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*Morada dos Léguas, terra de encantaria: Religião e cidade em Codó (Maranhão)*

**Martina Ahlert, Conceição de Maria Teixeira Lima and Lior Zisman Zalis**

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## Léguas' dwelling, land of enchantment: Religion and the city in Codó (Maranhão)

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Based on ethnographic research carried out in Codó, in the interior of Maranhão, this article seeks to answer how religious entities relate to the city. To achieve this goal, the field of Afro-Brazilian religion studies in the state is first contextualized, particularly regarding terecô, the religion covered in the article. This is followed by a look at aspects of cosmology and ritual that draw attention to the relationship between terecô, the enchanted spirits of Légua Boji Buá's family, Codó and its woodlands. This is how the idea of a land of enchantment is elaborated. To move on to the final part of the text, the emic category "morada" is used to explore the constitution of land, earth, and houses based on the practices of people and entities. It suggests folds, dimensions, and layers mobilized by those who look at the city from the perspective of religion. As the argument unfolds, we conclude that thinking cartographically and administratively about the place is not enough: to think about the city and the terecô, we need to understand that Codó is a place of thought.

*Religion; City; Enchanted Spirits.*

O artigo procura responder, a partir de pesquisas etnográficas realizadas em Codó, no interior do Maranhão, como entidades religiosas se relacionam com a cidade. Para alcançar esse objetivo, inicialmente se contextualiza o campo dos estudos de religião de matriz africana no estado, considerando especialmente o terecô, religião trabalhada no texto. Na sequência, são trazidos aspectos da cosmologia e do ritual que chamam a atenção para a relação entre o terecô, os encantados da família de Légua Boji Buá, Codó e suas matas. Assim se elabora a ideia de uma terra de encantaria. Para fazer a passagem à parte final do texto, lança-se mão da categoria êmica "morada" para explorar a constituição dos terrenos, da terra e das casas, a partir de práticas de pessoas e de entidades. Sugerem-se dobras, dimensões e camadas, que são mobilizadas por quem olha, a partir da religião, a cidade. Desdobrando o argumento, conclui-se que pensar, cartográfica e administrativamente, o local não é suficiente: para pensar a cidade e o terecô, é preciso entender que Codó é um lugar de pensamento.

*Religião; Cidade; Encantados.*

Land of enchantment. Land of power. City of spell and mystery. Cradle of Afro-Brazilian religion. Space of powerful masters as well as audacious, partners, and wise entities. There are several ways to refer to Codó<sup>1</sup>, a municipality in the eastern region of the state of Maranhão, northeast of Brazil, whose fame has crossed regional and even national borders, historically attracting visitors seeking solutions to their problems in health, business, or love relationships. Visits are still welcomed for the various festivals held around the homage to saints and *encantados*<sup>2</sup>, frequent characters in the lives of many of its residents; events that are held especially in the *tendas* [cult houses] of *mães* and *pais de santo* [mother and father of saints, Afro-Brazilian priests and priestesses], who can be found in urban and rural areas<sup>3</sup>.

Codó is known for its reference to terecô, also called *tambor da mata* [drum of the forest] or Santa Bárbara's *brincadeira* [play], an Afro-Brazilian religion. Mundicarmo Ferretti (Ferretti 2000; 2001) suggests its Bantu origin, with Jeje-Nagô elements. Currently, terecô has various relationships with *tambor de mina*, *umbanda*, *quimbanda*, and *candomblé* (Nagô), which gain meaning according to the trajectories of the masters (also called *mães* and *pais de santo*), with the associations between the entities, and with the experiences in each house or *tenda*. In these places, the *brincantes* or *tereceiros* gather, as the people who possess “mediumship”<sup>4</sup> are called, that is, those who “receive” or “carry” in their bodies *encantados* and establish relationships with them that take place not only in a ritual context but also in ordinary life.

The *tendas* are essential to the argument of this article. They are spaces of a certain width, albeit of varying sizes, like a *salão* [hall] – one of the ways of referring to this space, as well as a *barracão* [shed] – decorated in honor of the entities. They have central altars, often located at the back of the hall, and smaller altars on the edges of the hall, with specific points called *assentamentos* [settlements]. They are led by the masters, and in them, rituals are performed with drum beats and possessions, as well as prayer and healing sessions. Typically, they are located at the back of their homes or contiguous to them. Here in the text, it will be possible to perceive that the research interlocutors also refer to the *tendas* themselves as *casa* [home] or *casa de santo* [saint's home]. Besides them, there is also the *quarto de santo* [saint's rooms] that are internal to the residences. They also have an altar (or a *mesinha* [“little table”]) in front of which prayers and some religious works are performed, conducted by the *brincantes*, at the request of the entities.

According to recent data, there were more than 250 *tendas* and *quartos de santo* dedicated to Afro-Brazilian religions in the municipality (Ahlert 2013). The city, however, is not only the *locus* of concentration of these spaces. Codó also plays a part in the cosmological dimension of the terecô and is related to the way some entities are understood. Considering this perception, we intend to analyze how it can be thought of from the point of view of religion, which leads us to analyze the houses (considering *tendas* and *quartos de santo*) and the land from the point of view of the coexistence of people and the *encantados*. In parallel, we unfold considerations about how temporality and spatiality are placed in experiences,

1 Codó has approximately 114,000 inhabitants according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE 2022) and is located on the transportation axis between São Luís, the capital of Maranhão, and Teresina, in Piauí.

2 “Encantado” is the most commonly used generic term to refer to the entities received within the bodies of individuals in terecô. It is understood that the *encantados* were people who lived on earth and never went through the process of death, becoming enchanted. They possess extra-human abilities related to healing and solving various problems.

3 Throughout the text, we have chosen to keep the emic concepts in Portuguese, as we believe that the recurrent use of the English translation could make them lose their meaning in the context we are analyzing. We also chose to keep them in the original in order to take these expressions as concepts of their own within the logic of terecô, circulating them in other languages as such and not as translations. Thus, we will use the emic notion in italics and the first time it appears in the text, we will seek to make an approximate translation between [ ].

4 Words in quotation marks in the text can refer to passages from the bibliography, but also, as is the case here, to emic terms used by our hosts.

to productively scramble linear logics of the passage of time and the definition of spatial boundaries and put on hold notions of ownership and dominion.

Based on ethnographic research carried out on-site in recent years<sup>5</sup>, the article aims to answer how the *encantados* relate to the city. To this end, we have divided the text into three sections. Firstly, we place our research in the context of other works in the social sciences that mention the city and the terecô. In this way, we aim to state where the subsequent discussion stems from. Secondly, we bring up aspects of the cosmology experienced by *terecezeiros* who talk about Codó and the religion, looking for ways to characterize entities and their families. We also mentioned *doutrinas* [doctrines] (as the songs sung in the rituals are called) that weave these relationships together. With this, we want to think about the perception of the municipality as a *terra de encantaria* [land of enchantment]. To move on to the third part of the text, we talk to Pai Antônio Filho, a terecô master, who tells us about a transformation in the *morada* [dwelling] of the *encantados* of the de Légua family (one of the most important families locally), from the forest to the *tendas*. In this way, we explore the constitution of the lands, the grounds, and the houses based on the practices between people and entities, suggesting folds and layers mobilized by those who look at the city from the perspective of religion. We will conclude, almost against the grain of our argument, that thinking about the municipality cartographically and administratively is not enough: to think about the terecô and the city, we need to understand that Codó is a place of thought<sup>6</sup>.

By this we mean that the relationship between the city and the terecô is not purely referential – it is not, in the sense given by Peirce (1983), an iconic existence, although at times it is, and this is no less important. As in other contexts of study on the coexistence of ‘intangible’ beings with humans, the idea of indexicality seems to make more sense (Blanes and Espírito Santo 2014). Thus, Codó is a *terra de encantaria*, but it is not just a geographically located reference, since it can be activated in the different places in which the *encantados* are mobilized. It is, in this sense, a place of thought.

At the same time, the idea of a place of thought can, with some reservations, be approximated to the concept of Place-Thought described by Vanessa Watts (2013), insofar as it triggers participation between the territory, humans, and non-human beings. Place, people, and entities are mutually composing and constituting each other. Logics of care and responsibility for the existence of others (and inevitably of oneself) demonstrate the difficulty of separating them. In this sense, when entities are present in places other than Codó, they are also Codó and make Codó exist there since they are people from there, family from there, constituted while making their land their home.

### The terecô of Codó and studies of Afro-Brazilian religions

In addition to journalistic coverage and media visibility<sup>7</sup>, Codó and the *tambor da mata* have already been the locus and topic of research in the social sciences, especially anthropology. The first record we have of terecô appeared in the litera-

5 This article was collectively written. Martina Ahlert began their field research in Codó in 2010, during their doctoral studies. At that time, they lived in the city for a year, attending the houses of *terecezeiros* and their rituals. Conceição de Maria Teixeira Lima and Lior Zisman Zalis are currently conducting their doctoral research, supervised by Ahlert. They also had residency periods in the city, during which they observed the daily lives of masters and “encantados.” More information about the research methodologies can be found in the following text.

6 Ahlert (2013, 2021), in previous work, proposed to consider the forest as a place of thought. However, the idea was not extensively developed at that time and is now revisited and expanded upon, to include considerations about the city itself.

7 Mundicarmo Ferretti had already identified some journalistic reports that fed the idea of Codó as the “capital of magic” (Ferretti 2001, 22). Among the television reports, the following stand out: TV Bandeirantes, Domingo 10, with Marília Gabriela (May 22, 1994); Rede TV, Superpop, with Luciana Gimenez (02/24/2011); Discovery Brasil, Na Fé, with Arthur Veríssimo (07/26/2013) and more recently on GNT and Globo Play, Avisa Lá Que Eu Vou, with Paulo Vieira (05/17/2022). On the role of the media in creating the stigma of Codó as the “land of macumba” or “capital of macumba”, see Lindoso (2014).

ture during the Folkloric Mission led by Mário de Andrade at the end of the 1930s (Alvarenga 1948), when the *tambor da mata*'s drums were recorded at the Casa de Maximiana, in São Luís, paying homage to entities seen as belonging to terecô, such as Légua Boji Buá, João Barabaia, Barão de Guaré and Rei de Mina (Ferretti 2001, Barros 2000). More specific records were only made a few years later, by Octávio da Costa Eduardo (1948) who, in 1943/1944, spent nine months in Maranhão, part of them in São Luís and another in Codó, especially in the *quilombo* of Santo Antônio dos Pretos, in the municipality's countryside.

The interest in religion in the author's work is supported by his research into the process of Black "acculturation"<sup>8</sup> in Brazil. Under the supervision of Melville Herskovits, Costa Eduardo sought to compare, in São Luís and Codó, the way people worked, marriage arrangements, and religion, trying to understand the influences of other ethnic groups and the transformations brought about by practices perceived as being of African origin. Work and marriage, in the interior of the state, were more preserved in their original form in Codó than in São Luís (something noticeable in the frequency of "amasiamento" and the practices of *mutirão*), but the same would not be true for religion, which in the interior of the state would have found it more difficult to maintain its African characteristics<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, Costa Eduardo (1948) justified part of what he saw: in Codó, in the religious context, it was more common to hear Portuguese being used in rituals and in the way entities were defined. Likewise, signs of a closer relationship with Catholicism were more present, as evidenced by prayers to saints and their presence in *terreiros*. Added to this was the lack of opulence in the initiation rites, which for the author were almost non-existent, and also the apparent simplicity of the clothing worn. Despite the comparative bias that gave terecô acculturation overtones, the author's notes are fundamental for recording the characteristics he perceived almost a hundred years ago.

In this regard, there is a comment by Bastide (1971) related to Maranhão, which emphasizes the contrast between the religions of African origin in the interior and the *tambor de mina* in the capital. For the author, around an "island of African resistance", which would be São Luís, there was a "transition zone where catimbó and *tambor de mina* abandon themselves to the strangest unions" (Bastide 1971, 256). In these places, the tradition was vaguely preserved and there was only a "confused recollection of the existence of some Daomean voduns" (Bastide 1971, 258-259). Clearly, Bastide made these statements in consideration regarding the approach of studies at the time of his research, which was revised in the following decades. For now, it is enough to record and classify these manifestations.

The most consistent study on the characteristics of terecô was written at the end of the 1990s by Mundicarmo Ferretti (2001). The author arrives at the terecô from other studies on religion and popular culture in Maranhão, which allows her to draw up a framework for understanding the three religions that are most common in her research – the *tambor de Mina*, *Pajelança* and *Terecô* – characterizing them according to their spatial location in the state (respectively, the São Luís region, the Baixada Maranhense, and the cocais forest region), the origin of

8 The concept of "acculturation" was used in studies of the Black presence in Brazil, especially in those concerning religion, in the first half of the 20th century. The aim was to understand transformations resulting from the encounter between what were considered, at that time, distinct cultures. However, the term fell out of use and underwent criticism in the following decades.

9 In the 1940s, Nunes Pereira (1947) wrote about the *Tambor de Mina* in São Luís (which Costa Eduardo compares to terecô). The Casa das Minas, from where he was writing, was, for him, marked by purity, so that "in the 'Casa das Minas,' there is no concern with sorcery [*feitçaria*], that is, the practice of maleficence or the preparation of *filtros*, amulets, etc." (Pereira 1947, 49).

the entities (also respectively, saltwater, freshwater, and forest) and the predominance of certain families (Ferretti 2000; 2001, Pacheco 2004, Barros 2000). In this organization, the terecô would be related to the cocais forests, the forest entities, and some families related to them, such as the *encantado* Légua Boji Buá da Trindade. Despite the didacticism of the explanation, the author herself recognizes the complexity of the intertwining of these definitions, which arise, for example, in the presence of Légua Boji in her fieldwork in other regions of the state.

Ferretti (2001), Barros (2007) and Araújo (2008) also discuss the arrival of umbanda and candomblé in Codó. According to these authors, Umbanda came to the city in the 1930s, with the arrival of Maria Piauí, a *mãe de santo* who became well known in the region after building her *tenda* on the edge of the train line that crosses the city (and where the house still stands today, looked after by the *mãe de santo* Iracema). The term “Umbanda” and the practices associated with it are said to have merged with the terecô practiced in the town. Candomblé began in the area in the 1980s, with the arrival of Eduardo, a Bahian *pai de santo*, and the return of Júlio (who accompanied him and knew terecô and Mina). Eduardo would only have made a *barco de iniciação* [initiation boat]<sup>10</sup>, responsible for introducing the masters who, in their houses, began to do candomblé.

The compositions that mark the configuration of the *tendas* and the entities' definition are part of how terecô is performed in Codó. They are also part of the discussion raised by other research papers written after Ferretti's work (2001), such as Ahlert (2013, 2016, 2021), Alcantara (2015, 2020), Ribeiro (2015, 2020), Cantanhede Filho (2020), Freire (2018, 2022), Lima (2019), Lamy (2016), Almada (2023), Zalis, Lima and Ahlert (2023), Cruz (2018), and Pereira (2019). The intersections between tambor de mina, umbanda, candomblé, and terecô are specific to each house (*tenda* or *quarto de santo*) and demonstrate the complexity of the *tereçozeiros'* experiences (and, equally, to the fragility of the categories for classifying these experiences that we researchers have drawn up). However, this multiplicity does not mean that the association between the forests of Codó and the entities of the de Légua family is lost, even when they appear in other contexts of experience. We intend to write about this relationship between the terecô, the Légua, and the city.

The database we present in the following article is a set of ethnographic studies we have carried out in Codó over the last few years. They have been carried out since 2010, with periods of different intensity and coexistence, sometimes together and at other times individually. During this time, we got close to the experiences of the *pais* (and *mães*) *de santo*, *brincantes*, and their *encantados*, sharing ordinary and ritual situations, and participating in the day-to-day life of their houses and the saint's festivities. The interlocutors have always been informed of our presence and the aims of the research – as have the entities that accompany them and with whom they also live in this context<sup>11</sup>. The research has taken place in different *tendas*, at the suggestion of the *tereçozeiros* themselves, who mentioned the different configurations of the houses, indicating the performance and importance of circulation between them. In the field, we tried to understand the relationships between different beings and the possibilities of living from these

10 *Barco* refers to the group of neophytes who go through the candomblé initiation ritual together.

11 The research has been based on daily interaction and participation in rituals, always authorized by the interlocutors. Experiences were recorded in field diaries and, sometimes, in audio or video, used solely within academic settings. At various times over the past years, we have conducted data interpretation feedback sessions with the *tereçozeiros*, thereby seeking to maintain ethical agreements and responsibility within the research context. Written authorization terms were not utilized due to the characteristics of the context (such as familiarity with writing) and the critical debate surrounding their use in anthropology (see Fleischer and Schuch 2010).

crossings. Among the various ways of conceptualizing ethnography that have a place in anthropology, we are particularly interested in that which commits us to and implies phenomena of cohabitation and imagining the future (Borges *et al.* 2022). It is in this sense that we seek to highlight the generosity of our hosts (Borges 2013) who literally welcome us into the homes and the city we seek to describe here.

### ***Terra de encantaria, land of power***

In Codó, one can hear that they are in a *terra de encantaria*, as many *encantados* have passed through its forests. The reference to them is so important that one way of calling the terecô is by its name, *tambor da mata*. Cícero Centriny (2015) points out that this way of referring to the religion is related to its supposed origin in the region's babaçuais, where the first rituals were held. The choice of location was part of the strategy to carry them out away from the control and repression of the white landlords. Considering the various ethnic groups of Africans brought to Codó, such as the Cabindas, Bantus, and Cacheus, the author shows how the forest was a place where different peoples came together to worship Legua Boji Buá.

Associating terecô with the forests of Codó doesn't mean that it isn't practiced in other places, such as nearby cities like Bacabal (Freire 2018, 2022), Itapecuru-mirim (Santos 2019), in *terreiros* in different regions of Maranhão (Freitas 2011, Cálipo 2016, Silva 2016, Leal 2019) or even outside of Maranhão (Prandi 2004). The presence of the *encantados* of Codó's forest, especially the family of Légua Boji Buá, is not limited to the religious practices of the city but spreads to different contexts, where the term Codó is used to identify and refer to a specific lineage of *encantados* who come from the *sertão* (i.e., the interior) of Maranhão.

References to the Codó family or Légua Boji Buá himself are present in anthropological literature on jurema, catimbó, tambor de mina, pajelança, batuque, and other religions spread throughout Brazil. We have, for example, mentions of the "Légua family", "Codó people", "Codoenses" and "Codó lineage" in ethnographies produced in the context of the Northeast region, such as Ceará, Piauí, and Pernambuco (Bandeira 2013, Assunção 2006; 2014, Souza 2013, Pacheco 2004, Tavares 2008); the North, such as Tocantins, Pará, Roraima and Amazonas (de Luca 2015; 2019, Melo 2020, Figueiredo 1996, Vasconcelos 2020, Leacock and Leacock 1975, Silva 2018, Silva and Pacheco 2015, Silva 2014, Venâncio 2019, Veras 1991, Quintas 2007) and the Southeast, such as São Paulo (Prandi 2001, Shapanan 2001). Although there are different resonances and modulations on the meaning of Codó in each of these works, the reference to the city is always significant.

One of those mentions, in the religious practices of Fortaleza, was examined by Luís Cláudio Cardoso Bandeira, in his doctoral thesis on the "Routes and Roots" of Itinerant Ancestors (Bandeira 2013). The author draws attention to the influences of Codó and terecô on the catimbó of Fortaleza. His discussion starts with the presence of terecô masters such as Zé Bruno, Zé Negreiro, and João Cobra who, through their healing practices, helped to shape Umbanda and popular culture



in Ceará. Another author who points to the presence of the *linha da mata de Codó* [Codó's forest lineage] or Légua's family is Luiz Assunção (Assunção 2006, 2014). He draws attention to the presence of this lineage in the *sertão* of three northeastern states, Piauí, Ceará, and Pernambuco. For this author, this recurrence is strongly related to the routes traveled by the *pais de santo* who left from the interior of Maranhão. With them also went entities such as Légua Boji Buá and the rituals of the caboclos "which, by meeting other existing local practices (such as "jurema"), produced new ways of experiencing religiosity" (2016, 164).

Another researcher who deals with the influence of Codó on the religious practice is Kauã Vasconcelos (2020), in his research on pena and maracá on the island of Marajó, specifically in Soure. He points out that there are a large number of caboclos from the city of Codó, known as *encantados* from the de Légua family. He also says that during the rituals they sing to the "people of Codó" (Vasconcelos 2020, 63). These *encantados* who come from other territories and lands, as is the case in the city we studied, "bring those territories with them" (Vasconcelos 2020, 265), that is, when they incorporate, they present in gestures, *doutrinas*, ways of speaking and working that are typical of their place of origin. On the other hand, these entities, coming from far away, constitute new *moradas* [dwellings], since they need to settle down and be indoctrinated to be able to descend and work in Pará territories.

The numerous references to the Codó forest refer to the city as a qualification for spiritual entities and a place of enchantment. The city is mobilized in different ways, sometimes in songs that invoke a particular entity, sometimes to refer to the places where masters and caboclos from the forest belong, or to change the rhythm of a drumbeat. During our fieldwork in Codó, we were able to notice some of these mobilizations. In this context, the term *linha da mata de Codó* corresponds to the *encantados* commonly belonging to the family of Légua Boji Buá da Trindade.

Despite being constantly referred to as being from the forests of Codó, Légua Boji arrived on the scene from other contexts – in some narratives as an *encantado*, in others as a human. The narratives encountered between people and entities in Codó's terecô show how he traveled through many places before arriving in the city and making his home there. According to Chica Baiana, an entity that manifests itself in the *pai de santo* Pedro, Légua was a "slave who came from Africa". During the period in which he was enslaved in Brazil, he, according to dona Chica, "liked to run away into the woods". Mathias Assunção (2010) records, that when working with the oral memory of slavery with elderly people from black communities in Maranhão, Légua was referred to as an *encantado* who helped the enslaved in times of difficulty and situations of mistreatment perpetrated by white farmers; in Codó it is often assumed that he helped because he had suffered such situations.

Pai Euclides, an important *pai de santo* and researcher from São Luís, in a conversation with Mundicarmo Ferretti, said that Légua Boji "was African and was already known in the Caribbean, many years before he appeared in *terreiros* in Maranhão" (Ferretti 2000, 145). Before arriving in Brazil, Légua passed through Trinidad

and when he landed here he became known as Légua Boji Buá da Trindade, about the place he came from. According to a daughter of father Euclides, “Légua Boji arrived in Codó old and with several children”, where he was welcomed by other entities such as Pedro Anção and Bárbara Soeira (Ferretti 2000, 145). It seems that it was in Codó that Légua Boji Buá's family became one of the most important in the terecô. In the *doutrina* about his skill with oxen, it is possible to see when he migrates from the capital to the interior of Maranhão:

*Seu Légua tem doze bois  
Na Ilha do Maranhão,  
Vou vender minha boiada  
E vou mimbora pro sertão,  
Boi, boi, boi, seu Légua,  
Tira as tamancas do boi, seu Légua!*<sup>12</sup>

12 Seu Légua has twelve oxen / On the island of Maranhão, / I'm going to sell my cattle / And I'm off to the sertão, / Ox, ox, ox, seu Légua, / Take the clogs off the ox, seu Légua!

The accounts of old Légua's arrival in Codó show that he didn't walk alone. Dona Chica Baiana told us that he had many children, both biological and adopted. When he became the chief of the local *encantaria*, he took in several *encantados* who referred to him as their father, because “he fell into the Codó *encantaria* and was ‘caught’ by him, he's already a Légua” (dona Chica, in Lima 2017). Lionesa Légua, one of seu Légua Boji Buá's biological daughters, explained to us the frequent presence of the forest in many terecô doctrines. According to her, the forest appears to indicate a place of belonging and dwelling. The forest is both a space in which the Léguas live together, as well as a line of power and reference for the caboclos of that family when they arrive at a particular *barracão* (*tenda* or *terreiro*). This can be seen in the doctrines recorded in some ethnographies:

*Preto Velho codoense, onde é sua morada?  
É na mata, é na mata.* (Ahlert 2021, 72)<sup>13</sup>

13 Preto Velho codoense, where do you live? / It's in the woods, it's in the woods. (Ahlert 2021, 72)

*Aê baia, aê Codó.  
Aê mano, é mano  
Não mata meu touro mano meu!*<sup>14</sup>. (Ferretti 2001, 144)

14 Aê baia, aê Codó. / Aê mano, é mano / Don't kill my bull mano meu.

*Dá licença, dá licença,  
Eu não sou daqui, eu sou do Codó.  
Me dá licença que eu não posso baiá só.  
O meu filho, me dá licença,  
meu senhor me dá licença!*<sup>15</sup>. (Ahlert 2021, 72)

15 Excuse me, excuse me, / I'm not from here, I'm from Codó. / Excuse me, I can't dance alone. / My son, excuse me, / my lord, excuse me.

We spoke to Lionesa de Légua when she was incorporated by the *pai de santo* Pedro, who has as his *chefe de croa* (or *de cabeça* [head], his most important entity) the elderly woman Chica Baiana, who we mentioned earlier. Lionesa doesn't appear as often as the *chefe* of the *pai de santo*, she only comes when requested.

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And it was at our request that Chica Baiana once decided to disembodiment so that the *cabocla* could talk to us. While we were waiting to be called to enter the room where Lionesa would present herself, we could hear from the other room of the house an assistant enunciating a *doutrina* that in a few minutes began to be answered by the *cabocla*:

*Oh Lionesa! Oh Lionesa!*  
*Ôh Lionesa! Ôh Lionesa!*  
*Cadê, Lionesa? Tá em Codó!*  
*Cadê, Lionesa? Tá em Codó!*<sup>16</sup>

Lionesa is in Codó for the consultation she was called to, but, like the other members of her family – which some of our interlocutors estimate to be more than five hundred *encantados* – the city is the place of “her” *encantaria*<sup>17</sup>. *Encantaria*, according to Ferretti (2000) is a way of referring to a between-world or another dimension of existence, different from earth, where sinners (humans) would be, and from heaven (where saints would be). But its meaning is also expanded in our fieldwork, with some specific places in Codó (such as the well-known *quilombo* of Santo Antônio dos Pretos, and even the city itself) being defined as *terra de encantaria*. This is the same as saying that these spaces are places of power.

To accompany this idea, let's consider another category used by some of our hosts, “*morada*” [dwelling]. As we can see from the field, it identifies certain places to certain entities: such as *Morro da “Príncipe” Moura*, where some Afro-Brazilian religion *tendas* are located in the city, a region considered to have a lot of *axé*. This is where the Tenda São Francisco e São Sebastião is located, belonging to Antônio Filho, the *pai de santo* who told us that the de Légua family, after living the hardships of the land for years as humans, made Codó their home. We followed up with Toinho, as he is called, to think about *casas de santo* and *tendas* as contemporary (and also ancestral, as he shows us) *moradas* in Codó.

### **Morada in the woods, morada in the houses**

In Codó, it is said that *terecô* was initially played in wooded areas, in the fields, and especially on the edge of a lagoon called Lagoa do Pajeleiro (the religion itself was also called *pajelança*, for a certain period). According to local narratives, *terecô* began “in the past”, during the time of the “old *vodunsos*”, known as Black women and men who were enslaved. That's why, to this day, the *encantados* are related to the countryside, oxen, fishhooks, and working in the fields. In those days, as we'll see below, Légua's family made Codó their *morada*, as Antônio Filho told us.

When we met Antônio Filho he was 32 years old. His maternal family is from the *terecô*, and his grandfather has been blessing and praying at home for 96 years. His mother was a *brincante* at dona Teresa Cega's house, the *Tenda Santa Helena*, where Toinho felt the first signs of “mediumship”. He developed it in *Me-*

16 Oh Lionesa! Oh Lionesa! / Ôh Lionesa! Ôh Lionesa! / Where are you, Lionesa? She's in Codó! / Where are you, Lionesa? She's in Codó!

17 “The people of Légua tend to move around a lot,” Lionesa told us, alluding to their transit in different cities, regions, and even religions. When speaking about her family's relationship with the Bumba Meu Boi festival, she mentioned that the people of Légua gather in the João Paulo neighborhood, in the city of São Luís, on Saint Marçal's Day, June 30th. “Everyone goes there,” the enchanted one recounted, “that's where the hustle and bustle of Légua happens.” [“Vai todo mundo pra lá”, relatou a encantada, “lá é o furrunço dos Légua”].

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stre Bitá do Barão's house, where he had his body possessed for the first time by seu Légua Boji Buá, an *encantado* who, in his mind, is the *farrista*, that is, the one who comes almost daily, who works and who indoctrinates his *filhos de santo*. Ten years of living and preparing in that house allowed him to set up a *mesinha* to work with the entities in the domestic environment. It was only after this, working on the *mesinha*, that he became a *pai de santo*.

It was he who told us, in an interview, some information about the *morada* of the *encantados*. And it is with him that we continue to discuss the houses, the land, and the city:

Before, they used to make *moradas* in the cities often. Légua's people say they made *moradas* in Codó for a long time, they spent a long time here in Codó. That's because Légua's family and his children were entities that walked the earth. It wasn't just a question of saying that they are *encantado*, that they are ancestors and are incorporating. They also witnessed the difficulties here on earth and made their home. I think they were the only ones who were *encantados*. ("Pai Antônio Filho", 17/10/2022)<sup>18</sup>

We also heard similar phrases during the fieldwork, saying that the *encantados* of Légua's family had chosen Codó to be enchanted there. According to our host, the place was chosen because the entities in question spent a lot of time there. That's where they experienced, as humans, the difficulties that affect people. The people of Légua then made their home in Codó – and even though they move around in other contexts, more or less distant, their bond with the Codó's forests remains.

It was Antônio Filho who also told us about a transformation in the space of *moradas*. In ancient times, they were in the woods and natural places. Over the years, according to our interlocutor, the spiritual entities began to have *moradas* in the houses (in the *tendas* and *quartos de santo*) of the city of Codó: "The *moradas* today are inside the *casas de santo*, no longer as before. Every *casa de santo* where you go to fulfill your obligations, if you put an *axé* there, it [the *encantado*] will go there to get it. Today it works like this," he told us.

"To put an *axé* there" is another way of referring to the need to settle the entities in a space. The idea of *assentamento* [settlement] does not necessarily coincide here with that mobilized in the contexts of Candomblé (Sansi 2013, Rabelo 2014). In Codó, it involves a set of elements (usually including a sacred stone), which refers to an entity, which is buried in a specific location of the land or the *tenda*, or arranged in a designated place, such as below the altar or in the corners of the *salão*. If a *tenda* closes, this *assentamento* must (although this is not always the case) be undone, otherwise the organizations will continue to visit.

The house and *tenda* of the *pai de santo* Antônio Filho himself seem to us a good way to tell how these spaces are constituted in Codó, which, as we said, are often contiguous in the grounds, built and cared for by people and *encantados*. Before we can tell you about the place, we need to say a few words, albeit briefly,

18 Antigamente fazia muita morada nas cidades. O pessoal de Légua, diz que fez morada em Codó, muito tempo, passaram muito tempo aqui no Codó. Isso porque a família de Légua e os filhos dele foram uma entidade que eles andaram em terra. Não foi só uma questão de dizer que é encantado, que é antepassado e está incorporando. Eles presenciaram as dificuldades aqui na terra também e fizeram morada. Eu acho que foi os únicos encantados, foi eles. (Pai Antônio Filho, em 17/10/2022)

about the *encantados* “carried” by the master. Toinho “receives” a group of different entities, as is common among the *brincantes*. Among them is Légua Boji Buá. It is for him that he plays the drum in his *tenda* in May, every year. His most important *encantada*, the owner of his *croá* (or head), is Cabocla Mariana or dona Mariana, as he calls her. His Légua and dona Mariana are fundamental to understanding the *pai de santo*'s relationship with the land where his *tenda* and his house are located, one of the *moradas* of the entities in the city of Codó.

When he was younger, Toinho didn't have his *terreiro*; he worked in a room of his residence, which was located in the downtown area of Codó. Once, he was surprised by the news that having “received” seu Légua, the *encantado* sold his house<sup>19</sup> and bought a plot of land with a much simpler construction on top of a hill (the Morro da Príncipe Moura, as he later found out), near the Catholic Church dedicated to Saint Peter. On the land, besides the small house, there were only bushes, and he couldn't understand why the *encantado* chose it, as it didn't seem like a good deal to him at first. However, he trusted the entity's choice, which, besides having the documents ready, organized the people close to him so that the move happened without delay.

After settling in, Antônio Filho began to hold sessions (that is, work nights, with prayers and *doutrinas*), incorporated with seu Légua, in the new residence. His work started to be talked about in the neighborhood, and he began to be visited by people he didn't know. Through them, the choice of his “*farrista*” became clear. He heard that the land had, a few years earlier, in addition to the small house, a *terreiro* that belonged to Eduardo. In the 1980s, as we mentioned earlier regarding the arrival of Candomblé, he came from Bahia in the company of Júlio (a resident of Codó) and established the *terreiro* that had this religion, still little known in the city.

With Eduardo's death, Júlio took responsibility for the *terreiro* until he moved away from Codó. When he did, the *filhos de santo* also dispersed, and dona Beata, the second in the lineage for the house, took the image of Saint Peter (the patron saint of the *terreiro*) to the *tenda* she opened in the backyard of her residence. The *barracão* was then occupied by another *pai de santo*, a *terezeiro* known as seu Caboclo. According to Toinho, he had a *tenda* on another street in the city, but he transferred to the space because “his eye grew.” Some misfortunes befell his health, and in the second year of occupying the house and *tenda*, he passed away. His most constant *encantado* was Mané Légua, one of the many children of Légua Boji.

If Légua's family brought Antônio Filho closer to his Caboclo and that land, in conversations with the people who visited him during the sessions, he learned that dona Mariana (his princess) was also “carried” by Júlio. Furthermore, Eduardo was of Xangô, so the patron of his house was Saint Peter: for Toinho, Xangô was also Saint Francis, the saint to whom he made a promise and to whom he dedicated his *tenda*, built on the same land.

These connections between the entities and the people are, for our host, a fundamental explanation for understanding the choice of that land by seu Légua.

19 Incorporation in terecô implies (at least in most cases) that the *brincante* lose consciousness. As one *mãe de santo* told us, “it's as if we were asleep”. It is considering the ability of an *encantado* to incorporate and start coordinating the body of the *brincante* that we can understand that it was the entity who bought the house, received in the body of the *pai de santo*.

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Even though Toinho had danced two or three times on the site when the religious party was Julio's, he had no memory of the space and did not recognize it, without the *tenda* in the backyard, then full of bush. It was only possible to understand how he ended up there considering dona Mariana, Légua's family, and Xangô.

I started with three *filhos de santo*, and today this house has 65 *filhos de santo*. So, he [Légua] made us where we are now. And today the house is of Saint Francis, but it is never to forget: it is all one bond only, because Saint Peter is Xangô, and Saint Francis is also Xangô. The owner of the house was dona Mariana, and today she is still dona Mariana, the owner of the house. Seu Caboclo, who passed [received] seu Mané Légua, who was the third person to take care of the house and received seu Mané Légua, who is the son of seu Légua. That's when I understood the Nation, and he [Légua] told me: 'It wasn't me who brought it, [it was] because this tradition shouldn't die, it's a big story within Codó so this story can't end this way'. (Pai Antônio Filho, on 17/10/2022)<sup>20</sup>

Although Antônio Filho's story has very particular elements, which allow him to talk about the entangled links between people, houses and the *encantados*, the participation of the entities in defining where the *terreiros* are and in the procedures for acquiring the land are not exclusive to his narrative. We know of a similar situation, experienced by a "compadre" of his (as he defines), the *pai de santo* Café. A few years older than Toinho, Café has had his house for some years on the same hill ("a space with a lot of *axe*", he once told us). Before that, he became acquainted with *terecô* because his mother danced in some houses, like that of the *mãe de santo* Luiza. He began his approach to the religion after the manifestation of *encantados* in his life, as a drummer of Mestre Bitá do Barão's *tenda*.

It was in Bitá's *tenda* that he met his first wife, who supported him when he decided to have his own *terreiro*, to work with Supriano de Légua (another son of Légua Boji). Before, he and his wife had many financial difficulties and paid rent, overcoming these adversities with some financial resources that he received by blessing children. One day, Supriano sent him a warning, saying that in seven days he "would receive the inheritance" destined for him. As he told us, the seven days were of great deprivation, a period when he was without electricity and gas at home. At that moment, his wife doubted the message from the *encantado*, asking him: "Is this the inheritance your guide spoke of?"

It was then that a known guy appeared, commenting about a piece of land available for sale on the Morro da Igreja de São Pedro. Café went to see the place but was disappointed with its characteristics, it had elevations and many rocks, "it was very strange." Supriano, however, insisted that he should go there, which prompted him to ask about the price. The owner told him it cost 1,200 reais. Having the money for the first installment, she agreed to the sale. With the help of the work of the *encantados*, Café paid for the land in three months.

There was only a small *taipa* (clay) house covered with straw and tarpaulin

20 Eu comecei com três filhos de santo, hoje essa casa tem 65 filhos de santo. Aí ele [Légua] fez onde estamos aqui. E hoje a casa é de São Francisco, mas nunca é pra esquecer: é tudo um vínculo só, porque São Pedro é Xangô e São Francisco também é Xangô. A dona da casa era dona Mariana e hoje ainda é dona Mariana, continua dona da casa. O Seu Caboclo que passava [recebia] o seu Mané Légua, que foi a terceira pessoa que zelou a casa e recebia Seu Mané Légua, que é filho de Seu Légua. Aí é que eu fui entender a Nação e ele [Légua] me disse: "não fui eu que trouxe, [foi] porque essa tradição não tinha que morrer, é uma história grande dentro do Codó então essa história não pode acabar desta forma". (Pai Antônio Filho, em 17/10/2022)

on it. To make the land habitable, Café and his then-wife “cleared the hill” down to the middle with their own hands – referring to the injuries resulting from the endeavor, he mentioned that he got “blood blisters,” at which point he decided to pay some people in a collective system so that the work could progress. Also similarly to Toinho, Café did not start his work with the entities in the *barracão*, but in a room of the house. Only after the construction of the kitchen and the living room did he build the first *barracão*, in the back of the land.

This first *tenda*, still made with sparse resources, collapsed one day, shortly after the *pai de santo*, in the company of a client from another state, left the site<sup>21</sup>. Upon seeing the damage, Café rebuilt the structure. The subsequent improvements were made possible due to work he did for a deputy. The merit, however, did not lie with the politician, nor with him “pure”<sup>22</sup>, but with the action and problem-solving provided by the *encantados*.

Both Café and Toinho stated that the owners of their houses were their *entidades de cabeça* [head entities]. Each of them has a princess as their *chefe de croa*, in the first case, dona Rosalina, and in the second, dona Mariana. They are rarely received, once or twice a year, especially on the night of the celebration held in their honor. However, we should not take the idea of ownership for granted – it is not a form of legalistic or legally attested ownership, which carries a specific notion of contract and consequent conception of the individual (Johnson 2014, Godoi 2014). They own the house because they are also the owners of the head and leaders of the *corrente* [chains]<sup>23</sup> of each of the *pais de santo*.

Recent Brazilian ethnographies on Afro-Brazilian religions also indicate that seriously considering the relationship between people and entities implies assuming the establishment of a different perspective of space and time (Evangelista 2015, Domiciano 2023). The ritual space – the house, the *tenda*, the *quarto de santo* – is often a collective construction, both in terms of creation and acquisition of the land. These, in turn, can be perceived as belonging to the entities or some entity and not to a person, or, as in the cases we have recounted, also be defined and chosen by *encantados*.

## Final considerations

In this article, we consider the relationship between city and religion from the perspective of Codó, a municipality associated with terecô and the *encantados* of the forest, especially the family of Légua Boji Buá da Trindade. The first aspect of this relationship that we highlight in the text is the connections between Codó, the forests, terecô, and the Léguas. We emphasize how these references are articulated in other contexts involving Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Indigenous spiritual practices, but also how they are invoked in the cosmology and rituals that have as their locus the *tendas* (*barracões* or *terreiros*) of the Maranhão city in question.

Among the *terecozeiros* of Codó, there is still an association of certain specific locations with the religion. When we arrived in the city, we heard in everyday conversations the term “Morro do Café,” in reference to the *pai de santo* who has

21 Client is the customary way of calling those who come to the *tendas* to have work done, regardless of the reason for the request (it could be health, business, love, etc.).

22 “Pure” is an expression used to refer to when the person is not possessed.

23 “*Corrente*” is a term used with different meanings, but here it relates to the group of *encantados* that possess a brincante.

his *tenda* in the highest part of the city, accessed on foot by a staircase that leads to a Catholic Church dedicated to São Pedro. Once, when we were going to visit him, we informed a motorcycle taxi driver of our destination. He only understood where it was when we used the reference to the location as “Morro do Café.” In another situation, accompanying some *terecozeiros* to a celebration in a village, we heard, in a playful tone, a *mãe de santo* telling Café that he should fix Supriano's staircase (Supriano Légua, his *encantado*), so that the *terecozeiros* wouldn't suffer so much to climb up to his *tenda*. In response, Café said that she should appeal to São Pedro, who had settled on the top of the hill before he did. Amidst laughter, the *mãe de santo* said that the hill should belong to Santa Bárbara, in reference to an old *tenda* that existed at the location.

We followed the article with a description of the passage of time (the past and the present) and heard from our hosts about their *moradas*. Codó is the *morada* of the Légua because they chose it to be their *encantaria*, their space of power. The houses/*tendas* today are seen as the *moradas* of the *encantados*, as procedures are carried out in them that establish the presence of the entities. Houses/*tendas*, in this context, cannot have their meanings reduced to material or juridical-administrative dimensions: they are collective constructions, have entities as “owners,” are chosen by them, and develop through their work. This outlines a notion of home and city that does not fit into cartographic and institutional procedures.

Parallel to the emergence of layers and developments to think about space, talking about the relationship between religion and city – and about dwellings – is also talking about time. On one hand, we see, in a more linear sense, how the passage of years speaks to the transformation of that territory. The land bought by seu Légua Boji Buá “on top of” Antônio Filho now represents only a third of the area that was known as Morro da “Principa” Moura, an entity received by Eduardo, the first to build a *terreiro* on the land. Toinho told us that according to the stories he heard, the hill was occupied, at that time, by the *tenda* and several houses where relatives and *filhos de santo* lived. With Eduardo's death and Júlio's departure, some of those who lived there sold part of the land. The piece of land negotiated by seu Légua was part of this broader process of sales that reduced the area that initially belonged to the *candomblé's terreiro*. What was then, currently, a set of private and separate residences, was once a set of houses connected to the *tenda*.

Another dimension of time, less linear, is the one that allows connections to be created that resize issues related to the past and the future, something that is recurrent in the context of Afro-Brazilian religions (Rabelo 2014). The past continues to be rewritten as it is assumed in the present. This is how Toinho, as he learns about the history of the land chosen by his Légua, builds a relationship with Eduardo, whom he never even met. In this, we see that the fact that the first house was of *candomblé* and Toinho's house is of *terecô/umbanda* is secondary. The entities can continue to be present in new material structures and distinct masters. Thus, as the *pai de santo* told us, his *tenda* (although materially built a few years ago) is a centennial house.

It is not our intention to suggest an exotic or extraordinary notion of house or



city, celebrated in the media, sometimes with terms like “the corner from beyond” (National Geographic 2010). The experiences of the *tereçozeiros* are impacted by diverse situations – from the surprise of those who become neighbors of a house and at night realize that it houses a *tenda* (adjacent to it or in the back of its terrain and, therefore, not visible from the street), to coexisting with those who perpetuate situations of intolerance and disrespect, putting, for example, salt on the doors of the *brincantes* or in the places where the processions of the *terreiros* with the saints pass through. There is still a shared stigma, found even in places far from the city, which links the place to witchcraft and weighs negatively on those who live in it or come from it. A few years ago, the association of the city with this fame led to the construction of a portal with the words “Codó: city of God” (which sounded like a provocation to some, who saw it as a way to reinforce a negative view of the practices of the *terreiros*, but did not mobilize other *brincantes*, keen on the continuous reference and devotion to God in the *tendas*).

Despite situations of intolerance and racism, there are continuous practices of caring for the relationship with the entities among the *tereçozeiros*. There are still movements, *moradas*, and entities that escape fixed forms and associations even given by us, researchers. Also for this reason, we understand the forest (Ahlert 2013) and the city of Codó as places of thought. We would like to suggest that when they are mentioned locally or in other contexts – when a “Légua” *encantado* is received in another location in Brazil and is greeted with “ê Codó!” – these terms are indices. If they are the forest itself and the city itself, home of the “Légua”, they also represent other elements associated with them, especially power. That is why the forests are also the *tends* and the houses and Codó is so many places. Where *axé* is established, the *encantados* come to visit.

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