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Spirit Possession in Candomblé
Bachelor thesis

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I sincerely confess I wrote this Bachelor thesis on my own with usage of listed sources and literature.

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1. Prologue

My bachelor thesis attempts to give a coherent description of spirit possession phenomena in the frame of Candomblé religion. With the successive familiarization of Candomblé origin, development and spread, as a part of Afro-American religions I mainly focus on Candomblé itself, its social structure, ritual practises containing the spirit possession phenomena, role and social status that the mediums have. I try to describe the spirit possession concept in various scholar approaches and its role in the society of Candomblé members, its community.

It is not the aim of this work to discover new facts, not even to set up a new theory for the research of Candomblé or spirit possession. Due to the fact that my thesis is based on read materials, it is rather preferred and desirable to make a clear and meaningful view of the spirit possession phenomenon in Candomblé, to find the place that this phenomenon occupies in its environment and within approaches of different scholars, and to try to analyze possible shortcomings or on the contrary, novel or interesting points of some theories.

2. Introducing Afro-Brazilian Religions¹

This introductory chapter deals with the category of Afro-Brazilian religions, gives a short overview of their genealogy and a New World’s history. It shall give a ground to the whole topic and enable us to link the next chapters to the more specific phenomena without losing the ties to its background.

2.1. Historically-political overview of slavery

In the 15th century while the Portuguese ships were searching for the Indian subcontinent to land on, they reached different parts of Africa. In the same century they started the slavetrade from west Africa, especially from what has since been called the Slave coast, but they also carried out trade with black people from other locations such as Ghana, Mali, Dahome, Benin, ...
South Africa, etc. These were the areas which provided the highest number of slaves who were mostly very skilled agriculturists and as such were the most suitable workforce for the Portuguese plantations in America. In the 16th century there were contracts for human trade between Portuguese traders and African kings. In the beginning some of the black kings were selling their own slaves but then they started to sell nonenslaved people and they were completing caravans of people called „coffe“. The way across the ocean was called the „Middle passage“ and many people died there. Such a situation caused a crumbling of African societies and in some cases even the race extermination.

During slavery in the New World there arose quite a high number of small black „states“ so called „quilombo“². In Brazil they were called „quilombo Palmares“. Thanks to the existence of these unofficial states there appeared more influential tendencies or ideas to create an independent Afro-American state already during the 17th century. Suprisingly, in Palmares there was a black monarchy with sovereign black kings for a while. Interestingly, in some places Afro-Americans were in close contact with Indian communities and sometimes they even managed to become chiefs of indian tribes which were hidden deeply within forests. These quilombos were extremely important for saving the inherited african religion and culture. In „Refuge in Thunder“ we can find that in the 19th century quilombos had a bit different character than Stingl previously described: „Quilombos were spaces where slaves, libertos, and other magnalized people took refuge, however temporary and assailed, in order to (re)-create an enviroment where they were able to rest their overworked and castignated bodies, a place to tend to their needs for physical and psychic healing“³.

Finally in the year 1888 American slavery came to an end but Brazil was not independent until 1960 which is the year when it became a part of the British Commonwealth.

² See Stingl, Miroslav, Černí bohové Ariky…., p. 46.
2.2. Afro-Brazilian religions

Within these religions there exists a concept called „African memory“⁴. We can find there a special heritage of African culture and spirituality in Brazil. Afro-American culture as a whole has actually four main links to Africa:

a. Yoruba from Nigeria (Spanish and Portuguese colonies)
b. Fanti-Ashanti from the Golden Coast (British colonies)
c. Fon from Dahome (French colonies)
d. Bantu from Congo (Portuguese)

These originally african cultures and the religious traditions they brought had went through some changes since they arrived to Brazil.

First of all, it is necessary to say, that there are more influential sources for the category of Afro-Brazilian religions. That means that each of these religious traditions draws from one or many religious sources which can easily differ from each another. According to The Encyclopedia of Religion⁵ the sources are not only:

A. African cults

but at the same time :

B. Indian cultures in Brazil
C. Roman Catholicism
D. Kardecism

But these above mentioned religious traditions can only be seen as the most influential, not as the only sources which shaped and are still modifying the spectrum of Afro-Brazilian religions (see figure 1, in appendix).

⁴ See Stingl, Miroslav, Černí bohové Ariky..., p. 94. My translation of : “Africká paměť“. According to Bastide’s theories this would be called a collective memory which has its imprint on actual and also future social, political, cultural and religious tendencies of African descendants in Brazil and anywhere else.
The most widespread and well-known of these religions are Candomblé (Bahia), Macumba (Rio de Janiero), Batuque, Pajelanca and Catimbo (center and north-easten Brazil), Umbanda, Xango (Recife), Tambor de Mina and Nago (Maranhao). Many scholars classify these Afro-Brazilian religions as spirit possession cults⁶. Due to their concentration on ritual praxis and the importance they give to the festivals, which shall always include the incorporation of spirits into human bodies, we can easily see it as an essential aspect of all these cults.

Among the scholars there usually appear four basic methods of research within the Afro-Brazilian religions⁷:

I. Searching for the authenticity
II. Describing the functional role in urban society
III. Cultural-genealogical method
IV. Explaining sociological role of religious communities

This work is not a field study ergo I tried to gather the information based on field studies of different approaches with the purpose of the comparison of social facts and possibly their critics.

I intentionally concentrate on Candomblé and the spirit possession phenomena, the role which it charges in the community of practitioners and possibly in the whole society. With the help of different descriptions of the phenomena itself I will attempt to highlight the main purposes and standards which, within the frame of Candomblé religion, this phenomenon absorbs and demands.

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⁶ This classification appears for example in almost every paper from various authors in a book *Spirit Possession*.  
3. Candomblé

„The Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian creation, a system for worshiping the Orishas, the Yoruba spiritual entities responsible for the elements and dynamics of natural and human reality, on soil distant from the African homeland, and developed within the oppressive social cultural context of slavery.“ As we find out later this definition is far from being complex but it expresses the basic content of religion with its historical background.

The word Candomblé is of a unclear origin. Encyclopedia of African and African-American religions says that „generally the term thought to be of Bantu origin and to refer to a musical instrument of African provenance…“ On the contrary Mikelle Smith Omari’s opinion is that the word Candomblé is a portuguese term which in singular means „a complex of ritual practices“ and plural expresses „concrete sects, temples or festival.“

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8 Literature used in this chapter:
9 See Walker, S. Sheila, „Everyday and Esoteric Reality in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé“…, pp. 108.
This chapter deals with the basic information of Candomblé, its history and its important situations or problems which occur and influence the shaping of the religion.

3.1. History of Candomblé

Candomblé has its roots in the previous Yorubaland. The consistency of this area in the precolonial period was based on cultural and language rather than on the political unity. There was quite a high number of politically independent centralized states. In the Yorubaland existed a so called „two-stage“ hierarchy which means that there was one main center (city of Ille-Iifa) but also other local centers. Yoruba people lead a mainly agricultural life but the cities became important centers for gathering and practising their religion. The most important among these cities is the above mentioned Ifa, which was established about one thousand years ago and is connected to the myth of first creation.

Traditional Yoruban society had only oral tradition, no literary references. They share one language which belongs to the Nigerian-Congo language group, and more precisely to the subgroup Kwa. But it is not only language that connects them- Yoruba people share also one worldview.

As there were many different ethnicities even among the Yoruba people, there also arose multiple kinds of Candomblé in Brazil, often distinguishing themselves by name of the original ethnic group. These ethnically differentiated groups are called „nations“. Nowadays the most orthodox is the ethnic group of Gege people and the most numerous is the Ketu. The city Salvador de Bahia was the capital until 1763 and is often called „Black Rome of Brazil“. It is seen as the most important center for Candomblé religion with the biggest

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12 Yoruba land is basically the area of today’s SW Nigeria with cities like Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Kwara, Ife and it also particularly includes Ghana, Togo and Benin.
13 For example Ketu, Ifa, Oyo, Ondo,…
14 This language varies markedly in dialects.
15 Ife, Egba, Ketu, Ijebu, Nago, Gege,…
16 That means the most African according to the opinion espoused throughout the paper „Yoruba Cosmology and Culture in Brazil“. See Gordon, U. Jacob, „Yoruba Cosmology and Culture in Brazil: A Study of African Survivals in the New World“…
17 See Voeks, Robert, „Sacred Leaves of Brazilian Candomble“…, p. 120.
cumulation of its practitioners while the most of them are of Candomblé Nago\(^{18}\). The problem of orthodoxy is closely connected to the point of syncretism which will be discussed later on.

In the 15th century the colonization of Africa started but the highest number of slaves from Yorubaland were transported to Brazil during the 17th and 18th century. This very often happened to be a lethal journey. Usually it finished in the city called Salvador de Bahia. Candomblé is first dated there in 1830; practised by three priestesses; who came from Yorubaland. Some of the boats also touched at more southern or more northern destinations. That is how the african people and their culture got to the New Word. The religious situation in Brazil was not easy at that time. „When Candomblé was founded in the first half of the nineteenth century, Catholicism was the only authorized religion, Protestantism was tolerated only for foreigners, and Islam was outlawed and persecuted because of the 1835 revolt…“\(^19\) The results of this event and the creation of new culture there, the process of adaptation, will be described later on.

The religion of the enslaved black people was in the beginning basically tolerated by the Portugal Catholic Church. The reason is such- in the beginning of colonizing west Africa the Christian missions immediately started. Because of these activities there was an interaction between Christianity and indigenous religions from the 16th century. Voelks therefore claims that it is possible that these missionaries could have found a way to link together the concept of Yoruban gods Orishas with the Catholic saints even before the real slave trade started. The explanation of this behaviour is that in that time and place Christian missionaries understood this syncretism as vehicle for conversion, which means they thought the next grade would be a full conversion.\(^20\)

Later in 1823 Brazil gained independence from Portugal\(^21\) and in 1836 there was a huge slave revolt in Bahia. In that year the government passed a law in which the participation in Candomblé rituals was prohibited. As there was a prosecution of black people who practised their religion\(^22\), it happened that these people started to be overt Catholic and covert Candomblé members. Lei Aurea, or Golden law, meant the final abolition of slavery in the year 1888 and almost hundert years later, in the 1970’s, there was proclaimed a Brazilian declaration of religious freedom. Since that time there are thousands of officially registered

\(^{18}\) So called Nago cults.


\(^{20}\) See Dolin, Kasey Qynn, „Yoruban Religious Survival in Brazilian Candomble“...p. 9.


\(^{22}\) But also of white people incorporated somehow.
terreiros\textsuperscript{23} and a lot of still unregistered ones. In the 1970’s Candomblé is defined as „religion of nature“ and its object as „Arte Sacra Negra“.\textsuperscript{24} The independence of terreiros and its official protection as a national heritage has lasted since 1980’s. The number of terreiros and its member increases still.

The question of the syncretic processes I touched on in this chapter is complicated and it is not a charge of this work to describe it precisely but at the same time it is impossible to neglect it completely as this exact matter plays such an important role in understanding the process of survival for this religion and the functioning of the Candomblé communities. Therefore the next chapter is dedicated to this topic.

\textbf{3.2. Candomblé and the problem of syncretism}

The role of syncretism in Candomblé is complicated but also fundamental for many scholars and their approach towards the whole phenomenon of Afro-Brazilian religion. First I give the ground to the term \textit{syncretism} and afterwards I use some of the scholar’s attitudes to describe their different understanding of these processes.

The etymology of the term and its history are described by the Encyclopedia of religion: „The term \textit{sugkretismos} first occurs in Plutarch (\textit{Moralia} 490ab). It was probably based on \textit{sugkretos} (Ionian form of \textit{sugkratos}, “mixed together”) and was explained by popular etymology or by Plutarch himself as referring to the behavior of the Cretans…“\textsuperscript{25} In this case I focus on these „mixing“ processes in Afro-Brazilian religion, namely Candomblé and some selected authors who were somewhat dealing with this topic.

Roger Bastide was an important figure in revealing Afro-Brazilian culture to western society and he undoubtedly influenced his own and also the next generations of scholars interested in this region. According to Bastide’s „principle of compartmentalization“, that is based on theory of mind processes which appear while co-existence of more cultures having

\textsuperscript{23} Houses of Candomblé.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Sansi, Roger, \textit{Fetishes and monuments}..., p. 117.
an impact on individual psyche and later on collective memory,\textsuperscript{26} we can analyse syncretism within Afro-Brazilian culture in frames of social psychology. At the same time Bastide claims there is good and bad kind of syncretism. Firstly this means that cultural syncretism leads to ’psychic syncretism’. Secondly the fact that he distinguishes between African society and Negro society, while the first one is viewed positively and the second negatively, is helpful for our purposes only within the frame of a simple description. We necessarily have to eliminate the negative aspect he sees in this process of mixing western and african culture and „mentality“, which he apparently saw as a negative aspect. This classification, within which all the Nago cults, Macumba etc., fall, is seen by Bastide as a „collaboration“ of African culture with the Western one. Until now Bastide’s anthropological work could be very useful for us\textsuperscript{27} but at the same time we have to see some points of his as accountable to the history of science. Although the theories of Bastide and Pierre Verger „….are seen as authoritative sources of the correct praxis,…“\textsuperscript{28} by many scholars and also many Candomblé participants.

In the paper \textit{Yoruban religious survival in Brazilian Candomble}\textsuperscript{29}, the writer describes the process of syncretism in Brazil generalizing it into three parts as it appeared in the first three generations of Yoruba people in the New world. The first one, he says, was hiding Orishas\textsuperscript{30} behind the Catholic saints. This part of the process is descibed by Walker: „Thus, while whites intended to extirpate the religious beliefs of the Africans by imposing the Catholic religon on them, the Africans were creating their first tactic for assuring the preservation of their own spiritual life in the world they were helping to create.“\textsuperscript{31} Voelks expresses himself on the subject with a very similar opinion: „However satisfying to the church authorities, this apparent syncretism, pagan and Roman Catholic, was superficial. The name changes were effected simply to deceive the white majority. In almost every way, the orixás survived as African gods.“\textsuperscript{32} The second generation of black slaves assigned to orixas the same characteristics and the third already saw them as one and the same identity, equal to each other, sharing the same inner essence.\textsuperscript{33} Nowadays images of Catholic saints still remain and represent orixas in some terreiros. However this three-grade layout might be true, the author

\textsuperscript{26} Cf. Capone, Stefania, „Transatlantic Dialogue: Roger Bastide and the African American Religions“…
\textsuperscript{27} As for example also Pierre Verge’s work.
\textsuperscript{28} See Sjørslev, Inger; Greenfield, Sydney M. (ed.), \textit{Reinventing Religions…}, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Dolin, Kasey Qynn, „Yoruban Religious Survival in Brazilian Candomble“…, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{30} Later i rather use the portuguese term Orixas. The term means the spiritual entities, which can incorporate into the human body during the ceremony.
\textsuperscript{31} See Walker S. Sheila, „Everyday and Esoteric Reality in the Afro-Brazilian Candomble“…, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{32} See Voeks Robert, „Sacred leaves of Brazilian Candomble“…, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{33} See Dolin, Kasey Qynn, „Yoruban Religious Survival in Brazilian Candomble“…, p. 10.
left aside other influential sources of syncretism and concentrates only on the interaction of Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions, as many other authors, which might mislead the reader’s impression of the topic and situation.

We can also find explicitly positive, scholarly opinions towards this syncretism as the phenomenon which is responsible for the survival of Afro-Brazilian religions. Inger Sjørslev says that: “The success of rigid dogmatism, of any anti-syncretic idea, would mean the death of religions…”\(^{34}\) This statement shows us two sides of the situation. It could be seen from the historical point of view as a completely natural thing to happen- syncretism gave a rise to anti-syncretistic reactions. These gathered strength during the 20th century. From 1930’s Afro-Brazilian culture, new elite artists and their art became popular and symbols of avant-garde. Many “re-Africanization” movements\(^{35}\) started to support the “purification” of Afro-Brazilian culture and of course also its religion. However the success of these movements is disputable. Its efforts are still influential though. Here we come to the problem of orthodoxy among different Candomboks and even terreiros and we can see it as a problem with syncretism of a different level.

The problem of so called „orthodoxy“ of Candombo terreiros was already mentioned in the context of various ethnic groups presence in the previous chapter. Its background is more complex than only locational as Bramly mentions about what „Pure African centers“ represent: „These terreiros are not called Macumba or Umbanda centers, but are known as Candomblés. They are mainly in the north of the country, especially in Bahia.“\(^{36}\) The demands on preservation of original tribe’s tradition correspond with „orthodoxy“ of Candomblé and terreiros themselves. In any case and for many other reasons there exists some rivalry among the terreiros which is often connected with this problem of “correctness“ of rituals. This problem does not always have to be connected to the „africanity matter“ and original african traditions. Though the question of traditionalism remains one of the basic one’s among all the Afro-Brazilian religions for scholars and for practitioners themselves too. As Inger Sjørslev writes: „In the Afro-Brazilian religions traditonalism is to great extent practised reflexively, as an element of search for identity through the definition of tradition.\(^{37}\)

\(^{34}\) Cf. Sjørslev, Inger; Greenfield, Sydney M. (ed.), Reinventing Religions..., p. 139.
\(^{35}\) See Sansi, Roger, Fetishes and monuments..., p.21.
\(^{36}\) Cf. Bramly, Serge, Macumba..., p. 120.
That means Candomblé is, among all the others Brazilian religions of African origin, coping with the problem of identity and modern concepts. Anyway often there are more practical reasons for rivalry among terreiros and the fight for the owner of „the very (most traditional) tradition“. This can be for example to pursue new potential members, etc. Anyway, as I wrote above, Bahia is considered to be the most important and „orthodox“ center of Candomblé, if we agree on the parameter of high abundance and also because the local terreiros are mainly of Candomblé Nago. We just shall not forget that this does not necessarily mean that there are no other locations and different terreiros which have the same demands of orthodoxy or correctness as those in Bahia and that they may have no roots or base in Nago or other ethnical african groups.

As a conclusion to this chapter it is neccesary to say that syncretism as a process must have been started right after the portage of African culture and religion to Brazil. Then the acculturation started. Such undoubtable fact lead us to the posssition of accepting the opinion that “Syncretism is nothing other than history…” which (in the original context of this sentence) means there is no way to deny this natural process eventhough we have to add that it continues and will continue onwards. Anyway there were and still are tendencies for “re-Africanization”. We shall not forget that these efforts of “purification” are again a part of cultural or religious exchange processes. Syncretic and anti-syncretic processes can be found on different levels of religious life, beginning from the whole cultural scheme and ending with shaping ritual practices and life of the various community members as the examples of different scholarly approaches have shown. Thus we shall not override its variability and influence on the whole religious life in Brazil.

Now let us see the basic structure of the world of Candomblé people, so that it makes us understand better the principles of their spiritual universe.

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38 As a good example could serve us the book “Sacred leaves of Candomble” where we can learn about the adaptation of herbal medicine.

39 See Sansi, Roger, Fetishes and Monuments…, p. 43.

40 See ibidem, p. 6-7.
3.3. The structure of the world

The cosmos in the image of Candomblé participants is basically inherited from the African one. It consists of two parts. The first is heaven orun which is a residence of the highest god Olorun, other gods orixás and also the ancestors egunguns. These are originally african. The contributions of the brazilian culture in this sphere are caboclos, souls of the great indian personalities, and also spirits of pretos vilhos, who were black enslaved people. Pretos vilhos are but often also called eguns, who can be just personal ancestors. As we can find in Behrend’s and Luig’s book Spirit possession, „To include foreign spirits into a translocal pantheon,“ seen by them as“ a ’strategy’ of affinity’…“ On the other hand there is our earthy world ayie where the human beings, animals etc. dwell. These beings are all called omoraiye which means „children of the world“.

In the heaven’s world the highest god is Olorun. He is known as the owner of the sky. There exist different scientific theories about his origin- either it could be a contribution of monotheistic religions or an authentic Yoruba image. This god is apprehensive, rigorous and distant one. The orixás are his servants and they can be seen also as the middlemen for the communication between him and people. There is a large pantheon of orixás, which is for our understanding not a clear construct, meaning the spirit, god or saint, receiving a big piece of the worshipping by people. There are more than 400 of them. „... The Orishas, the ´personifications of the phenomena of nature´, are associated with specific leaves, animals, foods, minerals, colors, and human activities, social principles, and interaction,…“ In fact the interaction is the most important thing for worshipers and one of the most specific signs of this religion. As every orixá, caboclo, exu or egun has its own personality; it also is connected to some characteristic forces which can be used by the worshippers. The main motto of the religion could be “The interaction provides satisfaction” and this is shown even in the everyday day life of its believers. Therefore the ritual praxis is so fundamental here. As Heike Behrend and Ute Luig in the prologue of their book Spirit Possession comprehend, the society’s ritual consciousness is a chance to tell the story of the spirit to the community and to remind them of important moments from their history. So it has to do with a consciousness

42 In Brazil the word orixá or in plural orixás is used instead of original Yoruban expression orisha.
43 See Voeks, Robert, „Sacred leaves of Brazilian Candomble“, p. 125.
of tradition and roots again. This “aspect of ritual consciousness” appears in the same book also in chapter 8th where author Tobias Wendl describes how the spirits during the possession try to reach the ritual consciousness of society. For such an interaction there are some more or less strict principles and different roles of community members which will be described in the following part of work.

3.4. Social structure within the community

Candomblé communities are not centralized; there exists a number of terreiros, which “… are the assemble of sacred space of Candomblé community”. Even though there exist associations for cooperation, preservation of tradition, etc., nowadays, each community is not subordinated to some bigger organization in such a political sense we would probably expect.

As we can find in the book Dancing Wisdom, there exists some centralization though not in a sociological sense. Such can be found in a single structure of a terreiro itself. As Daniel writes, terreiro is centralized according to its dancing space where “Two-dimensional concentric circles can indicate the interrelationship among three realms of existence,…” This center, the dancing space, can be then perceived as a concrete place where the three worlds (world of human beings, animals and plant, world of spiritual entities, and the world of…) can connect or are in the greatest possible closeness. In the book “Refuge in Thunder” we can find basically a very similar description of terreiro: “… we see candomblé terreiros as centers of a simultaneous process of healing and axé-cultivation.” At the first sight we can see that author evidently concentrates on different axioms of the spiritual world of the Candomblé, but if we analyse the sentence, we find that the meaning stays the same as in the first case of Daniel’s description. As we already know, healing and herbology (see figure 2, in appendix) are both unseparable and both connected to the spiritual knowledges of Candomblé community members. Secondly, axé, as a basic term expressing the inner essence of

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45 See Wendel, Tobias; Hieke Behrend/Ute Luig (ed.), Spirit Possession..., p. 120-121.
47 For ex. CONTOC which is a federation called Conference of the Tradition and Culture of the Orixás. Every terreiro with possessed members and ritually seated exu can become member of this federaton. Cf. Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood..., p. 4-5.
48 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 81.
Candomblé universe and earthy praxes, give us a basement and a sense for movement between worlds. Now we can see that there is just a neverending list of action which provides an interaction between realms of the universe.

Candomblé community is in fact based on the concept of familia-de-santo and its hierarchy is as the name predicts analogical to the family concept. If this was a complete truth we would have to find a concept of incest within these relationships. All the initiates are in fact symbolically married to their parent-of-saint, which corresponds with sexual exogamy.\(^{50}\) On the other hand their role as a parent is probably very influential and expressive. A significant remark made by Jim Wafer is that the parent-of-saint who leads the terreiro often behaves as a real parent, in some cases even “despotical”.\(^{51}\) Terreiros are thus lead by its own priests or mainly priestesses who are called Mothers or Fathers-of-saint.\(^{52}\) This person has a responsibility for the whole propulsion of the holy house but the ownership of the terreiro itself doesn’t have to corresponde with the leadership of it. “A terreiro may be collectively owned by a group of individuals or community or it may simply be a room or two in an individual’ s home.”\(^{53}\) To become a Mai or Pai (see figure 3, in appendix) takes years of complex training. These priests/priestesses have a high social status not only for the role of the leader and coordinator of the temple but for their botanical knowledge. As Voelks writes: “Ethnobotanical knowledge is basic to the practice and ultimately to the existence of Candomblé“\(^{54}\). Their social credit elevates also for their magical craft which particulary can represent art of Ifa oracle\(^{55}\). This magic craft was modified according to the original African one in Brazil too. “… in Brazil, divination, using buzios, or cowrie shells, has largely replaced the much more elaborate Ifa oracle system.”\(^{56}\) (see figure 4, in appendix). Parents-of-saint are also highly esteemed for taking charge of the new member’s initiation. While the rituals are performed they are always there to control and supervise, especially when it comes to trances.


\(^{51}\) Cf. ibidem, p.36.

\(^{52}\) This label has an african origin in the word Babalawo. In Brazil arisen the name Iyalorixa and Babalorixa. In Potuguese vision- Mae and Pai de Santo. These names have its fiction all among afro-brazilian religions. For Candomblé there also exists a special term Candombleizeiro. There are problems with transriptions and used vocabulary. It can differ from place to place and so the terminology of scietific sources also differ a big time.\(^{53}\) See Glazier, D. Stephen, *Encyclopedia of African ad African-American religions…*, p.76.

\(^{54}\) See Voeks Robert, „Sacred leaves of Brazilian Candomble“…, p. 120.

\(^{55}\) This piece of art came from Yorubaland, too. Priest or priestess are able to give a prosage to their patient with the help of 4 to 16 cowrie shells or cola nuts. By the position of their fallout they can read the message they say. There is 256 combination of possible combinations and minimaxy four times more possible outcomes. It always dipends how skilled the priest is to explain it well and aplicate it on a given situation.

of participants. Important part of his/her duties is the so called consulta\textsuperscript{57}, which is a ritual usually performed for uninitiated and by which a parent-of-saint helps to coming people (see figure 5, in appendix). In the history black leaders of Candomblé were perceived in two ways, having good and bad face. Partly they scared people who knew their energy, art and knowledges. Especially in the 19th century these leaders were publicly known as feiticeros meaning sorcerers. On the other hand these feiticeros were well known for their succesfull healing practices; thus people called them curandeiros. Due to this distinction which is based on the fact that there exists two possible ways how to use received knowledges we may to some extent agree with Wafer when he claims there exists a white and black line of practices.\textsuperscript{58} Anyway we shall be carefull with classification because basicly Candomblé includes no black magic. These rituals of sorcery belong usually to black linage of Macumba, etc.

The second and inherent part of the community forms its members. Walker divides them in two goups:

A. the initiates of varying degrees and

B. noninitiates who come for a consultation and advice

We could dicssuss such a distinction for Walker’s including of uninitiated, freely coming and going, people but in this case it would be wise to accept Walker’s distinction because uninitiated people play an essential role for the whole community. They provide a financial support for various kinds of help. Without them the life of many terreiros would look rather different.

Ema Cohen in her book Mind Possessed says that clients are of all social classes and phenotypes. The heterogeneity is characteristic for the whole culto.\textsuperscript{59} The question of the race is not important, claims Cohen, because “one became Afro (…) when one became a filho,…”\textsuperscript{60}. Services for the noninitiates are paid by the customers themselves- usually by

\textsuperscript{57} See Yvonne Maggie; Eliade, Mircea, The Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 1…, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood…, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{59} With the expression culto afro Cohen revers to various Afro-Brazilian religious practises. Cf. Cohen, Ema, The Mind possessed…, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{60} See ibidem, p. 36.
some amount of money for the temple or by the gifts to the specific orixá whose’s help was needed.

According to Mikelle Smith Omari’s findings “Devotees are primarily from the lower socio-economic classes…”61 They are of different phenotypes and have varied ethnical ancestors. To become a proper iniciado62 takes quite a high amount of money and so it can mean years for one of a low social status to become initiated to the specific cult.

The initiation is a complex process that is composed of several levels. First of all the person must get identified with his/her orixa. In the beginning the adept undergo several weeks of seclusion which includes a number of purifying and learning processes. After three months the person becomes a bride (iao or yao)/fiancé of his/her god63. Mainly women serve in this position; they become the daughters of their gods, which means they become a medium for the specific orixá who “rules their head”. “Sometimes medium is consecrated to more than one deity.”64 This could be true also in the case of every other person who does not necessarily have to be a medium. Jim Wafer claims that:” The individual is regarded…as ‘belonging to’…three of the orixás…”65 After seven years the iniciado gets the rank of ebomin and after seven more years abourisha. Then it is possible to become a Mother or Father of the Saints and even freely establish an independent temple. Usually we can find such a distinction of initiates as for example in the book “The taste of Blood”, where Jim Wafer divides them into two groups: “…those who ’receive saint’…” and “…those who do not.”66 The initiation of filhas and their significance in the community will be described in more detail in a separate chapter. According to Wafer the second group is made up by ogãs who are men and equedes, women. There are but further distinctions and more roles which these “non-recievers” fulfill, still they all can be called ogãs and equedes. An important personality in the community is Axogun, the one who is sacrificing animals. This role is dedicated to men explicitly as well as agogô who is a gong or bell player. Ogans are often financially responsible for the terreiro. They are often its administrators and also can play drums called atabaque (see figure 6, in appendix). “Master drummers are highly respected

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62 The one on the way of initiation.
63 Probubly more often used term is a daughter or son of saint/ filhos or filhas-de- santo.
65 See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood…, p. 16.
66 See ibidem, p. 16.
within the ritual communities…” because their art leads the mediums on the path to their spirits. The drums they use to do so are called rum, rumpi and lê, which are Jeje names. These instruments are “…three sacred drums of Candomblé ritual liturgy…” The whole book Dancing Wisdom by Yvonne Daniel is dedicated to the topic of music and dance ritual performance in Candomblé. Anyway it is not just her who sees the musical contribution to the rituals as essential. “For the community members, the dance/ music performances suggest myths and retell cultural stories, but most important, they charter and encourage social behavior in present everyday lives.”

The hierarchy within the community is both sacred and profane. Distinction between these two concepts is not apprehended in general. We could make a hierarchical classification based on the ‘political power’ of the members. The highest position would then occupy the Mai or, rarely, Pai de Santo. The second rank would be ogãs and equedes. On the third position would surprisingly be Filhas and Filhos de Santo for whom themselves, as well as for the whole community, the most important thing is the ritual praxis, that brings the given terreiro money and prestige, as Ema Cohen claims. This ritual praxis in this case means to acquire a skill of being possessed. The daughters of the gods always have to obey the Mai’s rules and advice. Therefore conflicts between and mães and filhas are not exceptional. Sometimes filhas even leave the terreiro for that reason. It is also up to Mai which secrets will be discovered to the concrete daughter or a son. “There exists an active oral tradition”. As was already mentioned, based on the fact that the profane and sacred is not distinguished in the minds of orixá worshipers, the height of the political power given to the member is based on the spiritual power one owns and manifests. “Rodrigues explained the hierarchical organization of the candomblé, recognizable in its construction around the spiritual and temporal leadership of a mother or father of the saint (mãe or pai de santo); honorary protectors and defenders of the community (ogãs); and initiates, daughters and sons of the saints (filhas and filhos de santo), who incorporated in their bodies the living presence of the deities.” That would mean that even though the role of spiritual mediums is irreplaceable, he sees those who do not receive their saint of higher importance and social rank than those who can. This

67 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 87.  
69 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 1.  
72 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 68.  
approach corresponds with what Jim Wafer writes: “According to the ideology of Candomblé, people cannot control their own spirits. However, parents-of-saint, ogãs, and equedes may control the spirits of others, because they have the authority to do so.” Thus we find out that even though there would be no living and therefore not any Candomblé tradition at all without the figure of medium, filhas and filhos-de-santo paradoxly occupy the lowest political rank in terreiro. Their political power elevates with years of initiation only.

It is also interesting to look closer at how the community copes with gender. I found the point that Wafer made in “The taste of Blood” very suggestive. He finds an original way to solve this problem that is by most of the scholars described as a female predominance. Wafer’s more sensitive approach to the gender says “…there are… three genders in Candomblé: the ‘masculine’ category, constituted by ogãs and equedes; the ‘feminine’ cathegory, constituted by children-of-saint; and what we might call the ‘androgyrous’ category, constituted by parents-of saint.” We have to understand this dividing as a symbolical one. It is based on the deeper philosophy, on understanding the possession and its demands on a possessed person. Only a female energy is capable of becoming a medium, which does not mean that only women can become these...

There can be found also a hierarchical typology based on the reverence of ancienctry. As the initiation takes long years, the responsibility of one grows higher and so his/her respect among the members grows, too. There is a special name for a senior position in terreiro called pegi-ga. „Age in the religion is calculated beyond chronological or biological age and relates to total years of initiation.“ , writes Daniel Yvonne in her book Dancing Wisdom. On the contrary Cohen mentioned that the seniority is not the most importatnt or estimated level in a terreiro: “There is a farther significant classification that is not based on seniority, but on the distinction between those members who enter possession with their orixás and those who don’t.” This brings us back to the importance of daughters and sons-of-saints who are due to their abitily to become a medium highly estimated. Their special position in terreiro brings us to the topic of the next chapter where their role within the community will be described.

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74 See Wafer, Jim, *The Taste of Blood*…, p. 102.
75 See ibidem, p.147.
76 The expression for seniors within the community is pegi-ga which at the same time represents the posision the seniors occupy.
77 See Yvonne Daniel, *Dancing Wisdom*…, p. 32.
4. Medium

Start from Jim Wafer’s generalization in two groups of initiates this chapter will be dedicated to that part which includes people who can receive a spirit. Not everyone is able to become a medium. The job of parent-of-saint is to recognize this gift in a person and to initiate him or her. The basic perception of the religion is that everyone has an orixá who is an owner of his/her head. There can be even more of them, usually can appear up to three accompanied by some more spiritual entities as caboclos, exus or eguns. The problem of the literature is that authors usually concentrate only on the orixá entities and do not even mention the fact that the other can incorporate too. Mikelle Smith Omari even writes that the god Exú from the Yoruba religion never manifests in Brazil Candomblé. This is evidently untrue according to what we read in the essential work on spirit possession “The taste of Blood” where the whole one part of the book is dedicated to that phenomenon. Anyway, the goal of the Mae or Pai-de-santo is to identify these spirits and to initiate a person to a filha or filho-de-santo level in case they are meant to become their mediums.

4.1. Initiation

Initiation is a fundamental step further in every known religion. It has to do with psychological as well as sociological growth and is an inseparable part of becoming a member of a religious community. History describes the development of initiation processes. In the book Refugee in Thunder, which concentrates on history and is based on usage of primary

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79 Literature:
80 Original Yoruban term for the god Exu.
81 See Smith, Omari Mikelle, „Candomblé: A Socio-Political Examination of African Religion and Art in Brazil“,…, p. 137.
historical sources, we can find out that in the nineteenth century the basic initiation took one year, compare to nowadays three months. In the case of Candomblé as Walker writes the initiation is formed by two stages:

I. Stage: identification of orixá
   II. Stage: “Orisha is’ seated’ in the person’s head”  

The whole process is under the control of the parent-of-saint. It lasts from several weeks to years depending on the type of initiation, on the position which the initiado shall finally get. Especially for mediums the initiation is very expensive and therefore it sometimes can take several years for people of low social status to become one. But this is not a strict rule and the price always depends on parent-of-saint and orixás demands. The first stage of initiation is done by Mae or Pai alone. She/he talks to the person and with the help of presages they find the orixá of the head. This is the basic act which influences the whole process. It can happen that different parents-of-saint identify a different owner of the head. This could cause big problems to the initiado and also the art and knowledge of parents can be doubted then. Problems can come even if a person does not follow the demands of his orirxa. “…each member of a Candomblé community has the responsibility of attending to even the smallest needs of his or her orixá.”

The second stage takes much longer and its process is rather difficult. According to Smith Omari findings the novice spends one night on his own, and then she/he tells the dream. The dreams interpretation is an important part of Candomblé too. Then a spiritual herbal bath is prepared with the use of herbs that are connected to her/his main orixá and several rituals are made. The initiado receives a long necklace called mocã of the colours of the orixá and armbands contra-eguns. Here we come to the part of seclusion. In every terreiro there is a special seclusion room called camarinha. “During the first days of seclusion, the novices undergo many rituals during which their hair is cut, the sculp is shaved, and they receive a necklace made of kele- large, tabular beads in the sacred color(s) of their dietary. They also receive an anklet, known as xaoro,…” During the whole period of initiation the person is wearing a white dress. In the whole process, herbs and the blood of sacrifices animals play an important role. During that time she or he learns everything about her/her main orixá. In the

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82 See Walker, S.Sheila, „Everyday and Esoteric Reality in the Afro- Brazilian Candomble“..., p. 119.
84 See ibidem, p. 98.
85 See Smith, Omari, Mikelle, „Candomblé: A Socio-Political Examination of African Religion and Art in Brazil“..., p. 144.
end of the initiation new initiates have a so called “coming-out-ceremony”\textsuperscript{86} with layer community. It is in fact a public presentation of them called saidas (see figure 7, in appendix). It takes seven years and a high amount of money for a person to be fully initiated, to become an ebomi, and then to be potentially allowed to establish her or his own terreiro independent of the original one. This act requires a special final ritual performed by a parent-of-saint where ebomi “may 'receive the decá.'”\textsuperscript{87} which allows her to open a new terreiro.

I consciously want to focus on the initiation of mediums. Poetical expression for this whole initiation process of filhas or filhos-de-santo is used by … in the book Fetishes and Monuments. The author calls it “making the saint” which is in fact a translation of a Brazilian term “feitura do santo”\textsuperscript{88}. The author first introduces us to the distinction of a relationship between Candomblé people and spirits which is fundamental. He writes that `Candomblé people relate with spirits in two ways’:

A. Embodying( which is a gift of a person)

B. Initiation( during the ritual process)

According to this distinction which I will to follow we can see that initiation is open basically for anyone and people are initiated into various positions in the community. But the process of „feitura de santo“\textsuperscript{89} is not accessible for everyone. The goal of this process is to become a filha or filho-de-santo. A person must have a gift to be able to embody the spirit. During the initiation „… the person learns to incorporate Orixá…“\textsuperscript{90} and to learn everything about him or her. As Rachel E. Harding says: "Initiates are prepared to embody the presence of their dominant orixá and are thought the specific means by which the ritual relation is to be continually cultivated."\textsuperscript{91} The problem here is that Harding does not specify the initiate. In this case it can be only filha or filho-de-santo to be. The learning side of process includes the knowledge of his or her mythical history, temperament, character, favorite food and drink, colours, rhythm, dances etc. It also can involve more grades of being filha or filho and these status differences can sometimes be marked only by eye. For example as Harding writes:“…today the filha de santo who has not completed seven years of initiation is usually barefoot when involved in ritual activities… Bare feet in the terreiro are also a means to connection with the chão, the floor, the bare earth, which is a link to axé and to ancestral

\begin{footnotes}
\item[86] See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood..., p. 123.
\item[87] See ibidem, p. 16.
\item[88] See Sansi, Roger Fetishes and Monuments..., p. 25.
\item[89] See ibidem, p. 25. This term used by Roger Sansi could be replaces by an expression published in book „Refuge in Thunder“- „fazerem santo“.
\item[90] See ibidem, p. 24.
\item[91] See Harding, E. Rachel, A Refuge in Thunder..., p. 98.
\end{footnotes}
energy." The problem with such a statement is that to be barefoot is a very common thing in everyday life and even in ritual life for all candomblé people just for the reason she gives here.

As in other religions the initiation is in fact a symbolic re-birth of a person. As it is written by Roger Sansi: „’Making the saints’ is a dialectical process of continuously constructing the person, in relation to the spirits that she embodies and to the ‘other body’ of these spirits, the shrines.“

4.2. Social status of children-of-saint

Therefore „Candomblé is not just a matter of training but an art, and people with a particular ‘gift’ may enjoy from the very beginning a privileged relationship with their santos…“ Here we come to the point were we neccesarily shall not forget the importance of other roles within erbe, a liturgical community. Everyone has some gift, for example ogans with their art of drumming are in no way less important than filhas and filhos-de-santo. It is to say that the interaction among the spirits and the community members is open and in some sense ultimate for everyone. But still the basic and most important confrontation with the spiritual world and its entities provide daughters and sons-of-saints during the ritual performances and embodying, either publicly or just for the members. The chanting, drumming and dancing plays a very essential role here. Usually with the help of ritual drums and chanting filhas and filhos start to dance and some of them can become possessed by their spirit. „…most often dance/music behaviour within the ritual behaviour(…)continually reties the worshipping community to its spiritual affinity.“ Yvonne Daniel can describe the role of mediums during the performance even in a quite universal or rather cosmic sense while describing the dance and possession ritual as she saw it in barracao: „The iawos were seeking to display their orixá affinity and to assist the community by bringing the cosmic orixás to the temple compound.“ This does not mean that the only dancing participants of the ceremonies are mediums. It just says what they represent for the whole community. In case that the

93 See Sansi, Roger Fetishes and Monuments..., p. 22.
94 See ibidem, p. 28.
95 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p.2.
96 Ritual space in terreiro assigned for dancing and possession performances.
97 Iawos is another term used for people initiated as filha or filho-de-santo.
98 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 41.
possession comes it connects all the participants with the „collective soul“ and so this is not viewed as a „self performance“ in any sense. It calls up the sense of social connectedness and a social responsibility of participants. The ritual practises of terreiro community is from Daniel’s point of view divided into „…those who can dance and receive divinities…“ and „…those who can witness and sing,…“⁹⁹. This distinction can help us to understand the importance of musical, or generally artistic, skills in Candomblé. She says that while one is capable of becoming a medium, one shall be naturally able to learn and to follow musical rules. In my opinion in this case of Candomblé we could use the term „musical liturgy“, if we agree on the fact that music plays such an essential role in the ritual performances and there is no written liturgy for the religious praxis.

As „In Brazil each individual became personally responsible for the cult of her/his orixa.“,¹⁰¹, and the service for the spirits and gods is then a part of everyone’s duties, this responsibility must rationally highen in the case of filhas and filhos. They are responsible for bringing the spiritual world into life for the whole community and therefore it is a huge disappointment for all of them and even shame for the parent of saint when a medium is not capable of becoming possessed when expected. As was mentioned before, parents-of-saint must observe and help their children to get into trance during the ceremonies made for their gods and spirits. Interestingly I found in just one book-Taste of blood- that it can happen that Mae or Pai-de-santo can become possessed too. Basicly the reason why they shall not go in trance is that they are basically possessed all the time, which means they are in all the time contact with the spirits and gods. They connected those two worlds so well that they are able to consciously move in both of them. It is not even welcome usually by the community because they have their responsibilities elsewhere. Anyway in the case which Jim Wafer in „The Taste of Blood“ describes, it happened that a father-of-saint in Jaraci was possessed by his orixa too.¹⁰² But this obviously happens more than rarely.

I found the most significant contents of Candomblé religion in this role of mediator between worlds which is the spiritual medium. It appears in everyday life of a community’s members and it influences their lives so far that there is finally no distinction between profane and sacral. The fact that there exists much more than closeness with the spiritual world, but it is

⁹⁹ Cf. Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom….., p. 279.
¹⁰⁰ See ibidem, p. 191.
¹⁰² See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood….., p. 175.
even understood as bringing the spirits into the life, with all they were, are, desire and demand, then brings us the question of spirit possession itself. This I found to be a fundamental phenomenon which constitutes the whole world of Candomblé and without which the whole religion with its principles would not exist. The next part is dedicated to this phenomenon and its manifestations in this religion.

5. Spirit possession

This chapter deals with a very problematic phenomenon which occurs in the religious world and even behind it - spirit possession. Its classification does not come which makes it more complicated to find the right starting point and to get a clear and satisfying final picture of concrete functions in society. First it is neccesary to give a basic introduction to the phenomenon itself. This introduction will lead to the situation in Candomblé and its more or less characteristic expressions of spirit possession in this religion. Throughout this chapter I attempt to use approaches of different scholars coping with spirit possession phenomena in Candomblé to get to their „sediments“, compare them, and finally get some useful overview

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103 Literature:
and their shortcomings with analyses. The goal of this part of the work is to find the place of spirit possession phenomena within Candomblé religion and its community of members.

5.1 Classification of spirit possession phenomena

Very many authors and disciplines have coped with this complicated phenomenon. The question now is what hides behind this term, what did these scholars truly deal with and which classifications lead out of their work.

In The Encyclopedia of religions we can find such a description of spirit possession; „Spirit possession may be broadly defined as any altered or unusual state of consciousness and allied behavior that is indigenously understood in terms of the influence of an alien spirit, demon, or deity. The possessed act as though another personality- a spirit or soul- has entered their body and taken control. Dramatic changes in their psychonomy, voice, and manner usually occur. Their behavior is often grotesque and blasphemous.‟\(^\text{104}\) We can find spirit possessions in many religions, but we have to be careful how and when we use this expression. There are various classifications based on various disciplines and their possible attitudes. First we shall remember that not every of the altered states of consciousness (ASC) is connected to spirit possession itself. We should make a clear distinction between possession phenomena and non-possession altered states of consciousness. ASC expresses obviously some non-specified states of consciousness or mind of a person which is an alteration to its normal everyday state or functioning. ASC can be either subjectively recognised or objectively observed as such a deprivation from a normal state.\(^\text{105}\) This category includes for example also ecstasy which can be in some sense identified with possession but does not mean the same thing. But the classification of ecstasy conforms in some aspects with spirit possession. The word ecstasy comes from greek ekstasis which means „to be placed outside“ or „to be displaced“\(^\text{106}\) or as Holm describes what is happening: „ego is no longer in the physical frame“\(^\text{107}\) As The Encyclopedia of Religion says: „Ecstasy can thus mean both the seizure of one’s body by a spirit and the seizure of a man by divinity. Although seemingly in opposition, the two senses are not mutually exclusive, and between them lies the vast and diverse range of phenomena

\(^{105}\) Cf. ibidem, p. 13.
covered by the umbrella term *ecstasy*, with the magician standing at the one end of the spectrum and the psychiatrist at the other. Even though this description of ecstasy is rather confusing, it gives us basic knowledge. Firstly the phenomenon of ecstasy counts on a duality of body and mind, or a spirit. Secondly, ecstasy is produced by a spirit or divinity not identical with the possessed body-mind complex. Ecstasy is thus an umbrella term where the spirit possession phenomenon is included. According to the phenomenological categorization there is shamanistic, prophetic and mystical ecstasy. There are not exclusively separable, therefore it is not always possible to make a clear classification that leads to spirit possession. Closest to what is going on in Candomblé possession is a term mystical ecstasy which occurs in two different ways; it is either a „communion“ which means that a devotee remains a distinct identity, or a „union“ meaning that during the ecstasy devotee has an ontological identity with god/ God. A widely spread sociological approach towards this phenomena says that ecstasy based on shamanistic abilities has first of all a socially integrative function. It is not surprising that psychology has expressed a huge interest in this phenomena during history. My focus lies not on psychological approaches, though its rather sociological, but I found necessary to mention some of the classification of attitudes of this academic discipline because it provides a helpful tool even for sociological researches during the history and we can learn a lot by knowing it. The typology of The Encyclopedia of Religion gives us three possible approaches towards ecstasy; the psychoanalytical approach, the pharmacological one is relatively young and we can guess it partly gave a ground to the psychobiological or even cognitive studies, and the mystical approach. Spirit possession is mostly associated with trance, but it does not have to mean the same process or act. Trance is thus not necessarily connected to the state of being possessed but can be for example caused by using drugs etc. Some scholars make a distinction between them. For example Erika Bourguignon distinguishes possession and possession trance. While possession is a belief that a personality of the possessed one is changed by some other spiritual entity, possession trance is a state of one`s consciousness, an altered state of consciousness, caused by the act of possession itself. On the other hand Lambek constructed a „possession-trance

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108 See Sharma, Arvind; Eliade, Mircea (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5,..., p. 11.
109 Cf. ibidem, p. 12.
111 This includes the ability to communicate with spirits.
113 This could represent C.G.Jung and his depth psychoanalysis.
114 Such an approach could be even connected with mysticism.
complex”. Lambek distinguishes strictly socio-cultural from biological aspects of possession. Holm deals with the possession terminology, classification and meanings in the book Religious Ecstasy. He includes trance and ecstasy, which are from his point of view almost the same thing, under the wider field of mysticism. Mysticism does not necessarily have to be connected to any altered state of consciousness and so does not have to include spirit possession phenomena.

Spirit possession is a phenomenon which awakes socio-, psycho-, anthropo- and so on-logical interests and could have many definitions, descriptions and typologies. As Cohen says: „Anthropological, sociological, medicalist, and biological perspectives have variously described, interpreted, and offered explanations for various aspects of possession…“ Cohen also writes about the database of scholars reviews of possession phenomena. Thanks to this database we can work cross-disciplinary on comparation of world-wide spread similarities of spirit possession phenomena. She finds it essential to search for the empirically grounded data to find cross-cultural features of spirit possession. Jean-Paul Colleyn in Spirit possession could add that „Spirit possession stands at the crossroads of such disciplines as psychology, sociology, medicine, history, anthropology, and even performance art theory,…“ while the last part of this quotation which Ema Cohen neglected is very important because performative aspect creates a direct link to the ritual practise. In the older studies we can see that researches on ecstasy, trance or possession were mainly used for discovering pathological mental processes. Anyway according to Holm there were formed a few possible academic perspectives of ecstasy research.

1. Continued research into the nature, origin and properties of the mental state itself, particularly in relation to hypnosis.
2. Studies of culture-bound models of altered state of consciousness
3. The significance of ecstatic states for the whole social system of a given culture (sociology of ecstasy) and
4. The use of ecstasy seen from the point of view of the individual (psychology of ecstasy)

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117 See ibidem, p17.
118 Cf. ibidem, p. 72.
119 See Colleyn, Jean-Paul; Hieke Behrend/ Ute Luig (ed.), Spirit possession..., p. 68.
120 See Holm, G. Nils, Religious ecstasy..., p. 20.
This work tries to find the sociological roots and expressions of behaviour within Candomblé community and of spirit possession as a key phenomenon for functioning of this religion. In the next part I attempt to give a social base to this phenomenon in the frame of Candomblé religion and try to describe the functions of possession within Candomblé society.

5.2. Spirit possession in Afro-Brazilian religions

Spirit possession occurs often and plentifully in agricultural societies, where women are usually possessed.¹²¹ As we find in the book Spirit possession, „… spirit possession cults are proliferating the world over…“¹²² According to what is written by R.E. Harding, in America the possessions can be found in Afro-North American Christianity, Jamaican and Trinidadian Shango Baptism, Cuban Santeria, Haitan Vodon, Surinamese Winti and Brazilian Candomblé.¹²³ But this is not complete information. As I have already written, spirit possession or trance belongs naturally to all the Afro-Brazilian religions and so Candomblé is not the only one in which this phenomenon appears even though it has its specifics also within Candomblé nations themselves. These cults are very flexible and their religious pantheon can relatively easily assimilate to the current situation. We can even find there spirits of angels, actors etc. Possession cults often have a political impact or can even cause a political harassment.¹²⁴ They are characterized by their multifunctionality and as „… Fritz Kramer (1987:233) has clearly pointed out, that possession cults very often fulfil a whole range of different function…“¹²⁵

A high number of societies where the possession phenomena appears have some institutionalized form of trance.¹²⁶ That means that spirit possession is such a basic form belonging to a ritual practise that there are official processes made for a medium to become possessed and while being in trance. Performed rituals of possession can even be deemphasized for their natural link to the religion.¹²⁷ There are several techniques which are practised to help one to become possessed; singing, chanting, dancing, drumming,…. These

¹²⁶ Cf. Maggie, Yvonne; Eliade, Mircea (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 1…, p. 103.
are widely used in Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions and are an unseparable part of ritual practice which appears on festas in terreiros as well as on outside festivities where devotees enjoy the presence of their gods. „As Rodrigues wrote, music in Afro-Brazilian religion is the means by which the 'state of being in-the-saint (possession) is created.“ All these activities restore the society’s ritual consciousness by giving a chance to re-tell the story of the spirit which can represent for example an important moment of their history. In other words, spirits are trying to reach the ritual consciousness of society by taking the possession of person. Therefore the spirit possession can rather be described as a controlled incorporation of the „collective story“ than as a „stepping out of one‘ s self. Thus the whole naturalness and importance of spirit possession as a living phenomenon included in this tradition means more than the incorporation of a spirit, god, or ancestor into one’s body. In this context of changing the inner essence of the medium Bastide writes that „The term ‘change of character’ suit here better than the word 'possession'.“ This claim does not oppose the fact that the spirit have incorporated the body. „Candomblé tradition maintains that ability to receive an orixá is an inherited trait, thus implying that the fixedness of such an embrace became embedded in Afro-Brazilians as a genetic possibility, passed on through generations- a gift of grace, of accompaniment, inside terror.“ This interesting claim made by Harding expresses also one possible point of view on the role of possession already mentioned before- resistance and keeping the tradition safe. As we can see there is a fundamental linkage among religious practices and music, spirits and devotees, body and mind, individual and collective. The whole ritual practice and gatherings including the act of possession shall be viewed as a „cultivation of axé."

The act or rather process of spirit possession has also its special terminology used by devotees as well as by scholars; spirit entrance, intrusion, fall in the saint, incorporation, to take possession of, to haunt, to inhabit, to besiege, to be a guest of, to strike or slap, to seduce, to marry,… In the Encyclopedia of Afro-American religions we can find expressions used by mediums themselves: incorporar (to incorporate), manifestar (to manifest) or pegar (to seize

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128 Rodrigues is an important personality in connection with discovering Candomblé.
134 See ibidem, p. 88.
or grab). All these terms are important and can help us to understand how different scholars and different communities or even individuals apprehend the phenomenon.

In culto afro the possessed individual does not suffer from a social isolation. That means possession is not a social stigma and it does not exclude the medium out of the society, because everyone in this social group believes that the possessing spirit exists. The belief in these spirits or gods and their necessity to incorporate into the living body is so fundamental in these religions that it could not basically influence the society negatively. In Candomblé „Possession and the role of the body in the ritual praxis are the central elements...“ Inger Sjørslev claims that „The body is a key factor... with spirit possession as a ritual core. Ritual embodies a complexity of religious ideas just as possession shapes individual and collective experience.“ Spirits are connected to the world of society as well as they relate to the social world of the individual. This means that there is a symbolical level; the possessing spirit can be a mirror of the individual’s inner attitudes, social sensing or position. On the contrary „Possession negates the ‘rational’ order of everyday life; it displays the world in reverse.“ Camarof sees the spirit possession as a piece of socio-cultural transformation, which helps the selfidentification. This opinion is connected to the selfidentification of a person as well as to the selfidentification of the community within the environment which was dicussed in chapter 3.2. Candomblé and the problem of syncretism.

According to Ema Cohen and new researches the social descriptions of spirit possession and its role in society are closely connected to the semantic memory of people. Therefore she claims that „The ‘social reality’ of trance and possession is fundamentally a psychological reality (…) By paying attention to what is known about cognitive processes activated in the representation and the flow of ideas, beliefs and behaviours between individuals, we can begin to explain recurring features of their organization on the ground.“ This approach has deeper roots. Based on early anthropological data, spirit possession can be viewed as a psychobiological idiom or category. From this point of view these psychobiological roots

136 Which is a term used by Cohen which reveres to various Afro-Brazillian religious practises.
139 See ibidem, p. 132/133.
142 See ibidem, p. 72.
143 See ibidem, p. 80.
of spirit possession cult have a strict link to the sociological structure of community and the behaviour of community. The existence of such a phenomenon evokes exotic feelings and for example Gilberto Freyre mentions that it creates an erotic/aesthetic image of Candomblé as spirit possession which is seen as a symbolic picture of coitus.\textsuperscript{144}

In the case of possession cults „It is often the religious elite that has the technique of ecstasy in its own hands.“\textsuperscript{145} These practices or techniques can be unique or can at least differentiate in some aspects from community to community. Here we come also to what is seen as sacred in Candomblé. The most sacred thing to do or to be in Candomblé is to embody a personal and collective memory which in other words means to become possessed by a spirit as a trained medium. We can characterize this collective mind or memory as the part of mind of devotees which is shared. This shared part of mind contains a certain knowledge. As Daniel Yvonne describes well in her book, she sees two kind of knowledges; disembodied and embodied knowledge. The first one is based on adaptation of western education and its style, while for the second one the ritual consciousness of the community is fundamental. She writes:“ The ceremonies that have developed concentrate heavily on either human or superhuman body; that is, a human body has been transformed by a spiritual incorporation.”\textsuperscript{146}

5.3. Face of spirit possession in Candomblé

In the previous chapter it was said that from the sociological point of view the spirit possession in Afro-Brazilian religions has first of all the integrative function. Now I will try to describe how this integrative power works in the community, what kind of interaction is needed among members and spirits for successful functioning of the whole Candomblé society.

First I will focus on the occasions and spaces where this phenomenon occurs. Good timing and place is very important and it can cause problems when expectations are not fulfilled in the right way. These special occasions are in fact ceremonies, either public or just for the community, outside or inside the terreiro, organized by the terreiro members and under the

\textsuperscript{144} Cf. Sansi, Roger, \textit{Fetishes and Monuments...}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{146} See Daniel, Yvonne, \textit{Dancing Wisdom...}, p. 59.
supervision of the parent-of-saint. It can be either a ceremony made for some special spirits or it can be a ceremony organized as a coming out party for new initiates. We could find several dualistic classifications leading out of above mentioned facts. Spirit possession can thus be, for example, expected or unexpected, public or closed, voluntary or involuntary.

5.4. Typology based on maturity level of possessed person

My typology is based on the maturity level of possession. In the previous chapter I have mentioned that possession does not always appear only when expected and to people who were trained to become a medium. Therefore I made three-grade distinction to separate different subjects being possessed by spirits. Possession might be:

I. Uninitiated
II. Initiational
III. Experienced

Ad. I. It happens very rarely but we have evidence that sometimes an uninitiated person can get into a trance. Thus it is always viewed as an involuntary form or possession. Such a situation can appear on the public festas where also non-members or non-initiates are present and it is a signal to the parent-of-saint that the one who became possessed needs to be initiated, or better, that spirits demand him to become initiated. Cohen Ema mentions such a situation, when she talks about the story of the father-of-saint who was at that time uninitiated: “…Pai describes himself as being thrown from side to side and beaten and shaken from the inside as he entered a state of possession.”

Ad. II. The process which leads to the second type of possession was described more precisely in chapter 4.1. Initiation. I made this special category of possession for several reasons; it is a very specific and difficult time for the initiate as well as for the parent-of-saint, it is a division link between non-fully-initiate and medium. During the time of seclusion there appears so called eré state. That is a type of trance signified by its childish style of manifestation, infantile trance. Spirits who cause such a state of consciousness are called eré

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spirits or the Ibejis. They are twins or there can appear three of them so far; Saint Cosmas, Saint Damain and Doum. They are of African origin and have the character of little children. So they behave as children— they are asking for lollipops, steal food and drinks, dance, laugh and weep spontaneously, sometimes they sing funny erotic song.\textsuperscript{148} It is common that such states occur during three months of seclusion and they can be perceived as a part of the symbolical rebirth of a person. The person undergoing the first real, controlled, and, at the same time, public incorporation of the main orixá, owner of his/her head, guided by the parent-of-saint, is of course exposed to a stressful situation. It is the first occasion for the initiate to show what she or he learned during the seclusion and for the parent-of-saint it is an exhibition of her/his art of teaching, transferring the knowledges. At this coming-out-ceremony initiate is given a new name. “When the name is called, the orixá descends, displacing the erê who has been materialized in the initiand for most of the period of seclusion. The orixá is then dressed in his or her costume, and dances.”\textsuperscript{149} This moment crowns the first grade initiation of medium. The initiate becomes daughter or son-of-saint and from that time she or he is fully prepared to receive orixá. In words of initiation, she or he becomes symbolically adult.

Ad. III. The most common type of possession is the experienced one, when the spirit incorporates advanced media during the ceremony. This type can be either an expected or unexpected form of possession. It might sound surprisingly but sometimes even experienced incorporation can be unexpected or uninvited by the ritual community. Sometimes the timing of incorporation can be wrong or the presence of some spirit can be unpleasant for the ceremony. Then it is naturally up to the parent-of-saint to get the situation, the “naughty spirit”, under control. The next part of this work deals with this type of incorporation, possession of experienced medium.

5.5. Medium possessed

We already know who the medium is and how one can become such a child-of-saint. In this chapter I will describe what kind of spirits can incorporate medium, how and in what situations. In other words, I will focus on character of ritual practices including spirit possession and types of spirits who participate in these.

\textsuperscript{148} Cf. Wafer, Jim, \textit{The Taste of Blood…}, p. 133/134.
\textsuperscript{149} See ibidem, p. 123.
In every Afro-Brazilian religion “Each medium is consecrated to a deity—whether orixá, vodun, guia (“guide”), santo (“saint”), or entidade (deity) (...) Sometimes medium is consecrated to more than one deity.”\textsuperscript{150} As it was said in chapter 3.4. Social structure within the community, in Candomblé mediums can have up to three orixás while one of them being the main one. But these are not the only spirits who can incorporate. There are more types of spirits capable of possessing one’s body. “The possessing spirits are the African Gods (Orixas), tricksters, old slaves, Indian spirits (Caboclos), the sailors and prostitutes, child spirits, Gypsies, and Bahianos.”\textsuperscript{151} (see figures 8,9, in appendix) These spirits are mediators on more levels. According to Inger Sjørslev they provide an interaction between human and spiritual worlds, individual and collective, past and present, tradition and modern life.\textsuperscript{152} As the interaction between the world of spirits and the human world from my point of view stands as the most important matter in the whole religion, Harding says: “In Candomblé, possession (and, by extension, initiation) expresses the fundamental nature of the relationship between human beings and deities. It is a relationship of exchange, of mutality, of shared responsibility, and above all, of accompaniment.”\textsuperscript{153} His statement expresses the essence of everlasting development of both worlds through their active coexistence. The problem of this topic is that literature usually mentions only the case of possessing orixás but in most cases the other kinds of spirits are overlooked. I found the most precise, useful, and coherent ground for this topic in “The taste of blood” where Jim Wafer shares his personal experiences from several terreiros in different locations. His work was an important source for creating a living picture of spirit possession in Candomblé for me. He divides possessing spirits according to parts of his book into exus (the tricksters), orixás (god-like entities) and eguns (spirits of ancestors). He mentions Caboclos (spirits of Indians) and also the erê spirits.

Erê does not appear only during the seclusion period of the initiate but also quite commonly during the ceremonies. This state often appears after the main trance.\textsuperscript{154} About exus Wafer says: “… it is uncommon for Exu to ‘manifest’ (that is, to materialize in a human body) in the same ritual context as the orixás.”\textsuperscript{155} Exus have a special place among the spirits of Candomblé pantheon and Macumba includes the incorporation of exus rather than

\textsuperscript{150} See Yvonne Maggie; Eliade, Mircea (ed.), The Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 1…, p.103.
\textsuperscript{151} See Sjørslev, Inger; Greenfield, Sydney M. (ed.), Reinventing Religions…, p. 131.
\textsuperscript{152} Cf. ibidem, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{155} See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood…, p. 9.
Candomblé. They are said to be tricksters, they like to talk to people, drink and smoke. Often also a female version of exu called exua appears. They can appear very erotic and flirting. “Each of categories of spirits in Candomblé, except for the exus, has its own particular style of speech, which differs in various ways from the speech of mortals... It is interesting that, out of all the spirits, only the exus speak the language of ordinary human beings.” Childer-of-saint learn to express the spirit presence during the seclusion, this includes also the language of their spirits. “The mastery of the various speech styles of the spirits of Candomblé requires considerable skill, so the ogãs clever performance was a demonstration of their status.” Anyway the whole performance is considered to be such a demonstration of social status. Both exus and caboclos are known for their favor of partying. “The exus are said not to favor beer, which is the preferred drink of caboclos.” They often ask for cachaça, which is an uncured rum often used during the possession rituals and cigars. Such a social behavior as drinking, smoking, flirting, having open eyes and talking creates finally a sort of link among these erê, exu and caboco spirits. As Wafer classifies:”Erês, exus, and caboclos have certain affinities with each other, which distinguish them as a group from the orixás.”

There exists a specific deeper terminology used for the act of incorporation of different types of spirits. This terminology expresses higher level of understanding the incorporation of different spirits by Wafer:

a. Orixá “descent into the head of person”

b. Eguns “lean on people”

c. Caboclos “climb on the person`s back”

d. Exus “come walking”

Such expressions can make us a better picture of the spirits themselves, about their inner essence, relationship to the medium, their character and the place they occupy within the religious universe.

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157 See ibidem, p. 44.
158 See ibidem, p. 44.
159 See ibidem, p. 27.
160 See ibidem, p. 9.
161 See ibidem, p. 63.
All of these spirits appear in ceremonies. Until now I made a distinction between outside and inside ritual ceremonies and public and private ones. Here I would add that not every inside-terreiro ceremony including spirit possession is private and not all the public ceremonies are organized outside of terreiro. Candomblé ceremonies begin with the padê de Exu, which is the act of giving an offering to Exu, to let him enable the interaction between worlds and spiritual realms. It is often a cock. Sacrifices or offerings are one of the most important things in the ritual practice of Candomblé community. They differ according to whom they are made. In “Refuge in Thunder” Harding dedicates one part of his book to the development of Candomblé in 19th century and says that already in that time “The blood, feathers, and food were most likely elements of votive offering such as would be made to one of the orixás or voduns- whose ultimate aim would be to fortify the axé or life force of the deity and of the ritual community.”\textsuperscript{163} Especially blood sacrifices have their special meaning with deep religious background and philosophy. When Wafer explains the term axé, he inclines to an essential connection of axé and blood by saying: “There is a close link between axé and blood, for which reason the term is sometimes translated as ‘vital force’.”\textsuperscript{164} As I have already written, the cultivation of axé lies in the ground of the whole Candomblé praxes and existence of this religion.

The continuous order of ritual acts differs depending on what kind of ceremony and for which spirits it is organized. Sometimes there are celebrations where all the spirits are welcome but there are also special occasions or days dedicated to a concrete spirit or group of spirits and so specific orixás or other spirits are expected to come. Wafer describes the festival of Exu, where first the sacrifice is prepared and given, some of the mediums go into possession even before the sacrifice itself, others later, and a lot of alcohol is drunk during the whole ceremony. “Public festivals for exus are much less common than those for orixás and caboclos…”\textsuperscript{165} He also gives a description of a caboclo festival and claims that “The caboclo festival itself is supposed to have originated in the Congo-Angola branch of Candomblé(…)”\textsuperscript{166} Rituals for Caboclos are characterized by dancing samba and drinking jurema. Wafer writes that “…the term jurema designates various plant species, all with mildly hallucinogenic properties…”\textsuperscript{167} Jurema sometimes also contains blood. Exus and caboclos are closer to the

\textsuperscript{163} See Harding, E. Rachel, \textit{A Refuge in Thunder}...., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{164} See Wafer, Jim, \textit{The Taste of Blood}...., p.19.
\textsuperscript{165} See ibidem, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{166} See ibidem, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{167} See ibidem, p. 79.
human world, their origin and character proves it. Thus their festivals are more spontaneous or “effervescent” which differentiate them from high formality orixás festivals.\textsuperscript{168} Furthermore Caboclo festivals are characterized by colorful cloths while on orixá festivals participants wear white ones.

On the other hand the running of orixá ceremonies is nicely described by Daniel Yvonne throughout the book “Dancing Wisdom”. An approach towards the whole Candomblé and the spirit possession phenomena held by her seems very original. She is a specialist in dancing and thus it significantly influenced her understanding of the whole thing when the dance and bodily movements are in the center of her interest. This attitude does not lead to any complications because we already know that music with all that belongs to it is an unseparable part of the whole religion, its ceremonies and spirit possession itself. Here I show a progress (consequences) of orixá “dance ceremonies” by Dancing Wisdom\textsuperscript{169}:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item Greeting the center of dancing space
  \item Singing and dancing of initiates
  \item Arrival of orixás leading to changing dresses
  \item Return to dance
  \item Orixás taken back to the preparation room
  \item Orixás leave back to Orun
  \item Music stops
  \item Eating and drinking of all
\end{enumerate}

Daniel Yvonne gives colourful descriptions of spirit possession dancing ceremonies. As an observer and sometimes also a participant she writes: “Each female dancer is elaborately dressed in grant, bonffant skirts made of yards and yards of vivid white lace cloth and with several white underskirts; males wore white pants and shirts. The white headscarf with a long white lace blouse and skirt visually signals spiritual connection to the Afro-Brazilian religion of Bahia. Members wear long bead necklaces to align them with spiritual protection that is associated with the different colors of each orixá.”\textsuperscript{170} Bramly in his book “Macumba”, which is based on the interview with Maria-José, the mother-of-saint, also talks about what the mediums were wearing during his observations. It was “… long pleated satin or cotton skirt,

\begin{footnotes}
\item Cf. Wafer, Jim, \textit{The Taste of Blood}…, p. 45.
\item See ibidem, p. 40.
\end{footnotes}
either white or blue, under which lie many layers of elaborate petticoasts; puff sleeved blouses appliquéd with lace; and innumerable glass bead necklaces in which are often entangled crosses or thin medailons. Immaculate white scarves have been wrapped around their heads like turbans. The medium walked barefoot… Thus through the graduating dancing and singing mediums go into a trance and become possessed. They play an important social role in fact for the whole religious universe. Serving as mediums, “…in performing the music and dance and embodying the (...) orixás repeatedly, dancing worshipers grow in individual esteem and dignity. They become involved in ritual community service and display social decency.”

The role of children-of-saint during their possession influences the ritual community on more levels. In “Taste of Blood” Wafer introduces us to a rather different face of possessions based on his experiences in a small village called Jaraci where he got initiated. His description of people’s and spirit’s coexistence is fascinating; thanks to the fact that he opened the door of everyday-life experiences in Candomblé world he gives us novel evidence of this. He writes: “In Jaraci, for example, the Afro-Brazilian religions were a part of people’s everyday lives in a way that I never observed in the city. On any day of the week one might encounter, in the public places of Jaraci, various kinds of spirits ‘manifest’ or ‘incorporated’ in human vehicles- erês, or the child spirits of the orixás, playing pranks on the public or chasing each other in the street; exus drinking together in makeshift bars, and making passes at the women present; or caboclos (...) generally intent on getting their human vehicles from one place to another without the inconvenience of being conscious of the distance.”

In the way I understand the significance of spirit possession phenomena in Candomblé, which is explainable on more levels, starting from personal experience of mediums and ending up with the sociologically acceptable role of possession, I agree with the explanation given by the book “Reinventing religions” which says that: “The possessed person is at the same time an instrument for the god, the spirit’s vehicle, and her- or himself, both medium and Orixa, simultaneously person and representation. Thus, quite in a literal sense, the body

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171 See Bramly, Serge, Macumba..., p. 30.
172 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 5.
173 To become initiated is for researches of Candomblé not exceptional, though they often have an academic background.
174 See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood..., p. 23.
becomes a symbol of the social, a mediator between the intimacy of the personal and the cultural symbol,…”\textsuperscript{175}

Further I will focus on the process happening during the spirit’s presence in general which is only a part of the whole ritual performance. For this presence of a spirit entity we could use Gennep’s tripartite ritual structure of possession\textsuperscript{176}:

A. Taking from everyday space by spirit
B. Entering the liminal world (trance)
C. Through exorcism taken back

His structure shows the basic three levels of a daughter’s or son’s state during the possession and the way they are treated. In first stage the spirit takes control over the human’s body and mind. Thus a medium becomes possessed and spends some relevant time in this state. Also this part of possession process can differ a lot depending on many factors while the most significant element of expression depends on the spirit who incorporates the medium. The presence of spirit entity can be expressed by special dancing steps, singing and various kinds of other behavioral manners. Daniel Yvonne gives us a description of a medium that embodied Oxum, who is one of the main orixás: “She was beautifully and elegantly dressed, level beyond anyone else in the room. She sparkled with golden-threatened cloth and bright, bright yellow in her gown and on her crown. She glistened all over behind panoply of hanging golden threads in front of her face. She shimmered with delicate vibrations. (…) She danced with the others,…”\textsuperscript{177} An important and until now not discussed part comes later, when the time of spirit’s leaving comes. For example the Encyclopedia of Religion deals with this topic through the term “exorcism”. This could mislead us from a right understanding of the essence due to its Christian background but we can adapt and accept its usage to some extent, respectively in frame of the act of the leaving of the spirit entity. The Encyclopedia of Religion says that “Exorcisms regulate the relationship between spirit and host.”\textsuperscript{178} This regulation shall be under sovereign control of mother or father-of-saint who observes the incorporatons and it contains the ability of guiding the acts of spirits from the beginning of possession as well as the ability of suspending a spirit from one’s body and mind in case of inappropriate incorporation or violent possession. Jim Wafer tells a story of such an

\textsuperscript{175} See Sjørslev, Inger; Greenfield, Sydney M. (ed.), Reinventing religion..., p. 135.
\textsuperscript{177} See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 195/196.
inappropriate incorporation of one caboclo: “At a festival for the seating of en exu at the terreiro, Tais had received Sete Saia at an inappropriate time. The mother-of-saint had tried to ‘suspend’ her- that is, to make her leave Tais’s body. She refused to go. Sete Saia is known to be tough. The mother-of-saint slapped her face. She slapped back, harder. The mother-of saint-saint collected Sete Saia’s ritual objects from the house of Exu and dumped them in the middle of the street.”

This is not very common example, though it consciously reminds us of the “human” character of spirits, including their unpredictability.

As we can see the possession of mediums is not an easy business either to experience or to explain in a proper way. It is a part of the whole system of religious beliefs and in the center of their practices to show us its living nature and power. As we can learn from Daniel’s approach towards Candomblé ritual practices containing spirit possession: “Spirituality in dance and music making accommodates a balance among three realms of existence: the human, animal and plant realm; the ancestral realm; and the cosmic realm.” Thus the interaction lies in the real epicenter of Candomblé religion and thus its devotees serve to the universe and its right functioning. Without spirit possession phenomena Candomblé would lose not only its face but the whole system would surely collapse.

6. Conclusion

To conclude the whole work I first chose to remind us of the main purpose of it, then to go through single chapters, their contents and meaning.

The aim of my thesis is to give a meaningful view of spirit possession in Candomblé. I intentionally started by describing the origin, development and spread of the whole group of Afro-American religions and later of Candomblé itself while my focus was continually turning to what is connected with spirit possession phenomenon. This consequence leads from in the intention of clearifying the nature of Candomblé which finnaly get us closer to what I see as a heart of this religion- spirit possession phenomena within the Candomblé comunity. As a tool for my study served different discriptions, experiences and approaches of authors, their comparation and critics. These were used to make the description of social ties

179 See Wafer, Jim, The Taste of Blood..., p. 31.
180 See Daniel, Yvonne, Dancing Wisdom..., p. 54.
within Candomblé society, its history, world-view and the presence of spirit possession phenomena as coherent as possible.

The first three chapters are thus meant to be a ground floor which was necessary to build because it let us see the basics of Candomblé and it brings us closer to what is meant to be the crucial matter of the work. Through out these first three chapters i try to make us understand the next parts.

As we got to know the history with its two main influential points which are at the same time essential for existence of Candomblé as we know it, slavery and syncretism, we farther got to know the social life of community, its structure and finally to the role of mediums. I focused there on their function of mediator between the world of living and the world of dead while progressively comprises the phenomenon of spirit possession. Spirit possession as a last chapter is the klimax of the whole work but at the same time it needs the previous chapters not to be vapid. Starting by classification of the term „spirit possession“ and ending with the examples of concrete manifestations of spirits in Candomblé religion, it finnaly gives us the description and ground to understand why the possession is so vital to Candomblé and what can we see behind the courtain of colors, blood and absolute commiting of oneself.
Bibliography


Appendix

- Figure 1., in "A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness"
• Figure 2., in „A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness“
• Figure 3, in “Fetishes and Monuments”

The photo of important mother-of-saint by Verger
Figure 4, in „A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness“

A pai-de-santo using the jogo-de-búzios divination method. (Photo: Janira Voda)

Picture shows the prosage based on previous Ifa oracle.
Figure 5, in “A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness”

5.9 A pai-de-santo administering a leaf sacudimento to a client. (Photo: Janira Voets)
• Figure 6, in „A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness“
Figure 7, in „A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness“

Here we have a photo of initiate’s out-going-ceremony. The white spots all over the body of the initiates are significant marks.
• Figure 8, in „A Refuge in Thunder. Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness“

This photo shows the manifestation of orixá Oxóssi.
Figure 9, in “Fetishes and Monuments”

The picture shows the incorporation of female orixá Iemanjá, the goddess of fertility and sea.
Key words:

Afro-Brazilian religions
Axé
Caboclo
Candomblé religion
Candomblé community
Ceremony
Children-of-saint
Ecstasy
Erê
Exu
Incorporation
Initiate
Medium
Orixá
Parent-of-saint
Pretos Vilhos
Sacrifices
Spirit possession
Syncretism
Terreiro
Yoruba people
Resumé

The concept of my bachelor thesis is based on continuous familization of Candomblé, with the final climax in contextualization of spirit possession phenomenon within this Afro-Brazilian religion. In the first third of my work I try to make a coherent description of Candomblé, its place within the group of Afro-Brazilian religions, its origin, and history. I also apprise the social ties within its community on the background of their world-view to make us better understand the inner components of religion and the structure of the world they live in. Such a description enables us to understand the role of mediums within the community ergo the role of spirit possession phenomenon and its importance. The main aim of my theses is to give a meaningful role and to find the right place for spirit possession in Candomblé, which would not be possible without including previous chapters. Later I focus on the interpretation of spirit possession phenomena, possessing spirits, particularly on the ritual practices and especially on the function and character of mediums who serve the whole community. One part of my thesis is dedictated to my typology of spirit possessions occurring in Candomblé by which I attempt to make a clear distinction among possessions depending on maturity level of mediums. Through out the whole work I am successively finding the place that the spirit possession occupies. With the usage of listed literature and a comparation of various author’s attitudes I try to compose a comprehensive and meaningful view of spirit possession in Candomblé religion.