

AT NOSSA SENHORA'S HOUSE, I DRANK "MOCORORÓ" THAT WAS  
PREPARED BY THE ENCHANTED

NA CASA DE NOSSA SENHORA, BEBI O MOCORORÓ QUE A ENCANTADA  
PREPAROU

EN CASA DE NUESTRA SEÑORA, BEBÍ EL MOCORORÓ QUE PREPARÓ LA  
MUJER ENCANTADA



Elton Ibrahin de Vasconcelos PANTOJA<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: elton.ibrahin@gmail.com

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**Editors:** Prof. Dr. Maria Teresa Miceli Kerbaux  
Prof. Me. Thaís Cristina Caetano de Souza  
Prof. Me. Paulo Carvalho Moura  
Prof. Thiago Pacheco Gebara

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<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), Manaus – AM – Brazil. He holds a Master's degree in Letters from the Graduate Program in Letters at the Federal University of Amazonas (PPGL-UFAM); a specialization in School Management from Uniasselvi; and a Bachelor's degree in Music from the State University of Amazonas (UEA). He is also a researcher in the fields of discourse analysis, anthropology of African matrix religions, and gender and sexuality.

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**ABSTRACT:** In the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, located in the city of Manaus - AM, the enchanted woman, Cabocla Mariana, annually presides over the mocororó ritual in her honor and in devotion to the terreiro's patron saint. Using the principles of participation, cutting, equivalence, and crossroads in the cults of saints and the enchanted, especially the Catholic and the enchanted, this work looked at how these cults can be interconnected so that there is equivalence between them and the mocororó ritual takes place. It is also with the aim of recording the practices involved in the mocororó ritual and recovering the history of the rites practiced in the enchantment of the Amazon region that this study is essential. Through participant observation and the tradition of memories, combined with a religious ethnography, I understood that as well as promoting the socialization of its participants, the mocororó ritual has cultural and religious importance because it is an ancestral heritage from the Northeast.

**KEYWORDS:** Catholic. Enchantment. Indigenous. Mocororó. Religion.

**RESUMO:** No *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, localizado na cidade de Manaus (AM), a encantada, Cabocla Mariana, preside anualmente o ritual do mocororó em sua homenagem e em devoção a santa padroeira do terreiro. Usando os princípios de participação, corte, equivalência e o encruzilhamento nos cultos a santos e encantados, principalmente, o católico e a encantaria, este trabalho verificou como esses cultos podem se interligar para que haja equivalência entre eles e o ritual do mocororó aconteça. Também visando registrar as práticas que envolvem o ritual do mocororó e o resgate da história de ritos praticados na encantaria da região amazônica é que esse estudo se faz importante. Com a observação participante, a tradição das lembranças, unidas por uma etnografia religiosa, compreendi que além de promover a socialização dos seus convivas, o ritual do mocororó tem importância cultural e religiosa por ser uma herança ancestral nordestina.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Católica. Encantaria. Indígena. Mocororó. Religião.

**RESUMEN:** En el *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, situado en la ciudad de Manaus - AM, la mujer encantada, Cabocla Mariana, preside anualmente el ritual del mocororó en su honor y en devoción a la patrona del terreiro. Utilizando los principios de participación, corte, equivalencia y fertilización cruzada en los cultos de santos y encantados, especialmente el católico y el encantado, este trabajo estudió cómo estos cultos pueden interconectarse para que haya equivalencia entre ellos y tenga lugar el ritual del mocororó. Este estudio también es importante para registrar las prácticas involucradas en el ritual del mocororó y recuperar la historia de los ritos practicados en el encantamiento de la región amazónica. A través de la observación participante y de la tradición de los recuerdos, combinada con una etnografía religiosa, me di cuenta de que, además de promover la socialización de sus participantes, el ritual del mocororó tiene importancia cultural y religiosa por ser una herencia ancestral del nordeste.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Católica. Encantaria. Indígena. Mocororó. Religión.

## Introduction

Manaus, a city shaped by the traditions and symbols of its indigenous peoples and the migration flow of people mainly from the northeastern part of Brazil, holds many stories to be told. It is with humility and satisfaction that I set out to narrate one of these stories in an ethnographic framework. Part of this story stems from my recent experiences, especially from my active participation in the rituals and celebrations of the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, and my initiation at this *Terreiro*. Around July 2013, I had my first experience with Candomblé, during a divination session that indicated the need for initiation to the *orixá Oxum*. My initiation took place in November of the same year, and I completed my *iaô* (initiate) phase. However, my participant observation began in 2021 when I started studying the anthropology of religions at the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM). Another part of this story comes from the accounts of the house's priest, who is also my *babalorixá*, using a "field diary, which is a note-taking tool, a notebook with enough space for notes, comments, and reflections, for the individual use of the researcher in their daily life" (Falkembach, 1987, n.p., our translation), as well as a brief semi-structured interview.

Following Pereira's (2017) ethnographic style, I chose to present the notes, quotes, and transcriptions as they were written or spoken, in order to preserve linguistic variations, since "in every linguistic community in the world, there is a phenomenon called variation, meaning that no language is spoken the same way everywhere, and not everyone speaks their language all the time" (Bagno, 2013, p. 68, our translation). Pereira (2017, p. 25) also discusses the narratives that compose his research, referring to them as memories, individual recollections that he revisited throughout his research, and organizes them according to the concept of tradition of memories, as I outline below. Thus, [...] "I started this study, assuming my role in this narrative as a *'caboclo'* who *'Once upon a time was paddling [...] and did not stop talking'*" (Pereira, 2017, p. 119, author's emphasis, our translation).

The study of the tradition of memories promotes the systematization of the author's lived experiences. "Attention, therefore, turns to this 'more general historical development', to the tradition of memories as a system or constellation of actions and events" (Mastrogregori, 2006, p. 69, our translation). These experiences, consequently, can only be understood through the "real participation of the researcher with the community or group. The researcher becomes part of the group, blending with it. They become as close as a member of the group being studied and participate in its normal activities" (Marconi; Lakatos, 2003, p. 202, our translation). Thus, my position is that of an insider researcher, who "uses the concept of insider

research as a non-absolute term intended to designate situations characterized by a significant degree of initial proximity between the socio-cultural locations of the researcher and the researched” (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 134, our translation).

The priest known as *Alaomi de Oxaguiã* is the founder of the *Terreiro* that is the focus of this work, having approximately eighteen years of experience in Candomblé. However, his spiritual life began much earlier as a caretaker in Umbanda, another term for “*pai de santo*”<sup>2</sup>. Even though he is recognized as a “*pai de santo*” in Umbanda and has received the cup<sup>3</sup> and become a *babalorixá* in Candomblé, *Alaomi* prefers to distance himself from these terms, understanding that, as an embodied man, he cannot claim the privilege of being a father of entities or *orixás*. According to Kileuy and Oxaguiã (2014, p. 54-55), *babalorixá* is the masculine term designating “the central figures of a Candomblé house, with their names identifying them as the ‘father who cares for the *orixá*’, being the heads of the *Axé*.” Therefore, *Alaomi* prefers to be recognized and referred to as a caretaker, priest, or spiritual consultant, as he presents himself on various social networks, with the term priest being preferred for this work.

Another aspect presented is *Encantaria* in the form of the *encantado* and *encantada*, whose understanding is fundamental for the development of this work. *Encantaria* is the generic term for the worship of enchanted beings or a locality, also known as “*encante*”. Ferretti (2008, p. 4, our translation) defines *Encantaria* as “places of great energy, of great power, of an inexplicable force, or as places of great mystery, of much *mironga*<sup>4</sup>, of many secrets.” Researchers Rocha and Filho (2020, p. 242) explain that “*Encantaria* is another form of Afro-American spiritual and religious manifestation, practiced mainly in Piauí, Bahia, Maranhão, and Pará. It can be associated with various religions present in these states, such as *Pajelança* or *Cura*, or *Terecô*.” This versatility can also be explained by the presence of the cult in various states across the country. The excerpt from Rocha and Filho highlights a gap in *Encantaria* studies in the state of Amazonas, especially in Manaus and the metropolitan region, making this research also the beginning of the recovery of the history of this rite in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> The *pai de santo*, also known as *Babalorixá* or *Babaloxá*, is a priest of Afro-Brazilian religions, responsible for directing and guiding the cults in the *terreiro*.

<sup>3</sup> The gourd is the primary symbol in the Candomblé hierarchy, which gives full religious powers to the initiate and confers on him/her the role of priest/priestess (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2014, p. 52)

<sup>4</sup> In Umbanda, it is a spell, a mystery, a secret, or a fight (Pinto, s.d. p. 127)

## The Enchanted Beings and the *Terreiro*

In the cult, the enchanted being is a spirit capable of traversing both the earthly and spiritual realms, but effectively inhabits an intermediate plane between the two. The enchanted beings “present themselves to the religious community as individuals who lived on Earth many years ago and who mysteriously disappeared or became invisible, having become enchanted” (Ferretti, 2000, p. 15). In other words:

This refers to a category of spiritual entities received during mediumistic trances, which cannot be observed directly or are believed to be seen, heard, or sensed in dreams or in waking life by individuals endowed with clairvoyance, mediumship, or extrasensory perception, as some prefer to call it. These include *voduns*, *gentis* (noble) caboclos, and indigenous spirits who reside in African or Brazilian enchantments and who embody in spiritual children (Ferretti, 2008, p. 2, our translation).

Based on this, an ethnography of the *mocororó* ritual within the cult of the enchanted beings was outlined, originally embedded in a celebration in honor of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* and the enchanted *Cabocla* Mariana. This study was conducted in the practice Community<sup>5</sup> of *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, also known as *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò*, Temple of *Oxum*, in the municipality of Manaus, with the aim of understanding the relationships manifested through the actions of its principal agents, namely the house, the priest, the entity, and the spiritual children within this ritualistic and festive context. “By proposing to describe the preparations for the festival [...], I am also describing the practices and knowledge of the *priest* and his spiritual *children* in relation to the honored *Cabocla*” (Pereira, 2017, p. 21, author’s emphasis, our translation), as well as the practice community itself.

The community mentioned here has two names related to its modes of worship and ritual practices, as if it assumed two “religious identities” within the same geographic space. Chronologically, the first name is *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, in reference to the Catholic saint of the same name, which is considered a center of Umbanda and has a predominance of enchanted beings originating from the states of Pará and Maranhão. This geographic proximity between the states of Amazonas, Pará, and Maranhão is due to the fact that they were part of a political-administrative unit during colonial times called Grão-Pará and

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<sup>5</sup> [...] social construct, a community of practice, is different from the traditional notion of community, mainly because it is defined simultaneously by its participants and by the practice in which they engage. In fact, it is the practices of the community and the differentiated participation of its members in these practices that socially structure the community (Eckert; Mcconnell-Gine, 2010, p. 102).

Maranhão, which also included Amapá, Piauí, and Roraima.

The other name of the *Terreiro*, referring to its affiliation with Candomblé, is *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò*, which is devoted to the *orixá Oxum*. The terms are in Yoruba and can be understood as: *Ààfin*: palace; *Ìyá*: mother; *Omi*: water; *À ẹ*: power; and *Ò*, which is the *orixá Oxum*. Thus, *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò* translates loosely to “Palace of the Mother of Waters, whose power is *Oxum*.” In addition, “Temple of *Oxum*” is another name used by the priest, although this functions as an epithet for the house, but is no less important. Interestingly, these “identities” coexist at crossroads, assuming varied characteristics within the same ritualistic space, which are diverse and broad, while simultaneously being concentrated and unique.

### On Novena Days

At the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, or *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò*, the preparations for the novenas begin in the late afternoon. Upon arrival, it is customary to greet those present cordially, but without delay, rest the body, and wait for one’s turn to take the baths. Before each novena, the house’s spiritual children and guests arrive and prepare themselves for this moment of “prayer,” a term used by the faithful, with specific baths. First, a bath prepared with “stinky leaves,” which, according to one of the house’s spiritual children, “stinky bath” should not be applied to the head but can be used to wash the face. After a few minutes, this bath is removed with running water. Following this, a bath of “pleasant leaves,” or “fragrant bath,” is taken, which can remain on the body and dry naturally. These baths, made from special herbs, serve as purifiers, with the first being for cleansing (stinky bath) of energies considered negative, and the second to grant strength (fragrant bath), reactivating positive energies and fortifying the devotee’s body and spirit. In other words, the “strength bath” is used to “recharge” the positive energies lost with the “cleansing bath,” with no distinction between energies.

After the baths, we wear white clothing, which in this *Terreiro*, due to having a priest initiated in Candomblé, is called “*ração clothing*”<sup>6</sup>. At this time, beaded necklaces made of glass or crystal beads, preferably white in reference to *Oxalá*, who, at the crossroads of religions, represents the figure of Jesus Christ, are also worn. We then proceed to the *barracão*<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>6</sup> Ration clothes are simple garments made of various fabrics, most commonly cotton, in white, which followers wear in their daily activities in religious communities of African origin, mainly Candomblé and Umbanda. For men, pants and a shirt are worn, and for women, a skirt and camisu (a type of gown).

<sup>7</sup> A *barracão* is a large place, a geographical space in the yard, often similar to a large room or shed, intended for religious meetings and celebrations.

some members arrange the altar, while others discuss various topics as they wait for the house's priest to begin the prayers.

The *novena* period<sup>8</sup> is when the *Terreiro*'s practitioners begin their observances, which include abstaining from specific foods, alcoholic beverages, places such as bars and cemeteries, and, if possible, sexual activity. The purpose of these observances is to purify the body of contrary or undesirable energies on the day of the ritual. Thus, for nine days, this will be the necessary routine for the performance of the novena dedicated to *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* and the *mocororó* ritual. According to Alaomi (2022), this ritual was established by the enchanted *Cabocla* Mariana, also known as *Bela Turca*, in devotion to the Catholic saint after whom the house is named.

It is noteworthy that not only the faithful have Catholic saints to whom they are devoted, but the entities themselves also show fervent devotion to Christian figures. The constitution of the people who worship in this house is so fluid and diverse that it is challenging to delineate boundaries, as the knowledge spreads in a rhizomatic manner (Anjos, 2006, p. 21). In this sense, what does it mean to be part of a house that is also a *Terreiro*, where *orixás* from *Exu* to *Oxalá*, enchanted beings, feathered *caboclos*, cattle herders, sailors, old blacks, and entities like gypsies, *exus*, and *pomba-giras* coexist within the same geographic and ritual space? It is to live within this crossroads of ancestral knowledge, which intersects at various points but does not merge or overshadow one another. As an entity, the Gypsy Salomé, told me: "Although everyone works towards a common good, each in their department." The gypsy's words align with the epistemology of the crossroads, which speaks precisely to this intersecting line, or as Pereira (2017, p. 26), and I prefer to call it, the crossroads of knowledge and practices.

The ideology of racial democracy has fostered an image of Brazil as a country of syncretism and racial miscegenation. According to this ideology, the image of the crossing of differences is closer to a biological model, where different species merge into a resultant that would be the mulatto synthesis. Afro-Brazilian religiosity offers a different model for the encounter of differences, which is rhizomatic: the crossroads as a meeting point of different paths that do not fuse into a unity but continue as pluralities (Anjos, 2006, p. 21, our translation).

This notion of the intersecting line appears to counter the concepts of "syncretism" or "mestizaje," which relate to the political projects of the nation. However, for a better

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<sup>8</sup> The novena takes place once a year, always from November 30th to December 8th, so that the last day coincides with the day of the patron saint of Amazonas, Our Lady of the Conception. The celebration takes place every year and is included in the temple's festivities calendar.

understanding of the cosmopolitics of this house, it is necessary to provide a brief chronology of the founder of this *Terreiro*, the priest Alaomi. From a young age, Alaomi exhibited his first manifestations with the enchanted beings such as *Cabocla Marina*, Pai Zé Raimundo, *Cabocla Jandira*, an “Indian,” and the Gypsy Salomé, an entity associated<sup>9</sup> with the gypsy lineage, or even with the street people, the *exus*.

Alaomi continued to develop his mediumship by accompanying his mother, who was an Umbandist, to the city’s “*macumbas*.” However, according to the priest, the first formal manifestation occurred at the house of a father of santo named Edivaldo, who was from Pará, trained in *Tambor de Mina*, and worked with the enchanted beings *Cabocla de Pena* and *Cabocla Maria Mineira*. It was through Father Edivaldo that Alaomi received his first obligations in this tradition as a child. As the obligations were carried out at the *Tarumã* waterfall and in the early morning, and due to the darkness, the priest recounts that he was very scared, having had a manifestation of *Cabocla Mariana* there. In Alaomi’s words:

[...] at that time, the one who took the obligation during the baptism was Caboca Mariana. I was still a child and was very afraid to enter the river. The obligation was performed in the early morning, at the Tarumã, up at the top of the waterfall, and it was very dark. I was scared, and the caboca helped me to enter the river because I was afraid of snakes (Alaomi, 2022, s.p., our translation).

Sometime later, he founded his banca, as a center or *Terreiro* was called in the past. At that time, the priest was known as “Ramiro do Zé Raimundo,” alluding to the enchanted being from the *Família Légua Bugi Buá*, a large family of enchanted beings from *Codó, Maranhão*. Mr. Zé Raimundo performed his healings and requested that a small table be placed so that he could conduct his prayers and *curandagens*<sup>10</sup> for clients. “He came every Thursday to bless and teach remedies to the people who came to the center, all free of charge; the work was done out of charity” (Alaomi, 2022, s.p., our translation).

The enchanted *Cabocla Mariana* was already serving clients and had a significant role with the medium; she was the one who named the house after the Catholic saint and established the *mocororó* ritual. Years later, Alaomi was initiated into Candomblé in Manaus for the *orixá Oxaguiã*, a younger form of *Oxalá*. Two years later, he went to Salvador, where he stayed intermittently for seven years, being spiritually adopted by *Mãe Alda de Oya* of the *Ilê Axé Opô Ajimuda*. From then on, he deepened his knowledge in Candomblé and *Candomblé de Caboclo*,

<sup>9</sup> The lines are like energetic organizations, that is, vibrational distributions of energies that have the same purpose.

<sup>10</sup> Curandagens is a neologism that designates acts of healing and blessing. The same as quackery.



actively participating in festivals and obligations in various houses and nations in Salvador. Upon returning to Manaus, Alaomi reopened and renamed the house, founding the *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò* .

It appears that the constitution of the person as a priest is so synchronically reflected in the sacred space that a small center, which is also a house, becomes a palace. As a center known as the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, it was presided over by *Ramiro do Zé Raimundo*. Now, as a house of Candomblé, or a palace, it is presided over by Alaomi. There is a noticeable growing flow between the cults; however, this does not constitute a hierarchical structure but rather a combination of energies that facilitates the renewal of *axé*<sup>11</sup>. This phenomenon can be analyzed considering the principle of cut:

[...] what is referred to as the “principle of cut” enables people, entities, and things to undoubtedly live in two different worlds, avoiding tensions and clashes: the clash of values as well as the contradictory demands of two societies (Bastide, 1971, p. 517, our translation).

Thus, we can understand that things do not merge but coexist through this flow that keeps them connected. The ritualistic space was presided over by Ramiro do Zé Raimundo, and the center was named *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, who is also the patron saint of pregnant women. It is noteworthy that the term “*conceição*” means the act or effect of conceiving. Still within the same geographical space, the same person, with the *orúko*<sup>12</sup>, named Alaomi, now presides over a house of Candomblé, or a palace called *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò* , devoted to the *orixá Oxum*, who is the deity of waterfalls, sweet water rivers, protector of the womb, pregnancies, and children. Thus, “correspondences are born and die according to the times; but variability is even greater when, instead of studying it over time, we study it in space” (Bastide, 1971, p. 371, our translation). In Alaomi’s words, we can see how correspondences materialize the spaces:

To understand how things are, at that time, I was not yet in Candomblé, and the spirit had already determined that the Umbanda center would be called the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, house of Mama Oxum, as is the syncretism, and many years later, already in Candomblé in Bahia, the mãe de Santo casting the divination shells for me says: Oxum is telling you that she is the great love of your life, that she is your path and owner of your *axé*, everything you do within the *axé* should be in her name. Even though I did

<sup>11</sup> According to Kileuy and Oxaguiã (2014, pp. 40-41), “the term *axé* is, for the Yoruba people, an invisible power that transmits a divine and untouchable energy that people only sense. Called *hamba* or *nguzu* by the Bantu nation, and *exá* by the Fon people, the word *axé* became widespread, popularized and began to be accepted and used by other sister nations. *Axé* is the force that produces growth”.

<sup>12</sup> *Orúko* is the word in Yoruba that designates a name (Kileuy; Oxaguiã, 2014, p. 121).

not know that Oxum was the owner of my path, my odú, and my juntó, the Cabocla Mariana had already read this destiny. Of course, the spirit has no link with Candomblé, but she had already directed my faith to Oxum (Alaomi, 2022, s.p., our translation).

It is important to note that the correspondence occurs between Ramiro do Zé Raimundo and Alaomi of *Oxaguiã*, and between the *Terreiro de Nossa Senhora da Conceição* and the *Ààfin Ìyá Omi À ẹ Ò*. However, the relationship between the spirits, in this case, Seu Zé Raimundo and Dona Mariana, with their respective “religious identities” of the center, is more of a diplomacy (Latour, 2004, p. 410) between entities or something similar, as Mariana does not correspond to *Oxum* in the same way that *Nossa Senhora da Conceição* does in the context of the crossroads. It is interesting to note that, even without apparent correspondences in Candomblé, a spirit presides over a cult in a house devoted to an *orixá*.

Sometime later, well-established in Candomblé, the priest learns through the divination shells that *Oxum*, in addition to being his “*juntó*” (the second *orixá*), is also his path. Thus, despite the priest understanding that the spirit has no link with Candomblé, based on the principles presented, I could find a path for a certain correspondence. It is from this situation of (re)cuts and equivalences that the connection between the Catholic saint, the Yoruba deity, and all the mechanisms that make up this system, which synthesizes the cosmopolitics of this center, can be understood. Thus, it is understood that:

[...] mystical participations operate within the different compartments of the real [...] connecting only the objects or beings that bathe in the same metaphysical current [...]. In summary, participation presupposes a prior framework, a philosophy of the cosmos [...] For participation to be established between a person, an object, a plant, a deity, etc., certain well-defined conditions must be met. The current of unifying forces cannot pass between, for example, a stone of *Xangô*, a plant of *Oxossi*, and a child of *Oxun*. Participation does not operate in any direction; it is oriented, follows lines, and what we call religion is the set of collective representations or rites that designate the lines of force within which it can occur (Bastide, 1961, p. 337, our translation).

Thus, what links the unifying current for participation to occur in the studied system is the priest himself. He establishes participation between the person, the object, the plant, the entities, the deities, the devotees, the house, and the *Terreiro*, essentially with all the constituents of this cosmos. Therefore, the principle of participation can only occur because of the principle of cut, which is constitutive of Afro-Brazilian relations. These principles, therefore, highlight the compartments being traversed, not only in these relations but also in the Amerindian ones, constituting Afro-Indigenous relations.

It is through the principle of cut that classifications occur. Thus, when one set of classifications is homologous to another set, the principle of equivalence comes into play. It is precisely the principle of cut that operates equivalence and allows for the transition (movement) between these worlds to take place. At another level, this space, which accommodates distinct and interconnected cults, reflects the archetypal nature of the priest and vice versa. Depending on the role played, and the rhythm of the drumming, the “turning drum”<sup>13</sup>, rotates and shifts the dance so that the macumba can occur.

In this crossroads context, the promise made by *Cabocla Mariana* “on the head”<sup>14</sup> of Alaomi, to the patroness of Amazonas, is fulfilled. Every December 8th, alongside the celebration of *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, which is also dedicated to the *orixá Oxum* of the house, the festivities of *Bela Turca* are held, with one of the main points being the *mocororó* ritual. “One cannot neglect to pray the *mocororó* so that no one in the house goes to *n lo*” (Alaomi, 2022, s.p.), and this rule includes the priest himself. The expression “*n lo*” originates from Yoruba spoken by Candomblé practitioners, which loosely translates to “going,” but connotes dying, making the passage, or even sending someone or something away. It is not uncommon to hear an initiated Candomblé practitioner say “went to *n lo*” when referring to someone who has passed away. The annual observance of the *mocororó* ritual recalls the care described by Flaksman (2018, p. 318, our translation), where “in Candomblé, the term ‘care’ has another meaning: when it is said that someone needs to settle the saint, for example, or even fulfill a minor obligation, the term used is always ‘to care’, in addition to being an *ẹbọ*, as the researcher reports, which serves to prevent many evils, including the most undesirable, death.

After all this preparation, the priest, the children of the saint, and other guests kneel before the already prepared altar and begin with the Catholic prayer of the “*Sinal da Cruz* (Sign of the Cross).” The right thumb is dipped in a small amount of holy water, placed in a small container, and three crosses are marked: one on the forehead, another on the mouth, and another on the chest, while reciting:

First cross: By the sign of the Holy Cross.

Second cross: Free us, God our Lord,

Third cross: From our enemies.

<sup>13</sup> Tambor de *virada*, turning the drum or crossing, is the act that happens when the work lines are to be changed; that is if in a function, they are working in the forest line and want to change to the street people line, the tambor de *virada* is played. Definition made by the priest *Alaomi*.

<sup>14</sup> In *cabeça* is an expression used by followers of religions of African origin to designate an entity manifested in a medium, incorporated.

This initial prayer is followed by another, "In the name of the Father," where another cross is traced, this time connecting vertically from the forehead to the abdomen, and from the left shoulder to the right shoulder, concluding with an "Amen," which may be said with hands over the heart, touching the mouth, or joined in a prayer position, saying: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." The first to perform this act is the priest, who passes the holy water to one of the children, who then passes it to a sibling, and so on to all those present at the occasion. Concurrently with this first act, the priest makes brief prayers of gratitude for the day, the year, and the blessings received. After everyone has marked their foreheads, the rosary of the novena is initiated in accordance with Catholic tradition. The attendees kneel and face the altar.

The altar is similar to an altar devoted to Catholic saints, as they are the same. It is the place where the images of the saints honored by the house are arranged and organized according to a simple principle. The main devotion image is *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, adorned with rosaries and ribbons of requests and promises, from which the others are arranged. To the left of the main image, in a smaller size, are the images of Jesus Christ (typical of Umbanda with arms slightly outstretched forward, showing the wounds), Santo Antônio, and a candlestick with cherubim. To the right are the images of Santa Bárbara, a small image of Santa Luzia, and an identical candlestick. In the center, there is a seven-day candle and, occasionally, a strength candle, both white. Also on the altar is a small glass bottle with holy water, a white cloth covering the table, and a Bible in the Pastoral edition, containing loose sheets of paper with hymns and other prayers used in the novena. It is important to note that the saint of devotion, *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, *Oxum* at the crossroads, is the devotion of the spirit, the spiritual matriarch of the house, *Cabocla* Mariana. She comes to the head of the priest of the center once a year to preside over *the Ritual of Mocororó*.

### **The *Mocororó* Prepared by The Enchanted One**

*Mocororó* has its origins with the Indigenous peoples, long before the European occupation of Brazil and the subjugation of the cultures that existed here. "This preference of the Indigenous peoples for this drink was already observed by the Portuguese during the time of colonization" (Pereira, 2011, s.p., our translation). Today, the word "*mocororó*" refers to a variety of beverages produced from the fermentation, to varying degrees, of products such as cashew, cassava, and rice, as described in the Bulletin of the Maranhão Folklore Commission

(2007, p. 12, our translation): “*Mocororó* – a drink made from cashew juice fermented outdoors for four days in Ceará. In Maranhão, it is a beverage made from cassava or rice.” This drink is closely linked to religious festivities that are either independent of or rooted in the intersection of Catholic Christian and Amerindian cultures. Other names for *mocororó* include *makururu*, *macururu*, and *tarubá* (Bulletin of the CMF, 2007; Santos, 2010).

In Ceará, *mocororó* made from cashew is used in the *Torém*, a ritual dance of the *Tremembé* ethnic group, during which several liters of the beverage are served. “This Indigenous group is known for their exceptional craftsmanship and the production of *mocororó*, a drink made from cashew, and for their unique dance, the *Torém*, which has brought them social distinction and notoriety” (Pereira, 2011, s.p., our translation). However, “this beverage is not only consumed during the ritual; it is also enjoyed during the day as a form of leisure, especially during the cashew season” (Pereira, 2011, s.p, our translation.). The drink holds significant importance for the Indigenous peoples of the Ceará coast, as “among the ethnic groups that make up the Indigenous Movement of Ceará, at least nine of them produce and/or consume *mocororó*: *Anacé*, *Tapeba*, *Pitaguary*, *Jenipapo-Kanindé*, *Potyguara*, *Tremembé*, *Kariri*, *Gavião*, and *Tubiba Tapuya*” (Santos *et al.*, 2020, p. 174, our translation).

In Maranhão, this drink is made from rice, and it appears that in the past it was widely popular and appreciated. As stated in an editorial from the Bulletin of the CMF (2007, p. 2, our translation):

In this issue of the Bulletin, recipes for *cuxá*, *batipuru* rice, and some traditional beverages in Maranhão cuisine, including *mocororó*, which was once widely sold in São Luís but seems to have disappeared, are provided. However, this beverage, once taken to the Amazonas by priestesses, is now consumed ritually in *Mina terreiros* in the Amazon that are connected to Maranhão's tradition.

It is noted that Alaomi, the priest of the Temple of *Oxum*, began his religious life in a *Terreiro* of the Tambor de Mina tradition, as previously mentioned.

Elsewhere, the Bulletin of the CMF (2007, p. 7, our translation) recounts the testimony of a São Luís resident, “born in 1907, in *Memória de velhos*, v. II, p.177-178, where he describes street vendors in the city: ‘There were old sweet sellers, Black women who sold sweets on the corners at night [...]. There were *mocororó* sellers [...] and fish sellers [...].’” The bulletin also includes an observation from historian *Câmara Cascudo*, who states: “Regarding *Mocororó*, *Câmara Cascudo*, commenting on *aluá* or *aruá*, remarks: ‘Jacques Raimundo cites Maranhão's *mocororó* as an equivalent, but Domingos Vieira Filho describes

it as ‘a kind of porridge made from rice’” (Bulletin of the CMF, 2007, p. 12 apud Câmara Cascudo, 2004, p. 832, our translation). The magazine also provides a recipe for *mocororó* or *macururu*:

Plant 1 or 2 handfuls of rice in the husk in advance and wait for it to sprout. Once sprouted, prepare a thick porridge of rice flour separately and let it cool. Then take the sprouted seeds, carefully wash the shoots, pound them in a small wooden mortar, strain the resulting juice, and pour it into the container with the porridge. Store it away from light and heat, and wait for fermentation, which usually takes 48 hours. The drink is ready, already sweetened by the sugars produced during the starch fermentation and slightly alcoholic (Boletim da CMF, 2007, p. 21, our translation).

In a note, the Bulletin reports that the recipe was:

[...] transcribed from the book *Pecados da Gula: Receita* (LIMA, 1998, v.2, p. 100), as a drink of Indigenous origin. The recipe was obtained by Zelinda Lima from Ana Amélia Lima. Augusto Aranha references *mocororó* in *Memória de Velhos*, v. II (p. 177), as a cold, delightful drink sold by Black women who walked the streets shouting: ‘mocororó, mocororó!’ (Boletim da CMF, 2007, p. 21, our translation).

According to researcher Luíndia (2002, s.p.), a drink called *mukururu* is used in the *Çayré*<sup>15</sup>, “a religious and secular celebration held in *Alter do Chão, Santarém*, a micro-region of the Middle Amazon in Pará,” and the origins of this festival come from the tradition of the *Borari* Indigenous people who inhabited the Santarém region. She divides the *Çairé* celebration into moments called “*cunho*,” and *mukururu* is used specifically in the religious aspect that encompasses the customs of the Indigenous peoples and missionaries.

Religious aspect: the religious festival is highlighted, where the *Çairé* was used in religious celebrations for Our Lady of Health and St. Joseph (January 6 and 7). On these days, the Indigenous people would perform religious salutations, customs introduced by the missionaries. Initially, the festivity was called *Çairé* or *Turiúa*. It consisted of a procession of women carrying the *Çairé*. During the saint’s celebration, they would raise an altar where the miraculous image was placed, with the *Çairé* at its feet. Alongside the house, they would prepare a large hut where dinner was served, and some dances were performed. Days before the celebration, large quantities of “*tarubá* or *mukururu*” (fermented cassava drink) were prepared, which was considered the soul of the festival (Luíndia, 2002, s.p., our translation).

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<sup>15</sup> “The *Çayré* is a wooden semicircle measuring 1.40m in diameter that represents Noah’s ark. It contains two smaller arches placed on the larger diameter. This symbolic object is decorated with ribbons of different colors, beautiful red and white feathers, mirrors, and other ornaments. Its purpose was to perpetuate and further establish the [Christian] religion among the Indians. It perpetuates the flood and the three persons of the Holy Trinity” (Luíndia, 2002, n.p.). Other forms of writing: *sayré*, *sairé*.

At the *Nossa Senhora da Conceição Terreiro*, *mocororó* is prepared in a manner similar to the Maranhão tradition, with its ingredients being white rice, coconut milk, sugar, ginger (known in the Amazon as *mangarataia*), fennel, and cloves. The eldest sister in the religion, who is properly observing the precepts, is responsible for preparing the drink. On the penultimate day of the novena, she, dressed in white and with a headscarf, begins the preparations. First, she lights a white candle at the sacred tree of the *Terreiro*, asking permission from the “owners of the house,” the guides, and the ancestors. Then, in a regular pot, she cooks the rice on a gas stove, owing to modern convenience, though “things made on the fire always have more strength” (Alaomi, 2022, s.p., our translation).

There are siblings who simply observe, and in between light conversation or a question answered by the priest, they learn the process. Other siblings help as much as they can, under the guidance of the elder sister. With a piece of cloth or even a clean napkin, a small pouch is made to crush the fennel and cloves. The *mangarataia* can be grated, processed, or even crushed, depending on the moment or how far along the preparation is. Once the rice is cooked, it is processed in a blender and returned to the pot so that the other ingredients can be mixed in and cooked together for a while. If the mixture becomes too thick, water is gradually added so that it does not become too watery.

After everything is ready, at the base of the tree and on a *tamborete*<sup>16</sup> covered with a white cloth, the porridge is left to rest for twenty-four hours. In front of this small, improvised altar, a glass of clean water and a white strength candle are placed. The sister who prepared it asks that the *mocororó* not sour, as “in the past, when the *mocororó* soured, the person who prepared it had to drink it all without leaving any” (Alaomi, 2022, n.p., our translation). The sister was concerned that everything would go well because if the *mocororó* spoiled, besides the sourness, after everything is done, the food yields at least a few liters, and despite her fear, the sister recounts that the *mocororó* never spoiled. This entire process takes place after a novena, specifically the penultimate one.

Thus, after the twenty-four hours of the final night of the novena, which falls precisely on December 8th, the day dedicated to the patron saint of the city of Manaus, *Nossa Senhora da Conceição*, the *mocororó* ritual also takes place. The novena is recited as usual, in the Catholic style, and a litany devoted to the saint of the day is typically sung. After this more Christian part, the space is purified with smoke. In an improvised censer, an old, lidless pressure cooker, hot coals, already prepared beforehand, are placed along with the incense prepared by

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<sup>16</sup> A *Tamborete* is a bench or stool made of wood.

the house's priest.

First, the priest smudges the altar of the saints and then proceeds to purify each person present. In line, first facing forward with arms open, the devotee is smudged on the left side, then the right, and then turns to the left; once facing backward, the smudging process is repeated. Finally, the censer is brought to the floor, and facing the devotees, they smudge their hands by crossing them over the smoke, then their feet, one at a time, as they each pass in front of the priest. During this process, ritualistic objects like maracas, the devotees' swords<sup>17</sup>, and items to be used in the ritual, including the *mocororó* itself, may also be smudged. This part of the process is accompanied by smudging songs, the most common being:

Smudge with the herbs of Jurema.  
Smudge with rue and guinea,  
Benzoin, rosemary, and lavender.  
Let's smudge the faithful children.

This song evokes the energies of Jurema, which refers to both an enchanted being and a state of enchantment, for the "cleansing" of the space. From this point, the calling songs begin, in this case, to summon *Cabocla* Mariana, who will preside over the *mocororó* ritual. After the entity manifests in the house's priest, Dona Mariana, as we call her, begins putting on her liturgical garments while speaking, giving messages, and offering scoldings with the intimacy of someone who feels like family, and in truth, she is. She also asks for something to drink and smoke, speaking in a jocular tone: "Give me a '*pumosa*'<sup>18</sup>, for I am parched, parched, parched... Because it's been so long since I've had a drink." Despite the spontaneity of the entity's speech, the ritualistic atmosphere envelops the gathering. After a few songs and some words with the devotees, Dona Mariana asks for the space to be prepared for the ritual.

Thus, with a white cloth spread on the ground, the main ritual space is formed. At the end of the cloth closest to the altar, the candle, the glass of water, and the porridge that has been resting are placed. The "*Bela Turca*" approaches with her chair, blowing smoke, shaking maracas, singing songs, and offering prayers to God and Our Lady of Conceição. In this way, she transforms the porridge into *mocororó*, the consecrated food. Next to the entity stands an assistant, holding a basin of clean water halfway filled and several regional gourds to serve the drink. From this point, the faithful, one by one, approach, bow, and lie fully on the white cloth

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<sup>17</sup> The sword (plural swords) is a rectangular piece of fabric, usually satin, adorned with satin or polyester fringes, an instrument that, due to its versatility, serves as protection, a means of demanding, shaking, and dispatching.

<sup>18</sup> "*Pumosa*" is a linguistic variant used by incorporated entities. It comes from the word *esfomosa*, which refers to the foam on beer, which is the most popular drink at parties for enchanted beings and entities.



in an act of reverence.

Dona Mariana shakes her maraca and blesses the person, who then takes a kneeling posture, bending the torso and resting the elbows on the legs or the ground, waiting to be served. Using one gourd as a ladle, the entity fills another gourd, which is handed to the person, who drinks while receiving blessings from the master of the ceremony. The gourd is returned to the entity, who passes it to the assistant, who washes it in clean water to be reused. Having participated in this ritual a few times myself, I can say that *mocororó* is a mildly sweet porridge, with the flavor and aroma of the spices within it, especially the anise, and a grainy but soft texture due to the processed rice. This process is repeated until the last devotee has taken the *mocororó*. The remaining food and the water used to wash the gourds are reserved under a tree to be disposed of the next day in a suitable location designated by the enchanted entity.

The moment of sharing the *mocororó* is accompanied by a specific chant, like a *responso*<sup>19</sup> hymn, led by *Cabocla Mariana*:

*“Mariá, marió  
Graças a Deus de mocororó  
O’joni baba, o’joni baba”*

The transcriptions provided here approximate the pronunciation of the chant. Alaomi (2022, n.p.) suggests that this chant may be in reverence to the ancestors, as there is a common greeting to *Bàbá Egun*, often heard during *egun* festivities in Bahia. There, they refer to Candomblé as *Bàbá*:

*Ibó Leribô  
Ateleriô  
Ê Bàbá Mariô  
Rei, rei, rei.*

In all these greetings, people shout when *Bàbá* enters the hall or gathering space. In José Beniste’s book “*Òrun - Àyé: The Meeting of Two Worlds*” (2020, p. 43), there is a greeting to the “lord of the day”: “*Olojô Oní, mo júbà o*”, which translates as “Lord of this Day, my respects, I salute you.” Thus, the word ‘baba’ may refer to ‘bàbá,’ which is used in Candomblé

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<sup>19</sup> “Response or responsorial, coming from the responsorial psalm of the office of the Catholic Holy Mass, “the name responsorial given to this psalm comes from the way in which it is generally performed: the psalmist reads or sings the verses of the psalm, while the assembly intervenes with a response, that is, a refrain or antiphon” (Melo, 2011, p. 41, our translation).

to designate father and lord. This word, originating from Yoruba, also designates the deity of the masculine ancestry worship called “*Bàbá Egun*” in Candomblé. Some translate ‘*Egun*’ as ‘bone,’ while in *Yoruba*, the word ‘*Ègún*’ can mean curse or evil. However, in the context of the *mocororó* ritual, the enchanted *Cabocla* Mariana might evoke a variant of this Yoruba greeting to honor the lord, or rather, the lady of the day, herself, the lady of the festival. Furthermore, in some nations, enchanted entities may be understood as “*Egun*.” Perhaps the meanings embedded in this word, buried by time, have generated the care and rituals required for the execution of the *mocororó* ceremony.

### **Final considerations**

When I began this research, I could not have imagined the extent to which beverages and/or foods named *mocororó* are used. The history of this drink, which starts with the indigenous peoples of northeastern Brazil, particularly in Ceará and Maranhão, extends through Pará and reaches as far as the Amazon. It carries with it an almost inexhaustible wealth of ancestral cultural and religious knowledge. *Mocororó* has served traditional peoples, Afro-Indigenous, and Amerindian cultures as a source of resistance and memory, as well as a ritual drink that sets the tone and establishes a connection with the spiritual world.

Other connections occur, such as the equivalence between the veneration of Catholic saints and the worship of *orixás* in Umbanda and Candomblé. However, this equivalence does not result in what has been canonized as syncretism, since each classification system operates distinctly from the other, and equivalence occurs as the priest exercises their agency. The concept of the crossroads also functions in linking these worship practices, yet without collapsing their boundaries of distinction. The worship of the Catholic saint and the African *orixá* coexist in the same space/time, but one does not become the other, nor do they form a new practice; they simply equate for the ritual of *mocororó* to take place.

In the *Terreiro* of Our Lady of Conceição, the *mocororó* ritual, seemingly simple, brings with it the remembrance of the ancestors and renewal for the days ahead, while also fostering socialization, integration, and brotherhood among participants. In this house, *mocororó* is undoubtedly a cultural and religious heritage from the northeastern region of Brazil, which has crossed into the northern states and found its place here in the humble yet powerful Temple of *Oxum*, in the city of Manaus.

Thus, a small house can hold within its cosmos an infinity of universes: people, priests,

initiates, ancestors, entities, cultures, times—past, present, and future—along with the rites. The house returns all of this, to the cosmos and to the people, processed through a cycle of practices and Energy. And so, in the house of Our Lady, I drank the *mocororó* that the enchanted one had prepared.

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