and wide strip of land, which can be understood as a ranch, plantation, and farm, and to the land where rituals of Afro-Brazilian cults take place. Spiritually, the Terreiro is the place where “the representations of the spaces in which existence is based are present: the Orum (the invisible, the beyond) and the Aiyê (the visible world)”.

In turn, Rêgo (2006) points out that the defining moment of that territory as a sacred space of the Terreiro occurs when the Axé community performs the rite of consecration. According to Matos (2017, p. 54), this is known as “planting the Axé” and it

[...] consists of placing material elements impregnated with the Axé of the deity to which the Terreiro floor is being consecrated. The term “planting” is used because the Axé, magical-sacred power magnetized in the material elements, is buried in the ground, which enhances the sacred, making it extended to everything and everyone.

From the construction of Candomblé Terreiros, the Quilombola communities have formed a new territory in which they revive, in their daily practices, the beliefs in the cult of African deities. They have added the customs, religiosity and cult of entities from other peoples, from European Catholicism to First Nations religions. All sharing the same territory: the Candomblé Terreiro. For Haesbaert (2012, p. 34), “Axé is the existence of a multiterritoriality, which implies transiting and, above all, experiencing this multiplicity of territories / territorialities that are constructed”. Thus, in the Terreiros, new speeches have emerged, miscegenation, fusion of beliefs and styles that would project from the enslaved environment to the whole of society (Macedo, 2013).

The Terreiros emerged in Santiago do Iguape from multiple religious manifestations of different African nations present in the Quilombo. The Terreiros Egbé Onile Iku and Ilê Axé Obitku Obá Inã, from the Nagô-Vodum nation⁵ are the children and roots of Candomblé Lobanekun Filho de Cachoeira. The Ilê Axé Xapanã Terreiro, case study of this article, was founded on

⁴ [Obalúayé] Obaluaiê is a powerful deity associated with land, health and wealth for the Yoruba people and has his name translated as “king lord of the land” or “lord of all earth spirits”. His most powerful name is Xapanã (*Şànpònmá*), which should be used more strictly, with due care. To avoid speaking his name, many call him Aion (“owner / lord of the land”), others prefer the term of endearment of “Old Man”, “Uncle” or even “Amolu”. He is intrinsically and concretely linked to the hot earth, to the hardened and dry terrestrial crust, having as his counterpoint Nanã, his mother, who is more directed to the earth's core, to the lower and humid part of the planet. It is also responsible for the moisture that emanates from the earth and that favors plant gestation, thus helping to maintain life. Through this connection, Obaluaiê is considered to belong to the group of onilés, the “owners of the land”, having complete dominion over both its external, physical and living part, as well as its cosmic, sacred part. Through this connection with the land, he is called “lord of stones” by the Fon people. Stones are elements that vivify the divinities after receiving liturgies (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 405).

⁵ Also called Jeje-Nagô, the most propagated by books and traditions in Brazil. This junction was born from the need for survival of some ethnic groups that, feeling difficulties in giving continuity to their cults, needed to seek and unite their knowledge with that of other nations. From the expansion of the religious world unveiled by both, they became stronger and more united, conquering and helping in the freedom that we perceive today. Through the union of the Orixás with the Voduns, some deities were hidden behind others. This, however, was a necessary evil and, on the other hand, it enhanced the pantheons. The exchange of information was greater and the Candomblé authorities needed to unite even more, thus seeking better knowledge. All gained initiates and deities (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 39).

April 22, 2014, by Mameto⁶ (Ialorixá⁷) Zélia de Obaluaiê, and brings in its rituals the influences of the religious traditions of the Congo and Angola nations, peoples of Bantu origin. Although this Axé community recognizes itself as a Candomblé Terreiro of the Bantu-Angola nation⁸, at Ilê Axé Xapanã, a strong influence of hybridization is added to the cults, present in the syncretization and worshiping of deities from other nations that exist in the Quilombo, which can be defined as Bantu-Nagô-Vodum. Umbanda⁹ is also present in the community with the Temple of Umbanda Caboclo Gentileiro das Sete Cachoeiras.

From this perspective, the *povo de santo* [lit. 'people of saint', i.e., worshippers] are collectively aware of their various ritual manifestations, which involve the worldviews of each nation from Africa. Black people have brought specificities of cults existing in each individual through memory, sometimes worshiping Orixás¹⁰, Inquices¹¹ or Voduns¹². These, added to the Native Brazilians, gave rise to the existing Afro-Brazilian religiosities, recreated on the aggregation of the varied cultural and religious manifestations built in the Brazilian territory.

According to Corrêa (2006), from the construction of Candomblé Terreiros, the Quilombos constitute the 'Terreiro-Territory', through the geosymbolic action and the conniving landscape, in which the semiography of reterritorialization revives the lost Africa that, in Brazil, gains materialization and resignification in time and space as Afro-Brazilian.

3 Afro-Brazilian Architecture of the Terreiro

Relative to Afro-Brazilian architectures, Velame (2020, n. p) argues that these

⁶ [*mametu dya nkisi*] The woman who is responsible for the house of the Bantu nation is called mameto ria nkise or Mameto-de-Inquice and the man is called tateto ria nkise or Tata-de-Inquice. The words Mameto and Tateto come from the Kimbundu *mam'etu* and *tat'etu*, respectively, 'our mother and father' (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 282).

⁷ [*Babalorixá* and *Iyalorixá*] *Babalòrìṣà* and *iyálòrìṣà*, in Yoruba, are the central figures of a Candomblé house and their names identify them as the "father/mother who takes care of the Orixá", being the heads of an Axé. They are people specially chosen by Olorum to help organize the lives of many people in the aiê! They are also called Babalaxé or Iyalaxé, those who concentrate and distribute the most powerful Axé in the house! With so many attributes, they need balance, availability, dedication and, above all, kindness of heart, to provide well-being to those who seek them. These priests are initiated people who assume this position through their individual Odu. To exercise it, they need to have their liturgical obligations complete and have received from their priest the evidence of their position, called Decá, Cuia, Ibaxé, etc., according to each Axé (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 282).

⁸ From the Bantu nation, called the "mother nation", one of the first to arrive, came the Inquices, Calundus, Bacurus. From the Congo, the Cabindas were brought; from Angola, the Benguelas; from Mozambique, the Macua and Angicos. From the Guinea coast came the Minas (from the São Jorge da Mina Fort). They brought with them several dialects and many languages, including Bantu, Kicongo, Kimbundu, Umbundu, Kioco, etc. From these languages originated several terms that ended up being incorporated into the Portuguese language spoken in Brazil. They also left their incentive to popular festivities, with their dances and rhythms (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 282).

⁹ The Indigenous peoples soon identified with the Bantu nation and allied with its members who were brought to Brazil as slaves. This partnership was an attempt by both sides to guard against their oppressors and to protect their social interests and religious needs. In this union, they were merging, acquiring and exchanging customs, beliefs, and knowledge about nature. It was from this junction that the beginnings of Umbanda emerged, which has in its Caboclos the figure of their indigenous ancestors, and in Pretos Velhos [Old Black Men], the synthesis of their slave ancestors. Umbanda is Axé, the religion that was created in Brazil, amalgamating African and indigenous knowledge with European knowledge, through syncretism with the Catholic religion. (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 30)

¹⁰ [*òrìṣà*] For the Yoruba people, the Orixá (*òrìṣà*) is "the lord of our head", a powerful force of nature that gives physical and spiritual support. In the Fon nation, the deities are called Voduns and, in the Bantu nation, they are called Inquices. It is through these divinities that the world is revitalized and regenerates its balance and harmony. Divine creation of Olorum, our supreme God, the Orixás are the intermediaries between this divine and omnipotent being and men. The Orixá can also be called Oluware (lord of the world), because he is precisely that for the one who owns him – the "lord of his world, of his life" (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 91).

¹¹ [*nkisi*] The deities of the Bantu nation are called Inquices, a word derived from *nkisi*, which can be translated as "supernatural being" or as "a helping spirit". Whatever the translation, the Inquice is the one who is among us to help us (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 280).

¹² [*Voduns*] The divinities of the Jeje nation are called Voduns and are divided into families, according to their specificity and also because of their connection with the elements of nature. Voduns are worshiped at the feet of large and ancient trees, some even centuries old. This natural Igbá is called Atinsá and keeps the foundations of these deities hidden. These trees receive special care and are permanently decorated with Ojás and bows, making them unique (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 290).

[...] are understood as being the architectures built by blacks in Brazil, by Africans and their descendants through the diasporic processes imposed by slavery, as a form of social, cultural and political survival, constituting places of resistance, existence, preservation, resignification and creation of black culture in Brazil, being composed in their spatialities and temporalities by cosmo perceptions, principles, processes, values and Afro-centered aesthetics, Afro-referenced, and Afro-diasporic.

This Quilombo architecture highlights the use of traditional construction techniques and the intense use of local materials, mainly from the handling of clay, palm straw (*piçava*) and bamboo. Materiality for the people of saint does not only represent the appropriation of applied techniques, but above all defines the relationship between humans and the divine nature of the gods based on the use of these materials. According to Oliver (2007), there is the process of transmitting know-how, as the person learns something when building and, with that, technology is improved. Such an understanding can be applied to the experiences of the resident / Quilombola and, therefore, such practice is a form of black resistance to the processes of annihilation of their culture. A form of affirmation of this Afro-Brazilian heritage and an ancestral black identity that is expressed through demonstrations, exchanges of knowledge and technologies.

In the Terreiros of Santiago do Iguape, symbols of different dimensions are materialized in an Afro-Brazilian architecture, which takes on physical form and delimitations of its spaces based on the designs of immaterial beings. The Orixás, Voduns, Inquices and Brazilian spiritualities are consulted to design this architecture with its own specificities and dynamics, either by reading the space, done through the incorporation of mediums initiated in the cult, or by consulting Ifá¹³, the oracle for religions of African origin. Thus, when it comes to Terreiro architecture, the entire process is guided by these beings, often by indigenous Caboclos, who will give this hybrid space its own meanings and specific division of places that will determine the different rituals. In addition, the construction takes place collectively, in a system of cooperation and mutual help of the children of saint (Velame, 2019). Their contact with Aiyê (Earth), Orum (Heaven) and their relationship with African deities is directly manifested through certain organic materialities incorporated into the architecture, sacralized by the Axé that gives meaning to matter.

It is from this perspective that Terreiro architecture is constituted, completely dissociated from the forms and content of hegemonic western architecture. Grounded by another cosmovision, not Eurocentric, but Afro-referenced, in which the ways of being/existing of the black population are included, as well as the collective spaces of conviviality and the different ways of living. For Velame (2019), the Afro-Brazilian architecture of a specific society that worships its illustrious ancestors constitutes a unique, singular, particular architecture, without any parallel and similarity in Africa.

The relationship between architecture and Quilombo is expressed in several aspects: in the relations of the remnants with their ways of life, with the environment and in their various cultural and religious manifestations. The communities share the space of the yard with housing and / or support areas for agricultural and fishing production. In Santiago do Iguape, the architecture of the temple is intertwined with social actions aimed at the community, such as the sacred architecture of the Umbanda Caboclo Gentileiro temple, which shares space with Mãe Lalu Institute.

4 The Sacred Architecture of Obaluaiê's House

¹³ [Ifá] The guardian and patron of the oracle, the “spokesman of Orunmila”, who administers and governs the divinatory systems of Yoruba culture. He is not an Orixá, but an intermediary between humans and deities, having, however, a very important position in the supreme court of the Orum. It is he who shows the determinations, but only reveals what we are allowed to know. In this way, he can guide and lead us. However, no decision is made solely through Ifá, because he works under the supreme orders of Olorum and Orunmila. Responsible for any type of oracular query, he responds through various elements, such as cowries, Iquins, Obis, Orobôs, onion (àZubasà), okra, pear, apple and several others. The oracle should only be consulted for very serious and just reasons, not serving for jokes or immoral and vulgar situations (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 493).

The Ilê Axé Xapanã is inserted in the rural area of the Quilombola community of Santiago do Iguape, in the Iguape Valley, around Todos os Santos bay and the Iguape bay extractive marine reserve (RESEX, from its name in Portuguese) (figure 1). The access road to the Quilombo is established by the BA 800 highway and its terrain includes important areas of agricultural production, rivers and a diversity of plants used in the rituals, as shown in figure 2.

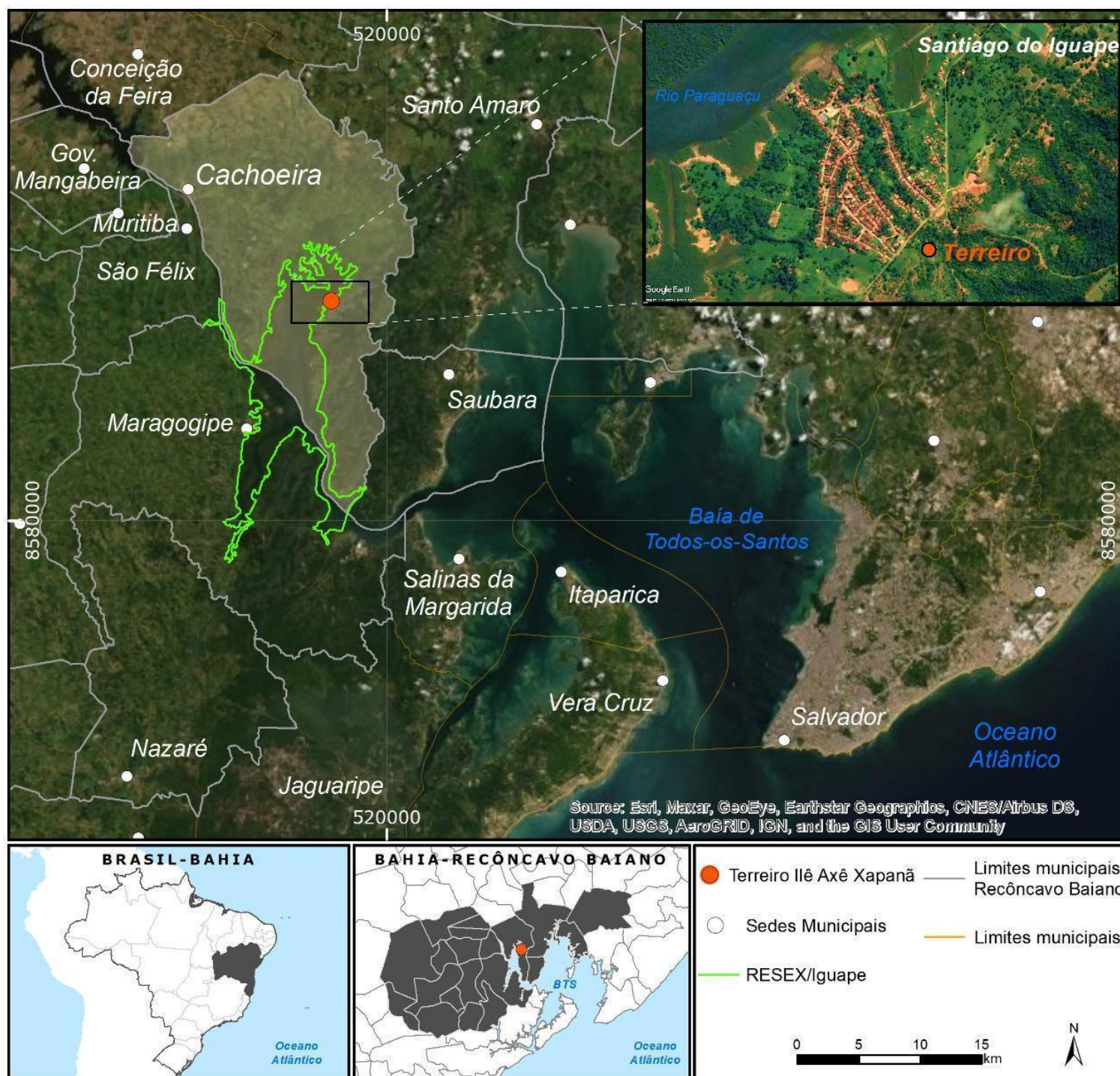


Fig. 1: Location map of the Ilê Axé Xapanã Terreiro. Source: Inema 1999; ICMBio, 2000; Sei/Bahia, 2017; IBGE, 2021. Notations: Moura; Mourad; Costa, 2022.

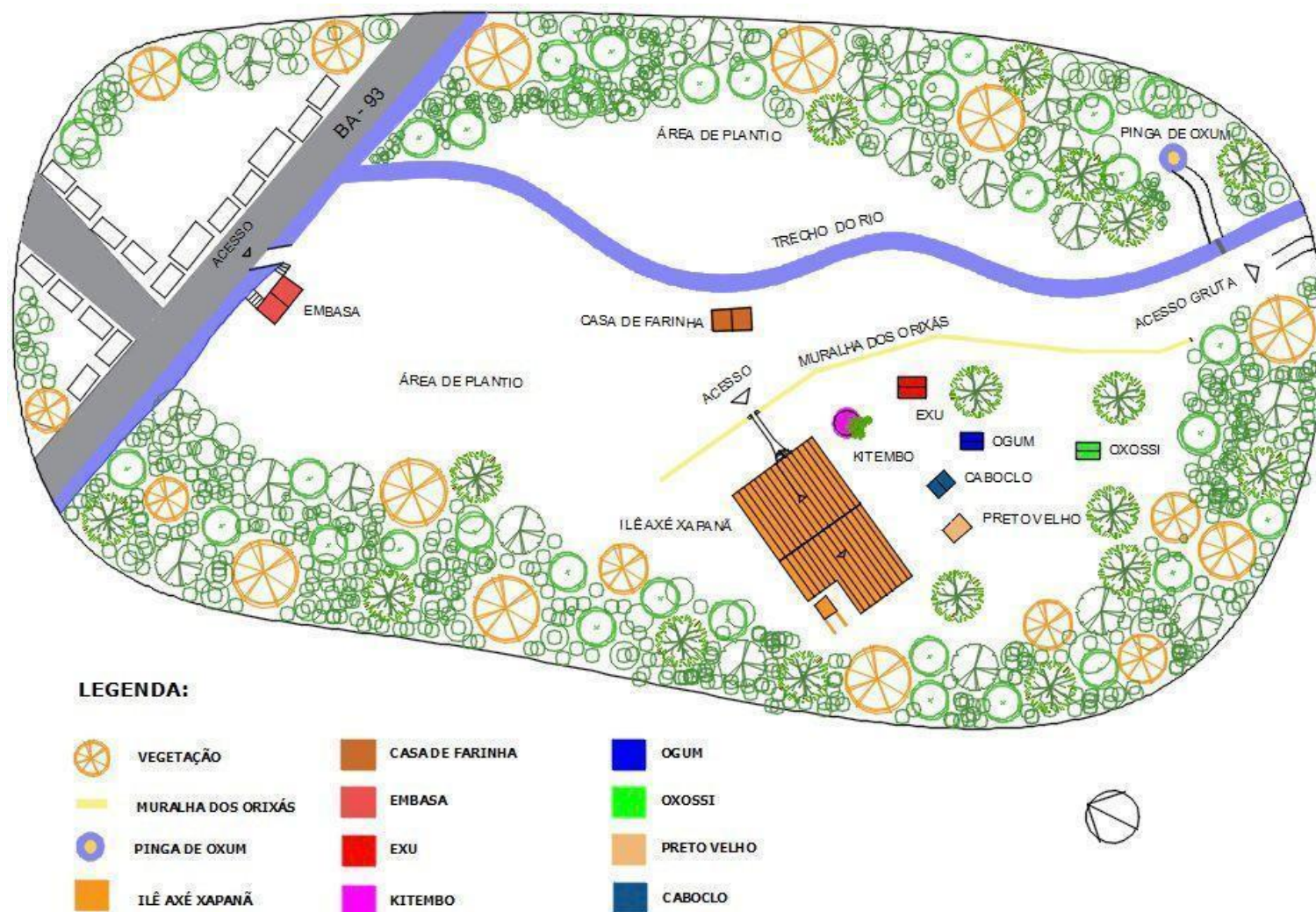


Fig. 2: Floor plan of Ilê Axé Xapanã grounds. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

The Terreiro had its Axé planted and all the trees and herbs consecrated by the guidance of Obaluaiê and under the intercession of lalorixá Mother Zélia. A unique and essential moment, which gives meaning to the architecture implanted there – its true base, its sustenance – it is from there that the Axé emerges that roots each wall raised in the yard.

When opening the gate of the Terreiro, the straws of the Old One (Obaluaiê) stand up to show all the grandeur in its construction, authentic aesthetics and immaterial power. Such power is given by the Axé of the rites and provides meaning to the materiality present in the building of King Xapanã's house. Upon entering this sacred ground, the Orixá Exu¹⁴ mediates these two cosmic universes, granting permission to enter this sacred land. Exu is the caretaker who protects paths, streets and crossroads. The Orixá is responsible for communication between the two worlds, material and immaterial. He governs everything that passes from the gate in and out.

The Afro-Brazilian architecture that makes up this territory – Terreiro and Quilombo – is connected to the material and immaterial goods correlated there, represented in the flour mill, in the Terreiro and in the Ilês Orixás¹⁵ and settlements located around. They are raised by the immaterial power that brings the flow of Axé from the rites and also from the different cultural and religious manifestations existing in the community, giving unique and singular meaning to the present materiality.

¹⁴ [Èsù] Messenger Orixá, owner of the crossroads and guardian of the front door of the house; always the first to be honored (Prandi, 2001, p. 565).

¹⁵ [Ilês órixás] Small individual rooms to house the Orixás (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 44).

In the flour mill (figures 3 and 4), the places for preparation stand out, mostly built of ceramics and adobe – mainly the wood ovens –, traditionally built in the backyards of many families in the community. Ilê Axé Xapanã shares its territory with several cassava and other fruits and vegetables plantations intended for collective consumption by the community. Traditionally considered agricultural and fishing, the remnants of the Quilombo of Santiago do Iguape develop, through family farming, the production of artisanal cassava flour.



Fig. 3: Flour mill.
Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.



Fig. 4: Flour mill.
Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

It can be seen that several economic survival activities are carried out on the site. There, the remaining ones share the spaces for work and rural activities with the spaces of the Terreiro, making their relationship direct with the ways of life of the community of Santiago do Iguape, that is, their cultural and economic practices, their territorialities, ways of knowing and doing converge into the same territory. This Terreiro-Territory now has its religious field expanded and reaches the dimension of income generator in which a solidarity network enables the continuity of traditional practices and knowledge that are preserved.

Ilê Axé Xapanã is located in a place guided by Mother Zélia's Caboclo, which stays at a higher level, displaying his grandeur, favoring the contemplation and respect of all who go to the area or pass by it. The Afro-Brazilian architecture of this Terreiro, mediated by the immaterial and material link, is expressed in its spatial organization, with the houses of the Orixás, and the settlements located around it (figure 5)

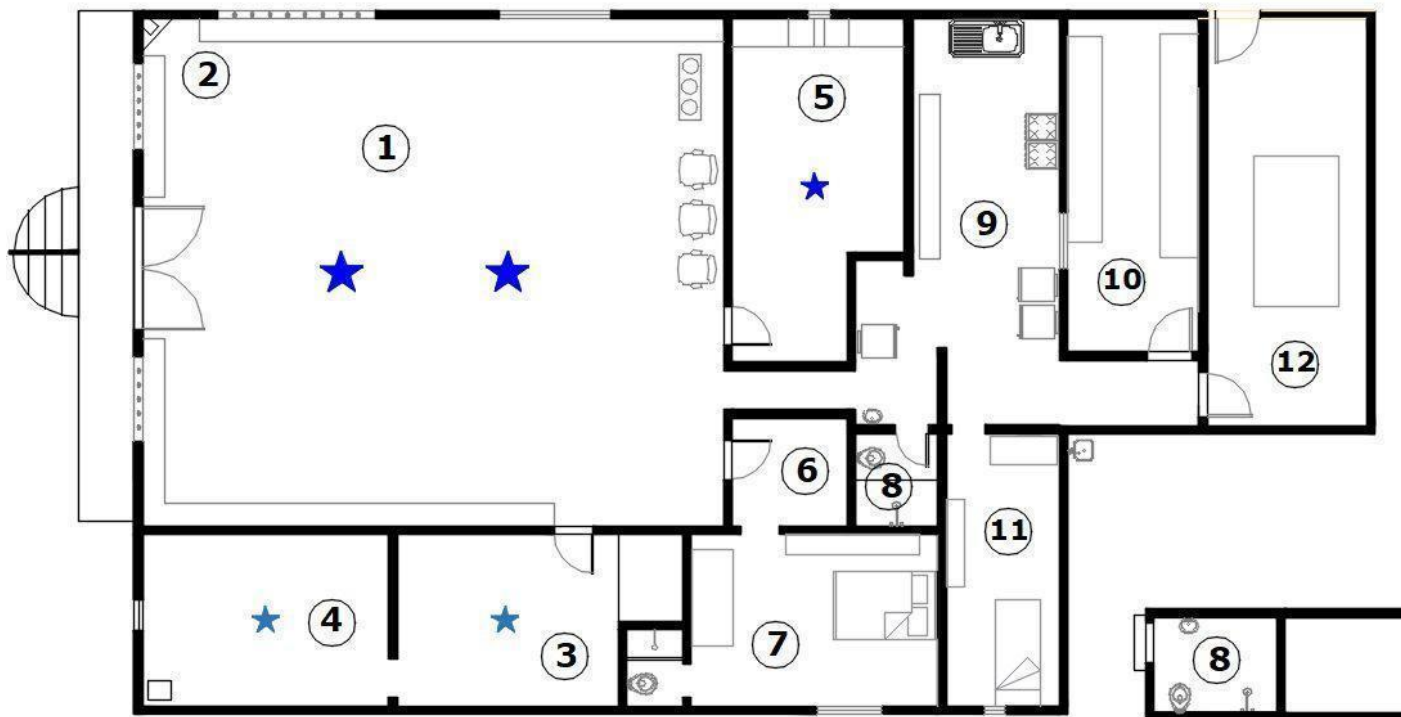


Fig. 5: Floor plan of the Ilê Axé Xapanã Terreiro. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

Legend: 1. Shed, 2. Settlement of Oxumarê (Angorô), 3. Sabaji, 4. Roncô, 5. Orixás Room (Inquices), 6. Anteroom, 7. Mameto's Room, 8. Bathrooms, 9. Social kitchen, 10. Ritual kitchen, 11. Children's bedroom, 12. Living area.

This culture, translated into architecture, is composed of this link that makes up the main body of the Terreiro: the shed, the Orixás' room, the *roncô*¹⁶, the lalorixá's room, the ritual and social kitchens, three bathrooms and, at the back of the temple, a convivial area where lunches are held. There is also a bathroom for the public and a place for bathing with an uncovered shower and drain, used separately for bathing leaves, flushing and sacred rituals. The frames are painted in blue and white referring to the Orixá that is the top of the house, Ogum¹⁷, the Orixá responsible for the initiation of Mother Zélia, and who is revered in his colors in different parts of the Terreiro.

¹⁶ Called *rondêmi* or *roncô*, it is the restricted place, away from the public movement, completely clean, where peace and silence reign. When in this room, the *iaô* detaches himself from all his problems and from anything that concerns external relations. His head needs to be directed only to the spiritual connections that will help bring about a transformation in his life (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 81).

¹⁷ [Ógô] Orixá of the metallurgy, agriculture, and war (Prandi, 2001, p. 568).

Another important architectural element on the main façade is the mural of the Orixás made by local artists (figures 6 and 7), designed by the worshippers of the house to honor Mother Zélia and her Orixá, the great father of the initiates in the Terreiro. On the wall, on one side, it was written “Terreiro Ilê Axé Xapanã homenagem em memória a Mãe Zélia de Obaluaiê” [‘Terreiro Ilê Axé Xapanã homage in memory to mother Zélia of Obaluaiê’, our translation]. On the other side, to reaffirm the interweaving between the Orixás brought by the blacks and the Brazilian entities, figures of African gods can be seen alongside the figure of the Caboclo.



Fig. 6: Mural of Orixás.
Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.



Fig. 7: Mural of Orixás.
Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

The portico (figure 8), with two large cattle horns at the entrance to the Terreiro, announces the presence of Caboclos who inhabit this space and the protection that these beings bring to the cults of this Axé. When crossing this reverent element, we come across Pepelê¹⁸, the settlement of Tempo, Kitembo¹⁹ Inquice. Built in a circular shape, it symbolizes the constant cycle of time and the chronology of our lives: the past, the present and the future. In the settlement of the Angola nation Inquice, considered king of that community, there is a white flag hoisted by a long wooden pole, marking the territorialization of the cults of this deity (figures 9, 10 and 11). This settlement, in most Angola Terreiros, is located in front of the shed. However, in Ilê Axé Xapanã, there is a parallel to the House of Exu and Pombuilas²⁰, revealing the importance of this holiness and its reverence.



Fig. 9: Tempo's Pepelê.
Source: Rodrigo Costa,
2021.

¹⁸ Place where the Orixás remain protected and seated on a bench specially designed and built for their perfect fit, called Pepelê (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 321).

¹⁹ The settlement of Tempo Inquice (Kitembo), or Catendê, is also made at the foot of a tree, preferably mango or ficus. But Tempo is not treated as a tree-deity and does not use exclusively identify with the color white, as Iroco does. Tempo is considered “the lord of days”, as time belongs to Tempo [lit. ‘Time’]. Tempo is also the lord of reason, cure and solution! Only its precepts and its praises are performed at the foot of the sacred tree that serves as a shelter for its settlement. In front of this tree-house, a white flag made of cheesecloth, exchanged annually at the festivals, is attached to the very top of a pole. This is a symbol and an identifying mark of a house of the Bantu nation (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 427).

²⁰ [Pambu-a-njila] In the Bantu nation, the Inquices who most resemble Exu are Aluvaiá and Bombogira (from the Kimbundu Pambu-a-njila), male and female, respectively. Both have the same prerogatives and domains as the Yoruba Exu (The term Bombogira gave rise to the name Pomba-gira, a female Umbanda entity that has control over crossroads and paths) (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 43).



Fig. 10: Tempo's Pepelê. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.



Fig. 11: Tempo's Pepelê. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

After honoring Kitembo, we find the main architecture of the temple, the Abassá²¹ (figures 12 and 13). The openings in the facades are intended to allow the public, when there is no more space inside the shed, to contemplate the Xirê²² of Gods from the outside, leaning against the sill. This fact reveals the importance of this architecture to privilege the observation of the internal space, so that everyone can watch the ritual and receive the Axé of the gods who dance in this sacred hall. All façades are protected with an important natural element, palm straw, known as *marion*²³, whose primary function is to protect the space from undesirable spirits. This element is identified in most of the Terreiros in the region, being common throughout



Fig.12: Entrance to the Shed. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

²¹ In the Yoruba nation, Candomblé houses are called Ilê Axé; in the Fon nation, Kwe, Abassá or Humpame; and Nzo, Mbazi or Canzuá, in the Bantu nation (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 294).

²² The word Xirê, a contraction of the Yoruba terms *șè*, to make, and *ire*, to play, to have fun, can be translated as “to party, to play”. A gathering, a meeting, the Xirê is the circle where the Orixás meet to dance and play! It is the occasion when the drumming and the singing of people call and invite the Orixás to come to the party that their people offer them! The Xirê has a sequential order of arrival of the Orixás, according to each house. It is also called Odorozan Adorozan (Odohozan) by the Fon people, or Jamberessu, by the Bantu people (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 330).

²³ Màriwò or Mònriwò, for the Yorubas, and Azan, for the Fons, are the tender leaves of the shredded palm oil tree (*igí-òpè*). Its use is essential in Candomblé houses, having as one of its premises being known as the “clothes that Ogum wears”. In its vestments, rituals and settlements it has an obligatory presence. In some Candomblé houses, it is under the canopy of this tree that Ebóra is settled. Oiá is another deity that also uses its leaves. Dusting them in the air is like pushing away or expelling undesirable beings, or even taking their Eguns to the Orum (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 224).



Fig. 13: The Shed.
Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

Thus, an aesthetic value is created by behaving as an identifying element of this religious matrix in the middle of the city crushed by exclusionary urbanism that limits the constructive and aesthetic possibilities of Afro-Brazilian communities. In addition to this element, there is the Carranca, a sculpture carved in wood and known to be used, at first, on the bow of riverside community boats. Carrancas came to mean, for the local population, an object of protection for their bearers, by associating characteristics of expelling evil spirits out of this sacred space.

The Axé of the Orixá Obaluaiê was planted on the floor of the shed. On top of the settlement, ceramics in the shape of five-pointed stars were placed (figures 14 and 15). It was from the settlement that the architecture of the following rooms in the yard was born and unfolded, which turn to the central space in this architecture. The stars also appear at the *roncó*, the *sabaji*, and the room of the Terreiro's saint, places restricted to initiates and regulars of this Axé. In this very important element, due reverence is made to the deity. The children of saint, during the Xirê, salute the house and bend down, touching the star with their heads, thus taking their Oris (heads) to the sacred stars. A relationship between the deity and the initiate is established, since the Axé of the Orixá is shared and enjoyed by his children, who respect and revere him (Velame, 2019).



Fig. 14: View of the Shed. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.



Fig. 15: Five-pointed star. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

The central point of the shed's energy is the ridge, which is the base, structure and core of a Candomblé house. In the Afro-Brazilian architecture of the Candomblé Terreiro, it is consecrated to the creator Orixá, the father who initiated it, the Babá or lalorixá of the house, protecting the highest place in the shed. Small vases of ceramic, clay and other elements are placed at the top of the Terreiro in consecration to the regent Orixá. In turn, the Axé is planted in the house at the meeting point of the vertical axis of the ridge, that is, at the meeting point between the Orum and the Aiyê. At Ilê Axé Xapanã, the vertical relationship is established between the seat of the patron deity, Ogum, and the star of the Orixá ruling the house, Obaluaiê. As Velame (2019) explains, this axis enables the realization of the dance of the gods, the Xirê of the Orixás, which revolves around the connection between the two plans of existence.

The shed is adorned with pennants, changed according to the festive dates, an important element that adorns the entire roof of the Candomblé and Umbanda Terreiros of Iguape Valley and Cachoeira Quilombos. In the shed, it is also very common to have paintings with images and symbols of the Orixás and / or Caboclos worshiped in the houses (figure 16). They also have photographs that recall the ancestry of the Terreiro, such as photos of the house's eldest, those who have already passed from the Aiyê to the Orum and will always represent great importance for the Axé community. These portraits make up a kind of family tree, which spreads its sacred branches on the walls of the yard (figure 17).



Fig. 16: Pennants and photographs. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.



Fig. 17: Entity panel.
Source: Rodrigo Costa,
2021.

At festivals, it is the sound of the atabaques played by the Ogãs in the shed that drives the movements of the dancing gods, showing with dances and gestures their energetic forces reverberating in the bodies of all who appreciate the Xirês. The floors of Candomblé Terreiros are normally built with beaten clay, with the aim that the sons and daughters of saints, when stepping and dancing in the hall, connect with this organic matter in its most natural state. In the architecture of Ilê Axé Xapanã, this clay floor became even more essential as it directly revered the main element of the house's Orixá, Obaluaiê, the lord and owner of the land, the sacred soil.

At the entrance to the shed there is another settlement, a Peji, governed by the Inquice Angorô-Angoromeia²⁴ or the Orixá Oxumarê²⁵, as he is popularly known (figure 18). The space was built in the shape of an arrow to represent the direction,

²⁴ In the Bantu nation, there is the Inquice Hongolô, which has characteristics similar to those of Oxumarê. This deity in its feminine part is called Angoroméa and, in its masculine part, Angorô. Its main function is also to bring movement, transformation, giving continuity to the existence of humans and the world (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 413).

²⁵ Oxumarê is a deity inserted in the pantheon of the deities of heaven and earth, which was adopted by the Yoruba people. This Vodum receives, in the Fon nation, the name of Dan or Bessém, and it originates from the region of the Mahis, present-day Benin. He is part of the Dambirá Family and, in the Jeje-Mina (Ewe) nation, he is called Dambalá Aidô Huedô or Dambelá / Dambará, which is reduced to Dan or Dá, the snake, his mythical representation (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 413).

the constant movement and the impermanence of the serpent that swallows its own head, and it is through this movement that it makes the path that fulfills the rainbow.



Fig. 18: Oxumarê's Peji. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021.

In the architecture of the Terreiros, it is very common to note the existence of two kitchens, the social and the ritual, or kitchen of the saint. The latter has a sacred character and it is there that food is prepared for the offerings, Ebós²⁶ and all foods offered to the Orixás in rituals. The ritual kitchen is the responsibility of the Iyá Bassé²⁷ of the house, who prepares the dishes for the Orixás and for people with a spiritual function, and the food is made to meet a wide range of energetic and spiritual functions.

On the lower level of the land, the Ilês Orixás of the Terreiro were built. These are architectural structures formed by houses, built apart from the main architecture of the Terreiro, the shed, and normally distributed in areas of sacred forest, designated by the Orixás and / or by the father / mother of the house. They have the function of a temple. In this place, sacrifices are made to the Orixá and their offerings are placed.

²⁶ The word Ebó (*èbó*), for the Yoruba, and Adrá (*adhá*), for the Fon people, has the meaning of “gift”, “sacrifice”, thus designating all the ways people devote themselves. The Ebó is premised on being the “principle of Axé”, because it is through it that Axé is strengthened and distributed. The meaning of “making an Ebó” has a wide range, because it is part of rituals that allow the strengthening of spiritual life, as well as part of rituals that help to ward off negative forces, which bring instability. These are elements that can be offered to Exu, Eguns and Odus and also to the Orixás and other deities, always with various mythical purposes (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 413).

²⁷ [*yabassé*] A person is trained by the priest for a long time to prepare food for the Orixás. This person will dedicate only to this within the Candomblé house. A woman who is initiated to a female deity (*lyabá*) is usually designated, then called an *Iyabassé* (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2009, p. 196).

At Ilê Axé Xapanã, the Ilês Orixás of Exu, Ogum and Oxóssi²⁸ (figure 19) were the last spaces built under the guidance of Mother Zélia. The first to be built was Exu's Ilê Orixá, where the Pombojiras (female Exus) and the traditional Exus, represented by the street entities Maria Padilha, Pomba Gira, Tranca Rua, Zé Pelintra and many others worshiped in the Terreiro. The Ilê Exu always appears at the entrances to the Candomblé Terreiros, materializing the role of Exu, of protecting the entrance to the house. It is for this reason that his house is built in front of the other Ilês Orixás and closer to the entrance to the Terreiro.



Fig. 19: Ilê Orixás.
Source: Rodrigo Costa,
2021

The ancestors of the Brazilian territory receive in this Terreiro the same level of relevance as the African gods, also obtaining their own homes, altars and settlements. The architecture of the Caboclos' house differs from that of the Orixás in its typology and proportion. The Caboclo's house (figure 20) is smaller, but also built using conventional masonry, covered in ceramic tiles. The house does not have a door and its façade has an opening protected by a curtain that contains the settlement of Capangueiro, Mother Zélia's Caboclo and also the main spiritual mentor of this Terreiro. The space allows only the placement of the main elements and the sacred offerings intended for this deity.

²⁸ [Ósóósí] Orixá of hunting (Prandi, 2001, p. 569).



Fig. 20: Caboclo Capangueiro's House. Source: Rodrigo Costa, 2021

Right after the Caboclos house, we see the house of Pretos and Pretas Velhas ['Old Black Men and Women'] (figures 21 and 22), called House of the Souls. This architecture is an iconic element within this Terreiro, as the traditional and popular technique was used, the wattle and daub, also known as hand rammed earth, *sopapo* rammed earth or hedge rammed earth. It consists of the intertwining of vertical wood fixed to the ground, with horizontal beams tied together by vines, giving rise to a large perforated panel, filled with clay removed on site. This constructive technique, applied in House of the Souls architecture, was worked by Mother Zélia as a way of remembering the old houses that hosted the black elderly who lived in slave quarters and Quilombos. The use of materiality and the specific ways of building the community are fundamental for the permanence and memory of ancestral cultural practices that bring organic matter closer to spirituality in sacralization rituals.



Fig. 21: House of Souls.
Source: Rodrigo Costa,
2021



Fig. 22: House of Souls.
Source: Rodrigo Costa,
2021

The variety of spaces and architectural concepts in this Candomblé temple demonstrates the complexity of its knowledge and construction techniques. Thus, the potentialities and multiplicities of architectural programs that will design the different Terreiro architectures are evident. These Afro-Brazilian architectures give meaning and belonging to dwellings, cassava flour and palm oil mills, among all other architectures that are built in the Quilombola territory, based on their own conceptions, identities, territories and territorialities. Thus, connected to the conniving landscape, to the geo symbolic action, they prepare, according to Corrêa (2006, p. 1, our translation), “the scenario for the Orixás to visit their children in a foreign land and strengthen them in the construction of their political, social and religious identity as Afro-Brazilian”.

5 Final Considerations

The Afro-Brazilian architecture of Ilê Axé Xapanã, as well as the architecture of the Terreiros of Santiago do Iguape, are buildings that are often disregarded in the academic and scientific universe. The persistent narratives based on western standards erase from the studies these heritage sites built in Quilombos and, frequently, do not open space for the discussion and expansion of this theme.

From the direct contact with the communities, it was possible to observe the confluences of symbols represented in the architecture belonging to different Candomblé nations that exist there. There is a mutual exchange between the Bantu-Nagô-Vodum nations, where different cosmovisions and practices are mobilized in specific rituals, marking the ethnic and cultural plurality of customs, musicalities, languages, symbologies, etc. By merging in their cults in the territory, they exchange ties and bonds, reconstructing unique and singular characteristics of Afro-Brazilian architecture and the religiosity of African matrix of each Terreiro built in this Quilombola community.

Recognizing Afro-Brazilian architectures, understanding them as counter-hegemonic architectures, in a territory constituted by Candomblé Terreiros as in the community of Santiago do Iguape, means showing the resistance of African ancestry. This resistance is reaffirmed daily by the people of saint in their various religious manifestations in Quilombola territory.

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