

**Spirit Mediums in Umbanda Evangelizada of Porto Alegre, Brazil:
Dimensions of Power and Authority**

by

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***A World of Women* (edited by Erika Bourguignon)
Praeger Special Studies: New York, 1980.**

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In this chapter, the author attempts to understand the great appeal of the Umbanda spirit possession religion for the Brazilian women she knew in the city of Porto Alegre. She argues that the role of spirit medium in Umbanda presents middle and lower class women the opportunity to transcend the confines of their ordinarily powerless social and economic status. The spirit medium role not only gives the woman an aura of supernatural authority, but also provides her with a network of clients and of information not otherwise available to her. As a result, she is placed in a position that allows her to control the extradomestic distribution of certain goods and services. Given the present ambiguous position into which Brazilian modernization has placed women, the Umbanda medium role is seen as alleviating certain of the less beneficial aspects of economic development.

Drawing upon materials collected in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1974-75, this chapter analyzes the role of spirit medium in the religious cult Umbanda Evangelizada (evangelized or reformed). During fieldwork, the primary research methodology was "participant observation." Consequently, the research required active participation in and detailed observations of the lives and experiences of spirit mediums. Data obtained in this manner were enriched by formal and informal interviews with informants.

In every Umbanda center that was observed during fieldwork, approximately 80 to 85 percent of the mediums were women. It seems only natural to ask why this should be the case. If we look at the spirit medium role in terms of what benefits accrue to the role occupant we find that religious authority and economic power are among the two most important. Religious

authority is conferred by a supernatural being known as a *guia* (guide) who is believed to possess his medium during the weekly *Trabalho de Caridade* (Work of Charity). The possession of the medium is usually accompanied by a trance or altered state of consciousness so that the spirit's identity is seen to replace the medium's. Economic power, that is the ownership or control of strategic resources, is a feature of the medium-client relationship. The spirit medium, via religious authority, has access to information concerning the resources of his clients and he can reallocate these resources if he so desires. Thus, the medium stands in a position of control over some important economic resources such as jobs and wealth.

Additional prestige is credited to the medium because this role is difficult to enter and continue in for any length of time. The training period, referred to as the development of *mediumidade* (medium abilities), requires fortitude and courage as well as the ability to withstand pain and suffering. The quality of *mediumidade* is ascribed and innate. While everyone is supposed to have some *mediumidade*, the role behavior of medium is learned.

The services rendered by Umbanda spirit mediums are important to the hundreds of clients who frequent the centers two or three times per week. By providing clients with an explanation for their problems, rendering valuable curing services, giving out information, and distributing valued resources, the medium performs a real service for society.

Thus, the status of women who are mediums is enhanced relative to non-mediums and clients. Since modernization, that is, economic development, has not yet benefited most Brazilian women and has even to some extent cut them off from traditional economic power, the popularity of the spirit medium role is understandable.

DOMAINS, POWER, AND STATUS

In discussions of the status of women in societies around the world, one major concern has been with identifying those roles and related activities which allow women access to power and/or authority.¹ Closely related to this concern is the distinction between two realms of activity in the private domain and in the public domain. According to Rosaldo (1974: 3), a universal asymmetry of the sexes has developed from the association of women with the maternal role and consequently with the private domain, and of men with those activities and roles taking place outside of this domain.

Private domain roles do not allow women access to power or authority so long as they focus inward upon the localized family unit and do not relate to the control of resources and of people outside this domain. Power can also come with the control over extradomestic distribution of a valued good or service. Thus, the presence of either economic power or economic authority will tend to enhance the status of women in the public domain.

Woman may be excluded from authority in the public domain by civil codes which prohibit them from entering into certain activities or roles that allocate authority to role occupants. This is the case described for Portuguese peasant women (Riegelhaupt 1967). Circumventing the formal role structure that is sanctioned by civil law is an informal system in which economic power in the public domain results from the occupancy of certain trading roles. The mechanisms granting women access to economic power include a sophisticated system of internal communication (that is, gossip) and a network of ties to male and female patrons living outside of the local community. The access to information through gossip and the ability to contact nonlocal patrons both enhance the status of Portuguese peasant women traders in their local community. Similarly, in Barbara C. Aswad's (1967) study of key and peripheral roles among noble women in a Middle Eastern plains village, internal communications are vital in conferring power to women. Peripheral roles fall outside of the authority structure of key roles, but they still have an important effect on decision making. Peripheral role occupants are able to use information that is obtained through gossip and unrestricted visiting patterns to secure favorable decisions.

It appears then that power and authority in the public domain are conferred by institutions or achieved by activities that provide access to valued goods and services. Such access becomes the basis for control over people and control over things. The sources of access may be through such indirect channels as an internal communications network like gossip and/or contact with nonlocal patrons.

Thus far we have only discussed economic power and its effect on status. We must now consider religion and how and where it fits into this domain distinction. It may be that religious behavior, roles, and activities form a separate domain. If so, some characteristics of the "religious domain" would be similar to those of the public domain. Religious activities might also take place and cut across both domains (the private and the public) making it necessary to consider the overlap of domains. According to A.F.C. Wallace (1966: 52), the underlying premise of every religion is the belief in souls, supernatural beings, and supernatural forces. When people's actions are guided by this premise, they are religious actions. Certain aspects of religious behavior such as prayer, music, taboo, or sacrifice take place in the private domain; others occur within the public domain. Religious behavior is in some instances social, that is, the adherents of a religion on some occasion come together as a group. As Wallace (1966: 65) points out, "no religion is purely an individual matter; there is always a congregation which meets on some occasions for the joint performance of religious acts." In this respect, religious activities fall within the public domain.

The role of Umbanda spirit medium takes place within the structure of roles making up the Umbanda cult institution. It is a cult institution in Wallace's sense of the term:

A cult institution may be defined as a set of rituals all having the same general goal, all explicitly rationalized by a set of similar or related beliefs, and all supported by the same social group (1966: 75).

According to Wallace (1966: 78) it is very difficult to discuss the 'religion' of a society since rarely does everyone operate under a unified system of beliefs. Rather in any one society there are a series of cult institutions, overlapping in membership and even in beliefs, which complicate the picture. This is true for modern Brazil where the Umbanda cult exists alongside the Catholic cult institution, the Kardec cult institution, and many Protestant cult institutions, to name just a few of the many that complicate the religious scene of Brazil.

The expectations that define the Umbanda spirit medium role involve actions affecting both domains; however, role behavior falls primarily within the public domain. An Umbanda spirit medium is expected to participate in such extradomestic activities as the weekly *Trabalhos de Caridade* ("works of charity") at the Umbanda center and the fund-raising luncheons and clothing drives. The public aspects of the role of spirit medium and the source of its economic power and religious authority derive from the complex interaction between the spirit *guia* ("guide") and the clients.

The clients and the mediums *con guias* ("with guides") form the core of Umbanda. There is a reciprocal relationship which is beneficial to both parties. We can pose two questions. First, what is it that clients get from a medium *con guia*? Second, what do the mediums receive in return? The answers to these questions are explored in this chapter because in them we can begin to see the attraction that this role of spirit medium holds for some Brazilian women. Let us briefly preview what is to come. The answer to the first question is somewhat more obvious than the second. The client receives special services and valued information and goods from the medium *con guia*. The services include: 1) an explanation for one's problems, 2) an access to curing services such as the *passé*, the *passagente*, the *banha descarga*, the *remédios*, and the astral operations. The valued information and goods include forewarnings about unfaithful husbands and help in finding employment.

What do spirit mediums receive in return from this relationship? A medium *con guia* is given recognition for possessing superior spiritual knowledge that is applicable to a wider range of situations. This is demonstrated by the fact that clients actively seek out the advice of mediums *con guias*. Thus, a spirit medium is a recognized authority on many matters important to life. A popular spirit *guia* (through his medium) builds up a steady clientele about whom he collects a large body of information that concerns the details of the lives and circumstances of his clients. This storehouse of information is used in some cases to find solutions to a few of his clients' problems. Finally, clients come from all walks of life. Therefore, a spirit *guia* knows both powerful and powerless people. Powerful people can be helpful to others, especially if

they are grateful for help given to them by the spirit *guia*. To summarize, public recognition for superior religious knowledge combined with an internal communications network and access to potential patrons gives the spirit medium role considerable power and authority within the public domain.

RIO GRANDE DO SUL AND THE SOUTH

The three states of Rio Grande do Sul, Parana, and Santa Catarina comprise the smallest of Brazil's five major regions.² The social, cultural, and economic history of the South prompts many writers to refer to this area as "another Brazil" (Wagley 1971: 72). The economic development of the region has been one of steady growth since its colonization during the eighteenth century by Portuguese Azoreans and European farmers. According to the economist Stefan Robock (1975), the South never shared in the typical economic cycle of "boom and bust" that is so characteristic of the other major regions of Brazil.

Rio Grande do Sul is the largest state in the South region and is even larger than the two South American Republics of Ecuador and Uruguay. Covering 3.3 percent of Brazil's territory, it measures some 478 miles from its easternmost to its westernmost point and almost the same distance from north to south. Bordering Uruguay and Argentina, it lies well below the tropics (falling between 27° S and 34° S). The state is primarily hilly and is crisscrossed by mountains and rivers. Joseph L. Love (1971) divides the state into three major cultural and economic regions: the Litoral, the Campanha, and the Cima da Serra (or simply the Serra). The Litoral, the smallest of the regions, consists of the coastal strip and the alluvial areas washed by the Lagoas dos Patos and Mirim; it extends from Torres in the north to Santa Vitoria do Palmar in the south, including the Jacuí River Valley as far west as Cachoeria. Both historically and presently, the Litoral is the most densely populated region. Despite its poor soils, it has become the locus of the state's exports, interstate commerce, and industry. The three largest cities of the state are located in this region. Porto Alegre, the capital, is furthest north at the junction of the Lagoa dos Patos and the Jacuí and Guaíba Rivers. Although it is the largest city with over one million people and the most important manufacturing center in the state, Porto Alegre cannot be reached by oceangoing vessels because of the shallowness of the lagoon's northern section. Items for export must travel by truck, train, or small ship to the only ocean port in the state, Rio Grande. Pelotas which lies south of Porto Alegre and just west of the lagoon is the second largest city. The strip of sandy beach running northward from Rio Grande (the city) to Torres presented an effective barrier against early attempts to settle the state. Since there are no rivers cutting across this sandy strip to the lagoon, the area remains isolated and sparsely settled. Except for resort cities such as Tramandá, small fishing villages are more typical of the coast. Along the western shores of the lagoon rice cultivation prospers.

The second region, the Campanha, is primarily composed of hilly grasslands that are divided up into large *estancias* (cattle ranches). These ranches employ the *gaúcho*³ ("cowboy") whose image so permeates the state that *gaúcho* is a synonym for *riograndense* (a person from Rio Grande do Sul). In the third region, the Cima da Serra, we find the richest soil in the state. Lying north of Porto Alegre, the Serra combines a high plateau, pine-forested region with rolling grasslands extending to the west. The Serra is the center of the European settlements referred to as the Colonial zone.

The people of Rio Grande do Sul come from many cultural and ethnic backgrounds, a fact which is today obscured by the dominant *gaúcho* image. The Riograndense Indians, the state's first inhabitants, practiced a culture similar to other Tropical Forest peoples and spoke a language within the Tupi-Guarani family (Wagley 1972). Tupi-Guarani culture influenced the formation of the western frontier life-style to a much greater degree than it did in the eastern Litoral, since the Indians of the Litoral were decimated early leaving no traces of their culture (Cesar 1962: 19).⁴ During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Rio Grande do Sul remain a sparsely populated frontier area. In 1700 the first important migration south began with bands of adventurers from São Paulo known as *bandeirantes*⁵ who journeyed into the area capturing Mission Indians. Later in that century in order to secure the territory against Spanish domination, Portuguese settlers from the Azores were encouraged to immigrate into the state. According to the *política dos casais*, a policy of settling families and couples, Azoreans populated both the Campanha and the Litoral. Those settling along the Lagoa dos Patos (1740) founded the Porto dos Casais which later became Porto Alegre (1742).

The Negro first entered *Gaúcho* society as a slave imported to fight the Spanish. In 1725 a ship direct from the Guinea Coast of Africa carried a cargo of slaves destined to reinforce dwindling Brazilian troops already in the area (Cesar 1962: 30). Then in the year 1735, African slaves, who were brought south with a company of São Paulo *bandeirantes*, participated in the construction of a highway which opened the way for trade between the South and the São Paulo merchants and landowners. However, through the first half of the eighteenth century, as long as the demand remained low, African slaves did not enter the state in large numbers. Finally, economic pressure on *estancia* owners made them look for a cheap labor supply for their ranches and their dried beef factories (*charqueadas*), and this stimulated the slave trade in the South. The 1775 census shows that one-quarter of the state's twenty thousand inhabitants were either black or mulatto slaves working chiefly as domestics and stockmen (Rout 1976: 82). This figure continued to climb as the rapid growth of the dried beef industry made Rio Grande, Pelatos, and Porto Alegre the chief domestic producers of *charque* (dried beef). The census of 1814 puts the proportion of African slaves in the total population of the state as high as 30 percent or twenty-three

thousand. Ninety percent of these slaves were committed to permanent service in the dried beef industry.

Charqueada slavery was unique in Brazil because the masses of unfree labor were urban and industrial. The slaves worked all year long without seasonal breaks for a minimum of 12 hours per day beginning at midnight and ending at noon. The emancipation of workers was fairly uncommon. A rapid influx of predominately male slaves prevented the creation of a large mulatto contingent such as existed in other areas of the nation (Rout 1976: 82-83).⁶

From 1777 to 1822 the *estancia-charqueada* socioeconomic complex dominated Riograndense society. Two major classes which were composed on the one hand of wealthy landowners, cattlemen, and *charqueada* owners and on the other by their workers—the African slaves and *Gaúcho* peons—were separated by an insignificant middle class of Azorean peasant farmers and shopkeepers. This small agricultural complex could not compete either economically or socially with the cattle complex (Love 1971). But just two years later in 1824 a significant transformation of *Gaúcho* society began when European peasant farmers immigrated into the state settling in the area known as the Colonial zone. The Brazilian emperor Dom Pedro I officially sanctioned this immigration. According to Jean Roche (1969)—95 percent of all the immigrants arriving between 1824 and 1870 were German. Some twenty thousand settlers founded towns north of the capital. Not until the era of World War II did German immigration again become significant. The Italian immigration reached its peak between 1874 and 1889 when sixty thousand people settled in the Colonial zone (Azevedo 1969). Since the land nearest to Porto Alegre was already taken by Germans, the Italians settled further north and west.

In summary we can see that the cultural origins of the people of Rio Grande do Sul are diverse. The Indian contributed heavily to the Western *Gaúcho* life-style, the Portuguese, the Germans, the Italians, and the Africans added to the culture of the Litoral and the Serra. Although it is true that the European immigrants and the *Gaúcho* life-style are generally thought of first when Rio Grande do Sul is mentioned, there has been substantial Afro-Brazilian culture retained and practiced in the state. This is most clearly seen in the two African-derived religions of Batuque and Umbanda.

Batuque was first described by the American anthropologist M.J. Herskovits in 1943 when he visited Porto Alegre. Batuque is an Afro-Brazilian religion similar to those practiced in the northern states and cities of Brazil, and it is heavily influenced by Yoruba and Dahomean religions of West Africa. Herskovits (1943) encountered 42 cult houses in Porto Alegre, and he estimated that approximately one-half of the cult houses were under the direction of female cult leaders. At the time of his survey, Herskovits (1943) found that Batuque drew its clientele primarily from the approximately fifty thousand Negroes in the city.

Umbanda⁷ appears to have entered Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul somewhat later than Batuque. According to the officials at the Union of Umbanda in Porto Alegre, Umbanda was introduced into the state between 1944 and 1949. Since that time, it has grown in popularity to the point where there are at least two thousand centers. Umbanda is also an African-derived religion, but it is a more syncretic or mixed form than Batuque. In addition to the African contribution, Umbanda incorporates beliefs and practices of Catholicism, Spiritism, as well as beliefs and practices from American Indian religions. Umbanda appeals to urban Brazilians of all ethnic and social-class backgrounds.

There are many forms of Umbanda being practiced in Porto Alegre. The type which is reported upon in this chapter is known as Umbanda Evangelizada. The devotees of Umbanda Evangelizada claim that it represents a purer form of Umbanda, being one that is devoid of the *fantasia* (fantasy) that in their opinion characterizes many other types of Umbanda.⁸ Umbanda Evangelizada is characterized by a belief in spirit possession trance. Supernatural entities take over or "incorporate" the bodies of designated mediums. During this "take over", the identity of the human medium is replaced by that of the possessing spirit. We shall next look at the ritual and beliefs of this cult institution.

TRABALHO DE CARIDADE

The *Trabalho de Caridade* ("Work of Charity") is the major ritual of Umbanda Evangelizada. Following is a brief description that will reveal the major supernatural beings and the most important ritual elements. The *Trabalho de Caridade* is held at the Umbanda center twice weekly between the hours of 7:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m. The mediums arrive early and they stop and chat with their friends before they retire to a small rear dressing room where they change into the plain white uniform typical of their center. One female medium attends the pharmacy, a small drug counter, at which herbs, perfume, candles, candy, and Avon products are sold during the evening. The male secretary hands out small numbered tickets to the visitors and the *sociais* (paying members) as they arrive. There are two separate numbering systems—one for *sociais* who are given numbers within the first series and another for the visitors who receive numbers in the second series. The secretary keeps track of how many clients wish to see the *Chefe, Pai Xangô*, and he limits this number to 20 per evening.

Each medium changes from street clothes into the uniform of the center. Men dress in plain white tunic tops and straight legged pants and women wear plain white dresses; both sexes wear white tennis shoes. Then as each medium enters the *sala de conga* (altar room), he or she stoops over to knock three times on the floor forming a small triangle. This simple salute to the altar and

spirit entities is elaborated upon by some mediums who prostrate themselves full length on the floor in front of the altar. A short prayer may be recited in front of the altar. After the salute and the prayer, the medium walks over to a particular *ponto* (point or place) within the room where he or she will remain for perhaps the next four hours. The new developing mediums stand in parallel rows facing the altar until the *consultas* (consultations) begin, whereupon they assume the various roles of usher, *escrevedor* (writer of spiritual messages), and doorman.

Defumação occurs when a male medium assistant proceeds with the *defumação*—(censing) of the center, the mediums, and the clients. This is done with special 'astral perfume' and incense. The incense consists of a blend of herbs burnt in a special censer. The 'astral perfume' is sprayed into the air in front of the altar, in the four corners of the altar room, and onto the hands of each medium. Finally it is brought out to the waiting clients and visitors. The censer of burning incense follows the same pattern. The purpose of the *defumação* is to help cleanse or discharge the mediums and the clients of any lingering evil fluids that they may have attracted to themselves during the normal course of their day. It is also a form of protection against the *espíritos sem luz* (spirits without light) which are believed to linger about the center during the *trabalhos* (works).

Calm music is piped through a loudspeaker system serving the altar room and the clients' waiting rooms. The male medium assistants place the *Chefe's* microphone in the middle of the altar room in anticipation of his *palestra* (lecture). Throughout this period of preparation, the mediums stand inside the altar room, concentrating in readiness for spirit possession trance. Depending upon what time they arrive, some mediums will stand for three to four hours.

Roupas para firmar (clothes for blessing) is called out by the *Chefe* as he walks from room to room greeting friends and clients. Some clients have with them the clothes of a friend or relative who is sick or troubled. These clothes will be blessed—censed—with incense and "astral perfume," and thus have the evil fluids discharged from them. It is believed that clothing picks up the vibrations of the person who wore them. So in the case of illness, an odor or aura is left in the clothes, which must be cleansed by a spirit medium if the person is going to recover. The clothes are brought to the altar where the *Chefe* or his assistant sprinkles "astral perfume" on them and places a few rose petals among them. They are then returned to their owner.

Radiações de luz (radiations of light) are collected from the clients by the male medium assistant or by the *Chefe*. These *radiações de luz* are small slips of paper which contain the name, the address, and the problem of a person who needs special help. They are submitted on the behalf of people who cannot easily attend the *trabalhos* themselves, if, for example, they are from another country. The name of the entity from whom help is being sought is

also written on this paper. After the papers are collected, they are placed underneath a stone on the altar. The stone symbolizes *Xangô*, the spiritual protector of the center. It is believed that these messages will be transmitted during the *Trabalho de caridade* up to the astral plane where the various entities will attend to them.

"Greetings" occur after the preparations are finished, and the *Chefe* comes to the microphone to address the visitors. He begins by welcoming his "brothers and sisters" to the *Trabalho de Caridade*. In his opening announcement, he reminds the clients that the ritual *passe de caridade* is an important part of the Monday and Thursday meetings and that it is entirely for their benefit. The *passe de caridade* has the power to help them solve their problems. The only requirement, that they as petitioners must have, is a pure heart, one which is devoted solely to God and Jesus Christ and one which is free of evil thoughts and intentions. The *passe de caridade* and the *consultas* help a person counteract the negative influences of *espíritos sofredores* (suffering spirits) who are responsible for making one smoke, drink, and perform other misdeeds that can prejudice one's spiritual development.

During "opening prayer," the *Chefe* turns toward the altar to recite the opening prayer in which he beseeches God, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus to give all present the spiritual guidance they need, to allow the *entidades de luz* (entities of light), protectors, and *guias*, and all the spirits in the phalanges of the Warriors of Justice to descend into the center this evening. He repeats this prayer adding *Xangô São Jeronimo*, the protector of the fraternity, to the list of entities addressed.

The *Palestra* (Lecture) occurs on Mondays and Thursdays and lasts 30 to 45 minutes. The *palestra* generally covers a point of doctrine, but the *Chefe* can also use the opportunity to make announcements about upcoming events, to explain the meaning of Umbanda Evangelizada to those attending for the first time, or to point out that the *entidades de luz* do not smoke, drink, or dance. He may also discuss the origin of a particular *feira* for one of the entities.

Pontos Cantados are short hymns or prayers that invoke the power and the force of the entities. With each *ponto cantado* the mediums invite the entities to enter the center. The cult leader calls out each *ponto*, and the mediums sing each *ponto* according to the tradition of the center. In Umbanda Evangelizada *pontos cantados* are sung without drum or percussion accompaniment. Their cadence is deliberate and slow. It is important that each *ponto* be correct otherwise it will not have the desired effect upon the session; the words and melodies are practiced every Tuesday during the classes held for development. The song leader, a female spirit medium, must make sure that the mediums know the correct words and tempo for each *ponto*. The importance of this role cannot be underestimated since if the *pontos* are incorrect the entire session can be prejudiced.

The following entities are particularly important in the *pontos cantados* of Umbanda Evangelizada: *Ogum São Jorge*, *Nossa Sra. Iemanjá*, *Mãe Oxum* or *Virgem de Conceição*, *Oxôce São Sebastião*, *Xangô São Jerônimo*. In addition to these entities known as *orixás*, there are the *prêtos velhos* (old black spirits) in the *linha* (line) of *Pai Benedito*, *Pai Joaquim de Luanda*, and *Xangô*. Another *ponto* celebrates the power of "our *guias*" and another the *cabocla* (Indian spirit) *Jurema*. As each *ponto* is sung, one or more of the mediums have entered into an altered state of consciousness. When all of the mediums have received their entities, the consultations begin.

COSMOLOGY

The ritual elements comprising the *Trabalho de Caridade* are supported by a system of beliefs about man, the universe, and the supernatural. The universe is divided into two realms, that of the *plano astral* or astral level and that of the *plana terra* or the earthly level. The goal of each person is spiritual evolution from the earthly level to the astral level. This goal may be achieved through a finite number of incarnations whereupon after the twelfth and final incarnation, a person becomes a permanent spiritual being living on the astral level.

The pantheon of spirits worshipped in Umbanda Evangelizada represents a hierarchy of entities descending from the astral level down to the earthly level. Those closest to the astral level are filled with enlightenment, power, and goodness while those closest to the earthly level lack these traits, and they are responsible for human problems and suffering. God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the *orixás* and Catholic saints are on the astral plane. As we have seen, they are called upon to lend their support to the *Trabalho de Caridade*. The *orixás*⁹ of Umbanda Evangelizada combine two separate religious traditions—the Catholic and the Yoruba. In Brazil's colonial past, Yoruba slaves and their descendants transformed their gods into the syncretic *orixás*, that today form a category of supernatural beings in which certain Yoruba gods and Catholic saints originally alike symbolically have now become fused in the *orixa*-saint equation. This common *orixa*-saint equation is further syncretized in Umbanda Evangelizada with the image of the soldier-warrior of Rio Grande do Sul's colorful military past. The *Gaúcho* is commonly depicted as a fighting cowboy who was recruited for the almost continuous external and internal wars of the last several centuries of the state's history. According to Francisco Oliveira Viana (1952), the *riograndense* is a warrior by education and inclination making every *Gaúcho* a soldier. Reflecting this tradition, the *orixás* are also *guerreiros* (warriors) who wage spiritual battles on behalf of their devotees. According to my informants in Umbanda Evangelizada the *orixás* were soldiers who fought against evil and for justice in several

of their past incarnations. They have continued this fight as *orixá*-saints in Umbanda Evangelizada. The *orixás* head a complex of spiritual lines and phalanges in which the entities are ranked in descending order according to their possession of spiritual enlightenment. Since the *orixás* are so close to the astral plane and thus so powerful, they cannot "incorporate" spirit mediums without causing them great physical harm. Instead the various *orixás* send the lesser spirits which they command down to earth to do works of charity on their behalf. The major possessing spirits are the *caboclos* (Indians and indigenous peoples from around the world), the *prêtos velhos* (spirits of old black people), and the *crianças* (children, sometimes identified as Brazilian). The *caboclos* belong to many different lines among which are the *linha Jurema*, *de lua* (moon), *de sol* (sun), and *de fogo* (fire). One special line of *caboclos* known as the *Linha Demanda*¹⁰ ("claim" or "fight") is believed to be effective against witches and sorcerers. The *Linha Demanda* was described as a spiritual police force whose responsibilities resemble those of the military police of Brazil. The *caboclos* have a reputation for strength and courage, and they often deal with those problems that require these traits.

The *prêtos velhos* also descend to work several times a week. Although they are important to Umbanda Evangelizada and are recognized for their special curing powers, there is no requirement that guarantees that every medium shall receive one. Considered to be more "suave" or calm than the *caboclos*, the *prêtos velhos* work on Saturdays with other calm spirits in the *Linha de Oriente*. *Prêtos velhos* are believed to possess the power to cure the effects of the *mau olhado* or evil eye.

The *criança* spirits descend into the centers of Umbanda Evangelizada on the last Tuesday of every month. Their arrival is celebrated with a party, complete with balloons, cookies, and candy. The *crianças* like to play on the floor and to fight with each other over the balloons and candy. Clients seek the advice of *criança* spirits because they represent purity and innocence.

Another category of spirits, the *exus*, must be mentioned. *Exu* spirits are believed to cause people problems. Although everyone is liable to *exu* possession, it is not sought or desired because *exus* cause people to engage in antisocial acts. For example, a female *exu* spirit known as a *pomba-gira* may possess a woman and make her paint herself up and go out on the streets like a prostitute. However, if a husband and a wife are both possessed by *exus* then they will have a happy relationship. In the centers practicing Umbanda Evangelizada, the only recognition given to *exu* spirits is a special place near the entrance of the *sala de conga* that is known as the *ponto de encruzilhada* (place of the crossroads). Since a person entering from the street may have been under the harmful influence of *exu* spirits, that person must be relieved of such influences. The *ponto de encruzilhada* has the power to draw away such harmful influences. Marking the place is the flag of Brazil, which, as the symbol of the nation's strength, aids in the fight against the evil influences of the *exu* spirits.

The characteristic spirit possession trance behavior identified with each of these spirit categories reveals another distinction between Umbanda Evangelizada and other types of Umbanda. The spirit possession trance is very controlled and subdued. There is no possession trance dancing accompanied by drumming to induce the trance state and possession. The *caboclo* spirit's presence is recognizable only by the stern, flushed, face of his spirit medium. The *prêto velho* role is similar to that in other types of Umbanda and the medium walks with a curved back and works seated on a low bench. The *criança* spirit role is associated with playful behavior and childish antics. However, some mediums who receive these spirits never exhibit any of these more stereotyped forms of possession trance behavior.

ROLE STRUCTURE

The roles found within Umbanda Evangelizada include four basic types: the cult leader, the spirit *guia*, the spirit medium, and the client. The way in which the relationships between these roles is structured is related to the domain of action that we focus upon.

A cult leader can be either male or female, but women frequently outnumber men by a wide margin. Of the two thousand registered centers kept track of at the Union of Umbanda, 85 percent are headed by women. In order to enter this role, spirit mediums must receive a direct spiritual order from God or from their spirit *guia*. This spiritual order usually comes in a dream or a vision. The spirit *guia* of the cult leader assumes the role of spiritual chief and protector of the new center. The duties of a cult leader concern the organization of the Umbanda center and the spiritual development of the mediums.

The structure of Umbanda role relationships are determined by two domains of activity: the "material" and the "spiritual." The names of these domains derive from a distinction that Umbanda mediums themselves make between the *parte material* and the *parte espiritual*. The former refers to the physical or material body and the latter refers to the spiritual self and spirit *guia*. The "material" domain includes those activities performed by mediums when they are not "incorporated" by spirits. This mainly concerns the business affairs of the center such as paying rent and utility bills, buying supplies for the *trabalhos*, organizing the charity drives, collecting membership dues, cleaning and maintaining the building, decorating for *festas* (parties for the *rixás*), and preparing the *sala de conga* for the weekly sessions. The structure of role relationships within this domain resembles a centralized federation in which authority filters from the top down. The cult leader and the president of the *sociais* (clients who pay dues to belong to the fraternity) head up the chain of command. In order of descending authority there is the cult leader, the secretary, the male assistant to the cult leader, the mediums *con guias*, the medium *aspirante* (aspiring medium), the *camponos* (new mediums), and the *sociais*.

The domain of the spiritual represents those activities performed while the medium is incorporated by a spirit *guia*. These include giving ritual passes and consultations. Most of these activities occur during the weekly *trabalhos* held in the cult house. In rare cases, they may also take place in a medium's home. The structure of role relationships within this domain form a loose confederation which is composed of the chief spirit of the entire center and the *guias* of the working mediums. The *guias* represent many different lines of spirits, each working with different powers and techniques of curing. The spiritual "boss" is technically the chief spirit of the cult leader. This spirit, usually a powerful *orixa* such as *Xangô*, is recognized as the protector and founder of the cult. The chief spirit has the authority to prescribe the order of the ritual, to determine the dress of the mediums, to define the limits of acceptable trance behavior, to limit the activities of the other spirit *guias* who work at the *centro*, and to loosely control the methods used in the *trabalhos* by the spirit *guias*. This authority is often tested and challenged by the other spirit *guias*.

It is accepted that the spirit *guia* has authority over the details of cures and strategies employed in problem solving, but even the spirit *guia* must accept the teachings of Umbanda Evangelizada. What we have here is an attempt by the cult leader to set up guidelines for the spirit role without actually denying the existence of the separate, strong personality of the *guia*. The cult leader tells the mediums that enlightened spirits never work evil or demand high payments for their services or direct their clients to place offerings to *exu* in the cemeteries or crossroads. These things are explained as self-serving directions of the *parte material* and not the *parte espiritual*. Those mediums who violate the rules are reprimanded, and if they continue, they are asked to leave.

Deviations from the expected possession trance behavior are not punished quite so severely because controlled trance is not within the reach of every medium. Even so, controlled trance behavior is still one of the major goals of development. Controlled trance behavior means the ability to retain an upright posture, open eyes, and a calm facial expression. Uncontrolled trance behavior is defined as anything which deviates from this behavior such as grunting, shouting, bending over suddenly, falling to the floor, shaking, trembling, dancing, and smoking pipes or cigars. Spirit possession trance is induced through intense concentration and repeated practice. Outside sensory stimulation is consciously blocked out as mediums stare with eyes open at a chosen spot on the floor. The only voice that they strain to hear is the cult leader's signaling the start and end of prayers, songs, and other ritual events.

The relationship between the spirit *guia* and the medium may take one of three forms: *incorporado*,¹¹ *encostado*, or *em transe*. A spirit may completely *incorporar* (to incorporate) the medium's body and assume control of all outward bodily manifestations. The medium is said to be *incorporado* (incorpora-

ted) by the spirit. The medium is referred to as the *aparelho* (apparatus) of the spirit. When the spirit leaves, the *aparelho* claims not to remember what has happened during the incorporation. This state of amnesia varies in intensity because some mediums claim that while *incorporado* they "see" themselves as an Indian or a warrior but their perception is distorted. One spirit medium said that she saw herself, as if from a distance, and she felt the power and strength of the *guia*. When there is a slight period of amnesia following incorporation, it seems to act as a role-segregating mechanism, which keeps separate the *parte material* from the *parte espiritual*. The following example illustrates how this role-segregating mechanism functions. Dona Bette's *guia* is in the *Linha de Oxoce*, and she handles many clients. One day at the supermarket two strangers approached Dona Bette and thanked her for some advice, which they claimed she gave them. Somewhat startled, Dona Bette told them that she was afraid they were mixing her up with someone else. In talking with them further she discovered that they were regular clients of her spirit *guia*. Dona Bette then explained to them that she could not discuss their problems or take credit for helping them since she, Dona Bette, was neither responsible for these events nor familiar with them.

A spirit may communicate with a person while it is alongside of, or *encostado*, the medium. When a spirit is *encostado*, it is not inside of the medium but next to the medium. The medium may receive directions and messages from the spirit and still be conscious and aware of her surroundings. Such spiritual messages are usually written down and read later at the *trabalhos*. Only rarely does a medium enter into a deep trance state that is referred to as being *en transe*. This state causes severe headaches and can make the medium sick. Being *en transe* is different from the other medium-spirit relationship in that the medium's spiritual self is believed to leave her body to journey to other parts of the city. One medium described a visit that was made by her "spirit" to a local hospital where her spirit performed an operation.

THE ROLE OF MEDIUM

A medium is a person through whom the spirits are believed to speak and communicate with people. The most basic attribute of this role is a quality called *mediumidade*. It is an ascribed characteristic that is inheritable and God-given. One cannot acquire it or get rid of it. A person can only develop it through study, concentration, spiritual guidance, and proper training. Both cult leaders and mediums claim that most people possess some *mediumidade*, but the amount depends upon *vidas antepassadas*. *Vidas antepassadas* or past incarnations determine both the level of *mediumidade* and its stage of development. The maximum number of *vidas antepassadas* is twelve. Cult leaders and highly evolved mediums are near the end of their required number. After

they reach twelve, they are no longer reincarnated in material form but remain in spiritual form and dwell on the astral plane.

The development of *mediumidade* requires a special kind of person who is able to withstand a lot of pain and testing. A medium must be loving, kind, patient, motherly, moral, and pure. She should be able to endure pain and suffering. Suffering is believed to be a spiritual test that must be conquered and withstood without complaint. The examples of spiritual tests endured by informants include a long and painful throat condition, the obstruction of education because of unforeseen events, and marital problems. These tests themselves are often interpreted by the cult leaders as signs of *mediumidade*, too.

The *parte material* or physical body of a medium must be pure and healthy. The maintenance of this state involves a purification rite known as a *banha descarga*, which is taken before the medium comes to the center to work. The ingredients of the bath may be purchased at any one of the Umbanda stores in the city. The failure to observe this rite can result in a weakened and unprotected body that cannot withstand evil influences. In a woman's body the *banha descarga* keeps evil influences from attaching themselves to the female organs. The *banha descarga* functions to keep the material part of the medium healthy so that the medium can continue to work spiritually during the *Trabalho de Caridade*. A medium must also maintain a healthy body by refraining from smoking and drinking. High moral standards are to be observed in order to keep the medium pure, since purity is a necessary precondition for spiritual work.

A medium is expected to practice charity and to extend help to anyone needing it. Umbanda Evangelizada provides ways to do this through such organized activities as charity teas, clothing drives, and Christmas gift give-aways. The proceeds from these events are used to buy the material to make clothing for the poor.

New mediums are recruited into the role by the cult leader who identifies the signs first and then relays the information to the perspective medium. Although the signs vary, a number of them occurring in a person's life is taken as evidence of a spiritual call. Some of the signs are excessive crying or sobbing, prolonged illness, unexplained events, unsolvable problems, and unusual occurrences. A cult leader warns a perspective medium that resistance is dangerous. Resistance is often encountered in the husbands of future mediums because they do not believe in the *mediumidade* of their wives. Most female mediums and cult leaders agree that a married woman should have her husband's consent and cooperation, but if it is impossible to get it, the spiritual order ought to take precedence over this resistance. The development of *mediumidade* is often recommended by cult leaders and spirit mediums as a way to overcome problems. This is the case in the following example of a woman who was experiencing marital problems.

A young woman came to the center to receive help and advice concerning the drunkenness of her husband. He refused to attend with his wife so she brought along some of his clothes to be ritually cleansed of evil influences. When she entered the *corrente* (circle) of mediums, she was possessed by an *irmaozinho* (a little brother) spirit who threw her violently to the floor. The female cult leader sent the spirit away, enlightened, and she told the client that this spontaneous possession trance was a sign of undeveloped *mediumidade*. Mediums are known to attract backward spirits who seek enlightenment. These spirits linger in the medium's home disrupting the home life. In this case the drunkenness of the husband was attributed to this *irmaozinho* who had possessed the wife.*

In Umbanda Evangelizada the development of *mediumidade* takes three to four years, involving seven confirmations, attendance at classes for development, practice at weekly *trabalhos*, observation of other mediums, and guidance by the cult leader. The time commitment is enormous. A new medium usually attends all of the weekly *trabalhos* and classes so that she can get adequate experience. This means that she is at the *centro* four evenings out of seven and all day Saturday. The Seven Confirmations are central to developing *mediumidade* because they mark the successful attainment of spiritual knowledge and assistance within specific lines. In Umbanda Evangelizada, the following confirmations are observed: the baptism, the Triangle of Fire, the Initiation, the *Trabalho do Mar* (Work of the Sea), the Confirmation of the *Cachoeira* (Waterfalls), the Confirmation of the *Pedra* (Stone), and the Confirmation of the *Pretos Velhos* and the *Linha de Oriente*.

THE CLIENT-MEDIUM RELATIONSHIP

The clients come to the *trabalhos* seeking spiritual cures and explanations for their problems. The average number of clients observed at the regular weekly sessions range between 200 and 250 and on special occasion it reaches almost one thousand. A major source of the clients' problems is believed to be the "disincarnated" spirits of dead people. They are called *espíritos atrasados* (backward spirits), *irmaozinhos* (little brothers), and *espíritos sem luz* (spirits without light). These spirits are neither good nor evil. They cause people problems because they cannot seem to help themselves find a way to evolve to a higher spiritual level. They wander about the earth searching for enlightenment. Sometimes, they are used by evil people to harm others but they themselves are not evil. It is believed that they are responsible for a wide

*All case reports in this Chapter are from unpublished fieldnotes.

range of problems and usually a client does not discover that they are bothering him until he is told so by a spirit *guia*. A spirit *guia* is able to communicate with these spirits and find out just what needs to be done to get them out of the body of the client. An especially good medium can attract these spirits into her body, and when they leave, they are more enlightened and will not bother people anymore.

Espiritos mals (evil spirits) are another source of the clients' problems. These evil spirits originate with evil people, some of whom committed suicide. *Espiritos mals* intentionally do harm to people. Violent acts and outbursts are attributed to them. A spirit *guia* of a good medium can detect their presence in a client and can persuade them to leave the client alone. Sometimes this persuasion involves a spiritual and a physical fight. When an *espírito mal* leaves the client's body and enters into the medium's, it moves up through the stomach area and lodges in the medium's throat. It stays there for a few seconds and chokes the medium. Then it leaves the medium's body by going out through the top of her head. The medium jerks slightly and raises her arms.

A broad category of problems fall under the category of a *demanda* (claim). A problem classified as a *demanda* is traced to a specific *trabalho* aimed at the client by someone who is his enemy. This person may be jealous of the client or he may hate the client, so he sends evil spirits and misfortunes against him. The client becomes a victim of evil works and comes to the Umbanda center for help. The spirit *guia* that he consults with sets the forces of good against these forces of evil. The term *demanda* symbolizes this spiritual action.

Some problems are caused by evil fluids or influences which surround the client's body. Evil fluids can cause nervousness, stomach aches, indigestion and headaches. They can be picked up almost anywhere a person goes. The *mau olhado* (evil eye) can be another source of the client's problem. The *mau olhado* is a direct glance from the eyes which emits a force. When it is cast intentionally, it has the power to destroy its object. It can wreck wood tile floors, ruin careers, and disrupt engagements. The *pretos velhos* are good at detecting it. Statements of praise from people who may really be envious or jealous are a sign that it may have been cast. In the following case, a client's problem began with the *mau olhado* and was further complicated by an *espírito mal*.

A female client came to the *trabalho* of the *Linha de Oriente* on Saturday evening. During the session, she was violently possessed and thrown to the floor by an *espírito mal*. The cult leader stepped forward to question the spirit. He asked its name and its intentions. The spirit refused to answer at first, but then shouted out that it was going to destroy this woman and her family. The

woman's husband was present and after the cult leader sent the spirit away, he gave the husband a ritual *passé* at the altar. The husband was told to take his wife home.

Later in the week Dona Bette explained the background of this case to me because she knew this woman well. They were *comadres*.¹² The woman's husband is a traveling salesman, and he was doing very well in his business until he aroused the jealousy of another person (unidentified). This jealous person put the *mau olhado* on him and ever since he has had problems. He began drinking, fighting with his wife, and fooling around with other women. His business dropped off. The client begged her husband to come to the *centro* for a *passé* but he refused, at least until that Saturday night.

So far then, we have seen that clients are given some explanations for their problems and misfortunes. But they also receive some special curing services from the medium *con guias*.

Despite the fact that each case is handled individually, there are some common services rendered in the cure. The three most commonly used are the ritual *passes*, the *passagentes*, and the *banha descarga*. *Passes* are given as a matter of course to every client who sees a *guia*. A *passé* consists of wiping away evil influences which cling to the immediate atmosphere around the body. The medium whips her hands around the client's body which draws the evil fluids away from it. A *passagente* involves three or seven mediums working together to cleanse the client of evil and to draw the possessing spirit into the body of one of the mediums. A *banha descarga* or ritual herb bath is prescribed as a follow-up procedure to the *passé* and *passagente*. It is believed to give added protection until the next visit.

Remedios (remedies) are also prescribed by spirit *guias*. These range from antacids which can be purchased at the pharmacy to herb teas made from local plants. Sometimes a client is told to collect a green plant known as *arruda* and to place it in a cup of water. The *arruda* and water are left by the bed of a sick person so it can collect anger which lingers in the atmosphere and which can cause illness. *Arruda* is commonly associated with the *pretos velhos* who use it in their curing practices. Rose petals placed in water and kept over night are believed to help upset stomachs. In the morning, the rose water is to be drunk by the patient.

Astral operations are a special service rendered by spirit mediums working in the *Linha de Oriente*. I observed eight astral operations as they were performed by the spirit of a physician which possessed or incorporated the body of Dona Edi, a female cult leader in Umbanda Evangelizada. The clients came from her neighborhood and from Porto Alegre. The following problems were diagnosed by the spirit doctor of Dona Edi and were operated on spiri-

tually over a three-month period: cancer of the stomach, a disorder of the prostate gland and stomach, a disorder of the female sex organs, and a kidney and bladder malfunction. These problems are believed to be spiritual disorders.

The astral operations were performed while Dona Edi was incorporated by her spirit *guia*, the doctor. The operating power rested in her right hand, which she held just above the afflicted area of the client's body. The operations lasted only a few minutes and left no scars or incision marks on the body. All of the cutting was done "spiritually" so nothing showed up materially. The astral operation took place within the center upon an operating table specially prepared for this purpose.

The preceding client cases demonstrate cures involving special services and explanations available to spirit mediums through their *guias*. These techniques of curing are probably more common than the kinds of solutions which are presented next. However, the solutions in the following cases seem to be equally valuable to certain clients who face personal and economic hardships. These cases were collected about the clients of one spirit *guia* in the *Linda de Oxoce* working through the medium Dona Bette. They demonstrate how the *guia* can use the storehouse of information which he has collected about the lives and circumstances of his clients to help solve problems for some other clients. They also show how some powerful clients can be potential patrons who can be persuaded by the spirit *guia* to use their influence to help people.

Case Number 1: A young woman was deserted by her husband and left to raise her children without child support. She came to Dona Bette's *guia* for advice and help. He told her he knew why she was suffering so much in this life. In a past life, she had been a man who had also deserted his wife and family. This man's wife had to struggle to survive and to support her children. So, the punishment he received was to be reincarnated as a woman in the same situation. The spirit *guia* was not unsympathetic to the plight of the children who he believed were the innocent victims of this predicament.

This case demonstrates a common problem for women, that is, the desertion by their husbands. It also provides an explanation for the problem in the sins of another life. The solution involves another client, and his problem is presented in the following case.

Case Number 2: An elderly and wealthy man was a regular client of Dona Bette's spirit *guia*. For many years, he suffered from an 'illness' and by this time he was willing to do anything necessary to help cure himself. Dona Bette's *guia* told the man that if he

wanted to get better then he should contribute some of his wealth to help others. He was told to donate child support money to the children in case 1.

Here we have the solution of the client's problem in case number 1 being tied to the cure of an illness of a client in case 2. The spirit *guia* has in effect been able to reallocate specific resources and to rechannel them to the supposed advantage of both clients.

In case 3, which follows, we have an example of information in the form of gossip being used to forewarn a female client about the infidelity of her husband. Clients often say that they are told startling and surprising things by spirit *guias* who seem to know so much about them before they themselves know. Among the clients of one *guia* gossip is common, and it can be useful.

Case Number 3: Donna Bette's *guia* told a female client that she was going to be in for a big surprise concerning her husband. The woman returned about one week later and recounted these events. She had difficulty with her husband for quite some time, and they were not getting along. One day during the week she was walking along the street when she spied her husband ahead conversing and walking with another woman. She quickly caught a bus to avoid meeting them face to face. The woman discovered that her husband was not going to work as he said he was but was instead going to this other woman's house during the day. The other woman was giving him money to come. The wife decided to confront her husband with this information, and then to ask him to move out!

The husband went immediately to the other woman's house and related what had happened. As she listened to him, she decided that she did not want him anymore either. So now he had no one. In Dona Bette's words: "He chose the wrong road and he has to stay on it."

This case demonstrates another problem which women face in life, that is, the infidelity of their husbands. The solution to this problem was to forewarn the client about her husband. She was told about a surprise concerning him. In all likelihood she already knew that something was wrong concerning him as they had quarreled for some time. The spirit *guia* put her on the alert. She was able to save face by confronting him and telling him to leave, and in this manner punish him before he had a chance to desert her. In a small way perhaps this revenge would "cure" her of her problem by making it less painful to her.

The next case is somewhat different than the first three in that it involves the distribution of goods to a client from the common coffers of the Umban-

da *centro*. A spirit *guia* does have access to certain common funds for helping out clients.

Case Number 4: Dona Bibiana lived alone with her young son. She was deserted by her husband and was employed as a cleaning lady. She was constantly ill and upset at work. She broke down in tears and sobbed so hard that her boss told her to go home until she felt better. Eventually, she was fired. She came to the *centro* to consult with the *guia* of Dona Bette. He listened to her problem and then directed her to the secretary who gave her some funds to tide her over.

This case again shows the problem of a lone woman trying to work and raise a child at the same time. The solution is a practical one, although temporary, involving the common funds of charity possessed by the center.

The final case which the *guia* of Dona Bette handled involves a young spirit medium, Dona Ira. She came to Porto Alegre from the interior and found employment as a domestic servant. At the time, she was relatively uneducated and barely literate.

Case Number 5: Dona Ira always worked late at the Umbanda *centro* assisting the cult leader in the *trabalhos*, which in those early days sometimes lasted all night. Her employer, a wealthy Italian woman, grew annoyed with her late nights and she fired her. Dona Ira could not find another job. She turned to Dona Bette for help and Dona Bette provided her with a place to sleep and something to eat. Dona Bette encouraged her to begin the free adult night classes in the city and helped her to purchase some furnishings for an apartment. In return, Dona Ira worked as a domestic servant for Dona Bette.

Dona Bette's *guia* was also concerned with the fate of Dona Ira. He knew of her desire to become a doctor and of her interest in medicine. He also knew of a former client of his who operated a chemical laboratory which processed blood specimens for the hospitals. When this client returned again to the *centro*, the spirit *guia* asked him to help find Dona Ira employment. He agreed to hire her in his lab. She was able to move out of Dona Bette's and rent an apartment with three other women.

This case demonstrates two levels of help which mediums and their *guias* can render to others. By helping Dona Ira find temporary employment within her home and by encouraging her to start school, Dona Bette began a permanent solution to Dona Ira's problems. The spirit *guia* used his influence and connections to get her a better job. The spirit *guia* has the ability to contact

potential patrons and to influence them to help his clients. The case also shows how spirit mediums have the authority through their *guias* to reallocate goods (employment) in the public domain.

DISCUSSION

The role of medium is set within a role structure dominated by two domains of action—one material and the other spiritual. Within the material domain, the occupant of the medium role has the opportunity to move up through a hierarchy of roles to the respected position of cult leader. As she passes from the *camboño* position to that of medium *aspirante* to medium *con guia*, she gains a wide variety of experiences. She acquires organizational and administrative skills from the charity drives and luncheons. She learns how to interact socially with men and women from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds. The status of a medium within this domain depends upon recognized accomplishments such as the *vidas antepassadas* (reincarnations), the level of *mediumidade*, and the stage of development. Status is also influenced by the number of years of experience within Umbanda Evangelizada, social class, and sometimes ethnic background.

On the other hand, within the spiritual domain the medium's status is determined by her spirit *guia* and his talent for solving the problems of his clients and for attracting a large clientele. Spirits themselves are not ranked vis-a-vis each other. However, in certain matters, they do defer to the spiritual authority of the cult leader's spirit *guia*, but they are still autonomous entities. Status gained by a medium within the material domain is offset by the equality of the spirits within the spiritual domain.

In the eyes of their clients, the spirits and their mediums provide important services. They can answer the big question of "why is this happening to me?" The curing ritual follows a set pattern, which is common to each session and which is repeated each time a client visits. The repetition of this ritual seems to reduce the client's anxiety and assures him that this is a reputable establishment in which the *guias* know what they are about. It is similar to the standardized procedure that accompanies a visit to the doctor. There is a waiting period before the examination and consultation. *Passes*, *passagens*, *banhas* *descargas*, *remédios* are always part of the standard treatment. In some special cases and for some qualified mediums, astral operations may be performed. These operations reassure the seriously ill person that something extra special is being done to help him or her recover.

The real and practical help with personal and economic problems that is offered to clients cannot be ignored. The significance of this kind of help for urban clients who are often alone in the city and who are left without patrons is considerable. (See Wagley 1971:106-7)

FEMALE STATUS AND MODERNIZATION

In our discussion of domains, power, and status, we saw that women who have access to economic power and/or authority in the public domain stand a good chance of experiencing a relative rise in social status. Sanday's (1974) evolutionary model of female status in the public domain suggests that the acquisition of economic power via control or ownership of strategic resources occurred as women were able to rechannel their energies away from private domain activities and into public domain activities. One would think that modernization would contribute in a positive way to the enhancement of female status. However, as we examine the role of the Brazilian woman in the modernization of Brazil, we find that while there have been some significant changes in the job opportunities and educational benefits open to women, modernization has not been entirely beneficial to all women.

Urbanization, plus rapid economic development and industrialization, produced an impressive rate of economic development for Brazil, which is being described by some as an "economic miracle." The miracle refers to an economic growth rate from 1968 to 1975 averaging 10 percent annually in real terms. According to Stefan H. Robock (1975: 1), a specialist on the Brazilian economy, "Brazil has increased its national output by an amount equal to its total cumulative economic growth over all the previous centuries of its history." Two separate studies of the participations of Brazilian women in this economic miracle show that although there has been a dramatic increase in the participation of women in education and employment categories previously reserved for men and that now women comprise 20 percent of the labor force, the employment of females is still heaviest in the service fields, including domestic service (Rubens Vaz da Costa 1974, cited in Robock 1975:11-12; Madeira and Singer 1975).

The Madeira and Singer (1975) economic report draws the following specific conclusions about female participation in the work force during the years 1920-1970. First, the number of jobs created for women through economic development is fewer than the number of women in urban areas who seek employment. Secondly, the growth of domestic-remunerated services employing women in typical female chores are still important sources of income for women with no skills or education. Third, there is hidden unemployment among women in urban areas because the majority of women are either unemployed or employed in socially unproductive work. Fourth, the transformation brought about by development had contradictory consequences for the economic and social status of women especially in the secondary sector and in the production services where the elimination of artisan and domestic jobs removed a large number of women from economic activities. Madeira and Singer (1975:496) estimate that in 1970 more than three-fourths of economically active women were found in subsistence agriculture and remunerated

ated domestic work. They find this encouraging since in 1960 the proportion was more than four-fifths. According to the Sinopse Estatística do Brazil (1975) between 1940 and 1970 an average of 82 percent of Brazilian women were not counted among those active in economic affairs.

"Work" is defined as activity that is related to the production of goods and services (Madeira and Singer 1975:490). Activity identified as work becomes increasingly specialized during economic development and increasingly isolated from the home. Brazilian women are assigned house tasks which are not considered as "work" by Brazilian census takers and economists. Housework is not seen as contributing to social production, that is, economic development, and since so many women are engaged in housework the number counted as economically active is extremely low.

Implied in the Madeira and Singer (1975) report is a distinction between two spheres of activity: one of domestic tasks which is associated with women; and one of "work" or activities contributing to economic development which is associated primarily with men and only some women. Keeping their definitions in mind, let us look at "housework" in Porto Alegre.¹³

The activities performed by women within the domestic sphere include the *serviço de casa* (housework), domestic crafts, and domestic service. Housework is defined as the organization and running of a household. It represents the major domestic tasks ascribed to Brazilian women. The activities concern:

1. *Food*: tending fruit trees and gardens, shopping for daily supplies, preparation and serving of meals, cleaning up after meals, canning and storage of food;
2. *Clothing*: shopping for materials and/or finished clothes, designing, sewing, repairing, washing and ironing of clothes;
3. *House maintenance*: sweeping and washing floors, dusting and polishing furniture, yard maintenance, minor repairs;
4. *Early education and child-care*.

The *serviço de casa* is the responsibility of the *dona de casa* (housewife or owner of the house). The *dona de casa* has the power to allocate part of this work to other females such as her daughters or, if she has the resources, to an *empregada doméstica* (domestic servant or maid). Men and boys are not expected to help in the *serviço de casa*. This expectation is often reflected in the doubts single women have about being able to find a husband who will allow them time to pursue either their careers or their missions in Umbanda Evangelizada.

The role of full-time *empregada doméstica* is very attractive to lower-class rural women moving into the city. This attraction is based upon job security and the chance for upward social mobility. An *empregada doméstica* who is employed by an upper-class family is usually provided room and board plus a

small salary. Although the monthly wages fall below the minimum wage of Rio Grande do Sul, the job gives women free time to pursue outside activities. Several spirit mediums were *empregadas domésticas*, and they were able to divide their time between their employment and the development of their *mediunidade* (medium abilities). Free time allowed some to better themselves by attending adult night school programs such as the MOBREAL¹⁴ movement sponsors. The completion of night courses leads to higher paying skilled jobs.

Domestic crafts require skills traditionally associated with domestic production. These include knitting, crocheting, embroidery, designing and sewing clothes, and special food preparation. Domestic service (such as the role of *empregada doméstica*) is defined as employment within the domestic sphere in which traditional household work is performed by hired personnel. Domestic service includes some of the less skilled aspects of housework such as washing and ironing clothes, washing and sweeping floors, dusting and cleaning the house, and so on. It can also include the more skilled domestic crafts mentioned above. Domestic crafts and domestic service skills develop during the early training and education of girls who will eventually be expected to direct all housework. Domestic crafts were a very basic part of a young girl's training, especially among the women descended of European immigrant families of the Colonial zone. Take the case of Thelma for example:

Descended from Italian immigrants to Rio Grande do Sul, Thelma grew up in a small town within the Colonial zone. Fifteen years ago she left her family in order to come to Proto Alegre where she lives now at the age of thirty-one. Thelma's upbringing was supervised by her father who believed that she should learn the traditional role of *dona de casa*. Encouraged by her father to leave school after the primary level, Thelma was apprenticed to an old immigrant woman who taught her to sew and design clothes, crochet and knit, embroider and cook. She resisted this role but her father would not allow her to pursue any other. Eventually, in the face of her father's opposition, she worked as an assistant to the primary school teacher. But in order to continue her formal education any further she had to leave home and move to another city and finally to Porto Alegre. In 1975, she was studying for the entrance examination of the medical school at the federal university.

Economic development eliminated some important cottage industries that enabled women to contribute to social production, gain some economic power, and to be counted as "working." In the following example, one Brazilian informant, Dona Bette, discusses the small domestic shirt factory that she ran from her home in the 1950s and 1960s. Utilizing her domestic craft skills of designing and sewing clothing, she employed several female assistants to sell the shirts for her on the streets.¹⁵

(Dona Bette is descendent of Italian immigrants to Brazil.) My husband and I moved to Porto Alegre about nineteen years ago. He is a carpenter, self-employed. Before we moved into this house (a well furnished three-story home), we lived in a smaller, more modest home. I used to make shirts there in my living room. I designed and cut out the patterns and hired several women to sew them up. A few more women sold the shirts for me out on the street. That is how I helped my husband send our two sons to the university and purchase this big house. I was always a very active woman.

Such cottage industries are being replaced in Porto Alegre by parallel industries manufacturing clothing and processing food. And as Madeira and Singer (1975) point out, some women have suffered from this aspect of economic development since the new industries cannot absorb all the female labor made available by the decreasing demand for the products of cottage industries.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of spirit medium in Umbanda Evangelizada of Porto Alegre is a public domain activity, since it includes activities taking place or having impact beyond the localized family unit. Religious authority is conferred on the role-occupant through a "spiritual connection." Economic power emanates from the complex interaction between mediums and clients. The source of this economic power lies in the access which the medium-client relationship allows to an internal communications network and in access to nonlocal patrons. Spiritual authority validates the use of this power to reallocate resources among clients. The spirit medium role serves society by providing an explanation for problems, by answering the client's question of "why this should be happening to me" and by giving the public much needed ritual curing services. Women seem to be attracted to this role because of the above attributes and because, as of yet, they are excluded from economic roles offering similar benefits. Also, the Brazilian economic miracle is, at present, putting women in an ambiguous position. Certainly the relative status of a few women participating in social production and contributing to economic development has been enhanced, but the vast majority of women are still not a part of this. Economic development has meant the loss of certain profitable cottage industries in which traditional domestic crafts were employed, and thus, the loss of an important source of economic power for women.

The role of spirit medium contributes to modernization in the sense that it allows some women access to economic power in the public domain even if they are not employed in so called "social production." By offering women an avenue for social mobility, the Umbanda spirit medium role alleviates some of the less beneficial aspects of development.

NOTES

1. M.G. Smith (1960:18-19) defines power as "the ability to act effectively on persons or things, to make or secure favorable decisions which are not of right allocated to the individuals or their roles." Authority is "the right to make a particular decision and to command obedience."

2. According to the *Sinopse Estatística do Brasil*, Sao Paulo is in the "Southeast" region along with the states of Guanabara, Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo, and Minas Gerais.

3. The typical dress of the *gaúcho* included a broadbrimmed hat, a bandana (*lenço*), tall leather boots with accordin pleats at the ankles, huge jangling spurs (*chilenas*), heavy trousers (*bombachas*), and a *poncho*. He lived on meat cooked over an open fire (*churrasco*) and drank hot herb tea or *mate*. (Love 1971:11)

4. Tapes or Tupi-Guarani were placed on settlements or *reducoes* by Jesuit missionaries. These *reducoes*, known as the Sete Povos, were conquered in 1801 and their inhabitants became nomads, cowboys, and soldiers contributing manpower to the external and internal wars of the state. The cultural influence of the Guarani of the Missoes district, part of the Cima da Serra, was still so influential that as late as the 1830s Tupi-Guarani was still a major language in the area (Love 1971).

5. According to the Brazilian anthropologist, Arthur Ramos (1972:130) the *bandeirantes* were composed of *mamelucos* or persons of mixed Indian and European descent.

6. The rapid influx of predominately male slaves prevented the creation of a mulatto contingent such as existed in other slave areas of Brazil. Caio Prado Junio, a Brazilian historian of the colonial period, is quoted by Rout here as pointing out that the "blacks were blacker, and the whites, whiter."

7. The African-derived religion known as macumba, once popular in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, is the immediate forerunner of umbanda! In fact umbanda in these areas is still known to outsiders as macumba. Macumba combined Yoruba beliefs with those from Angolese and Congolese religions (see Bastide 1978 and Pressel 1974 for a more complete discussion). Sometime in the past, macumba was influenced by a lower form of spiritism known as Kardecismo (Bastide 1978:315). Brazilian spiritism originated in Ceara and Bahia in 1865. It was primarily urban, and its dogma appealed to many different levels of society. The upper-class intellectuals and scientists were drawn by its metaphysical philosophy while the lower middle-class and lower-class people were probably attracted by its semi-upper-class stigma which gives it more prestige than either macumba or other forms of African-derived religions. This mixture of macumba and lower spiritism first occurred in Rio de Janeiro and later in other areas of Brazil—Minas, Rio Grande do Sul, Sao Paulo, Recife (Bastide 1978:315).

8. This seems to conform to Camargo's (1961) description of the varieties of umbanda that he surveyed in Sao Paulo. He arranged the beliefs and practices of umbanda along a continuum from the most traditionally African to those closest to Kardecism.

9. The syncretism of African gods and Catholic saints is a phenomenon typical of Afro-American religions in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil (Herskovits 1937).

10. In Rio de Janeiro's umbanda and macumba centers, Yvonne Maggie Alves Velho (1975:48-49) found that a *demanda* is a war of the *orixas* waged for the benefit of people. It is very dangerous and it can even kill the person for which the losing *orixa* fought. *Orixa* is broadly used here to refer to any divinity or supernatural figure who enters into contact with a human through possession (1975:166).

11. The relationship referred to here as *incorporado* is similar to what Bourguignon (1976:8) calls possession trance: "a belief in possession that is used to account for alterations or discontinuity in consciousness, awareness personality, or other aspects of psychological functioning."

12. *Comadre* (co-mother) is a fictive kin tie in which two women are bound together by the fact that one is the godmother of the other's child.

13. The material on "housework" is drawn from formal interviews with 21 Porto Alegre women. The group interviewed included about an equal number of spirit mediums and noncult affiliates, that is, women who did not frequent umbanda at all.

14. MOBREAL stands for the Brazilian Literacy Movement and its goal is to reduce the illiteracy rate within a decade from 33 percent to less than 10 percent.

15. This role is similar to the processing-vending role of Isthmus Zapotec women. See Chinas 1967 for a comparison.

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