

Atinsás: The sacred trees and architectures of the terreiros of candomblé de Cachoeira and São Félix

Átinsás: As árvores sagradas e as arquiteturas dos terreiros de candomblé de Cachoeira e São Félix

Fábio Macêdo Velame*

*Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil, velame.fabio@gmail.com

usjt

arq.urb

número 32 | set - dez de 2021

Recebido: 10/08/2021

Aceito: 27/10/2021

DOI: [10.37916/arq.urb.vi32.546](https://doi.org/10.37916/arq.urb.vi32.546)



Keywords:

Architecture,
Nature,
Candomblé,
Afro-Brazilian patrimony.

Palavras-chave:

Arquitetura,
Natureza,
Candomblé,
Patrimônio Afro-brasileiro.

Abstract

The present work approaches the relationship between nature and architecture in the context of Candomblé houses in the Recôncavo Baiano, between the cities of Cachoeira and São Félix. In these places there is no dichotomy between the natural x artificial, but an intertwining in the sacred. The sacred trees become architectures, nature that composes and creates a particular African-Brazilian architecture, and the architecture becomes sacralized nature, part of the ritual woods. Being the trees always opening and closing the festivities. The houses of Cachoeira and São Félix have in the sacred trees that are born in and stick the roofs of sheds, Ilê Orixá and Casa de Caboclos a symbolic spatial aspect that differentiate them, which gives them particularity, peculiarity, singularity, which are peculiar to them. The sacred trees found, generate, organize, and governing architectures of Candomblé houses of Cachoeira and São Félix.

Resumo

O presente trabalho trata da relação entre natureza e arquitetura no âmbito dos terreiros de Candomblé no Recôncavo Baiano, entre as cidades de Cachoeira e São Félix. Nesses lugares não há dicotomia entre o natural x artificial, mas uma imbricação no sagrado. As árvores sagradas tornam-se arquiteturas, natureza que compõe e cria uma arquitetura afro-brasileira particular, e a arquitetura torna-se natureza sacralizada, fazendo parte da mata ritual. Estando as árvores ali, sempre a abrir e fechar as festas. Os terreiros de Cachoeira e São Félix têm nas árvores sagradas que nascem dentro e furam os telhados dos barracões, Ilê Orixá e Casa de Caboclos um aspecto espacial simbólico que os diferenciam, que lhes atribui particularidade, peculiaridade, singularidade, que lhes é próprio. As árvores sagradas fundam, geram, organizam, e regem as arquiteturas dos terreiros de Candomblé de Cachoeira e São Félix.

Introduction

In strolling among the African matrix temples in Reconcavo Baiano, especially the Candomblé houses of the Nagô-Vodum¹ nation, something in their architecture catches our attention: the sacred trees grow inside the buildings and interrupt their roofs. The sacred trees in the region's Candomblé houses, besides being settlements for Orixás, Vodum, Inquices, Caboclos, and local entities, such as Slaves², have a fundamental role that distinguishes them, they are generating, organizing, and structuring elements in their temples' architecture. In Candomblé, nature is sacralized, it is not only something natural, or a pictorial landscape. But rather a construction and habitat of the gods, an "enchanted" nature, where the sacred, through the flow of axé fed by the rituals is present in certain places: stones, springs, creeks, bush, and trees. Nature becomes a hierophany, with various manifestations and eruptions of the sacred in the world.

This moving architecture made by mortals guided by the dynamic axé system becomes itself integral part of such divinized nature. Therefore, there is not a manmade architecture as a pictorial landscape or an artifice, artificial, created by man as

something in opposition to nature, a dominance of man over nature. On the contrary, the house architecture becomes a continuity, an extension of sacralized nature, a continuity of the gods and ancestors' dwellings, integrating and potentializing the dynamic axé system.

In the houses of Salvador and Metropolitan Region, the deities, entities, and ancestors may be settled both in the *pepelês* in Orixás and Caboclos' rooms and their respective Ilê Orixá and Caboclo Houses or may even be settled on stones or sacred trees in the sacred bush and in semi-public places in the houses. Juana Elbein dos Santos characterizes the Orixá settlements, highlighting their presence in sacred trees, where the deity's axé is set, when planted, and at whose base offerings are deposited, or yet, in temples, the Ilê Orixás. Thus, the existing settlements are addressed in two situations: in temples (buildings); and in sacred trees in the bush³. Roger Bastide also presents observations in Salvador and Metropolitan Region on the Orixá settlements in *pepelês* in the saints' rooms and, especially, on their quintessential temples, the Ilê Orixás, as well as the Orixá settlements set in sacred trees⁴.

¹The Nagô of Cachoeira and São Félix is not homogeneous, on the contrary, there are internal differences that are subdivided into: Nagô-Mulssurumi; Nagô-Tedô; Nagô-Ixejá; Nagô-Vodum. Nagô-Vodum differs from other Candomblé nations, especially Ketu, through an intense process of double cultural combination between Jêjes (daomeanos) and Iorubás (nagôs), accompanied by the effective presence of the catholic cult, and the Amerindian, with reverence to the Caboclos. Vilson Caetano de Sousa Junior in *Nagô: A nação de ancestrais itinerantes*, in weaving the web of familial relationships of the people-of-the-saints of Cachoeira and São Félix, and tracing the constitution of their Candomblé houses, characterizes the Nagô-Vodum nation: "For the houses that define themselves as nagô, the Ketu model, prior to representing them, is something that distinguishes them in various ritual aspects, manifested in the treatment given to some Orixás, the administration of certain leaves, some songs, foods, and the observation of ritual taboos. Differently from the city of Salvador, the nagô expression holds profound relationships with the jeje ancestors, hence the preference for the word nagô-vodunsi." (CAETANO, 2005, p.25). Nicolau Parés in *A Formação do Candomblé: História e Ritual da nação Jeje na Bahia*, addresses the formation of the Jeje- Mahi Candomblé in Cachoeira and Salvador, demonstrates the influence and importance of daomeanos (Jêje), and of Creole and freemen in the institutionalization of Candomblé in Reconcavo, observing the emergence of the Nagô- Vodum nation: "Apart from addressing various nagô 'subnations', such as nagô-agavi, nagô-tedô, nagô-congú, or nagô-ixejá, it is worth noting that the Reconcavo nagô rite, which is characterized by specific songs and by the use of small hand-played atabaques, differs from the nagô-ketu tradition known in Salvador. The nagô rite of Cachoeira, beside its iorubá-origin specificity, was influenced by the jeje tradition, being common in some of the houses the worship of vodum *Bessen*, but it would be correct to speak of a mutual interpenetration of ritual elements, which in late nineteenth century gave way to the tradition the people-of-the-saints call 'nagô-vodum' or 'nagô-vodunsi'" (PARÉS, 2007, p. 197).

²In Cachoeira and São Félix, many settlements of Exu on stones and, especially, sacred trees are reframed in the image of Slaves.

³In the temples: the "house" concentrates, in a limited geographic space, the main locations and the regions where they originated and where the traditional African religion worships are practiced. The *òrisà* whose worship are disseminated in the various regions of *Yorubá* Africa, worshiped in separated and often very distant villages and towns, are contained within the "house" of the various temple-dwellings, the *ilé-òrisà*. [...] Each dwelling – *ilé-òrisà* – contains the "settlement" consecrated to the *òrisà* – *idí-òrisà* – who is the object of common adoration, called *àjòbo*. To each supernatural entity correspond specific "settlements" and the elements of which they are composed express the various aspects of the *òrisà* whose nature they symbolize (SANTOS, 1986, p.35). And, in the sacred trees: *Ògún* is deeply linked to the mystery of trees and consequently to *Orisálá*. His "settlement" is "planted" at the base of an *igí-òpe*, whose trunks symbolize the individualized matter of the *òrisà-funfun*, particularly *Osàlá* (SANTOS, 1986, p. 92).

⁴Ilê-orixá is, first and foremost, a temple, and, as such, holds all object in which deities were fixed: stones, pieces of iron, drums, etc. [...] As previously indicated, in the temple the open field orixás differ from the others. The former, Omolu, Ogum, Oxóssi, have their sanctuaries separate from the building itself; but, whether the orixá's room is the interior or exterior of the house, or is given a special name or not (throne room of Xangô, tank room of Iemanjá...), they are all pejis; there can be found, in platters or plates, "made" stones, with the food offerings, all covered by embroidered towels, the deities' emblems, and sometimes African sculptures or images of catholic saints. [...] There may also be often seen, in the tangled thicket, one or two trees whose branches hold pieces of white cloth called ojas, and on whose base bottles, plates, all kinds of vessels are placed. One of these trees (ficus doliararia, religiosa) is identified with Iroco, the Africans' sacred tree, and is prepared exactly in the same way a stone or daughter-of-the-saints is prepared, i.e., by fixing the deity on the inside;

It is possible to notice, both in Bastide and in Juana Santos, who focused their studies on the great Candomblé houses in Salvador, that the deity's axé is fixed on sacred trees (where the bush Orixás are usually settled), and that all sacrifice of votive animals and sacred food and beverage offerings take place at their base, close to the ground. Thus, the sacred trees are autonomous, open settlements, usually linked to a bush Orixá, with no need for any auxiliary sacred built element, because such trees were planted with the deity's axé.

The tree is the deity themselves. In opposition, as pointed out by Bastide and Juana Santos, to the Orixás' temples or rooms (saints' rooms), usually linked to the urban Orixás, whose interiors hold sacred altars, *pepelê*, where the deities' settlements with their respective symbolic elements are placed. In Cachoeira and São Félix, the deities do not dwell in one or the other but may be simultaneously in both. The *pepelês*⁵ with the deity settlements relate to the sacred trees, erecting the peculiar gods' dwelling, creating a unique relationship, an inextricable relationship, where the *pepelê* and the tree are one single thing.

The sacred trees may emerge both from a circular *pepelê* that embraces and wraps around sacred trees as well as in front of *pepelês* inside Ilê Orixás and Caboclo Houses. Both situations are in fact manifestations of one peculiar relationship between deity settlements in *pepelês* and deity settlements in sacred trees, which may be joint, concomitant, interrelated. Such relationship is unveiled and potentialized by a unique aspect: sacred trees and their *pepelês* grow within the huts, Ilê Orixá, Caboclo House, deity or caboclo rooms, which traverse, burst, pierce the rooves of those spaces. Those are places⁶ of permanence in the temples, which gather the values of worship, kinship, and ancestry⁷. Places, sacred trees, where African Brazilian worships took place, around which the house communities were

organized, where the Candomblé houses emerged, becoming their generating elements.

To comprehend how sacred trees generate, structure, and organize the architecture of Cachoeira and São Félix's Candomblé houses, we shall address the temples: Capivari (Pé da Cajá), Ilê Axé Itaylê, Raiz de Airá, Ilê Axé Ogunjá, Viva Deus.

CAPIVARI – PÉ DA CAJÁ

The Capivari House, also known as Pé de Cajá House, was founded in the second half of the 19th century, in 1860, by Anacleto Urbano da Natividade Tosta, who was a slave at the Natividade do Capivari Mill, owned by the Tosta family. The Mill was named by Joana Maria da Natividade Tosta, daughter of Manoel Pereira Tosta and Joana Maria da Natividade.

The Capivari House is the first of the Nagô-Vodum nation, located in the municipality of São Félix on the left side of the road connecting it to the municipality of Maragojipe, 6,5 km away from the center of São Félix, and was built along the banks of Capivari river, hence its name, Capivari House. Its origin is linked to the *morbus* cholera epidemic that fell on Reconcavo Baiano at the time and which killed thousands of people, tenths of slaves on the region's mills, including the Tosta family mills.

Capivari stands out in São Félix's rural landscape due to the presence of a leafy sacred tree that pierces the roof of its festivity hut. In entering the hut, we encounter a centennial mombin tree, the Obaluaiê settlement (Figure 1), dating to Anacleto's time, from which the house arises, and around which worship is organized. There is also a five-point star on the ground; and, on the right side, a niche, and a catholic oratory, which resignifies and updates the "house of worship," dedicated to Saint Roch, that existed on the house at the time of its foundation. The sacred Obaluaiê

henceforth, it becomes an object of worship, it may no longer be touched by anyone, and, if the branches were cut, they would bleed (BASTIDE, 2011, p. 80).

⁵ Small bench made close to the ground, usually built of earth (adobe), ceramic block, brick, where the settlements of Orixás, Vodum and Inquices are placed.

⁶ Christian Noberg-Schultz (1979), Norwegian architect, in his paper *The phenomenon of place* from his work *Genius Loci: Landscape, environment, architecture* draws in a more profound manner a phenomenological-existential approach on place in Architecture. Daily life and experience take place in spaces turning them into places and distinguishing them qualitatively and expressively. Noberg-Schultz addresses the notion of *genius loci* in the studies of place in architecture, which correspond to the ancient Roman notion that some places are inhabited by spirits that enable europhanies (the manifestation of the sacred in the world). *Genius loci*, "spirit of place," as a unique presence, edifies

the place. Etymologically, place comes from the Latin *lacālis*, from *locus*, meaning occupied space, located, post, position. Therefore, place is the occupied, i.e., inhabited space. Norberg-Schultz defines architecture as follows: "[...] architecture may be defined as the production of places" (NORBERG-SCHULTZ, 1983, p.64). The author defines place as: "Place is the concrete manifestation of men's dwelling. [...] A location or "lived-in space" is usually called place" (NORBERG-SCHULTZ, 1983, p. 64).

⁷ See the concept of value of worship in BENJAMIN, Walter. *A obra de arte na era de sua reprodutibilidade técnica*. São Paulo; Brasiliense, 1996, the concept of value of kinship in LÉVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *As Estruturas Elementares do Parentesco*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1982, and the value of ancestry in BRAGA, Júlio Santana. *Ancestralidade Afro-Brasileira: O culto de Babá Egum de Ponta de Areia*. Salvador: Ed. EDUFBA, 1995.

tree and Saint Roch oratory are the continuances of the African Brazilian and catholic worships present since the temple's origin.



Figure 1. Obaluaiê settlement in the mombin tree piercing the roof of Capivari House, São Félix, Bahia, 2009. Source: Fábio Velame.

The hut was built embracing and wrapping around the sacred tree, which has a robust trunk and a large treetop over the roof, becoming itself the “sacred roof of the house,” a roof made of sacred leaves, which renews itself and is continuously

transformed. The sacred Obaluaiê tree is the generating element of that architecture. From it, Capivari house, commonly known by the region's people-of-the-saints as Mombin House in clear allusion to the Obaluaiê mombin tree, arose.

In the hut's space, on the ground, around the sacred Obaluaiê tree and placed on each of the hut's corners, there are three five-point stars, Solomon Star, which is the symbolic element pertaining and present in all Nagô-Vodum nation houses in Cachoeira and São Félix.

The stars mark the African Brazilian presence in the space because each one corresponds to an important deity of the house, a Iemanjá, Obaluaiê, and Ogum, forming an African Brazilian quadrature with the sacred mombin tree in the hut's space. The gods' festivities, the Xirê, at the time of Mother China, took place around the stars and the sacred tree, they imprinted the rhythm and the paths. Unfortunately, nowadays, without the festivities, without the Orixás' Xirê, the architecture is incomplete, it becomes void, lifeless, it stands as space waiting for the festivity.

At the base of the sacred tree, there is a circular pepelê (altar), with various symbolic African Brazilian elements: otás (deity settlement sacred stones), in pots and plates; Exu vase; pottery jars; a latinized image of Iemanjá with a small hole in the pepelê embedded with whelks and seashells, containing symbolic Iemanjá elements, such as water, seashells, snails, small fish, oysters, sea stones, and jewels. In the back of the pepelê, there is also an image of Caboclo Boiadeiro, the African Brazilian cattle drover, immerse in the Candomblé belief and practice system.

The house does not hold public festivities with Orixá Xirê due to its family-of-the-saints being too reduced to the relatives of Father Nino. Currently, only the obligations to the Orixás are held. With Father Nino recently at the head of the house, one of the temple's main obligations was resumed in 2010, the obligation of Obaluaiê, held on the first week of August.

In the morning, the cleaning of the hut's sacred tree's pepelê takes place, from where the Obaluaiê mombin tree springs, and where later the peji (small room) Obaluaiê settlement will be placed, all covered in his straw and colorful ojá. Still in the morning, the Obaluaiê settlement animal sacrifices are held, in his peji, the room that opens to the hut's space. And in the late afternoon, his sacred foods are lowered, permeated by the sacred songs to the deity.

ILÊ AXÉ ITAYLÊ

Nagô-Vodum nation's Ilê Axé Itaylê was founded by Mother Filhinha, with the aid of her father-of-the-saints from Lama House, in 1935. Its regent Orixá is Iemanjá Ogunté, and Ogum is the patron Orixá. Such presence is featured in the temple buildings, as well as its flags, in blue and with, an homage to Iemanjá and Ogum. It is located on Rua da Delegacia, Cachoeira. The house was bought by Mother Filhinha in 1928. After seven years of charity work in the house, she obtained permission from Iemanjá Ogunté to begin working on Candomblé, found her house, and do spiritual works and services.

The Ilê Axé Itaylê presents an unexpected situation: two leafy trees pierce and breach the roof, giving the impression the roof is supported by them, the trees of life under Iemanjá Ogunté's zeal, who welcomes and comforts all her children, in life's evils and misfortunes, in her hut-hand. The sacred trees existed before the construction of the hut. They existed even before the founding of the house, when the place was sacralized as temple, the opening of Orum in Aiê.

The first tree is the settlement of Caboclo Jaiça Taquara, commonly known as Tuma Juçara, and the second one is the settlement of Orixá Obaluaiê. These sacred trees stand out from the other worship trees in the temple, making them the most important ones, because worship was organized around them, they were the place where members of the Ilê Axé Itaylê people-of-the-saints realized annual obligations to Obaluaiê and the Caboclos, it was around them that the *egbé*, the Ilê Axé Itaylê house community, was structured, under Mother Filhinha's leadership. These sacred trees were elements for the choice of the place for the construction of the temple, the building of the house, and generating of Ilê Axé Itaylê's architecture (Figures 2 and 3).

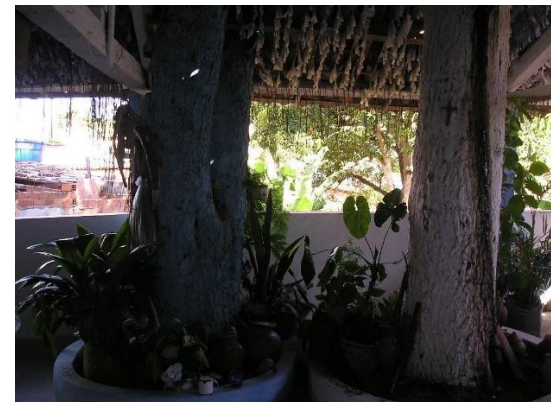


Figure 2. Sacred trees, settlements of Cabloco Taquara and Obaluaiê, embraced by the hut., 2009. Source: Fábio Velame.



Figure 3. Sacred tree, settlements of Obaluaiê, embraced by the hut., 2009. Source: Fábio Velame.

The Obaluaiê and Caboclo Taquara sacred trees, with the fulfillment of their respective annual obligations, found the place from where the house community is territorialized, with the later edification of the temple, which takes place from the planting of the house's axé. Symbolic sacred elements give origin to the house, the *egbé* (house community), the temple, and its architecture. In front of these two trees, after the founding of the house, the palm straw hut was set up, during the Orixás festivities in January, and Caboclos festivities in July. Temporary, ephemeral, transitory hut. In the end of the 1960s, the baked-brick, handmade-ceramic-tile hut was erected.

However, when building it, the house community opted not to do it in the backyard, where the temple's sacred bush is, up to the present; nor on the other side of Mother Filhinha's house, area donated by her to the temple's children-of-the-saints to build their homes, and that nowadays constitutes a row of houses, a village, facing the street; nor in the house area where there is currently a guest house for the children-of-the-saints, facing the main street, beside Mother Filhinha's house.

All of them constitute ample, spacious areas, propitious for the building of a hut capable of accommodating the festivities and its children. Nevertheless, in spite of existing more generous areas for the hut construction, Mother Filhinha and the Ilê Axé Itaylê *egbé* opted for building it on the same place where the straw hut used to be set up, at the base of the sacred trees, at the feet of Obaluaiê and Caboclo Taquara, the place of the quadrature, the meeting place for gods and mortals, Orum and Aiê, the house's origin place, and current place of festivities. Thus, the hut is the "same one," it remains as a place, while symbolic space. The festivity, Xirê, strengthens and feeds the symbolism of the place, when and where the axé dynamic system reaches its apex.

In dancing around Itoto⁸, the temple composed of two stars: Solomon five-point star, symbolizing regent Iemanjá, and David six-point star, symbolizing the presence of patron Ogum, at the Ilê Axé Itaylê; in the rhythm of Quebrado, to the sound of Nagô-Vodum, manifested in the bodies of entranced children-of-the-saints, the gods erect

an architecture, a unique, specific, peculiar place, where trees rise from within the construction and pierce its roofs.

When built, the hut embraced the sacred trees, as if it were a great ojú. The hut's embrace strictly invites the gods to take shelter there, to be welcomed there, constituting the architecture, being the architecture itself. The place remains, transforming, from the straw hut to the brick-and-tile one, but being the "same" hut, because there is where the gods' apparition takes place, there they dance around the stars at the base of Obaluaiê and Caboclo Taquara's sacred trees. Unique, singular place which remains in the transformation because the Ilê Axé Itaylê house's community bestows worship, ancestry, and kinship values upon it.

Ilê Axé Itaylê's Itoto, with its set of stars, symbolically creates, during the Xirê temporality, the *axi mundi*, the *opô-orum aiê*, the connecting axis between Orum and Aiê. During the Xirê, dancing the Quebrado⁹, mortals salute the gods and caboclos, initially hitting their heads on the ground in front of the sacred trees, in reverence and respect; then, before entering the circle, they walk up to the Itoto, to both stars, and hit their heads, reverencing the house's deities. Thus, the relationship between Itoto (stars), sacred trees, gods, and mortals united by the festivities is established.

The festivity, Xirê, in establishing the connection and relationship between the quadrature elements, strengthens the place, creating an originating relationship. These relationships build and conserve the place's singularity, the inextricable relationship formed by temporal elements: Xirê, the Quebrado dance, the Nagô beat; and spatial ones: the Itoto – Iemanjá (Solomon) and Ogum (David) stars –, and the sacred Obaluaiê and Caboclo Taquara trees enable the unique parturition of a distant thing, the gods.

Itoto, with its stars in relation to the sacred trees, in the temporality of Nagô-Vodum festivities, in its Quebrado, constitutes something unique, irreproducible, conceived as the here and the now of the sacred-sphere ritual. Its singular existence in the place where it is found constitutes itself in the sense of everything that was transmit-

⁸Itoto is a painted star, molded or made of marble on the hut's floor, it is the place where the house's axé is planted, quintessentially sacred place, which cannot be touched by hands, gone over, and much less stepped upon outside of the ritual.

⁹Specific Nagô-Vodum dance, strongly influenced by Jejê, a smooth, slow, staggering dance, with ascents and descents.

ted through tradition. The dynamic axé system remains, in this place, composed of these relationships.

RAIZ DE AIRÁ

The Raiz de Airá house was founded in 1917 by Maria Clara de Jesus, also known as Sinhá Clara, in a locality called Charqueada, next to the Catuaba bush in São Félix, in the outskirts of what is nowadays the Pedra do Carvalho dam. The house was transferred in 1932 to a nearby location, on kilometer 310, which was later flooded by the dam's water. The land was bought by João Três Estórias, then religious leader, from a farmer called Arthur Rena for fifteen thousand réis (CAETANO, 2005, p. 106).

The temple was initially made of hand plaster, topped with straw, and relied on many community buildings. The current religious leader is lalorixá Mariá Ferreira dos Santos, who resides in Salvador. The house belongs to the Nagô-Vodum nation. Its ridge owner is Ogum, and the temple's patron is Xangô Airá. In the 1970s, with the construction of the Pedra do Cavalo dam by the Bahia State Government with the goal of supplying water to Salvador and Metropolitan Region, the area where the Raiz de Airá was located was flooded by the dam, therefore they were expelled from the place.

After the expulsion, João Três Estórias, with the aid of Irineu, transferred the house to Salvador, and operated a reterritorialization of the temple. The Raiz de Airá was settled on number 23, Rua Pedro Velloso Gordinho, in Matatu de Brotas. A few years later, João Três Estórias separated from his wife, Dona Raimunda José de Santana Santos, daughter of Oiá, who kept the house and the Matatu de Brotas temple. After the separation, João Três Estórias moved to Duque de Caxias, in Rio de Janeiro state, in a locality called Capim Melado, on the way to Nova Iguaçu. João Três Estórias opened a Nagô-Vodum house in that location and stayed there until his death.

After the death of his former wife, Dona Raimunda José de Santana Santos, in 1973, some Orixá settlements were taken from Raiz de Airá, then in Matatu de Brotas, Salvador, to João Três Estórias's house in Rio de Janeiro. Such settlements remained in Rio de Janeiro until 1975, when João Três Estórias stepped down from the post of lalaxé to Mariá, as well as the responsibility of protecting the Orixás in his

house in Rio de Janeiro and in the Raiz de Airá, in Salvador. João Três Estórias passed away ten months later.



Figure 4. Raiz de Airá's sacred tree, settlements of Obaluaiê, piercing the hut., 2009. Source: Fábio Velame.

With the death of João Três Estórias, Mariá and her brother, Pejigan Irineu, took all the Orixá settlements back to Reconcavo Baiano, both from João Três Estórias's house in Rio de Janeiro and Raiz de Airá in Salvador. The Raiz de Airá, under the tutelage of Mother Mariá, operated a double deterritorialization: from Rio de Janeiro and Salvador to São Félix. Collecting and deconstructing the existing network, the temple once again reterritorializes itself in Reconcavo Baiano, returning to its cradle. The land was chosen due to its location across Paraguaçu river, dwelling of Oxum, the hut has a staircase connecting to the river, using during the obligations to the deity. The land used to harbor various trees on the riverbank where large animals were tied for the obligations, notably, to Orixá Oxossi.

However, one tree stood out among the others, a leafy mombin tree, dwelling of Obaluaiê. And around this tree, the Raiz de Airá hut was erected. The Raiz de Airá hut was built on the place where the obligations to Obaluaiê took place. Around the leafy Obaluaiê mombin tree, construction of the house began (Figure 4). The sacred mombin tree, dwelling of the lord of illnesses and healing, lays on the banks of Paraguaçu river and became the generating, organizing, and structuring element of the temple's architecture.

The tree remained throughout the changes that occurred to the hut. The initial hut, built by Ogã Irineu, who employed his expert builder skills, was erected with a low ceiling, with channeled fibrocement roofing tiles, ceramic bricks, and a line of reinforced-concrete pillars in the middle of the hut's hall. However, in 2010, Mother Mariá promoted a remodeling of the hut; the ceiling height was tripled, the roof was replaced by metal roofing supported by light metal trellises, rendering unnecessary the concrete pillars in the middle of the hall, and new windows were placed, better illuminating the entire space.

But Obaluaiê's mombin tree, his sacred tree in the temple, remained imposing, symbolically structuring the space, with its leafy treetop covering the "new" hut's roof. Currently, it rises from a pepelê made of wood trunks, filled with earth, with a wooden Xangô Airá sculpture in front of it. In the Raiz de Airá, there were also found, until the last remodel undertaken by Mother Mariá, sacred trees rising from the Ilê de Exu and Casa dos Caboclos, piercing with their trunks those temples' roofs.

ILÊ AXÉ OGUNJÁ

Ilê Axé Ogunjá was founded in Cachoeira in 1975, by Father Carlos dos Santos da Silva, initiated by Dona Beatriz Conceição, commonly known as Mother Bia of the Ogum Cariri house, and adopted and raised by Dona Perina. The house's regent, the ridge owner, is Orixá Xangô Airá. The temple was founded under Nagô-Vodum tradition, albeit currently belonging to the Ketu nation. The temple's rituals and festivities, after the inauguration of Father Delson, began to be realized in Ketu tradition, gradually abandoning Nagô-Vodum tradition. The Ilê Axé Ogunjá initially operated, in the 1970s, in Father Antônio's house in Cachoeira, a hand plaster building, close to Paraguaçu river.

However, with the river's flood of 1989 in Cachoeira, the house was completely destroyed. Thus, the house was transferred and rebuilt, still in Cachoeira, on a slope close to the original location. Nevertheless, due to it being too steep, of exceedingly difficult access for the house's elders, the Ilê Axé Ogunjá temple was yet again moved, in the beginning of the 1990s, to São Félix, where it stands until today.

Thereafter, houses of gods and ancestors, Iroco (*ficus gomelleira*), and Caboclos (mombin tree) were built, with their respective pepelês, and who were already settled on sacred trees. Such houses, Orixá and Caboclos temples, embraced the trees, as an ojá, and the trees then pierced the temples' roofs (Figure 5), as it happened in the Nagô-Vodum houses of Cachoeira and São Félix. Also, between the sacred tree where lies Iroco's settlement and the Caboclo's sacred tree, the Obaluaiê Ilê Orixá was erected.

Those are necessary measures for the dynamic axé system, as they provide privacy to the ritual, since unprepared, "curious" eyes are veiled from watching the ritual activities, and especially strengthen the house's axé in establishing a connection between the deity's settlement on the Ilê Orixá pepelê and the sacred tree settlement.

Átinsás: As árvores sagradas e as arquiteturas dos terreiros de candomblé de Cachoeira e São Félix



Figure 5. Ilê Axé Ogunjá sacred tree, settlement of Caboclo, 2010. Source: Fábio Velame.

trees in front of pepelês, constituting an original relationship. They compose the stone path that leads from the temple entrance to the hut. On the left side, there are the settlements of Exu de Ogum, and Coladina. On the right side, there are the settlements of Exu Bomboxira, Dancor, Tempo, Ossaim (Figure 6).

They all have their pepelês with sacred trees at the front. Apart from having all the symbolic elements of Ilê Orixá interior altars, basically composed of a pepelê (white, made of earth or brick), where the deity settlements are laid with its vases, sacred tools, otá Orixá (sacred stone), troughs, jars, bowls, ojubó (whole made in the ground to receive the sacrifice of votive animals), all the pepelês also have a covering structure protecting them from the elements. Notably, the settlements of Ossaim, Dancor, and Tempo, whose structures, composed of two slim pillars supporting a small slab, are crowned by a small pediment and a pair of horses' heads.



Figure 6. Settlements of Ossaim, Tempo, and Dancor, at the Viva Deus. Cachoeira, Bahia, 2009. Source: Fábio Velame.

ERÁN OPE OLUWA – VIVA DEUS

The *Erán Ope Oluwa* house, known by the people-of-the-saints of Cachoeira as Viva Deus House, is located on Terra Vermelha's high ground, a locality in rural Cachoeira, close to the urban center. It belongs to the Nagô-Ixejá nation and was founded by legendary Zé do Vapor. The temple was inaugurated on July 23rd, 1911, consecrated to Orixá Ogum. At Viva Deus, the same inextricable relationship between deity settlements on pepelês and deity settlements on sacred trees takes place.

However, at Viva Deus, the trees do not pierce the roofs, whether in a hut, Ilê Orixá, or Casa de Caboclo, nevertheless the relationship between pepelê and sacred tree remains the same. At Viva Deus, there are countless deity settlements in sacred

Still at Viva Deus, even when the sacred trees do not spring inside the Ilê Orixá, they establish an interaction relationship, building an origin connection with the deity's Ilê Orixá. As in the relationship established between Oxóssi's sacred tree and his settlement, found right behind Oxóssi's Ilê Orixá. Oxóssi's Ilê Orixá was built in front of his sacred tree (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Sacred tree with the settlement of Oxóssi, behind Oxóssi's Ilê Orixá, composing a unit, Viva Deus, Cachoeira, 2011. Source: Fábio Velame.

CONCLUSION

The sacred trees that are dwellings of Orixá, Vodum, Inquices, and Caboclos, in Cachoeira and São Félix, constitute places where annual obligations and rituals took place, and around which African Brazilian worship were organized in Reconcavo Baiano, originating the *egbés*, the houses, and their architecture, creating a singular relationship between the Itoto stars and such sacred trees, that spring from the ground and pierce the huts' roofs in the region's Nagô-Vodum houses: Capivari (Pé-da-Cajá), Ilê Axé Itaylê, Raiz de Airá.

But, in Cachoeira and São Félix, the sacred trees (Orixá and Caboclo settlements), also pierce the Ilê Orixá's (Orixá temples) roofs, as well as the roofs of Casas de Caboclos, as observed in the huts: Lobanekum, Raiz de Airá, Ilê Axé Ogunjá, Rosarinho. Moreover, the sacred trees condition the Ilê Orixá location in the house: Viva Deus. As expounded, this does not occur due to a lack of physical space, but rather because they were sacred places where the rituals took place in the open spaces of those towns, prior to the existence of the houses, and from which the temples were organized. The sacred trees become the generating elements of the region's house architecture.

The Xirê (festivity), at the base of the sacred trees, in erecting a place, creates a specific relationship distinguishing the Nagô-Vodum nation's houses. There lies the meeting place of Orum and Aiê, of the stars in the sky with the stars on the hut's ground, the stars of the gods and the stars of men, where architecture and nature do not constitute two opposing, polar, binary attributes. In that place, there is no dichotomy between natural and artifice, nature and man, but an interweaving into the sacred. The sacred tree becomes architecture, nature that composes and creates a singular African Brazilian architecture, and architecture becomes sacralized nature, as part of the ritual bush.

The sacred and the profane combine, intermingle, becoming one single thing. The trees, standing there, always opening and closing the Xirê festivities, at the Quebrado ball, around the stars. The houses of Cachoeira and São Félix, especially those of the Nagô-Vodum nation, have, in the sacred trees that pierce the huts, Ilê Orixá, and Casa de Caboclo's roofs, a symbolic spatial aspect that differentiates them, bestows upon them unique particularity, peculiarity, singularity. The sacred trees generate, organize and structure the architecture of Candomblé houses in Cachoeira and São Félix.

References

- BENJAMIN, W. *A obra de arte na era de sua reprodutibilidade técnica*. São Paulo; Brasiliense, 1996.
- BRAGA, Julio. *Ancestralidade Afro-Brasileira: O culto de Babá Egum*. Salvador: Ed. EDUFBA, 1995.

LEVI-STRAUSS, Claude. *As Estruturas Elementares do Parentesco*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 2003.

PARÉS, Luis Nicolau. *A Formação do Candomblé – História e ritual da nação jeje na Bahia*. Campinas, SP: Editora da Unicamp, 2007.

SANTOS, Juana E. *Os nagôs e a morte: pade, asese e o culto de egum na Bahia*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Vozes, 1998.

SANTOS, Edmar Ferreira. *O poder dos Candomblés – Perseguição e Resistência no Recôncavo da Bahia*. Salvador: EDUFBA, 2009.

VERGER, Pierre. *Os Orixás*. Salvador: Ed. Corrupio, 2002.