# The kilombola occupation: "resistance recipe" of the Mãe Preta Territory (RS)

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## INTRODUCTION

This article presents part of the research material from my doctoral thesis, developed alongside the *kilombola* community of Morada da Paz, also known as Territory of Mãe Preta. The community is located in the rural area of Triunfo, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and it is formed mostly by black women. It is characterized for being a spiritual community that follows the guidance of a "black old woman" (preta-velha), Mãe Preta, and an exu, Seu Sete. It was with the eldest women in the community, known as Yas and *Baba*, that I learned about the concept of occupation. The purpose here is to recover this concept, presenting its singularities in relation to other understandings of *occupation*. Finally, I argue that, as the indigenous "resumption" and the "reclaim" of the American neopagan witches, the occupation elaborated by Morada is also a "recipe of resistance" against the colonial and capitalist attacks.

This article presents part of the research material from my doctoral thesis, developed alongside the *kilombola* [1][2]community of Morada da Paz, also known as Territory of Mãe Preta. The community is located in the rural area of Triunfo/RS, which land was collectively bought by its inhabitants, and it's formed mostly by black women. It is fundamentally characterized for being a spiritual community that follows the guidance of a "black old woman" (Preta-velha), Mãe Preta, and an Exu, Seu Sete. It was with the eldest women in the community, known as *Yas* and *Baba*, that I learned about the concept of *occupation.*

I first heard the term *occupy* in a round of conversation, known as *ipádè*, during the experience carried out in the community by a group of black militancy in Porto Alegre, mostly made of middle-aged people with many years in the militancy. At that time, one of the visitors outlined similarities and distances between the goals of his collective and those of Morada da Paz. He stated he was seeking the experience in the community because both desired to "value the communalism and the ancestral wisdom". However, the main difference between them was the fact that Morada is a "spiritual collective", and they are a "political collective", as they intended to recover the "quilombola ancestors'" communalism and bring these "communal ideas into politics". At that moment, Yashodhan, Yalasè of the community, answered: "but we are political beings! It is not about party politics, but it is politics. We have permaculture practices, we have CoMPaz Institute, the Ponto de Cultura Omorodê and we are building the ComKola[3]. We work with occupation! Occupation of minds, spaces, dialogs and hearts".

I suggest considering occupation, presented in this dialog, as a nodal point of a crossroad (Anjos, 2006, 2008) between two notions of occupation, such as: social movements and Batuque houses. Crossroad is a notion of the afro-religious thought and presents itself, through Anjos' work, as another way of understanding the difference, not by its own dilution, as instituted by the acting ways of the Nation-state. As the author has defined it, "the Afro-Brazilian religiosity has another model for the encounter of differences that is rhizomatic: the crossroad as an encounter point for different paths which do not merge in one unit, but continue as pluralities" (Anjos, 2008: 80).

In this crossroad, on one hand, we have the notion of occupation developed by the social movements, as a political reclaim strategy to assert their rights and autonomy; on the other hand, the notion of occupation developed by Batuque from Rio Grande do Sul state, to name the subject's *incorporation* process by the Orisha. I argue that it is in this relation that emerges the *occupation* notion developed by the Morada da Paz Community.

## POLITICAL IMAGINATION

The dialog that I started this article with occurred during a period in which public state schools in Brazil were being occupied by high school students that were demanding

that the State would pay more attention to basic education. Occupying schools allowed students to build new relations of knowledge production, no longer guided by the student-teacher relation, but by the communities. The school became an open space where young students and the community were willing to perform activities and workshops self-managed by the occupants, like teachers, parents, and the community in general would contribute with food collection and other items necessary for the permanency of the action. Students would organize assemblies where the decisions were made collectively, building in day-to-day practice the meanings of what an occupation is.

Morada da Paz wasn't unaware of these movements. On the contrary, many of its members would actively participate as public school teachers, workshop instructors, students, or supporters of these movements. Besides that, during a permaculture course that took place in the community, this was the central theme among many of the attendees. Therefore, the schools' occupations, at MinC, at universities and in other spaces, were topic of most community conversations. The students' fight for education and the desire to build a different school through occupations was connected to Morada da Paz's own desires and its fight for *another possible world*.

In legal terms, the occupation notion rises deeply tied to the concept of individual property, fundamental characteristic of modern Law. The right to property is one of the basic institutes of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, characterized as the right "to use, enjoy and dispose of the thing, as well as recover it from the power of anyone who unjustly possesses or detains it".[4] It is understood that things can be appropriated via a "legal contractual" relation, which implies a relation between two people, like a buy and sell relation, or by "capture", where there is no relation between the people, but only between the individual and the property. The first acquisition is called "derived", since the property once belonged to someone else, and the second is called "primary", as the property doesn't have or has never had an owner.

The right to property, from the State-nation point of view, is considered the most important real right. In this logic, the occupation is only possible when there is no previous owner, otherwise it's considered "invasion", argument often used by landowners and contractors opposite to actions of the fight movements for land and housing. There are two fundamental implications to this occupation idea that I would like to point out. First, it is only possible to occupy what has no owner (whether it's because there was never an owner or because it was abandoned). Second, as soon as it has been occupied, the person who occupies it has the possession, and ownership may derive from it, by adverse possession. In case a private property is occupied, and it is alleged that the State does not fulfill with its social function, the property might be expropriated, becoming State property, or passed on to other individuals who will become its owners. Still, when an occupied property belongs to the State, it is possible to seek negotiations with the State so that the occupier has concession to use the space. Hence, they will have the possession, while the State will be the owner.

4 | Article 1228 from the Federal Constitution.

Every proprietor owns, but not everyone that owns is a proprietor, even if it detains "some of the powers inherent to the property" (art. 1196 from the Civil Law). What mainly differentiates a possessor to a proprietor is their capacity to sell the property. I make this brief overview of how the Modern Law understands occupation to demonstrate that, in this perspective, every occupation is a way of counter-inventing properties and individual proprietors. Thus, when we start to analyze the movement of landless rural workers or the movement of those who fight for worthy housing in urban areas, to become a proprietor through occupation or to make the State the proprietor in order to take possession, collectively and with concession use, is what will guarantee to people their permanency in the property or land. However, new outlines emerge with the concept of occupation, through these social movements, when the occupation is seen, mostly, as a political tool to express social inequalities.

The lands idleness of occupied houses and buildings is the main legal argument used by the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) and the movements of those who fight for housing in urban areas, which is considered a crime by the Federal Constitution. According to Boulos (2012), Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST) activist, in the articles 5 and 170 of the Federal Constitution is established that every property must fulfill its social function, in other words, the property must have some use (whether it's for living, work or any other action that brings "benefits to society"). Occupy, ergo, for these movements, is a strategy to validate the Law expressed in the Federal Constitution, that guarantees housing as a social right and the obligation of the property's social function. As it is said in the streets chant, "If living is a privilege, occupying is a right", or yet, "if living is a right, occupying is a duty".

Regarding the rural workers' fight, that inspire a lot of what is in the occupation concept, this political tool is deeply attached to the fight for the agricultural land reform and the end of estates. It was a strategy used to pressure the State to take proper measures to democratize the use of land. During the 70's and 80's, in the beginning of the creation of what would be called MST – Landless Movement – the existing motto among the rural workers was "occupying is the only solution" – denying any possible negotiation with the then national government[5] and using the occupation as a way to "make them" deal with the land problem. It seems to me that the landless rural workers and those who fight for housing in urban areas have in common the occupation as tool to enjoy a property collectively, expressing and obligating us to see and think about social inequalities inherent to the idea of property and possession. Those who were obstructed, by the absence of opportunities, from participating in the capitalistic buy and sell game, used the occupation to guarantee autonomic and collective life management.

The occupation, however, is not used only when the permanent possession of the occupied space is sought. There are other ways of occupation, as proven by high

**5** | Occupying is the Only solution was the motto arisen in the first national summit of MST in 1985. For more information, see Morissawa (2001)

school and university students in the national mobilizations of 2014, 2015 and 2016, or as reminded by the landless, indigenous, quilombolas or the fight for housing movements, when they occupy governmental buildings responsible for the land demarcation or for the guarantee of housing. These occupations are, at first, moved by certain concrete claim agendas – press the State to fulfill its part in the rights' guarantee – and they are legally supported by the right of free manifestation. They are temporary and happen as a means to halt the functioning of the state bureaucratic machine, drawing attention to agendas of those who demand, producing new senses and meanings for those public spaces.

What is most interesting in these movements isn't the agendas they mobilize, nor the legal arguments used to convince the State of the legitimacy of an action (even if they are fundamental, mainly as a strategy to attempt minimally to contain its repressive force). The interesting thing, which mainstreams every way of occupation described here, is what is produced in the process. Other logics of relationships, exchange, solidarity, affections, and desires are invented. A space-time of an inventive routine is produced, and it mobilizes us to thing about the capital logic that always makes the property prevail over life.[6]

For that matter, the way the occupation is experienced and conceptualized by the many social movements goes against the legal concept of occupation. What many social movements seem to point out, very close to when Davi Kopenawa designates the white people as the "commodity people", is that there's always a proprietor for everything. A building downtown, though it's been abandoned for years, belongs to a construction company that is waiting for the right time of the real estate *boom* to build another skyscraper; the latifundia, even though the land is settled and part of it is not being used, belongs to the landowner, in the forged papers; the School or University, in spite of not contemplating the educational expectations of the school or university community, belong to the State – as a bureaucratic and abstract entity. Because the correlated term of property is the individual. There's always a proprietor for everything.

However, we find among the social movements a double relation. While engaging the property through the minimum guarantee of rights, which is how the State proceeds, they also deny the property as an exclusive and only way of dealing with spaces and people. Because of that, indigenous and quilombolas say it's not the land that belongs to the man, but the man that belongs to the land (Bispo, 2018); the landless people state that "we cannot be the lords of the land, we can only be its administrators, in charge of taking care of it" (MST, 2000: 7); and the homeless workers state that the fight for housing is not a fight to maintain privileges, or to guarantee house for some, but to provide to all a place to live. Somehow that's what the high school students did. They reminded that public schools are not State property, but it is the State, as administrator, and the School that must answer to the school community's aspirations.

Occupying, as a political strategy, is an action. It makes everyone that witnesses

6 | The speech of one student who participated in the occupation movements in São Paulo demonstrates much of the capacity of subversion in spaces and affections through occupations: "We have huge trees at school, and we've never had a class outside, we've never had a class to discover which species the trees are, we've never had a class under those trees. I would climb a tree every time we had fieldtrips to parks. When we occupied the school, the first thing I said was 'Wow, we'll be able to climb a tree!' I remember the last time I climbed a tree my teacher asked me 'What are you doing?'. 'Well, I'm climbing the tree!'. 'Get down!'. And it stayed with me...A tree is seen like such an extraordinary and dangerous thing..." (Coletivo Contrafilé, 2016:13)

such action to take a stand before it, as it is highlighted by one of the landless workers: "The occupation (...) is a forceful way of fight, it doesn't let anyone be on the fence, it 'makes' every sector in society to say whether they are pro or against it. Lastly there's no opportunity to conceal the social problem" (MST, 2000: 18). The occupation causes the necessity of a position taking, both by those who occupy or have their property occupied, and by those who watch the movement happen. It pressures mainly the State, as a conflict regulator, to take a stand. This way, the occupation creates an impasse because it blocks, with a start, the flow of the supposed normality of things.

In these perspectives, every occupation implies in taking for oneself the world that we were denied participation – the world of possession and property. Occupying also implies facing the capitalist logics, that so easily depleted us from the world, in creating other ways of inventing it or, as Pelbart (2016) called it in relation to the high school students' occupations, presenting a new "political imagination", in which desires they potentialize and materialize actions and collective decision-taking. Occupying, thus, is to express the inequalities in the exact measure in which another territory is invented, an escape route to properties.

> Immediately, what was tolerated is no longer tolerated, and what was previously unthinkable, begins to be desired. It means that the frontier between the intolerable and the desirable is shifted – and without even understanding why, it seems like everything quickly changed: nobody accepts what once seemed inevitable anymore (the disciplining school, the arbitrary hierarchy, the degradation of teaching conditions), and everybody demands what once seemed unimaginable (the inversion of the priorities between public and private, the students' voices primacy, the possibility to imagine another school, another teaching, another youth, even another society!). (Pelbart, 2016)

## THE ORISHA WHEN OCCUPIES

If among the social movements, occupation means a political action, among the Batuque supporters, cult of the Orishas religion very common in Rio Grande do Sul state, occupation is suitable to designate the established relationship between Orishas and humans. In an *ipádè*, one of the Yas mentioned that the Yalorixás used a term to name the Orisha manifestation process, also called Santo.[7] In these movements that take place in Batuque houses, the body is the occupied territory. In any case, at Morada da Paz, we hardly ever see the term occupy referring to such situations, the term *incorporation* is more common. Undoubtedly, it is both curious and interesting the adepts of these movements intense creativity in naming this relation – *occupy, incorporate, become, receive, give passage, give body, manifestation* – which contrasts with the classic anthropology nominations, rather impoverished, like possession and trance.

This complex relation between Orishas and Humans happen because of a notion

**7 |** There is a whole discussion on the possible equivalency of these term to the own supporters of the African origin religions (see Opipari, 2009: cap. IV). I take them as equivalents. Generally, Orishas can be perceived as powers inherent to the elements and forces of nature (Ogum the iron, Xangô thunder, Iemanjá sea, for instance); but they can also take human forms (Ogum the warrior, Xangô avenger, Iemanjá lady mother). Every single one of these Orishas have many "qualities", manifested under different names. In Candomblé and in Batuque, the initiated person will be assigned an Orisha with its specific qualities. As Goldman tells us (2012: 275), it is from the process of *feitura*, in other words, with a series of rituals that a more substantial relationship between human and Orisha will be established, which is called Santo. At Morada da Paz, this Santo designation is not used in informal conversations, only in rare occasions. And since there is no other process of *feitura* like the one in Candomblé and Batuque, this distinction between Santo and Orisha doesn't exist.

of person in which the human being, as Goldman tells us about Candomblé Angola, "is thought (...) like a complex synthesis, result of the coexistence of a series of material and immaterial components – the body (ara), the Ori, the orishas, the Erê, the Egum, the Exu" (Goldman, 1985: 38). Or perhaps, as one of Opipari's interlocutors described during his fieldwork with Candomblé houses in São Paulo:

> The human being is the same as in the Catholic Church, they have a body and a soul, regardless of any other thing they might possess one day, ok? However, for me, they have a body and a soul, it's normal, but they have something else, these are the things that make them whole. (Opipari, 2009, 189)

Therefore, the Afro-Brazilian religions present us with another way of thinking a person's constitution, which is not a closed unit (from the spirit and body binarism) and homogeneous of the individual, in which the modern Western Law is based. The subjects are permeated by other beings, by immaterial components that "complete" them. Because of that, those initiated subjects in the cult of Orishas develop intense care techniques to maintain the relationships they establish with these others. Generally, it's a common aspect that there is a series of complex rituals that bond humans to Orishas, in other words, involving the "feitura" (as it is called in Candomblé and Batuque) of both the Santo and the Ori (head) of the initiated subject (see Goldman 2005a; 2009). It is important to say, however, that the feitura puts into effect a previous exiting relationship between human and Orisha.[8] Thus, Rabelo tells us, "The feitura opens way so that this relationship is the object of investments and caring, for that matter, it establishes a history" (2014: 81).

As the ethnographer Barbosa Neto (2012) was reminded by an Umbanda medium, "every house is a different case", which leads us to consider the variation in ritual forms to establish relationships between Orishas and Humans in its many perspectives that are commonly categorized as "African matrix religions" or "Afro-Brazilian religions".[9] Moreover, the way the manifestations' intensity is understood varies. Not every initiated subject is occupied by the Santo. Furthermore, the ones that are occupied, the incorporation process is understood as a manifestation's fragment of a much larger force, which intensity would be unbearable to the human body. In the Candomblé and Batuque houses the initiated subjects that are occupied by the Santo manifest the Orisha that is said to be, with cowrie shells divination (búzios), the "owner of the head" and they manifest it, especially, in ritual moments. In Morada da Paz's case, it is common for a medium to manifest different spirits – as it is called the invisible beings that populate the *cosmos*, including Orishas, caboclos, preto-velhos, eguns, among others. Furthermore, the manifestations may also occur outside the spiritual space, since it is said that "spirits know when they need to come", as I was told by Akogum, *iaô* of the community.

The Santo, when occupies, does not occupy an empty body. It's such a powerful

**8 |** Rabelo (2014: 81) tells us about Dona Detinha, Ya, though without an opened house, with whom he lived at Ilê Axé Key Koysan, of Nação Ketu, in Salvador: "In the initiation, the Orisha and its human child are made, or rather, a relationship between them is effected, a relationship that already existed (although Dona Dete didn't know, she was always daughter of Oxum and, thus, always experienced this Orisha's interference in her life), even though it hasn't been properly cultivated yet".

**9 |** This is one of the central questions in Barbosa Neto's thesis (2012) which has as theoretical object to describe the complex relationships resulting from African matrix religions with the intention of thinking a collective concept that doesn't imply totality. I return to an addendum by Goldman (2011: note 2) regarding the concept of "African matrix" that I believe to be important: "African matrix religions in Brazil" seem to me as a synthetical formula preferable to the traditional expressions "African religions in Brazil", "Afro-Brazilian religions", or even worse, "Afro-Brazilian cults". It happens because the term "matrix" has the advantage of being understood, simultaneously, in its sense of something that "gives origin to something" – which respects, in addition to utilizing the native use, always concerned with relating these religions to an Africa that I believe to be neither real, nor imaginary, nor symbolic, but endowed with an existential sense – and yet, in its mathematical or topological sense ("matrix of transformations"), which points to the kind of relationship that I believe to exist among these religions' different updates and, at the same time, to the transformational method I believe to be necessary for its analytical treatment".

force that the subjects end up *giving passage* or *giving their body* to be occupied by the Santo. Goldman describes it as a process similar to death: "This is because it's the own Gods manifesting themselves, and to make it possible it's necessary that, not the body itself, but what animates it to step aside, in a movement similar to what occurs in death, thus giving up space in which the orisha will incarnate" (1984: 47). From what I could learn through my experiences at Morada, this *incorporation*, or occupation, is produced in an impetus. Depending on the subject and the context, an impetus produced with assistance from drums, hymns, and sacred prayers.

The approach between *spirit* and the *medium*, or the Santo and its horse, might happen in many ways. At Morada da Paz there are cases in which, it is said, the spirit is only *leaning over*.[10] In addition, it is said that when a spirit manifests itself, it can be in a *semiconscious* or an *unconscious* way. There are mediums that don't remember absolutely anything that happened during the manifestation process and there are mediums that follow what happens as if they were spectators of the movements and speeches manifested through their own body. Due to these variations in the relationship between individual and Orisha, every *incorporation* and every *disincorporation* is very particular, they vary according to the *spirit* that manifests itself and the *medium* involved. In Candomblé and Batuque houses, as far as I know, the occupation is attributed only to the *unconscious* manifestations and, in the Batuque house's case, the subject that manifests the Orisha doesn't know what they're doing. For Morada da Paz, it's impossible not knowing when you will enter in the incorporation process, even though the manifestation is *unconscious*.

It's interesting noticing that in the relationships between *spirits* and mediums, the forces that occupy aren't forces that 'possess' the subject, since the term possess isn't equivalent to the term occupy, as Yashodhan explained to me. Contrary to it, she told me that *possessed* is a word used in a pejorative way, mainly by neopentecostal religions, to name incorporations processes: "he is possessed". This conception gives a connotation that what is possessing the subject is external to themselves, because it conceives the subject as a very limited unit. In Batuque, she told me, the Santo does not possess, the Santo takes, the Santo occupies. And in this process the forces that occupy, which can be one or more Orishas, are nothing more than the forces that constitute the own subject – and in a singularization process they're also constituted by it – but they aren't the subject itself[11].

Therefore, we play with the use of languages, such as a sentence that we often say in the community's daily routine: "the Xangô of Alakoto". Quickly one of the *Yas* corrects us, "it's not Xangô that belongs to Alakoto, but Alakoto who is Xangô's daughter!". Alakoto, who is Xangô's daughter, also manifests Oxalá, and other many spirits with which there's *cruza (pairing),* but that do not 'possess' her. Even so, it's shared an idea that a spirit which manifests in a subject is singular, even though the subject might manifest a spirit that 'usually' is manifested in someone else. Mãe Preta, for instance,

**10** | Once, in a *spirit's call* dedicated to pombas-giras and to exus, I had a fit of laughter. I was fully conscious; I didn't feel anything in my body that would resemble the incorporation processes that I had experienced before. I couldn't stop laughing though. As soon as the call was over, the entire sisterhood went to the kitchen to have dinner and we started talking about the *call*. The *egbomis* and *Yas* that were present said I was with a gira and I emphatically denied, I was fully confident that I hadn't been incorporated. They laughed at my naivety for my insistence in denying – after all, I "knew" what it felt like to be incorporated and I was sure that wasn't incorporation. When the Yabace, losing her patience with my stubbornness, ironically questioned: "Folaiyan [name by which I'm known in the territory], how much time during the day do you think you are yourself?".

**11** | Pitrou (2016) refers to his ethnographic research carried out in the peasant communities of the Mixe, Amerindian people (state of Oaxaca, Mexico).

manifested both in Yashodhan and in another medium, that no longer participates in the group, when Yashodhan couldn't be the channel.

If, in terms of political movements, the occupation operates in another truth regime different from the one supported by the property concept (and its associated individual proprietor), in terms of the African matrix religions and the spirituality experienced at Morada da Paz, the occupation, in other words, the Orisha's manifestation process, operates in a regime other than that of individuality (and its associated property). I refer to that image of the individual whose frontiers of Me are well marked, whose rationality provides the bases to have control over what is, over 'your' body, over 'your' thoughts and actions. The individual as proprietor and the owner of himself.[12] Which relationship established with a divinity is through transcendence – a divinity that, somehow, is out of this world. This way, as it's pointed out by Anjos (2008), there isn't only one ritualistic practice in a territory, but and identity philosophy.

The occupation might be defined and used in many ways, but what seems to me transversal in the definitions and uses of the terms here presented is: suddenly take something they said and tried to convince us to have a proprietor – whether it's the body or the territory. *Occupy* is an impetus, a contagious force with great capacity of mobilization, that 'makes' us pay attention to the process and the matters it outlines. It is interesting to notice that the term obligation in Candomblé and Batuque's houses is very used, and it refers to the care and cultivation of the relationship that the initiated subject needs to have and keep with the divinity. In the medium's body, occupation is the heart that pulses in crescent intensity – the dizziness, the pains, the cold sweats that take over the hands, the legs' weakness that unbalances the body. It "makes" us pay attention to an external *force* that affects the body which, even in advanced age, dances for long hours, distributing axé.

In a similar way, in 2015 and 2016, the high school students' movement happened throughout Brazil. Young people occupied their schools and universities, compelling us, whether we were involved or not, to observe the public education dismantling. Occupying is the unexpected when those who consider themselves "proprietors" are surprised, but it is also the urgent, for those who do not find other possibilities to fight for life, to assert their existence: "I occupy to exist", say the high school students from São Paulo.[13] Perhaps an adept of Afro-Brazilian religions would say the same, but on the contrary: "I am occupied to exist"[14] or, in another sense of occupation, as taking care of oneself and thus of the Other, "I occupy myself so that the Orisha can exist".[15]

## THE ONGOING COSMIC WAR

Social movements take occupation as an action to be exercised, since they are the ones who occupy. On the other hand, the Afro-religious cosmovision makes the subjects those who are occupied, and the occupation's centrality is in the relation

between these *forces* and the body. A certain passivity of the human that is only apparent because the occupation only occurs, as mentioned, through a series of rituals that reinforce and remake the bond established between *spirits* and humans. It happens because, and perhaps we can list as another transversal element in these forms of occupation: when we occupy, we are also occupied by certain forces that constitute what we are occupying. A territory, for instance, with its own constitutions, when occupied, somehow also occupies those who have occupied it, as it presents certain biomes, characteristics, needs, conditions. Something similar also occurs in terreiros, where it's certain that Alakoto belongs to Xangô, in the exact measure that Xangô manifests itself in a singular way in Alakoto. In the occupation process, both terms of the relationship constitute and affect themselves mutually.

When Morada da Paz talks about *occupying minds and hearts*, it uses the verb as an action to be performed by it – humans and non-humans that work together there. After all, it is Morada that puts itself in the role of *occupying*. An experimental and creative action, produced in an impetus that 'obligates' the thought and position taking. However, it doesn't mobilize this verb in the same way as the social movements. It doesn't seek guarantee of rights before the State, let alone the possession, temporary or permanent, of real estate for the management of life. At the same time, it does not use the expression in the sense given to occupation at Batuque houses, or how it refers to the processes of *incorporation*. Even though what is central to its actions is in the bodies and in the relationship with the invisible dimensions and beings that permeate it. And, in an attention to the urge to occupy, which makes the established forces "*give passage*" to another way of existence. In any case, *occupying minds and hearts* acts in the decomposition of the relationships that support the notions of individual and property, the backbone of Western modernity.

For Morada, the *cosmos* is populated by *forces* and *invisible beings* that cross, appropriate, interact, inhabit, strengthen, or weaken the visible beings, the subjects, the groups, the objects, what we've conveyed to call 'nature' and everything else that would be of the order of a given physical materiality. The *cosmic forces* are known for their effects, for what they cause in bodies, situations, and territories. The colonialism, the capitalism, the racism, the sexism, the xenophobia, the lgbtqiphobia and the environmental devastation are perceived as materializations of the destructive *cosmic forces*, which existence is prior to its materializations. In addition to these forces that populate the cosmos manifesting in their material consequences, communication with them also occurs through what they call *mediumship*. The *mediumship*, for Morada da Paz, is an organic aspect that constitutes every being, in other words, it isn't a gift that belong only to some people or something to be developed. First and foremost, it's something to be *recognized* since we were taught to ignore it. It occurs through the *energetic points* that constitute the subjects' bodies, the so-called chakras through which these *energies* or *beings* enter or pass through the subjects and produce effects. It was

characterized by Ikowè, former *egbomi*, as an attention to *detail*.

Once, o group of Morada da Paz community gathered in Porto Alegre with the only and exclusive purpose to perform a collective prayer with the intention of "emanating peace to the world", guided by the *Yas*. Soon after it was over, some people from the community started talking about purchases and the money we needed for specific rituals. Ikowè said it wasn't the moment to talk about that, nevertheless they insisted. The situation ended up causing tensions among everybody. It was already night and some people needed to take the bus back to their homes, others were immersed in the expenses and costs they would need to afford. In this context of tension, one of the children burst into tears and one of the *iaôs* felt a stomachache. Amid these simultaneous situations, Exu manifested itself in Tojù, former *iaô*, to *cleanse* the place, forcing everyone to remain in silence and interrupt the subject discussed. It was after this situation that Ikowè reprimanded us for "opening an energetic field" of tensions, and said it was necessary to pay attention to situations, to moments, because we're *mediums* and "mediumship is detail".

Add to that what Yashodhan once explained to me, "spirituality has no side". In other words, these *forces* and *invisible beings* can be of potency, of *lights*, or *destructive*, *dense energies*, which serve the *darkness*. It isn't possible to reduce the idea of *dark forces* and *light forces* in Christian terms of God and Devil or Good and Evil. First because there are no unique figures in neither one. Making a pun on those common police chases, that are, by the way, too Christian, there aren't leaders neither in the *light* nor in the *dark*. It is the common *purposes*, as the Yas explain to me, among different *forces*, *spirits* and *beings* that make the unit possible. What composes these two worlds at *war* are the relationships that consolidate and to what they serve. It's possible that the same subject connects with these two *forces*, making their own body a territory in dispute. That's why the Yas continuously alert us for the need to monitor our actions, *ways of thinking* and *ways of feeling*, so as not to give passage to elements and beings that work for the *dark forces*.

Their designations are prior, insofar as they know the dark forces and the light forces act on the visible world, but they only manifest when they meet the subjects who then designate them. They are known for the effects they produce, whether harmful or beneficial. For this reason, I think about these relations, between *light* and *darkness* respectively as good and bad encounters, in the term proposed by Espinosa – that I recover here through Deleuze (2002; 2017). What I'm trying to say is that it's important to differentiate the *light* and the *darkness* from the moralizing and transcendent values of Good and Evil in order to think them by their qualitative differences of existence forms. The good encounter happens when "a body directly composes its relationship with ours, and, with all or part of its power, it increases ours", strengthening our power to act, for instance, when we eat. The bad encounter is based, on the contrary, through decomposition. It's when a body, upon meeting us, decomposes the relationship of

ours, despite composing with our parts, "but under other relationships than those that correspond to our essence", for instance when we ingest poison, such as the pesticide that decomposes the relationships of our body and acts in the production of cancers.

> Good and evil, thus, have a first meaning, objective, but relative and partial: what conveys our nature and what doesn't. And, consequently, good and evil have a second meaning, subjective and modal, qualifying two types, two ways of man's existence: it will be said good (or free, or reasonable, or strong) he who tries, as much as possible, by organizing the meetings, by joining what conveys his nature, by composing his relationship with suitable relationships and, in this way, increasing his potency. For goodness has to do with dynamism, the potency, and the composition of potencies. It will be said bad, or slave, or weak, or foolish, he who lives for random encounters, who contents himself to suffer the consequences, ready to moan and accuse whenever the suffered effect proves contrary and reveals his own impotence. (Deleuze, 2017: 28-29)

However, weak, or strong aren't absolute instances either. The weak is the one who, whatever their strength is, is separated from their power to act. The strong, on the contrary, is full of their power to act. They are both consequences of passive affections, since they explain themselves through an exterior body, that produce mainly passions, or affections, joyful and/or sad. The joyful passions are those that exist in good encounters, that enhance the power of action, and the sad ones are those that exist in bad encounters, that diminish this same power. There is, without a doubt, an effort by Morada to organize as much as possible encounters with happy passions – that is what the *cosmic war* they wage is all about, where *occupying* appears as a *war* strategy.

For some time, the *ancestral Yaba* Mãe Preta has warned us about the importance of not losing the hope and the desire to build *another possible world*. She's told us to be careful with fear, sadness, hate, selfishness, thirst of power, and everything else that generates destruction, because what the *dark forces* want is for us to give up on joy, love, solidarity, and hope, in other words, that we believe these feelings do not belong to us. What the *dark forces* want, according to Mãe Preta, is for us to believe the *darkness* has won and taken over the world and the people, that is, that "there's no other way. But there's a way for everything in life, ok?", she says while smoking her pipe. *Occupying minds and hearts* is to deny this possession of the world and subjects by the *dark forces*. It is, therefore, to inhabit the world with other forms of feeling and thinking, producing new engagements, raising new events – which, for Morada da Paz, could only occur through the alliance established between humans and non-humans. As Mãe Preta said, while we danced "for the souls" around a small fire after a long day at *Muzunguê* – as spiritual services are called -, "it is time for angels and men to walk together".

## OCCUPY, RETAKE, RECLAIM

I approximate *occupy* to the idea of "retake" (or "resumption") by the Tupinambá from Serra do Padeiro, which we find in Ubinger's ethnography (2012).[16] The author tells us that through a spiritual perception the Tupinambá from Serra elaborate their current attacks in order to "retake" their lands. Due to a colonial past filled with deaths, it's said that the land they come from is "blood-sick" and it needs to be cured to free those Tupinambá who were killed and decimated by the colonial power. As a result of their premature deaths, they are stuck in this world. This "cure", say the indigenous people, needs to occur through a Tupinambá response that is not elaborated in the same terms as "bloodshed", but through the cure of a sick territory. It is with a view of healing that the "retakes" are necessary, retaking the land, culture, and indigenous life in general, as a means of freeing the Tupinambá who were killed.[17]

Ubinger's dissertation brings valuable data on this relationship between humans and non-humans – whether they are ancestors' spirits or the enchanted.[18]

An extraordinary fact among the different moments of territorialization of the Tupinambá in Southern Bahia occurred in the 1950s, and has as protagonist Velho João de Nô, who suffered from "madness" for receiving in an uncontrolled way many enchanteds and visions of the future. João de Nô's father, seeing his son's situation, decided to take him to his aunt in Salvador, that was none other than Mão Menininha, Yalorixá from the Terreiro Gantois, so that she could cure him. She, on the other hand, said she couldn't do this, as he already had the power to cure and stated that he needed to return to Serra do Padeiro, as he had "a sentence to fulfill". When he returned, he healed himself with an herbal bath and began to heal others.

At that time, Caboclo Tupinambá manifested itself in João de Nô and told to the indigenous people that "this land will be an indigenous village again". He began to receive numerous messages that warned of the need to "retake the indigenous territory, in addition to a spiritual preparation for the right moment for this procedure of 'cultural and spiritual rescue', in an attempt to 'raise the village'". Time went by and in the 80s the Pataxó indigenous people, Tupinambá's neighbors, were negotiating with FUNAI the demarcation of their lands. João de Nô, that had passed away at that time, informed that the enchanted had warned "it still wasn't the right moment to enter the indigenous movement", since they needed to strengthen themselves spiritually and "wait for the warriors" – the generation of Tupinambá leadership that acts nowadays (Ubinger, 2012: 54). Alarcon (2013) introduces us to interesting ethnographic data of the Tupinambá´s retaking processes and their articulation with the enchanted.

Just as Morada da Paz lives and directs its fights in function of a cosmic war, the Tupinambá from Serra do Padeiro also experience constant "spiritual wars" that affect the bodies of humans, mainly due to the actions of the dead who live wandering the world and haven't found peace, for they have no land to rest. In this way, "retake" the possession of land implies not only the ancestors' rest, but also the physical and spiritual well-being of the human Tupinambá people. In addition, it is the enchanted,

**16** | Also see Couto (2008) and Alarcon (2013)

**17** | According to Cacique Babau: "(...) The tupinambá don't work for the living, which can be seen through the eyes and can be overtaken by a simple rock on the way. (...) We fight for Tupâ, who has left, for our protection over the land, the enchanted, and the Tupinambá, he is simply twenty percent matter, and the rest spirituality. We believe in the realm of the enchanted and we know that the direct connection for the existence of the Tupinambá being is the guarantee of land, of free land, of everything you see on this land. (...) Tupinambá has lived there for hundreds of years. When Cabral arrived here, Tupinambá was already living on the land, land of the enchanted, sacred altar – our land and we haven't left the land so far. (...) We will not give up the land, I told them: I'll die in prison, but we do not negotiate our right to the land, because this right belongs to our ancestors, who died fighting, and to our grandchild and great-grandchildren, that will come in the future." (Ubinger, 2012:59). This aspect is in line with the elaboration of Alarcon (2013) when she states that the land demarcation processes by themselves do not include indigenous retake possessions of land.

**18** | It's Worth an addendum: enchanted, for the Tupinambá, are spirits that didn't die, but for some divine blessings were transformed into a force of nature, or beings sent by Tupã to communicate with humans.

the main alliance established by the Tupinambá, who want the land, as dona Rosa reported to Ubinger (2012: 70):

> Yes, because it's not us who want it, it's something that the enchanted ones want the territory, it's theirs, right, and if it wasn't theirs, there wouldn't be this whole fight, right, for these lands, so it is their request that the land it has to belong to the indigenous people, to the ancestors and it has to continue, right, and that's where it is to keep the fight over the land and to keep the enchanted too, right, because I say, if we don't fight, in a few days it's all over, the whites took it, as they had been taking over, and nobody cares, nobody really believes in the enchanted ones, and then everything passes, right...

The reciprocity between humans and non-humans deserves to be highlighted. The enchanted protect the humans and give them information on how to proceed in the fight for land. But simultaneously, they need the human indigenous to "keep their spiritual 'strength'". She tells us that "if the indigenous people did not believe in these beings, did not follow their advice or did not fight to secure the Indigenous Land, the enchanted ones would also lose their spiritual power or 'strength' and potentially disappear" (idem, 2012: 70). At Morada da Paz, the *spirits*, that occupy an analogous role to the enchanted, since they are the ones that bring orientations to the community and the collective life, wouldn't cease to exist, but the effects of their actions in the world would be smaller, more restrained. This would entail a distancing between humans and non-humans and would make their participation in the *cosmic war* difficult, opening the possibility of a bigger attack by the *dark forces*.

Another relation between *occupy* and "retake" is the fact that the Tupinambá fight is directly related to the theft of their ancestors' land and the struggle to guarantee rights. In Morada's case, the fight isn't restricted to the land matter, even though it passes through it as a territory of black resistance that has been recovered.[19] However, if we understand "retake" not only of the physical territory, but of the composition of a way of existence, again "retake" and occupation come closer together. And they are also close to the concept of "reclaim" – translated as "reactivate"[20], as suggested by Goldman (2015) in relation to "retake"[21].

"Reclaim" comes from the North American neo-pagan witches, especially from the Reclaiming Tradition Witchcraft, an organization founded in the early 1980s, identified as ecofeminist, and has as one of its main founders and participants the activist, witch, and anarchist Starhawk. The term came from the anti-nuclear fight, and it basically proposes to bring politics and spirituality closer, connecting what they call the Goddess religion[22] with a series of non-violent civil disobedience acts and organizations[23], as well as community permaculture practices.

Starhawk and her companions "reclaim" a form of relationship with the world through what she calls Ancient Religion or Witchcraft, a way of dealing with forces

**19 |** The Community territory was collectively acquired by the elder ones, from different places of Porto Alegre outskirts. It is important to highlight that the purchase of the territory was also guided by the spirits. There, the recovery of the soil began, marked by monoculture of eucalyptus, as well as the recovery of their ancestral kilombola and terreiro knowledge.

**20 |** According to Jamile Pinheiro Dias, translator of the text "Reclaiming Animism", by Isabelle Stengers: "Stengers explains that 'reclaiming' is both empirical and a pragmatic adventure as it does not primarily mean reclaiming what has been confiscated but learning what is needed to re-inhabit what has been destroyed. 'Reclaiming', in fact, is irreducibly associated with 'heal', 'reappropriate', 'learn/ teach again', 'fight', 'become able to restore life where it is poisoned'". We've decided for the translation of the verb "to reclaim" as "reactivate" in order to encompass the therapeutic and political potential of the idea proposed here. However, no option will suffice as satisfactory. The reader is warned, first, that the history of the term goes through the link between magic and spirituality and social and political transformation; and, secondly, that the "reactivating" at stake is not about a nostalgic gesture of repetition of the past, but about situated actions and practices, guided by empiricism and pragmatism" (Ibidem., 2012: 8)

**21 |** According to the author, "They should be understood literally in the sense proposed by Stengers for the notion of *reclaim*: not simply regret what was lost in the nostalgia of a return to a past time, but recovering and conquering at the same time" (Goldman, 2015: 656)

**22 |** As the author says: "The symbolism of the Goddess is not a parallel structure to the symbolism of God the Father. The Goddess does not rule the world; She is the world. Manifest in each of us, She can be known internally by every individual, in all her magnificent diversity. She does not legitimize the rule of either sex by the other and lends no authority to rulers of temporal hierarchies. In Witchcraft, each of us must reveal our

of nature that was brutally decimated in the most perverse inquisitorial process experienced in Europe: the witch-hunt. The witch-hunt, as Federici (2017) reminds us, also marks the beginning of the enclosure of common fields and the establishment of private property, with the expropriation of land and the consequent expulsion of peasants from their homes. Not only Art practitioners, as Starhawk calls them, but also women in general, mainly the poorest ones, as well as homosexuals or free thinkers, were burned in public squares. The knowledge of witchcraft practices was increasingly destroyed. The knowledge transmission was reduced to a few families, both in the old continent and with immigrants arriving in the Americas.

This process of persecution and devastation of witchcraft practices makes the author approach the repression experienced by the European and North American witches from that time with the repression to African religions (Starhawk, 1993: 22). Just as the enclosure of common fields and the expulsion of peasants with the advent of private property can be close to the frequent "thefts" of indigenous lands, as the Tupinambá put it, and also the quilombolas (Santos, 2018) – which, as noted by Stengers (2015), not only implies expropriating goods, but also connections.[24] Reclaim, in neopagan ideas, implies in re-appropriating on all those magical practices that they tried to destroy and that, through an almost well done job of capitalism and the church, were practically eliminated from modernity. It is, ergo, to recover a way of life that was once devastated, not to rescue the past in its entirety – to live the past again -, for "reclaim" implies above all a possibility of experimentation and creation in the present, as said by Stengers.

"Reclaim", "retake", *occupy* seem to me like strategies that involve what Pignarre and Stengers (2011: 130) called "empowerment techniques"[25]. They are ways of disenchanting and protect oneself from spells produced by capitalism, and colonialism, that prevents us from thinking and acting. These techniques are not based on a theory that legitimizes them and demands adhesion. On the contrary, they are experimented, and only validated if they are proven effective, thus making possible what they cannot explain. Therefore, they retake the notion of recipe, that was used pejoratively to designate non-scientific techniques, because recipes, and this is the reason for the recriminations surrounding them, cannot explain why they work through terms that transcend their own execution, in other words, they are not generalizable to other situations.

> Make no mistake: whoever says recipe is not saying a feeble, secondorder technique. If the recipes of empowerment do not refer to a theory that would justify them, it is because the question of justification is a poor question in relation to what their success designates, the event of a becoming. Such recipes do not explain, and do not aim at assuring the reproduction of what it is a matter of succeeding in doing, in the manner of an experimental protocol, any more than they aim at defining this success by conditions that would make it reproducible. An event is not reproducible, but it is possible to explore the possibilities of bringing about its repetition, which is risky and different every time. (Stengers and Pignarre, 2011: 133)

own truth. Deity is seen in our own forms, whether female or male, because the Goddess has her male aspect. Sexuality is a sacrament. Religion is a matter of relinking, with the divine within and with her outer manifestations in all of the human and natural world." (Starhawk, 1993: 26)

**23 |** As an example, I suggest reading the chapter Seattle, in the book Webs of Power (Starhawk, 2002), in which the author describes the process of non-violent communication groups organized in acts of civil disobedience, in 1999, against the WTO and its authoritarian decisions affecting labor, human rights and environmental issues. The author narrates both the organizational process, its execution, and consequences. She tells us about her time in prison and how spirituality went through all those moments. Above all, it engages readers in an imaginative process of other possible work, environmental and life relationships.

**24 |** In an interview, Isabelle Stengers (2015) tell us: "at the end of Capitalist Sorcery we evoke the neo-pagan witches from the United States. It's a political movement close to anarchists that reminds us that Europe has become modern by eradicating peasant culture, thus announcing what would make colonized peoples and civilizations suffer. This destruction in the name of progress began to be done within the borders themselves. Neopagan witches try not to forget that capitalism not only exploits but also expropriates: it captures collective practices and intelligences and redefines them in its own way through destruction and appropriation. (...) Collective intelligence is always a 'connected' intelligence, that is, it defines itself in relation to a situation and the multiple connections it creates, social or territorial for instance. Capitalism works by destroying all connections, including that of the past, and it considers as suspicious and dangerous any collective intelligence that claims its connections."

**25|** Stengers makes a reassessment over the term – "empowerment" -, and its many uses in other contexts (see 2014: 29). Sztutman (2018: 348) also does it, when he tells us: "to speak of disenchantment, Pignarre and Stengers borrow the term from the activist

I bring up this point because I do not intend to assume that "reclaim", "retake" and occupy are the same thing, nor do I intend to embrace them in a generalizing theory. They are specially, different recipes, with their respective techniques, to deal with the devastation of the world orchestrated by capitalism and colonialism that are ongoing. They are, therefore, recipes of resistance, as Sztutman (2018) tells us, in which the resistance implies not accepting the given of things but taking the problems for oneself and creating other possibilities of existence.

There is a transversal aspect to these three terms and to the ways they are used, which is, above all, to think alongside others (humans and non-humans) to resist. A practice named by Stengers (2014) of cosmopolitics. The cosmopolitics concept is proposed by the philosopher of science in an exercise of thinking about the relation between Science and Politics. The term is not simply about a relation between cosmology and politics, nor does it assume that the cosmos is a "common world" shared in perpetual peace. This is because, as the author states, this world in which we detain ourselves to know the 'facts', through the technical tools of modern Science, are 'our' knowledges, but they are also invested in 'our' values. And the 'respect for others' or the 'equality of rights' is not enough to exclude the difference. In this sense, cosmopolitics doesn't intend to define what the 'Good' is for a common world. Cosmos doesn't desire to encompass everything and everyone either, including those who do not want to be encompassed.

Giving a cosmopolitical dimension to political problems is not about the answers that will be obtained, but about the questions that will be asked, where the collective thinking is built 'in the presence' of those who made their insistence exist, says Stengers. *Occupy*, ergo, as cosmopolitics, insofar as the members of Morada da Paz place themselves under the 'obligation' to think and act with others to resist the destructive *forces* that act in the world. Cosmopolitics, therefore, is not about a consolidated program, but about an "astonishment", or perhaps that sudden impetus of social movements, that do not expect a 'peaceful' agreement with the State or a "common world" with the interests of latifundium, contractors or capital and which 'compels' a position to be taken: it makes us think about what is happening, both to those who occupy, and to those who are mere spectators of the action—the astonishment that has gripped us since the journeys of June 2013 and which, without a doubt, was extended by the high school students in 2015 and 2016: after all, 'what are we doing with education?'; and leads us to the care and cultivation of other possible relationships, such as the adept of African matrix religions who 'obliges' themselves to care for the Orisha, not by an external and vigilant Law, but as a way of taking care of oneself by taking care of the Other.

vocabulary (feminism, black movement): empowerment. "Empowerment" however, doesn't seem to me the best translation, we could maybe think of "self-determination". Anyhow, when Stengers and Pignarre refer to empowerment techniques, they are thinking about the ability to imagine, to move without fear, to create new fights, always bearing in mind minority transformations.".

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