

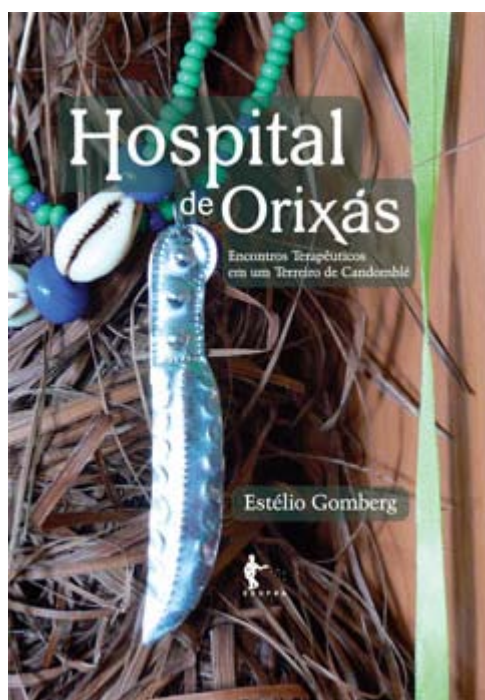
\* **Book review**

## **"Feeling and thinking about the therapeutic encounters in Candomblé Yards"**

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### **Hospital de Orixás: encontros terapêuticos em terreiro de candomblé**

Estélio GOMBERG, 1. ed. Salvador: UFBA, 2011. v. 1. 154 p.

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The book we are presenting is "**Hospital of Orishas: therapeutic encounters in a Candomblé Yard**", by Estélio Gomberg, published in 2011 by Publishing House of the Federal University of Bahia (Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia), the fruit of his PhD at the Public Health Institute of this Institution of Higher Education and research projects, funded by the National Health Fund

His book is a significant advance in understanding of a Brazil of therapeutic practices developed by religions focusing, especially, Candomblé.

In the presentation, Miriam Rabelo, from the Graduate Program in Social Sciences at the aforementioned University, points out that this study addresses how the faithful, not only of Candomblé, can structure themselves in the face of a society with a deteriorating healthcare system based on an alternative system that, in this case, would be the Candomblé yards.

In the Introduction, there is a call to learn the meaning behind the book's name and to understand the why of "Hospital of Orishas" through the words of Yard members who were researched; this is followed by a discussion on the meaning of illness, healing, and health in the religious sphere. The analysis of therapeutic religious itineraries and the process in which individuals experience it is the major focus of this book.

The work is presented in five chapters and the format in which each chapter is presented is extremely provocative. Each chapter is quite interesting as they all have an ethnographic character, but present the theory interwoven in the field work, making it inviting to read this book.

The first chapter is called "**Candomblé and its expressions**" this chapter has more than three

sub-chapters. The author questions the history of Candomblé in Brazil , how it was configured and the foundation of the same. It is in this chapter that the author presents the Candomblé of Sergipe, and justifies his choice of this sphere and his methodology entitled "Afro-brazilian religious anthropological adventure". He also points out, through a sociohistorical perspective, the problems of slavery and diseases attributed to blacks and mestizos. To Gomberg, religions of an African origin are currently within a realm of social and therapeutic choice, styling and acting as "social agencies".

In the second chapter Gomberg discusses the process of health and disease in greater depth, understanding and social applications of bodies in Candomblé. He infers from the solutions found in these spaces, and exemplifies how one explains illness.

Still in this chapter, we discuss how therapeutic knowledge is institutionalized (GOMBERG, 2011, p.61) and places importance on the establishment of the Traditional Medicine Program by the World Health Organization. Based on this initiative, one begins to reflect on the importance of alternative methods within the health system and on the preservation of the complex system of practices and knowledge that are singular to traditional social groups and how this will concern the social legitimacy of "Afro-brazilian medicine".

Interestingly enough, the author argues the difference between space and territory in the third chapter. So the reader may understand the importance of space in Candomblé is central to the affirmation and construction of its identity (GOMBERG, 2011, p.86). Based on several examples of ancient yards, Gomberg states that the destruction of these spaces as public entities, guaranteed the continuity of the institution, greater visibility, and above all, a social legitimating of the individuals (GOMBERG, 2011, p.95).

In the fourth chapter, the author presents the strategies developed by the religious communities to promote health of their people and customers (GOMBERG, 2011, p.113). He says that religious "acceptance" is individualized, and only by consulting an oracle (jogo dos búzios) along with the willingness of the consultants, is there the possibility or not of insertion into these spaces. The circumstances for entry are diversified, some of the most common are: grief, suffering, and misfortune.

As this chapter unfolds, Gomberg presents some kinds of integration of these individuals and what are the solutions. Through narratives, he presents the process of articulation of "*the individual and collective plan for coping strategies and solutions posed by social subjects through material and supernatural resources*" (GOMBERG, 2011, p.139).

E finalmente no último capítulo ou, **Caminhos terapêuticos no Terreiro**, apresentamos a mudança parcial ou total do status social de cliente para *filho de santo* iniciado. De que forma os adeptos neófitos são socializados e por deverás tornam-se membro da família de santo. Gomberg apresenta alguns rituais para antes da iniciação entre eles o Bori – (re) construção da identidade social e religiosa, os ebós- processo terapêutico com folhas e/ou animais, a depender a necessidade do indivíduo- e a iniciação - a conversão propriamente dita.

It is important to point out that, for prescribing ebós or the bori ritual, the individuals do not necessarily have to be new adept, but the initiation completely changes the lives of the individuals, they are no longer a consultant and become a member, with rights and duties inside and outside the religious community.

Also in this chapter the author presents, in narrative form, how the initiation ritual is carried out; how the yard changes to receive a new "son. The author narrates the preparation of the house and all efforts made to ensure that this process is in fact a renewal for the neophyte.

Overall, this study broadens our vision beyond the public health system, providing "*strategic actions designed to promote health in a Candomblé yard in the State of Sergipe*" (GOMBERG, 2011, p.185). Gomberg very cunningly seeks to understand the motivations that lead individuals to opt for Afro-religious therapeutic practices, and the great importance of establishing a dialogue between government and religious segments and thus growing to a healthy understanding of the therapeutic habits and strategies practiced in Candomblé.

## Bibliographic References

GOMBERG, E. **Hospital de Orixás: encontros terapêuticos em terreiro de candomblé**. 1. ed. Salvador: UFBA, 2011, v. 1, p. 154.

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