

Food in African Brazilian Candomblé

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The aim of this article is to highlight the importance of food in the rituals of African Brazilian Candomblé, as well as in its *cosmovision* (world view). A brief description of Candomblé's historical trajectory is provided in order to show how food offerings became part of its rituals and how specific ingredients became symbolically significant in this belief system. According to the theories applied, it is possible that food has at least two functions in Candomblé: to materialize principles and also to work as a ritual language. To show the role of food in Candomblé the state of Bahia was taken as a case study – firstly because Candomblé started there and secondly because, as this article shows, the sacred foods of Candomblé are also consumed in everyday life, outside of religious situations, but just as importantly constituting a part of Bahian cultural identity. The dishes that feature in the ritualised meals and at the same time in Bahians' everyday eating are described at the conclusion of the article, with a mention of their ingredients and to whom they are offered. The research sources included publications by Candomblé believers and scholars of religion, as well as cooks and journalists specialising in Bahian cuisine.

Most studies about food and religion are carried out by scholars of religion rather than of food or nutrition and it would seem that religious studies have been more concerned with understanding food practices in the religious field than food studies have been concerned with the impact of religion on food habits.

My perspective though, fits the second case. Since I come from the field of food research, my starting point is food culture up until the point where religion is encountered as a cultural element capable of determining or changing food habits. I seek to understand the range of foods and foodways in the religious context.

Almost all religiosities could be studied from the point of view of food as food whether it is encountered in or out of a religious context is often a vehicle for representation. In some belief systems food can be really one of the main ways of expressing the *cosmovision*. This is the case with Brazilian Candomblé, and this is the reason why I have chosen it. Candomblé possibly wouldn't exist

without its food practices. In this article I try to distinguish the different functions food can perform within this particular belief system.

The article begins with a little historical contextualization concerning the origins of Candomblé. The second section addresses the basic *cosmovision*, or worldview, that permeates Candomblé. I do not intend to explore very deeply any of these topics here. I shall simply mention enough for the reader to have an idea as to where food practices are situated within this context. The two following sections discuss the functions of food *per se*, the materialization of abstract ideas or pacts and language, as I try to show how food can be viewed as a religious language in Candomblé.

Finally, by showing that within the culture of Candomblé the food which features in its rituals is also a part of everyday life, I intend to demonstrate the power of food and religion combined; how one reinforces the other, even outside of the religious context.

Many different religions either use food in their ritual practices or have rules about food. Actually, almost all religions have something to say about food, using such terms as pure/impure foods, sacred foods, food taboos, feast and fast, dietetics associated with religious *cosmovisions*, food as symbols, sacrifices and offerings. Indigenous, tribal and orally-transmitted religions seem to have stronger relationships with food, apparently due to a proximity to agriculture; while official religions have veritable manuals on the proper ways of eating. In any case, the bond between religious practices and food can sometimes be truly unbreakable. One thing favours the other: in certain religions food practices may help believers to express their belief in the religion, while the religion may have the effect of preserving typical dishes which are specific to regions or cultures. And in many cases one can observe both of these effects.

The origins of Candomblé

African Brazilian Candomblé is a Brazilian religion based on African religious cults brought to the continent by African slaves between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of the African deities and the forms of worshipping them had been transplanted to Brazil and after many adaptations, Candomblé came into being. One important thing to know in order to comprehend the nature of Candomblé is that Brazil received slaves from various regions of western Africa. Each group had its own culture, language, religion, and the like, and many of them became mixed up with each other in Brazil, forming new groups, and subsequently generating a culture which was characterised by hybrid forms of language and religion. In order to pre-empt a rebellion, slaves from different

cultures were very often intentionally mixed together by the Portuguese during their passage to Brazil. In the state of Bahia, however, a large number of slaves from closely related cultures (Jeje-Nago)¹ were brought together and as a consequence they were able to affirm each other in reproducing the greater portion of their belief system, which, with a few adaptations, formed the origins of Candomblé and which later diffused out to other Brazilian states. The African cults that arrived in Brazil had in common the usage of food in their rituals, in the form of offerings and sacrifices. Candomblé retained this custom, although adaptation was needed.

The food used in Candomblé rituals is called *comida de santo* (a Brazilian Portuguese expression, which literally means ‘saints’ food’) and it reflects the African cult’s history in Brazil. Some of the important ingredients used in the offerings associated with the *orisas*² cult, such as *dende*³, okra, yams, guinea fowl, *malagueta* pepper and others, travelled from Africa to Brazil with the slaves. Other ingredients which had been left behind had to be replaced by local ones such as corn, cassava root and alternative strains of chilli peppers. Just as did their beliefs, their foodways underwent adaptations in order to survive. The structure of their religion had been changed in order to preserve its organization. The ingredients may also have changed, but the custom of making food offerings to deities and ancestors was maintained. Eventually, such ingredients would figure not only on deities’ menus, but also on those of the colonialists’. Slaves would offer their gods the best of what they had; usually foods eaten by the colonialists, obtained at a high cost. By offering something so special and so valuable they expressed their belief in the divinity of the *orisas*.

From the foods served to the Gods, none takes ingredients served to slaves ... the daily foods served to slaves were based on beans, lard and pumpkin. In certain periods of the year, pumpkin was substituted by bananas and in some sugar cane mills there was a supplement of dried meat. (Radel 2006: 58, 59)

- 1 Terms in italics in this article are African expressions, mainly in Yoruba, the main language used by the Jeje-Nago group. I translate or explain them in footnotes. The terms in italics not translated in the footnotes are the names of dishes.
- 2 *Orisas* are African deities worshipped in Candomblé.
- 3 *Dende* is a palm oil.

Candomblé doesn't impose a fast or make pronouncements about pure/impure foods, regular diets or dietetics; but it wouldn't exist without its food practices. And although it is not a religion which is concerned about what a believer eats, nevertheless food plays a central role in Candomblé's rituals.

A small window on the Jeje-Nago *cosmovision*; introducing the concept of ase

To understand the role of food in Candomblé it is necessary to understand the African cults' *cosmovision*. The *jeje-nago* system believes that:

There are two denominations which denote the places in which the process of existence is developed: the Aiye indicates the physical world, inhabited by all beings, humans generally called *ara aiye*; and the Orun, which is the supernatural world, inhabited by the deities. The *orisas*, ancestors and all forms of spirits are called *ara Orun*. They inhabit Orun's nine different spaces according to the power and category they have. It is in the Orun that the doubles of all living people from the Aiye, called *enikeji*, are installed and it is to here that all the offerings [food offerings] are sent. (Beniste 2002: 49)

Contrary to what many people think, Candomblé is a monotheistic religion and Olodumare is its supreme god. Mediating between God and humans are the *orisas*. According to Candomblé these are the great servants, and at the same time the great teachers, of humanity.

These divine beings have a very complex nature and should be considered as a group. Some of them would have lived with the Supreme Being at the beginning of time. Others are historical figures such as kings, queens, founders of cities who were deified as a result of certain acts or in recognition of their mythic bonds with natural elements – earth, wind, the spirit of hunting, rivers, tides, herbs and minerals ... they represent the personification of natural forces and natural phenomena: birth and death, rain and dew, trees and rivers; they also represent the three kingdoms: mineral, vegetable and animal, as well as the principles of masculinity and femininity. (Beniste 2002: 77)

According to Nago mythology, at the beginning of time Orun and Aiye used to be one world, uncompartimentalised. *Orisas* and humans would live together:

The myth reveals that in the distant past, the Aiye and the Orun were not separate. Existence unfolded itself on two levels and the beings of both spaces would go from one to another without hindrance; the *orisas* inhabited the Aiye and human beings could go to the Orun and come back. After the violation of an important interdiction the Orun and Aiye became separated and the existing world was set apart; human beings could no longer go to the Orun and come back alive from there. (Santos 1986: 54)

Although these worlds have become separate they are still dependent upon each other. In Candomblé they say that ‘life doesn’t end with death, just as sweetness doesn’t end with honey’ (Reis 2000: 295). When a person dies their life continues in a different way; they become what is called an *egun*,⁴ now inhabiting the Orun. This fact is attested by a ritual called *asese*, which is at the same time a funeral ceremony and also considered a new beginning:

Without *asese* there is no beginning, there is no existence. The *asese* is the origin and, at the same time it is the dead realm, the passage from individual existence to the generic existence of the Orun. There is no confusion between the Aiye’s reality – the dead – and its symbol or its double in the Orun – the Egun. (Santos 1986: 235)

And that’s why ‘the cult of the ancestors is mandatory in Candomblé; it assures the initiated their immortality. Life always goes on, either on the physical level (Aiye) as a person, or on the spiritual level (Orun) as an ancestor’ (Reis 2000: 295). If death is the door for humans to the Orun, as they become *eguns*, possession is one important door for *orisas* and sometimes *eguns*, to come to the Aiye.

Nevertheless, there is a crucial principle that holds the worlds together, allowing an entire system of a flow of communication and energy between them. *Ase* is known as the principle of accomplishment that animates and drives everything. For didactic purposes one could to some extent compare *ase* to the concepts of *prana*, *ki* and similar ideas found in many other religions.

The presence of the supernatural entities, *orisa* and *egun*, can only be possible through ritual activity. The priestesses, the altars, the consecrated objects and the entire ritual system would cease if there was not a periodic transference and redistribution of *ase*. (Santos 1986: 51)

4 An *egun* is a spirit of the dead, an ancestor.

Ase is not endless and 'is not born spontaneously; it has to be transmitted' (Santos 1986: 36). So all the *ase* a person receives has to be re-established at specific moments, such as birth, several initiations, death or less predictable ones such as disease, starting a business, and so forth. Each person is related to a few *orisas* and is supposed to worship these *orisas* throughout his or her life. The relationship a person maintains with the *orisas* and *eguns* will directly impact on the balance of *ase* in this person's life. By worshipping the *orisas* *ase* can be assured. When a person dies, most of his or her *ase* is given back to the Orun, where it will be used by others.

A decrease in a person's *ase* can be caused by many factors, including improper behaviour (excesses), not fulfilling obligations to the *orisas*, curses, the action of evil spirits, *egun's* vengeance etc. Such an unbalance of *ase* is detected when a person gets sick, suffers injuries, goes through financial difficulties or any other problem that prevents them from achieving their destiny in the Aiye. Problems in life can really be an indication (in C. S. Peirce's [1967] sense) of a decrease in *ase*. In such cases rituals involving food offerings are performed in order to increase *ase* again. 'To acquire and accumulate *ase* is a process in which the horizon is the promise of permanence and the irreversibility of vital force' (Vogel 2001: 93).

'*Ase* is transmissible; is passed on by material and symbolic means and it is accumulative. It is a force that can be acquired by means of introjection or contact. It may be transmitted both to objects and human beings' (Santos 1986: 39). *Ase* always seems to need a material vehicle in order to be transmitted and food, in the form of food offerings, has presented itself as the main one. Minerals and ingredients from the vegetable kingdom, as well as animal sacrifice can be used individually or in combination as food offerings. These offerings are made to the *orisas*, *eguns* and sometimes the person's double. Once the food is offered, Esu⁵ will take it to its addressee in the Orun. It is important to remember that Esu also 'eats' and he should be offered first, otherwise the offerings won't be delivered.

The food offered is not materially eaten by the deities, although it is believed that all energy (*ase*) from food offerings is transferred to the addressed entity in the sense of nurturing. Once the food has been left sitting for a sufficient period of time it can usually be consumed by the clergy and the initiated. The food offered is supposed to be steeped with *ase* which will pass into those who

5 Esu is an African male deity who is a messenger, a guardian and also the facilitator of creation. Represented by its phallus and the colours black and red he is very often confused with the devil.

are eating it. However in some cases food offerings cannot be eaten and must be delivered to specific places according to the *orisa* or other deity to which the food has been dedicated, and it might be left, for example, at the beach, river, forest, stone quarry, crossroads, or the cemetery.

Food embodies principles

In Candomblé 'ritual activities engender a series of other activities: music, dance, singing, recitation, art, crafts, the culinary arts, etc., that integrate the system of values and the *cosmovision* of the *terreiro*' (Santos 1986: 38). But only something so basic and at the same time so essential to the maintenance of life, such as food, could embody so well the values of Candomblé. Candomblé believers also pray, play the drums and have a dress code in order to worship their *orisas*, but in this culture, food may seem to be the best means of encapsulating its values. The verb 'to eat' is a current word in Candomblé rituals because not only do living beings eat, but so also do invisible deities and objects 'eat'; the *buzios* (the oracle of cowrie shells) eat, statues of the *orisas* eat, masks and drums eat. Every thing and every being that receives the proper food offerings acquires *ase* and becomes alive. The act of making food offerings is called 'to plant *ase*' (Santos 1986: 43). Once *ase* is 'planted' the deity or object has to 'eat' periodically, according to a liturgical calendar. Thus nurturing entities and objects (that eventually become entities) is a way of establishing pacts and alliances between believers and supernatural forces; implicating rights and duties on both sides. As Candomblé uses food to transport *ase*, we can understand food as the factor that turns the abstract into the substantial. Even though human communication is based on verbal language, it still seems to require some sort of non-verbal, but physical demonstration.

It is more usual for the subject matter of messages to have weight and dimension, and for the signs representing them to be insubstantial: words, spoken or written. ... [W]hen that which is signified is incorporeal, like worthiness or influence, its representation may have to be material if is to be taken seriously. ... [W]ords 'must be made heavy' if they are to be convincing. Corporeal representation gives weight to the incorporeal and gives visible substance to aspects of existence which are themselves impalpable, but of great importance in the ordering of social life. (Rappaport 1999: 141)

For example, sex is concrete, one can talk about it, but wedding proposals only seem real when followed by wedding rings. Especially when the social order is based on religious premises it is even more essential to convert its deities and principles into something concrete and mainly objective. Pacts and bonds between man and immaterial beings need to be made substantial, according to Roy Rappaport, discussing Marcel Mauss's concern 'with the moral obligation to return gifts':

Conventional bonds cannot be specified without words, but cannot always be established by words alone. ... Bonds among the living are not alone in requiring substantiation. The substantiation of the conventional by the material is also an aspect of sacrifice, whether the sacrificial act is understood to be an offering or a communion. If an offering, devotion is made substantial; if a communion, that which might otherwise remain an abstraction is first made substantial and then informs the performer as it is assimilated into his substance. (Rappaport 1999: 142)

According to Candomblé believers, deities also materialize their messages; nature can be 'read' through animal and plant behaviour and the weather also emits signals from the *orisas* to those who are capable of interpreting the signs. Many of us have lost the ability to read the signs in nature, but a experienced interpreter would still detect them. During the course of our evolution we've spent more time communicating in non-verbal than verbal ways. 'The message traffic in four out of the five kingdoms is exclusively non-verbal; verbal messages have been found only in animals and there surge solely in one extant subspecies, *Homo sapiens sapiens*' (Sebeok 1994: 7). And not only natural phenomena may communicate, but also objects. Graham Harvey, mentioning the Yorubas from Nigeria, conveniently says about the cowrie shells, kola nuts and other divinatory systems: 'Deities speak through objects. Meanings are recognized in what some others might interpret as random events (note that "randomness" is much an interpretation as "there is meaning here")' (Harvey 2013: 144). An initiate believer can glean information even from ordinary everyday objects.

The kitchen [where the *comida de santo* is prepared] is full of interdictions: not to talk more than necessary, not to speak loud, scream, sing or dance to music that is not related to the *orisas*, not to allow people who are not initiated. ... In this consecrated space everything gains meaning: a bowl that falls, the fork, the knife, the spoon, the oil that smokes too much when burning. In the kitchen one can learn beyond the right consistency of a

dish, learn not to turn the back to fire, not to throw salt on the floor, not to stir food with a spoon that is made out of wood, that food stirred by two people goes bad, not to put out a fire with water or that the presence of people related to certain *orisas* makes the food turn out bad, as in the example that when there are people related to Sango⁶ in the kitchen, popcorn kernels will burn before they pop. (Junior 2009: 83)

Another great example of the deities speaking through objects is the *lubaça* game. *Lubaça* is a word for onion. In this case an onion cut in four equal pieces becomes an oracle. 'After votive food is prepared, right there, the *lubaça* is thrown in order to find out if the food has been accepted or not by the *orisa*. If the answer is negative, the food should be prepared again.' (Junior 2009: 75)

This non-verbal language is taken so seriously in Candomblé that they are really careful not to 'send messages by accident'. A person would never pass a knife directly to another; it could cause a fight. The knife should be placed on a surface by one person and then picked up by the other. Similarly certain foods are not offered to certain *orisas* or *eguns* because of the possibility of miscommunication with unfortunate consequences.

Food as language

The so-called *comida de santo*, or ritual food practices in Candomblé can be understood as language in a sense that the offerings communicate something to supernatural beings and to the other participants. *Ase* is the message that is supposed to be transmitted between the two worlds, the Orun and the Aiye, and the believers' intentions are messages transmitted to other participants and deities. Whatever intentions are to be communicated, they can and ought to be converted into 'food language'; we can understand it as a transduction, as Rappaport suggests:

Transduction (the technical term for the transmission of information or energy from one form or system to another) is not always a matter of mere transmission. It is often necessary to translate information into terms which are meaningful to the receiving system or subsystem. Sometimes translation, if it should even be called so, is a simple matter of changing modality, for instance from the grooves of a phonograph record to the sounds emanating from a speaker. The 'languages' or metrics of the two subsystems, the

6 Sango is the *orisa* of justice, fire and thunder.

record's grooves and the vibrations of the speaker, are supposed to correspond to each other perfectly. (Rappaport 1999: 98)

Food in Candomblé can be understood as a language not only because it is able to transmit messages, but also because it follows a strict grammar. This grammar dictates which foods should be used, for what purposes, how, by whom and to whom. A change in one of these variables would produce an unexpected result: a miscommunication or a non-communication. In the same way that several languages use the same 26 letters of the alphabet to produce totally different languages, so different religions can use the same ingredients to produce totally different results.

As in other religions that also have food as a ritual element, there are two different sets of rules determining the ways of *comida de santo*: one is the religion, which will establish the reasons for and ways of making food offerings in Candomblé, as presented before. And the other is the food system itself. Every culture existing within a geographical area, at least in its beginning, is subject to its environment. The climate, the soil, the mountains or valleys, the rivers or deserts will design the products of the land; the abundance or scarcity of foods, as well as the possible techniques for obtaining, preserving and transforming them. Considering the symbolic capacity (language) of humans, everything acquires a meaning, including food:

In all societies the way of eating is ruled by conventions analogous to those that give meanings and stability to the verbal languages. This set of conventions, which we call grammar, configures the food system not only as the addition of products and foods, reunited in a more or less causal way, but as a structure in which each element defines its meaning. (Montanari 2008: 165)

The combination of geographical and physical conditions, plus cultural aspects would construct culinary systems with their own grammar:

The culinary systems of nations do not emerge only from mere survival instinct and necessity of nutrition. They are expressions of their histories, geographies, climate, social organization and religious beliefs. Because of that, the forces that condition a taste or revulsion for particular foods are different from one society to another. (Franco 2006: 25)

A culinary system will say which foods are proper; what is the correct 'grammatical' way of preparing and serving it and to whom. Even without religion, implied culinary systems impose rules and values onto food and foodways. Within a religious system this grammar can be amplified and justified. Religion will attribute meanings to foodways and food taboos. Even when they have been transported from one place to another, culinary systems tend to sustain their grammar, in the sense of proposition, as much as possible. In the same way, when a local culinary system is confronted by a new one it tends to preserve its values in response to the new grammar. 'Culinary practices are not so easily destroyed as are caliphates and theocracies' (Miller 2009: 159).

The highly structured nature of food systems is reflected in a tendency to reproduce models of reference ... even in a case of a forced detachment from customary practices, a system might persist in as close a proximity as possible to its own culture, to the 'language' that is well known ... inventions of all kinds are attested to adapt available resources to techniques and practices which are already well known. (Montanari 2008: 171)

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the food habits that came to South America with African slaves, informed by their *cosmovision*, underwent adaptations just as as much as the local food system was influenced by the African slaves' religious foodways.

This interplay of preservation and adaptation can be perfectly observed in Candomblé food practices. Back in Africa, the *Orisas* would already have had their proper votive foods, based on African local culinary systems. Subsequently Brazil would offer a whole different culinary system; a mixture of local indigenous and Portuguese factors. In the meeting of the three different culinary systems a new one emerged; the Brazilian. In Salvador, Bahia, due to a large number of slaves coming from similar cultures (and thus with similar culinary systems) it is possible to identify what is called in Brazil 'the African cuisine of Bahia': a system where, definitely, the African culinary system predominates. Some authors attribute this fact to the influence of religion on the African culinary system:

The orisas would have the favourite dishes, Sango, *caruru*, Osun⁷, chicken *xin-xin*, Osala⁸, *hausa* rice without salt. To a large extent, if African cuisine

7 Osun is a female *orisa* of love, fertility, waterfalls and rivers, gold and prosperity.

8 Osala is a male *orisa* of wisdom and peace. Superior to other *orisas*, he is referred to as the 'father of all'.

can hold its own in Bahia, against the Portuguese or indigenous systems based on cassava root, it has happened due to its relation to the cult of the gods, and the gods do not like changing their habits. (Bastide 1960: 464)

... [T]he slaves which were brought to Bahia, being a more homogenous population, practised almost the same religion; Jeje-Nago. The African-Bahian cuisine derives from the culinary practices performed in the *terreiros*⁹. *Orisas* would be worshiped at ritual banquets as demanded by the cult, and each *orisa* has its own votive food. The only ingredients in these votive foods were guinea fowl and the palm oil present in most of the offerings ... it should be mentioned that most white people accepted these votive foods and transferred them to the holy week, to the Cosme and Damion festival and to Saint Barbara's festival when *caruru*, *vatapas*, *efos*, *fradinho*¹⁰ and black beans are prepared in palm oil, *xin-xin*, regular rice, *mungunza*, *abara*, *acaraje*, raw sugar, sugar cane and slices of dried coconut are served. (Radel 2006: 59)

A more homogenized concentration of black slaves could be verified to pertain in the city of Salvador, a more intimate one, and as such facilitating a defence of the old African foods more than in other places. It would be around the Candomblés, around the Jeje-Nago cults, that the African cuisine could sustain the primary elements of its survival. (Cascardo 2004: 824)

When it comes to what is considered votive and what is regular food in Bahia, it is very difficult to draw a line. They seem to be really blended. Many of the votive foods in Candomblé would have been in the first instance regular dishes which started to be used as votive dishes later, when Candomblé was more defined as a religion.

It is more logical that slaves, in the same way that they included *moqueca* and *caruru* in their *orisas'* diet, would have their specialties appreciated in noble houses, *vatapa*, *caruru*, *acaraje*, *acaça*, independently of the functions of these foods in candomblé. It would be food of the gods and also of the devotees from

9 A *terreiro* is a house or cottage where African Brazilian Candomblé is practiced.

10 *Fradinho* is a specific type of bean from Borneo, disseminated in Brazil and Africa by the Portuguese.

the *peji*¹¹ sanctuary. Before *Sango*, *amala* was a regular dish. (Cascardo 1977: 837)

However, we should be reminded of the fact that these ‘first, regular dishes’ were an African legacy, and that means these regular dishes were permeated by their religious *cosmovision*. When Brazil was a Portuguese colony African slaves were always the only source of manpower. The kitchen was one of the main areas of activity which would require slaves: ‘In Brazil, the African presence in the kitchen was indispensable and regular. It was the most common, natural and proper of the occupations.’ (Cascardo 2004: 836)

Africans tend always to have a religious attitude towards food. Their relationship with *orisas* would permeate their agricultural practices. ‘Those who give me what to eat also eat...’ (Junior 2009: 34), says an African song. One good example is celebration of the *orisa* called Osala, a ritual that commemorates the harvest of the new yams. This ritual is known as ‘Osala’s pestle’, with which in earlier times they would make yam flour. The idea of giving back to the gods was always present in the African culture, so it would be natural that such a belief passed into the dishes along with African ingredients.

We could say then that the division of foods into religious and non-religious categories doesn’t exist for the Africans, or that what really highlights the difference is the precepts (grammar) which apply when food is being prepared and which impact on to whom it will be served: *orisas* and *eguns*, versus the Aiyé people. At the *terreiros* food is offered to *orisas* and *eguns* on specific occasions following rigid and, most of the time, secret and ritual precepts. But in the houses, restaurants and streets of Salvador the same food is being consumed by everyone, including people who have no connection to Candomblé and even people who belong to other religions.

Here follows a list of dishes served as offerings which also figure at the same time on people’s tables every day or even are sold as street food. In order to make such list we have used as reference cookbooks on general Brazilian and Bahian cookery, as well as a Salvadorean restaurant guide (*Veja magazine* 2014), comparing them to texts from scholars speaking on votive foods of Candomblé:

Abara is a batter made out of *fradinho* beans, to which *dende*, *malagueta*, onions and salt are added and steam cooked. An African equivalent is found in Nigeria under the name of *moin-moin*. It is offered to the *orisa* Osun. (Radel 2006: 154)

11 *Peji* is a sacred room where private rituals take place.

Acaraje is the definitively iconic dish of Bahia and of the entire *comida de santo*. It consists of a fritter made out of *fradinho* beans fried in *dende* oil and served with dried shrimps. It is the most popular street food. It is sold by the famous *baianas do acaraje* (Bahian women dressed on African costumes). *Acaraje* is one of the offerings to Yansa¹².

Acaça can be made with white or yellow corn and may be sweet or savoury. It is a batter made out of the crushed corn mixed with water and cooked until it thickens. It is wrapped in triangular shaped banana leaves. When it cools off it acquires a distinctive consistency. When made out of white corn with no sugar and no salt it is offered to Osala, though most *orisas* may eat it. When made with yellow corn it is offered to Osossi¹³.

Amala is a dish offered to Sango and Yansa. It consists of an okra stew. Okra is sautéed in *dende* oil; onion and dried shrimps are added.

Caruru is from Salvador. *Caruru* is the name by which a lot of people know *amala*. But in Salvador when one says *caruru* one is referring to a mixture of several *comida de santo* dishes. *Caruru* is the occasion where the saints Cosme and Damion (Ibeji¹⁴) are honoured. It is called *caruru dos meninos* ('*caruru* of the kids'). It's one of the most popular celebrations in which food and religion combine, and in which the 'profane and sacred' are found side by side.

Whether rich or poor, the head of household in which twins have been born invites friends and neighbours to partake of a *caruru* to honour the twins Cosme and Damion. The festival takes place during the month of September and very often the host is helped with the preparation of the party by his relatives and friends. (Andrade 1987: 54)

Doburu is regular, plain popcorn. When it is used as an offering it cannot take oil or salt. And it should never be microwaved popcorn. *Doburu* is offered to Omulu or Obaluae¹⁵ every Monday and also on the feast day, August 16. A great procession is held on this day. Those who seek to be cured supplicate this *orisa*, the Lord of healing. Some people may even take 'baths' of *doburu* in order to be cured.

12 Yansa is a female *orisa* of wind, storm and fire, also called Oya.

13 Osossi is a male *orisa* dedicated to hunting and knowledge.

14 In Brazil there is a syncretism between Catholic and African saints. Cosme and Damion are Catholic saints, but their equivalent in Candomblé is the *orisa* Ibeji, which are also two boys.

15 Omulu and Obaluae would be the old and the young versions of the same *orisa*. He is the Lord of cure, known as the doctor of the poor.

Efo: in this dish a 'dough' of *taioba*¹⁶ leaves is made by boiling and squeezing the leaves. The dough is seasoned with onions and dried shrimp and sautéed in *dende* oil. *Efo* would be offered to Nana, the oldest female *orisa* and mother of Omulu. She is the *orisa* of rain.

Farofa is a generic name for seasoned cassava root flour. The seasoning may be prepared in many different ways. When *dende* oil and onion are added, all the ingredients sautéed together may be called *farofa amarela* ('yellow *farofa*'). It may be served with any Bahian dish, and may be also offered to *Esu*. When *farofa* is offered to *Esu*, we call it *pade*, and it could also be prepared from a mixture of cassava root flour and *cachaça*¹⁷.

Feijoada, the most characteristic and well known Brazilian dish is a stew that combines black beans, sausages, beef and all pork cuts and is served with cassava root flour. This is the favourite food of Ogun, the 'way opener'. He is the *orisa* of all ways, material and spiritual. He is also the *orisa* of war.

Fried fish sometimes fried in *dende*, sometimes in olive oil is consumed everywhere and it is also a very important offering to *Yemanjá*¹⁸. It may include shrimps or shrimp sauce.

Hausa rice is a dish brought by the Hausas, Muslim Sudanese from Nigeria. It consists of rice with jerked beef. The rice must be cooked until very soft with dried shrimp and onion. The beef is cooked with onions and garlic. It is consumed with a lot of chilli pepper, though if it is to be used as an offering pepper and seasonings are not allowed. It is offered to *Osala* and *Yemanjá*.

Manjar is a very popular dessert in Brazil. It is a coconut pudding served with prune syrup. Though it is generically a Portuguese dish it is also an important offering to *Yemanjá* and *Ibeji*. When it is an offering it doesn't take prune syrup.

Xin-Xin or *oxin-xin* is chicken stew with *dende*, onions and dried shrimp. It is a very popular dish in Bahia, found in many restaurants, served with chilli peppers sauce and cassava root flour. It is offered to *Yansa*, *Ogum* and *Oxum*.

As in any area of human activity, this cuisine has gone through a number of changes due to technological, economic, social and many other developments. For example, people don't cook as much as they used to. Along with that, *Candomblé* has also changed, as would any other religion, for many reasons. It is not my intention to analyse such changes in this article. My aim has been to point out that these changes have been reflected in *Candomblé's* food practices.

16 *Taioba* is local leaf, similar to spinach.

17 *Cachaça* is Brazilian sugar cane brandy.

18 *Yemanjá* is the great mother and the *orisa* of the seas. *Yemanjá* is the most popular *orisa* in Brazil.

As the old priests and priestesses of Candomblé pass away, they take some of the traditions with them. Some of the dishes are no longer made and many recipes are starting to be forgotten, as has been mentioned by Guilherme Radel (2006: 233).

Although dishes are changing, a few ingredients, seasonings and techniques from *comida de santo* still pertain in both spheres (religious and secular): these include *dende* oil, dried shrimps, okra, beans, onions, cassava root flour, corns, and chilli peppers.

This cuisine is still available in Bahia and on the other hand there has been some governmental and popular effort aimed at preserving Bahian cuisine. The Instituto de Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, IPHAN (National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage) has encouraged people to write books on the subject; *acaraje* has been deemed to be an institution and is now protected by law as a cultural patrimony. Bahia hosts millions of tourists every year and they are enchanted by the religious festivals, costumes, churches and *terreiros*, as well as by the food, even when they don't know the relationship between food and Candomblé. Some ingredients, perhaps because of their exoticism, may be considered 'sacred' by tourists. 'You will see many a returning visitor from Bahia leaving the airport with a bottle of *dende* in tow, guarded with as much care as if it were an elixir of the Gods' (Andrade 1987: 51).

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