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The religion of mobile phones: technology consumption as an expression of faith among Pentecostals and Umbandistas

A religião dos celulares: consumo de tecnologia como expressão de fé entre evangélicos e umbandistas

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Abstract *During the eleven months of field research in a low income neighborhood in Florianópolis, I was able to witness important connections between the consumption of mobile phones and religious experience among Pentecostals and Umbandistas. In this article, I explore the ways in which the mobile phones are present in the religious discourse and practice of these two groups, where the mobile phone can be perceived as both a negative and positive mediator. Based on an ethnographic analysis of the material, I argue that the association between religion and the use of mobile phones, not only alleviates the experience of poverty, but also provides new ways to express religious identities. I also suggest that a political dimension is present when its features - especially Bluetooth and SMS - help to spread the religious discourse and to obtain new followers.*

Key-words: *Mobile phones; Bluetooth; Consumption; Pentecostals; Umbanda*

Resumo *Ao longo de 11 meses de trabalho de campo em um bairro de camadas populares em Florianópolis, pude constatar importantes conexões entre o consumo de telefones celulares e a vivência da religiosidade entre evangélicos e umbandistas. Neste artigo, exploro as maneiras pelas quais os telefones celulares estão presentes no discurso e nas práticas religiosas desses dois grupos, percebendo o celular tanto como mediador positivo quanto negativo. A partir da análise do*

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material etnográfico, argumento que a associação entre religião e uso de telefones celulares, além de aliviar a experiência da pobreza, traz renovadas possibilidades de expressão da identidade religiosa. Sugiro também que a dimensão política está presente, na medida em que suas funcionalidades – em especial o bluetooth e o SMS – auxiliam na disseminação do discurso religioso e na obtenção de novos adeptos.

Palavras-chave: *Telefones celulares; Bluetooth; Consumo; Evangélicos; Umbanda*

Technological consumption and the objectification of religious values

What is the relationship between technology[2], a symbol of fluid and accelerated modernity in a connected society, and religion, characterized by dogmas and ancestral rituals? To think about his relationship, it is first necessary to realize that, although they seem immutable, religions reinvent themselves from time to time, adding new elements.

Studies about Afro-Brazilian religions by Prandi (2005) and Silva (1995), as well as analyses by Mariz (1994) and Mariano (1999) about Pentecostalism, show us that religions are constantly changing. They transform to adapt to new societal demands, thus being able to compete more effectively in the growing religious marketplace. In this article, I argue that the insertion of technology into the religious experience is part of this transformation dynamic. I believe that a good key for understanding the large interest of Pentecostals and Umbanda practitioners for mobile phones in Morro S. Jorge, the low income community that I researched, is provided by Mariz (1994): much like religion, in a certain sense, mobile phones alleviate the feeling of impotence and abandonment that are common in the life experience of the poor[3].

Although an entire set of literature about the use of mobile phones has flourished in recent years (HORST; MILLER, 2006), very little was written regarding the insertion of mobile phones into religious practices and experiences. In this sense Campbell's (2006) work is pioneering. The author argues that mobile phones empowered the faithful as they become tools that allow the integration of religious practices into the frenetic contemporary lifestyle. Therefore, the are tensions, controversies, and continued negotiation is this social construction process for technology, as Campbell illustrates using the analysis of the appearance

[2] The term "technology," although it obviously covers various possibilities, in this article it will be used to mean "information and communication technology."

[3] In the author's words" "Religion can be an important instrument in coping with poverty because it destroys poor people´s experiences of being powerless. This sense of powerlessness is common among the very poor, and most religions strive to overcome it with the belief in spiritual power and the possibility of performing miracles" (MARIZ, 1994, p. 143).

of the "kosher" mobile phone among ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel. The "kosher" (a word which means 'approved by religious law') device has a special seal from the telephone operator that attests that the features considered religiously offensive[4] due to their potential access of profane content were turned off. This includes features such as Internet access, voice mail, and the sending of text and video messages. Campbell uses the concept of "cultured technologies" developed by political scientists Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai (2005), to understand the process through which a community provides new meaning to a technology, making it part of their culture. However, I believe that, while this approach may be fruitful, it ignored a field of studies that, among the Social Sciences, has been concerned with the relations between communication and culture: the anthropology of consumption. It realizes that consumption is a cultural practice that goes beyond the moment of purchase; therefore, it is a dialectical process where objects and subjects, merchandise and people, constitute one another (APPADURAI, 1986, 1998; MILLER, 1987).

This is how Miller suggests the concept of objectification as a key to explaining consumption, especially in modern/contemporary societies. To affirm that consumption is an objectification process means saying that the social agents use the goods and services in such a way that the object or activity "simultaneously becomes a practice in the world and the way in which we build our understanding about ourselves in the world (MILLER, 1995, p. 30)." Thus, his idea of objectification is a proposal for approaching modern societies that, while distancing itself from Marx and the fetishism of merchandise, consider consumption to be a process with major dealianation potential. According to the author, "as an activity, consumption can be defined as one that transfers the object of an alienable condition, in other words, of being a symbol of estrangement and monetary value, to becoming an artifact with imputed private and inseparable connotations (1987, p. 190). The affirmation of

[4] In his ethnographic study about the use of mobile phones in Jamaica, Horst and Miller (2006) saw a practice related to the religious use of mobile phones among Pentecostals: the prohibition of secular ringtones, considered offensive, and their substitution by "Christian" ringtones.

the dealianating potential of consumption is valuable for the argument we presented above, which is that the consumption of mobile phones empowers the residents at Morro S. Jorge in relation to their religiosity, and thus alleviates their experience with poverty.

For Miller (1987), who develops his concept of objectification from Hegel, a deeper understanding of the role of merchandise in society necessarily requires a perspective of the relationship between people and things. The meaning of the object is important, but not separate from its material dimension. This dimension should be taken into consideration in order to understand the motives that make objects have meaning or significance for people. By consuming, the social agents objectify values such as modernity and success, or cultural values related to categories such as class, ethnicity, and gender (Miller, 1987). As we will see next, the interest of this article is to describe which cultural values regarding religion are objectified through the consumption of mobile phones among Pentecostals and Umbanda practitioners in Morro S. Jorge.

"Because the Lord knows how to work": mobile phones in the Pentecostal day-to-day activities

O Morro S. Jorge[5], where the ethnography for my doctoral thesis was done, is a low income community in the city of Florianópolis, in southern Brazil, with about three thousand residents, mostly children and youth. In 2007, after the first phase of exploratory field work, I wrote an article where I presented the first results, stating that the mobile phones represented an important part of the idea of "being modern"; where their use was a way of " being in the world," measured by technology, which is a characteristic of contemporary culture (AUTHOR, 2008). At that time, I had not explicitly noticed issue of religiosity and mobile phones yet, even though it was present in the words of one of my interviewees□.

[5] I chose to use a fake name for the location, and my interviewees are also identified by pseudonyms. The ethnographic material was obtained by participant observation and in depth interviews. The images presented in the article are mine.

In July 2008, I returned to the research field with a more attentive view regarding these issues. I discovered that Vânia, one of my first interviewees, had begun two months prior to our first interview, in January 2007, to attend the services of Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) which were held at their main temple downtown. As the field work advanced, the importance of religion for the residents of Morro S. Jorge became more and more evident. In the community there are two Catholic churches, three Assemblies of God temples, and about ten Umbanda and Candomblé *terreiros* (sacred worship space) (I will deal with those later on). Among my interviewees, a minority were practicing Catholics; the large majority were Pentecostals (of the Assemblies of God) or Umbanda practitioners, of which several claimed to be "Catholic-*Umbandista*[6]".

I randomly made friends with a couple from the Assemblies of God who loved cell phones: Saulo, a security guard, and Edinéia, a homemaker, both in their thirties. They live at the top of the hill, in a wooden house in precarious condition, without a ceiling, and with flooring that was rotting away. They have two adolescent children, and various young people that live with the family, which they call "spiritual children." When he met me and learned about my research, Saulo offered to send me a "praise" (gospel music) to my mobile phone via Bluetooth. When Saulo became a pastor I began to attend the worship services as an observer - not every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday as my interviewees did, but whenever possible. While I expressed my interest in their belief, I would reiterate that I was there as a researcher and I explained by research interests, which included the practices of both Pentecostals and Umbanda practitioners. My interviewees did not agree with Umbanda; however I thought it was important for my main interviewees, Saulo and Edinéia, to know that I attended Afro-Brazilian worship because of the research, which they respected. This didn't keep

[6] Mariz (1994) and Prandi (2005) remind us that this behavior can be explained by the conditions of the historical construction of Umbanda in the beginning of the 20th century - its syncretism with the Catholic religion, in a period where being Brazilian meant you had to be Catholic. Also, many Umbanda practitioners also go to Church.

them from trying to convince me to "accept Jesus" a few times. At their congregation, I met Magda, Edinéia's sister, and her husband Josevaldo. Going to the services, visiting their homes, and interacting with various "brothers and sisters from the church" I was able to discover some of the ways the mobile phones were integrated into the religious experience and discourse of the Pentecostals.

First of all, there is a belief in the absolute power of God, who acts on behalf of the faithful in various ways. This aspect was already present in the interview with Vânia, who believes that God acted - because "for God nothing is impossible" - so that her boss gave her a mobile phone as a gift. For Pentecostals, the power of Christ is a panacea for all earthly evils (MARIANO, 1999), and the mobile phone, present in the daily life of the faithful, becomes one of his tools. "The cell phone is God's invention," Edinéia assured me. At the end of a Bible study at the temple, I heard Ms. Martinha, the group's leader, tell the ladies at the church the following story:

> Sisters, know that the Lord in His wisdom always finds a way to reach us. See what happened to me. As you know, when I was sick I was not able to come to the services. But my husband and children always came. And one evening I was at home, with my swollen knee, in a lot of pain, and alone - with nobody nearby. I was really needing a word, and I asked the Lord for someone to pray for me. All of a sudden my cell phone rings. I answer but nobody speaks! And I didn't understand anything, and I was in pain... But then I paid attention and I heard the praise music, and then the voice of brother Saulo preaching. God acted through the cell phone for me to be here in the worship service with you all. God acted, making my husband's cell phone call me, and he didn't even know. Because when he came home I asked - you called me, did you know? He said no. That the phone was in his pocket the whole time. But I told him: God acted to relieve my trial. He made the cell phone push speed dial, that has my number stored. That is because the Lord knows how to work. That just goes to show you the power He has in our life.

If "the Lord knows how to work" through a cell phone, his faithful also find very interesting ways to incorporate mobile phones into their

religious practice. This happens with the prayer chain that Edinéia holds every day with her family and friends, in the morning and in the evening. When Saulo is working, he follows along and participates by mobile phone. It is important for this to happen because, as head of the family, he is the leader, explained Edinéia: "we call his number and leave the cell on speaker-phone, on top of the bed. He hears us, and when it's his turn, he lifts his voice in prayer and prays by telephone." Also, according to Edinéia, when one of their "spiritual children" is in Palhoça (a nearby city where other family members live) they also participate in the prayer chain using the mobile phone on speaker-phone. These prayer chains last, on average, half an hour, and Edinéia takes advantage of the fact that the family members use the same carrier to make free calls, using a promotional bonus: "last month I purchased BRL 35.00 is credits and received an additional BRL 400 is bonus. And I used them all."

The promotional bonuses are important to alleviate the economic pressure that results from the fact that Edinéia and Saulo have to always be available to provide spiritual help for the residents of Morro S. Jorge, regardless if they are Pentecostal or not. Spiritual counseling by phone is part of the couple's routine: "we help people and thus show those of 'the world' the path to salvation from the Lord," said Saulo. Most of the calls are received, but depending on the urgency of the case, both make calls from their mobile phone: "when it is another carrier we call because of our love for God." Edinéia always has two mobile phones and two batteries, because she can't be out of touch ("I had three cell phones, but I gave one to my daughter") and her husband as well. Both receive several calls a day from people asking for prayer and for help:

> Saulo even answers the cell phone in the shower. He leaves it on speaker and goes on talking with the person. When my spiritual daughter was giving birth to my grandson, they even called me in the hospital. I care for many people in the community, many ladies. I am almost never at home, that is why I gave up on a land line. Sometimes they call me at midnight asking for help because their husband is breaking everything because he is on drugs. And as God's servants we have to answer.

An important means of connection for the Pentecostals with the sacred is through music. The worship services I saw were mostly sung, interrupted only by preaching; and the churches had organized choirs. Most of the time, Saulo uses his mobile phones with earphones - he listens to hymns and praise music whenever he can. The music from the earphones is only interrupted when he receives a call. The mobile phones of Pentecostals, in most cases, are not used for listening what they call "worldly" music: which in the musical landscape of Morro S. Jorge is mostly rap and funk. Since very few members of the Assemblies of God in the community have internet access, the Bluetooth feature of the mobile phones plays an important role in the sharing of the religious discourse present in the hymns and praise music. Those with access download hymns from the internet and share it using their mobile phone. It is common for there to be exchanges, not just of hymns, but also images before and after the worship services. However, these are no images of saints, which Pentecostals considered idolatry. The images in the mobile phones of the Pentecostals exalt faith in the person of Jesus. An example is the wallpaper of Saulo's new cell phone, which previously belonged to one of their friends (Figure 1). According to him, "if my life belongs to the Lord Jesus, then so does my cell phone."

There are other ways that mobile phones are integrated into the religious practices through their features that are more pragmatic and less symbolic than the images of praise to Jesus and the hymns. For Saulo, his other mobile phone, with more than twenty praise songs in the memory, was very valuable when the church equipment quit working just one week before he was installed as pastor. Saulo had no doubts - he adapted a microphone and an amplifier and used his mobile phone to officiate the service and help the choir with their performance. And the phone helped celebrate the worship service for several weeks in the small church with only 30 square meters, until enough offerings were collected from the members to fix the sound system.

Here it is important to note that in the temple area, including the worship service, mobile phones are not forbidden. Once it is considered

a "evangelical phone," as opposed to a "worldly phone" due to the control of its content and use, it is not considered profane or improper for the sacred space. The same is true for the digital cameras in mobile phones. Unlike the Catholic Church, for example, where taking photos during mass is not considered polite, quite often I saw the Pentecostals taking photos or even filming during the sermons - often several at once during the same moment in the worship service.

In the task of disciplining the mobile phone for it to be "evangelical," the word of the pastor is essential. Beyond taking care of the contents, the calls also must be made according to Christian principles. "The cell phone can be a weapon of Satan in someone's hand," said Saulo. Edinéia said that the topic of mobile phone use was included in more than one sermon. In this sense, the mobile phone is seen by the Pentecostals of S. Jorge as a negative mediator, especially in relation to issues such as indebtedness, gossip, and slander.

> Yes, every Friday is a day to preach about discipline. And the pastor once made the following observation - you have to know how to use your mobile phone. If you have a bill to pay, you are responsible for paying it. Don't use the mobile phone to call and do wrong things, gossip, fight, don't yell on the phone. Use the phone to send a message of faith, love, and hope, not wrong things.

Even Edinéia had a recent family problem regarding this issue. She began to receive calls from some children and adolescents saying Saulo was their father and he had abandoned them. They began to suspect a fifteen year old nephew who may have given out his aunts number because he had been scolded. "So we sent a hymn to his cell - the same one we sent to you Sandra. Remember? Sure enough. The next day he went to church, his eyes tearing up, and he confessed and asked forgiveness.

To share "a message of faith," the Pentecostals use the SMS function of the mobile phone: sending Bible passages by text message: "The message is based on the moment a person is experiencing" said Edinéia's sister Magda. Even though it is not free like Bluetooth, it is a relatively low cost - from thirty to fifty centavos a message. Osevaldo, a director

of the Assemblies of God and Saulo's brother-in-law, told me he sends about ten messages a week, and receives several more. He said he has won over people "from the world" to the church with SMS messages: "When the message is to someone in the church, we only send the chapter and verse number. When it is for someone who doesn't know the Bible, we type the entire verse."

Thus, the various forms in which the mobile phones are appropriated by Pentecostals in their religious experience expose their view of the world, and reinforce the performance of a religious identity among the group's members. Likewise, when acting as instances for spreading the religious discourse, the consumption of mobile phones fulfills a political function - "political" here meaning the "broad sense of relations, assumptions, and competition related to power" (APPADURAI, 1986, p. 57) - helping the Assemblies of God to obtain new followers.

"My mobile phone belongs to Saint George": for the purposes of Afro-Brazilian religions

Having come from the middle class, I had never had any close contact with the Afro-Brazilian religions, even though I obviously was aware of their existence. Therefore, I never suspected that the practices related to this religious belief could be connected to my research topic. However, when visiting people in their homes I noticed an omnipresent object: a frame with the picture of Saint George, usually right above the door. I also noticed several home alters, with various images (figure 4). I also soon discovered that most of Vânia's (my Pentecostal interviewee) family members were Umbanda practitioners: her seven brothers and sisters, her mother, and even her children. Once I realized the significant role of the Afro-Brazilian religions in Morro S. Jorge, I began to ask if, as was the case with the Pentecostals, the mobile phones played a role in the religious experience of their followers.

It was at Ms. Catarina's birthday (Vânia's mother), that I had my first contact with Umbanda. Since her birthday is on the same day as the feast of Cosmas and Damian, at the end of September, Ms. Catarina

throws an afternoon party at her home with the distribution of sweets to the children at the end. At this party, the guests, dressed in children's clothing, sang and danced to the sound of drums, and "received" (entered into a trance and incorporated) the "*beijadas*" (spirits of children), who played all afternoon, drinking soda from baby bottles and getting smeared with frosted cakes. During the trance I notices a young man using a video camera and others taking photos and filming with their mobile phones. At their invitation I began attending some *terreiros*.

Three weeks later I went to interview Nena, a member of another family I knew. Nena is a single mother of two boys, ten and fifteen years old, and she works as a janitorial assistant. She has several boyfriends who she constantly asks for presents, and sometimes she prostitutes herself to get some extra income. In her communication with "boyfriends" and "clients," the mobile phone is fundamental. With Nena I discovered that mobile phones are part of the circuit of goods that are part of the reciprocity agreement between the faithful and their "entities" (spirits, generally of slaves, who follow and are incorporated by the practitioners). Nena said her entity is "[...] of the 'left' side, she is more toward evil than good. Depends on what you ask him. If you ask him to cut someone's throat, he cuts it, if you ask him to cure you he cures you, if you ask for a job he gives you one." Nena wanted a new mobile phone, but had to negotiate it with her entity, who wanted a gold ring in exchange:

> So I asked for a new cell. I want a "flip" phone. But she doesn't know that a cell phone is, or what a "flip" is, right? So I imagine her and go on taking, I go close to her clothing and ask for it. Then I explain it to her. I say, "I want one that opens and closes, like this." Then... I found one, found another [...] That same week she put five in my hand. Then I even found one that was similar, but it wasn't a flip phone, it was just its protection case. So I said, this isn't the one I want...! This happened over a one or two week period. One I gave to my son, the other I bartered. You sell it, turn everything into food for your home. Until a really cute one showed up, real little... It was so cute, this size, but with an antenna. But I found it. So I was happy.

Nena believes that the entities must constantly be pleased, because their power over people's lives is immense - they can even interfere in the functionality of a mobile phone. Nena tells me what her entity can do when enraged: "He called me (one of her boyfriends) and I didn't answer. The phone didn't ring, And it really had this call. But because 'she' was mad at me, she made the phone not ring." Another boyfriend avoided giving Nena a more modern cellphone with Bluetooth: "Then I went to the *barracão* (*terreiro*) and she said if I gave her something she would make him give me the cell. And he gave it to me." The entity is also capable of making Nena save her credits: "When I really want to talk to someone, I go there in 'her' stuff, and ask for her. I imagine the person I want to talk to, and the person ends up calling me."

The *terreiro* space generally forbids mobile phones, especially of someone who is in a trance. That is what a Umbanda priest and priestess I spoke too told me. In some *terreiros* in S. Jorge, the mobile phone should be placed by the disciples next to the *peji* (altar) and turned off. In others, they should be left in the dressing room where the "saint" clothing is put on and personal objects left. In some others the device can be left in silent mode[7]. In the session I witnessed, I saw some practitioners with mobile phones in the pockets that checked the device during the breaks. However, people forget, especially during the *assistência* (audience of the session who are not there to "work with the saint."). That is how I discovered that the mobile phones can bother supernatural beings such as *orixás*, *pretos-velhos*, and other entities. These spiritual beings call mobile phones "crickets": "Generally, when a cell phone rings they (the entities) say - hey, there is a cricket blaring - and they don't like it," said Nena. Marisa, another Umbanda initiate, explains: "It is because it breaks the concentration chain, and the *orixá* won't come." Marisa confirms that mobile phones are 'crickets' for the entities, but says they have alternate names" "My mom's *preto velho* calls it a 'taca-taca.' I have also

[7] These differences are explained by the fact that each *terreiro* is autonomous in its administration and ritual (Prandi, 2005).

heard them call it *karé-karô*. I think it is because 'they' hear the people during the *assistência* say hello.

However, Nena's boyfriends are usually very upset when she doesn't answer calls. They always want to know where she is. Once Nena told me, "they called me and I was 'turned' [incorporated]. After I came back to my senses, I saw there was a missed call and I called back, but they were mad because I didn't answer." Therefore, Nena tries to negotiate the tension between her need to be available for her boyfriends and the entry of her mobile phone in the session, justifying it by saying that her entity told her to answer the call:

> Because sometimes... Like I said, I have several boyfriends. And it rang, I was with "her" so she knew it would ring, and told me to answer it. She knows everything. They call us stupid. I mean, we are on the Earth and they are spirits, they see beyond. So my sister went and said I had to talk to this person no matter what. Then "she" said, "get the cricket because the thing is on the cricket." In this case the thing was money, that was on the cricket. So the phone rang and my sister answered and asked him to call later, because I couldn't answer right then.

Another point in which the mobile phone is seen as a negative mediator is in the capture of the images. Many of the followers wish to have their picture on their mobile phone that shows them with the incorporated entity, according to Natália, a Candomblé priestess. According to her, some entities even "like it and pose," but others, such as Exus "don't like photos or being filmed. Mine [entity] is rare, because he comes out either red in the middle or black... I went to see it now in the film." It is not uncommon for the practitioners of the various strands of Afro-Brazilian religion in S. Jorge to attend more than one *terreiro*. As Natália explained: "Various religions, with different rituals, Candomblé, Umbanda, *Almas e Angola*, *Jeje*, *Batuque*, but we visit them all." For a deeper discussion about similarities and differences among rituals, as well as the current dynamics with the contemporary urban environment, see Prandi (2005) and Silva (1995). Sebastiana, an Umbanda practitioner, said that "some saints like to take pictures, especially when

it is *beijada*, children like to take pictures." Nena's entity, for example, hates to be photographed: "If she sees you with a camera in hand she will turn her back. She won't show herself to you, under any circumstances." Once, her thirteen year old nephew took a photo of her when her entity was incorporated, "and then he went there and showed her. And she almost broke the phone, demanded he erase the photo, he said she made a big scene. She said she only wouldn't break him because he worked for her. If he didn't work for her she would bust him up." But Nena ended up receiving the coveted photo offering, her entity a pair of earrings: "She knew I wanted her picture. It was in this cell phone here I think, but I ended up deleting it accidently."

Having a visual representation of the religious practice is important for Umbanda and Candomblé practitioners, especially due to the oral and visual nature of these religious practices. The printed photo albums are substituted or supplemented by digital photos that are stored on the computer (for those who have one) and the mobile phone (for most people). To have images of an Umbanda session is tolerated by the religious leaders of S. Jorge due to the individual and private characteristic of this technology. However, I heard criticism by Vasco, an *ogã* (sergeant-at-arms), that the publishing of sessions or incorporations in general on the Internet sites like Youtube, "it is a lack of respect. Anyone can learn about the secrets of our religion. You see people 'spinning with the saint' and everything. I don't think that is right, because secrecy is important in Ubanda." If it is not possible to have a photo when incorporated by the saint, the religious identity is expressed through the use of other images. That is what I saw on many mobile phones of the followers: photos of their children dressed in "saint's clothing"; saint festivals in the *terreiros*; images of Iemanjá and Cosmas and Damian, and especially the "Saint George mobile phone" (figure 5). I'll explain: it is the practice of using the image of Saint George or Ogum as the wallpaper of the mobile phone. As we saw, the image of Saint George is extremely popular in the community, but it is present not only in the pictures of saints in the homes, but on t-shirts, chains worn on people's necks, and in tattoos, like the one on Ms. Catarina's son's arm. "My cell phone is of Saint

George, of Ogum, because he is a protector," says Sebastiana, who has two children initiated by the *ogãs* - they play the drums and sing in the sessions. Sebastiana's mobile phone was the first "Saint George mobile phone" I saw. Later I was able to photograph some others and learned of the existence of several others. It was Patrícia, Sebastiana's daughter, who photographed the frame with the picture of Saint George to use as wall paper. Later she transferred the image to her mother's mobile phone using Bluetooth. "And as long as this cell phone is with me, Saint Jorge stays here," she ensures. She also uses a chain of the saint. Rael, a thirty year old experienced *ogã* who is a mentor for younger *ogãs* explained to me that it is possible to find images of *orixás* on the internet, but it is difficult because "there is still a lot of prejudice when it comes to Umbanda." This factor, along with the low rate of internet access in the community, can explain the rise of the practice of capturing religious images with mobile phones and distribute them via Bluetooth.

SMS and Bluetooth are two important features of the mobile phone in the socialization of information between Umbanda and Candomblé practitioners, especially the younger ones. Text messages are used to notify people about when there will be saint festivals, or who was a good photo from a session; and Bluetooth not only allows a renewed form of religious expression, as we saw above, but also plays an important role in obtaining and distributing *pontos* - Umbanda's ritual music, of which there are several variations. According to Natália, "It is good to have cell phones with Bluetooth because there are new *pontos* that people don't know, so they share them with each other. Most come from Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro." Her friend Rael - whose ring tone is a ritual chant is the Iorubá language - has been using recorders to record *pontos* since he was a child, and is always after novelties, obtained on the Internet or at the various *terreiros* where he visits and plays the drums. Rael tells Natália by SMS when there are new prayers and *pontos*. As she told me: "Because it like this. There are cell phones that give and that don't give. Since mine is already little, Rael records and [...] sends a message saying, look, there is a new *ponto*. So he comes here and we exchange." In this case, since Natália's mobile phone doesn't have a memory card

like Rael's, she transfers the *pontos* to her computer, which can't access the internet (when she needs to use it she visits her brother).

Natália had already confirmed my hypothesis about the role of the mobile phone in spreading ritual music, but it was Rael who explained to me about the use of mobile phones in the training of adolescent *ogãs*, reiterating another research hypothesis. Even though an *ogã* is made through ritual, by completing initiation obligations (PRANDI, 2005), what I saw in Morro S. Jorge was that mobile phones helps to informally increase the knowledge capital of these young disciples. The *ogã* is responsible for "holding the session" - they are who "lead the *pontos*" and they need to do it with safety and enthusiasm, encouraging the other participants. The sessions are long, and can last three hours (sometimes more) and the ritual is all sung; the invocation of the *orixás* and Catholic saints are minimal. Knowing the most *pontos* grants prestige and is a sign of experience, as Vasco, another experienced *ogã* proudly told me: "I know more than three hundred *pontos* by heart. I can play a session all night long without repeating one." Since there are more and more *pontos*, Rael says "that is why the *ogãs* listen to *pontos* on their cell phone. Not everybody has a computer, so they can train anywhere. And they always pick up new *pontos* by Bluetooth,"

Throughout this article I described how the religious experience affects and is affected by the insertion of mobile phones in the social networks of the researched community. I argued that mobile phones are appropriated by Pentecostals and Umbanda practitioners in Morro S. Jorge in a culturally significant way, objectifying the values of their respective religious beliefs. Both the members of the Assemblies of God and the followers of the Afro-Brazilian religions resignify the uses of mobile phones in their discourse and in their daily practices while taking the precepts and characteristics of their religious beliefs into account; thus, they wrap their technological consumption with religious significance.

Prandi (2005) says that ever since ancient times, religions present themselves as eternal, but are actually always changing to adapt to new social and cultural constraints. In this sense, I hope this brief

ethnography of the cultural practices that explores the intersections between religiosity and technology consumption among the residents of Morro S. Jorge can contribute to a broader discussion regarding the role of the sacred in modernity.

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