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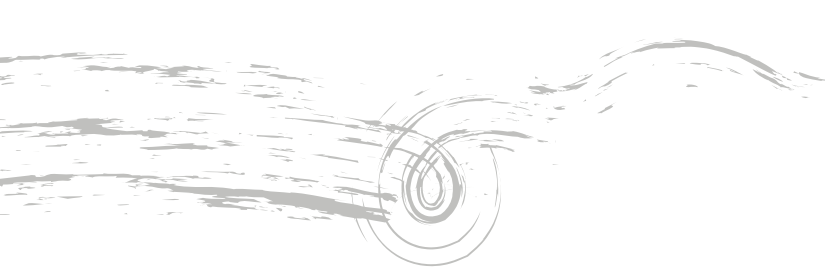
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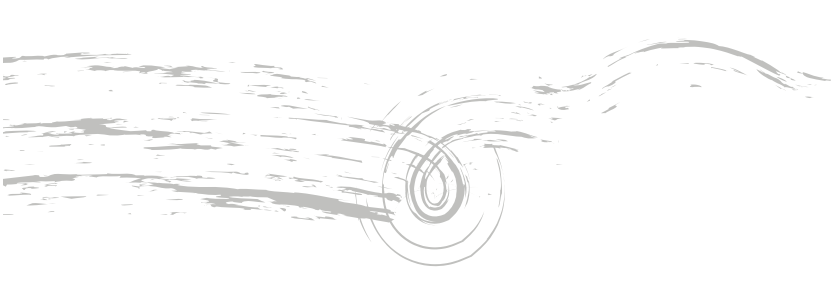
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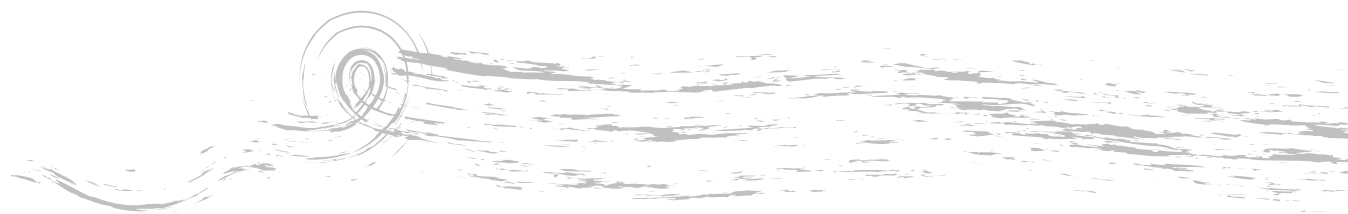
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With some surprise, we launch volume 7 of GIS – Gesture, Image, and Sound – Anthropology Journal. Although 2022 pointed to a scenario of less political tension and a return to a certain degree of “normality”, we are still experiencing a situation of coexistence/survival in relation to the pandemic. In face of such a scenario, greater energy and collective efforts were needed for this number to materialize. In spite of the adverse collective situation, we have counted with much collaboration in the making of this new issue of GIS.

There is beauty in the possibility of bringing together different views embodied by the articles, essays, and different materials that make up this issue. Its very existence, as it comes into public view, makes evident the fact that, even in the hostile environment in which we find ourselves, together we can make a difference, by academic resistance in face of forces that are undermining public universities in Brazil. This gathering of different views, we find, is an expression of the pulse of life, in which the search for knowledge is of utmost importance.

We have received a large number of materials for evaluation in this issue. This shows the involvement of authors of articles and essays, photographers and images, performers and gestures. Nonetheless, a remarkable effort on the part of the reviewers has been required. They have contributed with their knowledge and critical rigor in the evaluation of works, making possible this result that we now make known to the GIS reader.

First, we highlight the ***Found on the Net*** section, which presents images of Patrícia Monte-Mór in an interview for the television program *Revista do Cinema Brasileiro*, in 2011. These images are a tribute to a figure who played a fundamental role in the constitution of the field of Visual Anthropology in Brazil. Throughout her career as a teacher, visual anthropologist and producer, working primarily as a professor at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), and as the coordinator of the Center for Anthropology and Image (NAI), Patrícia helped create a new field, involving anthropology and image, training new generations of researchers seeking to specialize in the area. In pioneering work, she prompted discussions, and helped organize the International Ethnographic Film Show, which, for more than 20 years, presented the top national and international productions in the field, stimulating new and ongoing productions. Within the scope of the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA), she was one of the creators of the Pierre Verger Award, and co-editor of *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, a journal that has been so important to the development of Visual Anthropology in Brazil. Through a body of work, expressing concerns with popular culture, and involving documentary and ethnographic cinema, and the crafts of a cultural producer, Patrícia

leaves a legacy of great human and intellectual importance. For those who knew her, she is an unforgettable figure.

This issue includes the highly productive dossier ***Religions: their images, performances and rituals***. The number of submissions for the dossier was well above the journal's average. While presenting a challenge from an editorial point of view, the number shows the dynamism and quality that the classic field of anthropology of religion reveals today, at the crossroads with studies relating to image and performance. The dossier was a success. Organized by Francirosy Campos Barbosa (USP), Rubens Alves da Silva (UFMG) and Pedro Simonard (Unit), it consists of twenty-one articles and eight essays, covering ritual practices and sacred forms of belonging that are expressed through images and performances, enabling the perception of the diversity permeating the symbolic universe associated with religious experience. In this issue, we can see how this experience unfolds in practices and devotions, and reverberates in decolonial politics and practices.

The **Articles** section opens with the text "Carandiru and the fractured spaces of memory", by Gabriela Carvalho, discussing the transformation of the former Carandiru Penitentiary Complex into the current Parque da Juventude, a process which radically reconfigured the landscape of that region of the city. The author examines the relationship that is established between the modification of space and the people who transit through it. By using photomontages, he reveals the memory arrangements that permeate this transformation process.

Next, the article by Dorival Bonfá Neto, entitled "Net-pulling: cooperation, collectivity and mutual help in images", discusses artisanal fishing carried out by traditional communities, such as the jangadeiros, and the practice of "net-pulling". In this way, it brings to light the cultural meanings associated with this practice, through photographic production in the field as a way of capturing the symbolic aspects present in the traditional life of these communities.

At the end of this section, the article "Rewinding the tape: archeology of videotape in villages", by Bernard Belisario, investigates antecedents for the use of the moving image in a particular indigenous society, the Kayapó, from the perspective of the well-known filmmaker and documentarian Andrea Tonacci and the subsequent developments associated with the Video nas Aldeias (VNA) project. From an "other's gaze" to the exercise of a displaced gaze, we witness the meeting of different experiences involving indigenous and non-indigenous spectators in this imagetic web.

The ***Gestures, Images, and Sounds (GIS)*** section, in addition to the eight essays linked to the dossier, presents three other proposals. The first, “Chalk city: graphic experiments”, by Jeferson Carvalho da Silva, offers the reader, through traces and graphic images, a creative process of imagination and perception of urban spaces in the city of Viçosa - MG. A cartography of discontinuous spaces based on ephemeral inscriptions enables an alternative way of thinking about the city. “Yes Sinhô, photoethnography of the absent quilombola community”, by Alan Faber do Nascimento and Nilmar Lage, contributes through another imaginative process, involving image and action, deconstructing a common perception of thinking about the Jequitinhonha Valley as a “valley of misery”. Research for the essay involves a photoethnographic process developed with the Quilombola do Ausente Community, in Serro - MG, exploring images and alternative meanings of this stigmatized physical and human landscape. Finally, we present the photo essay “Mirror of memory: Sylvia Caiuby Novaes through photography”, prepared by Jeferson Carvalho da Silva, Kelly Koide, Laila Zilber Kontic, Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, and Maria Luiza Mahara, in connection and dialogue with the interview carried out with Sylvia, as part of this issue.

The ***Translations, Interviews and Reviews (TIR)*** section consists of two reviews, a translation, and an interview. The text “Relics of ‘Lost Valley’: discourses on magic and masks” results from translation of the original article by Prof. Konrad J. Kuhn, who discusses the little-known context of Carnival masks in the Lötschen Valley region, in the Canton of Valais, Switzerland. The article deals with popular discourses about the magic of masks, and, at the same time, explores other dynamics, such as local discourses of self-representation associated with the production of images for tourism.

The first of the reviews, by Marciglei Brito Moraes, Lais Chagas de Carvalho and Marina Rougeon, comments on the short film “The Eagle”, directed by Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji, addressing the trajectory of Miguel Aguila, a Cuban immigrant in Canada. Migration and social life are themes of this film, expanding the perceptive possibilities of the universe in question. Next, Yuri Prado’s review of the book “Audiovisual ethnomusicology: filming musical cultures”, by Leonardo D’Amico, offers an appreciation of a significant work for ethnomusicological studies regarding the intersection of image production practices with expressions of musical cultures.

The volume ends with the interview “Dwellings, jabuticabas and affections – Trajectories with Sylvia Caiuby Novaes”, carried out by a group of 33 people: from the first students to the current ones, with different backgrounds and maturing processes. In respect to this diversity, Sylvia serves



as a common meeting point, inspiring an unusual effort in search for a way to satisfactorily contemplate a dialogue involving so many people. This effort resulted in a somewhat experimental format that embodies the meaning of this experience for all participants, and conveys to the audience some of the emotions and ideas involved in these beautiful encounters. In addition to being transcribed, the interview can also be seen and heard in the form of a film, allowing the viewer to enter into Sylvia's universe. Here one finds some of the worlds of sense created by the founder of the Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia (LISA), and of the Grupo de Antropologia Visual (Gravi). Sylvia is also responsible for the creation of GIS.

With the delicious taste of the jabuticaba in our mouths, we close this issue of GIS, thinking about what we have built together so far, and looking towards fulfilling wishes projected into the future.

Good reading!

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## LES RELIGIONS, LEURS IMAGES, LEURS PERFORMANCES ET LEURS RITUELS

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### RÉSUMÉ

Inspirés par les connaissances religieuses intelligibles et sensibles des religions traditionnelles et les diverses formes d'appartenance spirituelle qui échappent à la structure religieuse formelle, mais relient l'être humain à ce qu'il considère comme sacré, nous cherchons dans ce dossier à construire une carte des représentations qui imprègnent leurs images, leurs performances qui montrent des rituels et une appartenance sacrée. Les formes exprimées prennent des différentes nuances dans les espaces religieux, compte tenu de certaines restrictions, ce qui oblige le chercheur à recourir à des stratégies esthétiques et à des recherches différenciées pour composer son univers imagé et performatif. Ce dossier traverse l'univers symbolique des rituels religieux, les digressions entre religion et politique, les expressions de la décolonialité, le corps livré à la dévotion et autres analyses qui impliquent des discussions sur les expressions sensibles à travers les images et les performances.

**MOTS-CLES**  
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À la mémoire de Patrícia Monte-Mór<sup>2</sup>

Participer à cette étude en tant que coordinateurs, a été un grand *potlatch*, un véritable essai sur le don de produire des connaissances scientifiques au milieu du désespoir des années de pandémie. Notre projet était d'apporter au GIS des textes, des images, des sons etc., issus de l'univers religieux qui dialoguaient théoriquement et méthodologiquement avec la proposition de la revue. Nous avons été positivement surpris par la profusion d'œuvres enrichissantes et nous avons dû sélectionner les plus proches qui dialoguaient avec le domaine en question. De ce *potlatch*, de nombreux *mana* et *hau* ont été produits. Les articles sélectionnés pour la publication dans ce dossier abordent des thèmes liés aux aspects de la dynamique culturelle et de la reconfiguration du champ religieux, depuis l'exploration des enregistrements informationnels (audiovisuels, photographiques et littéraires), soumis au processus d'analyse et d'interprétation réflexive en affinité avec la perspective dialogique de l'anthropologie avec les études de performance, les images et les rituels. Il s'agit donc d'un ensemble d'œuvres qui expriment un déplacement du regard vers les religions, les rituels, les mouvements alternatifs et les personnages charismatiques, avec une attention particulière aux « cadres de l'expérience sociale » avec le sacré, en prenant en considération non seulement les aspects symboliques, mais aussi esthétiques et politiques (disputes et négociations d'espace, de pouvoir et de légitimité sociale en question). Ce dossier s'inscrit donc dans le tissage d'un dialogue instigateur entre les domaines de l'anthropologie visuel et de l'anthropologie de la performance.

Le domaine de l'anthropologie visuelle au Brésil a commencé à être formé en 1988 par Ana Maria Galano, à l'UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, avec la création de NAVEDOC – Núcleo Audiovisual de Documentação. NAVEDOC a dirigé la production scientifique du projet *Fotografando a Moradia Popular*. Pedro Simonard, l'un des coordinateurs de ce dossier, a participé à la création de NAVEDOC et à la production de son premier ouvrage, le documentaire *Oxalá Jesus Cristo*, en 1988, ainsi qu'à la réalisation du documentaire *E por aqui vou ficando*<sup>3</sup>, en 1993. Au département d'anthropologie de l'USP – Universidade de São Paulo, la formation de ce domaine a commencé avec le premier cours donné par la professeure Sylvia Caiuby Novaes en 1993, qui a engendré le LISA – Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia et plus tard, en 1995-6, le GRAVI – Grupo de Antropologia Visual, contribuant ainsi à la formation de divers spécialistes dans le domaine de l'anthropologie visuelle et, par la suite, à la création de la revue GIS elle-même.

2. Patrícia Monte-Mór nous a laissé orphelins de créativité, une autre victime de Covid-19. Dans ce dossier où religion et formes expressives marchent ensemble, nous voulons la saluer avec tous les saints et orixás.

3. Disponible sur [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZmITZSS\\_n4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZmITZSS_n4)

Il existe plusieurs groupes de recherche puissants dans ce domaine au Brésil, mais il convient de mentionner ici que notre génération a bénéficié de la création de la revue *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, coordonnée par Clarice Peixoto et Patrícia Monte-Mór, qui a été la première revue sur l'image et l'anthropologie visuelle à paraître en 1995. Les premières traductions dont nous avons bénéficié pour la constitution de ce domaine sont issues de ce périodique. Il est important de rappeler les numéros thématiques de cette revue, parmi lesquels celui sur la religion. Le numéro 7 de *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem - Imagens da Religião* était consacré au thème religieux, une belle coïncidence avec notre dossier qui fait également partie du 7 de GIS, un nombre cabalistique associé à la religiosité. *Imagens da Religião*, a déjà donné lieu à des discussions sur les églises chrétiennes, les médias, la télévision, le cinéma, la photographie, des perceptions que nous retrouvons également dans ce dossier, mais de manière plus large, puisque les discussions sur les religions et la performance ont également augmenté ces dernières années.

Lorsque nous examinons la conception de la performance dans le domaine des sciences sociales brésiliennes, nous constatons un renforcement significatif à partir des années 2000, stimulé principalement par la dynamique du débat autour du thème, promu dans le cadre d'événements nationaux et internationaux sur la question par NAPEDRA – Núcleo de Antropologia, Performance e Drama de l'Universidade de São Paulo<sup>4</sup>, coordonné par John Dawsey.

Les principaux théoriciens de référence des études sur la performance sont certes Richard Schechner et Victor Turner. Schechner affirme que la performance est un « comportement restauré » et une « restauration du comportement ». Il a élaboré ces expressions pour décrire le processus caractéristique des pratiques culturelles, comme le théâtre, en observant que « le comportement de performance n'est ni libre ni facile » (Schechner 1988, 118), car il exige de l'interprète un apprentissage rigoureux des techniques corporelles et un dévouement intensif à l'entraînement et aux répétitions, en plus des processus psychologiques et psychiques impliqués dans la praxis performative. En ce sens, la performance est la restauration de comportements appris par transmission orale, mimésis et pratiques selon des « scripts préétablis » et, par conséquent, la performance est une « répétition » créative et réflexive de modèles culturels.

La notion de performance de Schechner s'éloigne de l'idée de polarité entre rituel et spectacle, mise en évidence dans les registres classiques de la culture – également insinuée dans les réflexions de Turner sur la

4. Napedra est né du cours Paradigmes du théâtre en anthropologie, introduit par John Dawsey à l'USP. Les coordinateurs de ce dossier, Francirosy Campos Barbosa et Rubens Alves da Silva, sont membres de la première génération du groupe.



performance (1982). Sur la base de recherches à l'échelle mondiale sur les types de théâtre et l'interlocution avec Turner sur les événements rituels, repensés comme variation de genre et performance, Schechner (1988, 116) affirme que les performances sont configurées « dans un continuum et un mouvement de pendule entre efficacité et divertissement ». Dans cette perspective, le théâtre peut devenir un rituel et vice-versa, car tous deux sont réparateurs de comportements.

Dans le registre de Turner (1986), la performance est associée à la notion « d'expérience ». Il introduit ce terme en se référant aux réflexions du philosophe allemand Dewey Dilthey à propos de l'expérience ayant un effet marqué et profond sur la vie d'une personne. Étant cela, « une expérience » qui est partagée avec d'autres dans un certain moment et des espaces propices à l'expression. La performance est donc une forme de communication d'une « expérience ». Stimuler dans ce contexte les processus de réflexion et de réflexivité qui tendent à produire le signifier et le sens collectif d'une « expérience » collectivisée.

Il est possible de parler de la religion à partir de différentes perspectives théoriques et méthodologiques. Ainsi, c'est en pensant à la religion en tant que performance que s'attire l'attention sur les formes expressives présentes, à savoir l'image, la performance, le son et la littérature qui potentialisent les discussions proposées. Notamment, l'influence des études de performance dans le registre de Schechner et Turner est présente dans la plupart des articles de ce dossier, mais certains apportent aussi le croisement de l'utilisation de l'image pour penser les performances construites, ceux-ci étant de paternité des chercheurs Adriano Godoy ; Alexander Elias ; Ana Molina ; Arilson Paganus ; Beatriz Parisi ; Dijná Torres ; Fernanda Rechenberg ; Felipe Candido ; Felipe Araujo ; Flávio Rodrigues ; Frederico do Vale ; Daniela Santos ; Giovanni Cirino ; Yuri Prado ; Rafael Barboza ; Nathalie Hornhardt et Marcus Vinicius. Dans les articles d'Elizabeth Perry et Fabio Scorsolini-Comin l'oralité et le corps sont présents, dont l'approche est plus proche de celle de Paul Zumthor (2001), de Walter Ong (1998) et Thomas Csordas (2008). Eliathan Carvalho Leite nous mène à travers l'univers méconnu des aspects poético-littéraires des textes liturgiques : la poésie hébraïque-biblique. La présence de la discussion sur l'esthétique et les médias avec Marcus Barreto, Grazielle Acçolini et Rafael Barbosa propose une réflexion de portée théorique, d'une manière très unique et stimulante.

Il convient également de noter que ces auteurs offrent dans leur ensemble, dans l'approche de leurs articles respectifs, un panorama de la diversité des religions : la religion afro-brésilienne correspond au plus grand nombre de textes et d'essais reçus. Le christianisme, le rastafari, le bouddhisme, le judaïsme, l'islam, Hare Krishna, ou les religiosités populaires composent

également cet univers. Les questions relatives aux médias, à la spectacularisation des religions, à la musique, aux formes d'expression corporelle, au rituel et aux motifs produits dans le cadre du rituel remplissent cet univers religieux de couleurs et de formes d'appartenance.

Pour accompagner les articles, ce dossier comporte également une section d'essais qui utilisent les images dans leurs différents types et formats, en les problématisant à partir de leurs thèmes, ainsi que de leurs bases matérielles, comme la photographie et la peinture. Ainsi, l'essai *A quilombola e o vaqueiro*, de Felipe de Oliveira Maciel et Marivaldo Aparecido de Carvalho, analyse une huile sur toile intitulée *A quilombola e o vaqueiro*, ainsi qu'un poème de même titre, tous deux par Felipe de Oliveira Maciel. L'auteur a réalisé ce travail lors du travail de terrain effectué pour la recherche *O Processo de Identidade das Comunidades Quilombolas de Peçanha, Minas Gerais : História Oral, Cultura e Etnicidade*.

Dans *Fé, vida e morte : representações imagéticas de uma América Espanhola crente* Jacson Gros fait une incursion dans le *Cementerio Presbítero Matías Maestro* - situé à Lima, capitale du Pérou - au début de la pandémie de covid-19, en 2020. Son objectif se promène dans le couloir des suicidés, la tombe du garçon à qui l'on attribue des pouvoirs paranormaux, les tombes des sorcières, visitées par des personnes demandant l'accomplissement de divers souhaits. Dans ce cimetière, on pratique des rituels nocturnes qui, bien qu'interdits, ne sont pas restreints. Le syncrétisme religieux est présent dans les différents usages que les visiteurs font des tombes de cet espace sacré.

Les défilés de l'école de samba *Estação Primeira de Mangueira* à *Marquês de Sapucaí* sont le sujet de l'essai *Imagens da religião em um carnaval da Mangueira* dans lequel Renata de Castro Menezes et Edilson Pereira discutent des relations entre carnaval et religion dans les récents défilés de cette école de samba. Les auteurs concentrent leur approche sur ce qu'ils appellent le « contexte de mise en place de la performance spectaculaire », dans les étapes qui précèdent l'entrée de l'école dans l'avenue, notamment ce qui se passe dans le *barracão* et lors de la concentration. Ils cherchent ainsi à créer un contrepoint avec les images du défilé, point culminant de la présentation, largement diffusées par les médias commerciaux. Pour cela, ils analysent les images et les performances « de la religion » et la manière dont celles-ci s'articulent et apparaissent dans un spectacle reconnu comme profane.

Paula Pflüger Zanardi nous présente un aperçu du *terreiro de Jarê* dans la municipalité de Lençóis, Bahia. Son essai *Os terreiro de Jarê de Lençóis - BA* étudie les mémoires reproduites pendant les cérémonies. Les photographies tentent de faire l'éloge des chefs religieux locaux, en valorisant

les décorations des *pejis* et le soin apporté à l'esthétique présente chez les *Jari*, illustrée par les couleurs utilisées dans les cérémonies et le soin apporté à l'élaboration et à la confection des vêtements de cette religion.

L'essai « *Da Cidade às montanhas* » : *Experiências de deslocamentos, reencontros na celebração do Dia dos Mortos em Bobonaro, Timor-Leste*, de Renata Nogueira da Silva e Carlos André Oviedo, aborde également un thème international, à savoir l'importance du culte des ancêtres, tel qu'il est présenté dans la célébration du Jour des Morts à la *Casa Sagrada Dom Cailito* dans la municipalité de Bobonaro, au Timor oriental. À l'occasion de la fête du Jour des Morts, les habitants de la capitale timoraise retournent dans leurs *lulik* ou maisons sacrées, dans leurs municipalités d'origine ou dans celles d'où viennent leurs familles. Dans ces lieux, dépositaires de la mémoire matérielle et immatérielle, ils s'engagent dans des célébrations collectives dans lesquelles ils reproduisent les récits d'origine.

*Axé, é o que é* explore la religiosité à *Ilê Axé Idá Wura*, dans laquelle l'auteur, Ana Clara Sousa Damásio dos Santos, s'imagine devenir une sainte au cours d'un voyage sentimental. De ce voyage, l'auteur a produit un essai-dessin composé de dix dessins avec lesquels elle nous fait une « invitation à connaître des mondes vécus », une « invitation à imaginer non seulement les *Orixás*, mais à entrevoir tout ce qu'ils peuvent dire et communiquer ». Cet essai explore une technique, le dessin, de plus en plus courante dans les ethnographies contemporaines.

La scène gitane de Rio de Janeiro est analysée dans l'essai *Optcha ! Cigano não é religião ? Uma análise da atuação, performance e rituais entre ciganos na cidade do Rio de Janeiro*, de Cleiton M. Maia. Cette étude examine les situations sociales observables pendant les rituels de la Tenda Cigana Espiritualista Tzara Ramirez, à Nova Iguaçu, dans la Baixada Fluminense, et la commémoration de la Journée Nationale du Gitan et de Sainte Sara Kali. Ces rituels présentent des expressions civiques, religieuses et culturelles gitanes exposées dans les photographies qui composent cet essai.

Les photographies rituelles avec le peuple *Huni Kuin*, c'est ce que Bárbara Milano nous présente dans son essai *Fotografia ritual : uma experiência com o povo Huni Kuin*. Le rituel photographié utilise le tabac à priser, le *sananga* et l'*ayahuasca*, des herbes utilisées par les membres de la communauté pour entrer en contact avec les êtres enchantés. Ce contact est la base de l'expérience vivante du *Huni Kuin*. Les photographies ont enregistré la préparation rituelle du tabac à priser et la peinture des graphiques, réalisées exclusivement par les femmes. La préparation des herbes et la peinture des dessins sur les corps sont des étapes du rite avec les herbes.

Nous considérons que ces essais contribuent à réaffirmer ce qui a déjà été démontré par plusieurs publications (Lopes 2007), à savoir l'importance de la notion de performance pour penser le champ religieux. Selon ce qui est démontré par les théoriciens de la performance dans les sciences sociales, l'introduction de cette approche épistémique dans les études de la religion consiste en un cadrage au-delà des aspects rituels et symboliques, mais élargi avec de l'attention aussi aux aspects esthétiques, contextuels, motivationnels, culturels dialogiques qui ont tendance à impliquer dans le processus dynamique de mise à jour et de configuration du domaine de la religion. Par conséquent, nous tenons compte de la complexité de ce domaine en tant qu'« espace social » où les tensions et les conflits de relations - impliquant des agents et des institutions - tournent autour de disputes et de négociations pour le monopole du sacré, de l'affirmation ou de la réaffirmation de la légitimité sociale des pratiques et des croyances religieuses. Telles sont, semble-t-il, les questions sous-jacentes qui traversent la discussion des auteurs de ce dossier dans la perspective de l'approche par les performances.

L'univers religieux est imprégné de ce que Taussig (1993, 13) définit comme la faculté mimétique qui est « la nature que la culture utilise pour créer une seconde nature, la faculté de copier, d'imiter, de créer des modèles, d'explorer les différences, de se rendre et de devenir Autre. La magie de la mimesis réside dans l'acte de dessiner et de copier la qualité et la puissance de l'original, à tel point que la représentation peut même assumer cette qualité et cette puissance ». La mimesis contribue substantiellement à la transmission des comportements religieux, à la réification de la corporalité, car toute action religieuse traverse le corps, l'oralité, les vêtements, produisent des performances et donc des images qui valorisent ce qui est vécu.

Enfin, il est important de souligner que le matériel publié ici inclut des chercheurs de différents centres de recherche et d'universités brésiliennes, ce qui permet au lecteur d'entrer en contact avec des thèmes diversifiés tels que les rituels quilombola, autochtones, gitans, carnaval, jarê, Jour des Morts et candomblé. De cette façon, les articles et les essais composent une approche réflexive qui met en évidence les intersections entre la religion, les images, les performances et les rituels et, par conséquent, configure une carte des représentations de l'univers des significations religieuses et de ses expressions de décolonialité.

**TRADUCTION:**  
Juliano Simonard

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## THE NEO-BYZANTINE MODERNIZATION OF APARECIDA'S IMAGE

DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the contemporary display of the original image of Our Lady Aparecida. Based on the modernization project of her Basilica in the early 2000s, located in the National Shrine (Aparecida, Brazil), this article proposes to understand the institutional motivations and the practical effects of the artistic project in the devotion to the Patroness of Brazil. I argue that the Catholic Church opts for the neo-Byzantine iconoclasm as a reaction to the neo-Pentecostal iconoclasm. With a new niche developed simultaneously to the evangelical rise in the country, having the Second Vatican Council as a theological reference, I approach the image from the anthropological concept of “sensational forms”: I try to understand how the aesthetic engagement is institutionally produced over time as well as how the Brazilian Catholicism seeks to update itself in modern forms.

### KEYWORDS

Anthropology  
of Religion;  
Catholicism;  
Material Religion;  
Modernism;  
Neo-Byzantine.

### INTRODUCTION

The original image of Our Lady Aparecida (Nossa Senhora Aparecida) is the National Shrine's (Aparecida, Brazil) main attraction. The clay statuette, found in 1717 in the waters of the Paraíba do Sul river, is prominently displayed in a golden altarpiece located in the south nave of Our Lady's Basilica. The so-called “niche” that houses the miraculous image is the most visited

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attraction in the shrine, and pilgrims can access it through an exclusive corridor, where they have the opportunity to see it up close.



**FIGURE 1**  
Pilgrims interact in front of the niche with the image of Aparecida (Photo by author)

On festive days and weekends, devotees may wait for over an hour in line to spend less than one minute in front of Our Lady Aparecida. In those seconds, it is possible to observe a diversity of reactions, such as silent contemplation, effusive screams, and abundant tears. While some may touch the walls, stretching their arms to get as close to the image as possible, some will be on their knees throughout the journey and some may show restraint reverence as they bow to Our Lady Aparecida. Among the various reactions that I could observe, the number of photographs being taken caught my attention. As people approached the niche, there were many raised arms with cameras and cell phones seeking to frame Aparecida, either on her own or as a background in self-portraits. As I was one of those people during the course of field research<sup>2</sup> for the development of my doctoral dissertation (Godoy 2020), I would be annoyed by how difficult it was to get a photograph in which Aparecida's image would be clear and highlighted. Picture after picture, her golden niche would always dominate the composition.

2. Preliminary results of this article were presented in the masterclass "Religions and the image question" offered by the Koninklijk Nederlands Instituut Rome (Rome, Italy 2019) and at the 43rd Annual ANPOCS Meeting (Caxambu, Brazil 2019). In this writing and elaboration process, I am grateful for the generous comments of Annalisa Buttici, Birgit Meyer, David Morgan, Jojada Verrips, Machteld Löwensteijn, Pooyan Tamimi Arab, Rodrigo Toniol, and Thais Tiriba.

In one of those visits, after walking by the niche, I realized that my frustration was shared with other people. Standing at the end of the corridor, I could observe several cases in which the pilgrims checked their recently taken photographs and lamented the results. Interested in this daily religious interaction, the presentation of the image of Our Lady Aparecida, situated in her niche and temple, will be addressed in this article as a “sensational form”:

Sensational forms shape both religious content (beliefs, doctrines, sets of symbols) and norms. Including all the media that act as intermediaries in religious mediation practices, the notion of sensational form is meant to explore how exactly mediations bind and bond believers with each other, and with the transcendental. These forms are transmitted and shared; they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship, and play a central role in modulating them as religious moral subjects. It needs to be stressed again that I do not use form in opposition to content and meaning, or ethical norms and values, but as a necessary condition without which the latter cannot be conveyed (Meyer 2009, 13).

I think that Aparecida’s niche and image are determining elements of a “religious aesthetic” that generates specific sensibilities as well as governs a “sensational engagement” of her devotees. Thus, seeking to understand the motivations and effects of such engagement, I will precisely explore the foundations of this contemporary display of Our Lady Aparecida’s original image in this article. Looking at the current sensational form, recontextualized to the previous forms in which she had already been displayed, my objective is to understand both how aesthetic engagement is institutionally produced over time and how Catholicism is materialized in modern forms.

### **APARECIDA’S OLD BALDACHIN**

“Our concern was where to place a small image, so tiny, in such a large shrine? How to display it? We were restless, anxious”: were the words of Dom Darci<sup>3</sup> in the homily he gave at the three-hundred-year celebration of Our Lady Aparecida in 2017. A narrative I also heard in the conversations with the priest who, at the beginning of the 2000s, was one of the supervisors for the elaboration and construction of a new niche for Aparecida. Far from being a novelty concern, the efforts directed to displaying the image are a constant in her trajectory.

Ever since she was found, Our Lady Aparecida’s miraculous image has stimulated the construction of altars and churches for her shelter and homage. As stated in the official history (Brustoloni 1998), and continually evoked in homilies and by the shrine’s media, after a stay in the

3. Dom Darci José Nicioli (1959-) was manager (1997-2005) and dean (2008-2012) of the National Shrine, as well as Auxiliary Bishop of the Aparecida Archdiocese (2012-2016).

village's port and in the house of the fishers who found her, the statuette gets her first temple on top of a hill where she would stay for the next two centuries.



**FIGURE 2**  
Old Basilica's  
baldachin (Printed  
as Postcard -  
Author's collection)

During this period of successive renovations, the church underwent transformations that would take it from a simple mud chapel to the condition of a well-known basilica. Parallel to the high popularity of that shrine was the Catholic Church's project to make Aparecida the queen of Brazil and her church a consolidated National Shrine. In the first half of the 20th century, in which dominant Catholicism saw itself threatened (Giumbelli



2012), the temple was considered insufficient, which motivated efforts to build a new basilica, characterized above all by its large dimensions. The new Basilica of Aparecida began to be built in the 1950s on a hill parallel to that of its preserved predecessor. Redemptorist Missionaries were in charge of management, and architect Calixto Neto was responsible for the project<sup>4</sup>.

Researching in archives<sup>5</sup> [5], I could verify that the placement of Aparecida's image in her new church was emphasized and debated since the first architectural projects. In Calixto Neto's original project, approved by the competent authorities of the Catholic Church, Aparecida's image would be displayed, just as in the Old Basilica, in a niche right behind the altar. This changes drastically as the construction works progress.

The changes that follow are due to a significant alteration in that building under construction. With a growing number of visitors and a strong lobby from part of the clergy, the architect makes a series of changes to his original project so that the new Basilica would be even bigger than initially planned. One of these changes was the transformation of the church's plan from a Roman cross to a Greek cross: in the place of the altar's rear apse, it was decided to create a fourth nave for greater accommodation of the pilgrims. Without the apse, there was no longer the place initially planned for the niche that would house the statuette. Thus, the impasse of where to display the image of Our Lady Aparecida would continue in the following decades. When the architect, whose idea was to display the image below the church's central dome, died suddenly, the disposition of the image was not yet defined. When the image was finally transferred from the old to the new temple in the 1980s, it was decided that she would be temporarily displayed on the wall at the end of the south nave, where the apse would have been built, until a better solution was found, while the internal finishing work on that church was taking place.

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4. Benedicto Calixto de Jesus Neto (1906-1972) was a prolific architect who designed more than 600 churches in Brazil. Hired to build the new Basilica of Aparecida in the 1940s, he died without witnessing the completion of the construction. He was the grandson of the famous Brazilian painter Benedicto Calixto de Jesus.

5. For this research, I was able to explore the collections of the Centro de Documentação e Memória do Santuário Nacional [Documentation and Memory Center of the National Shrine] (CDM) and the Arquivo da Cúria Metropolitana de Aparecida [Archives of Aparecida's Metropolitan Curia] (ACMA).



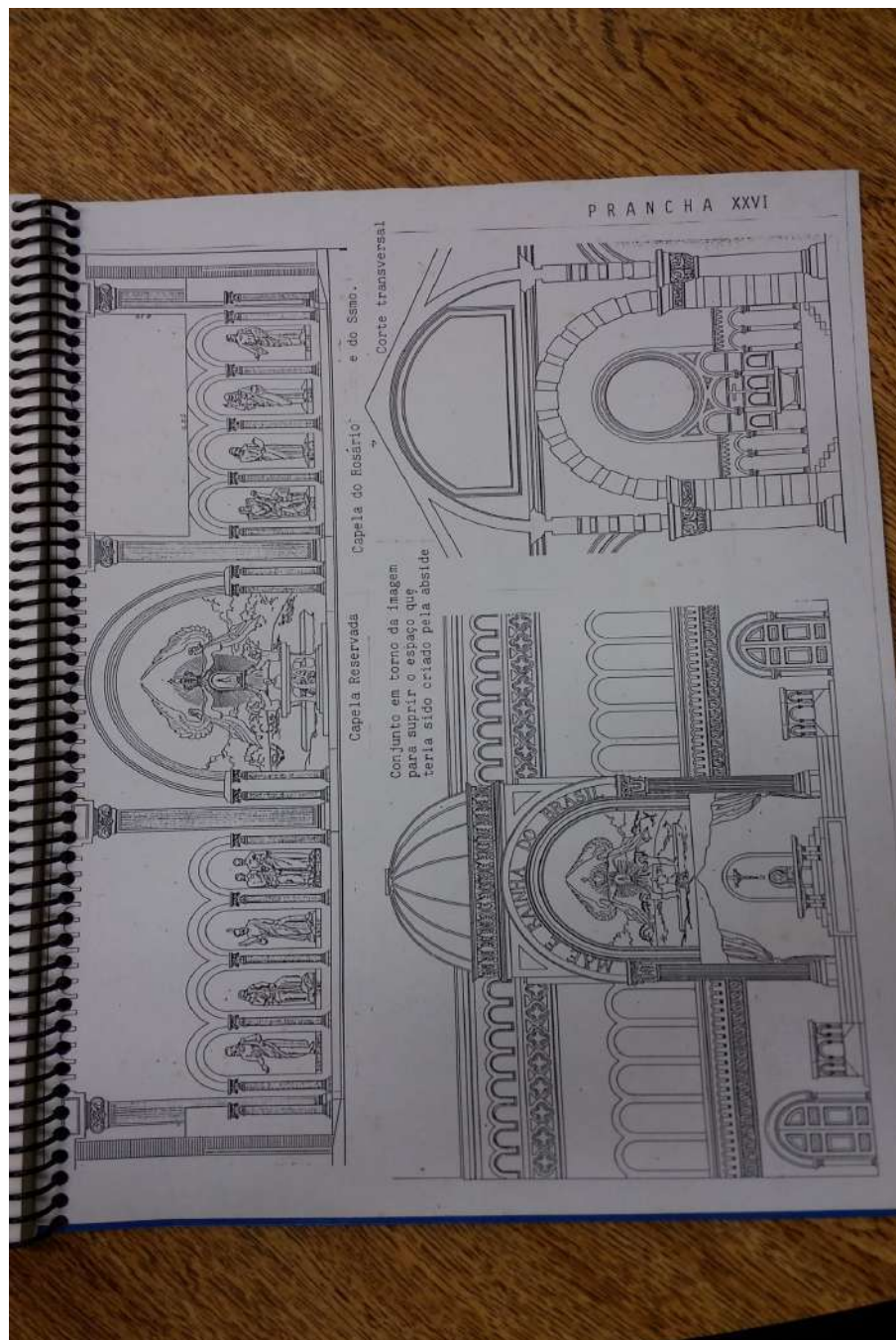
**FIGURE 3**  
Our Lady  
Aparecida's  
niche in the  
1990s (Photo  
by Nair Martins,  
reproduced with  
permission)

As late as the mid-1990s, no suitable place had been found for the one that gave her name to the temple.

Due to the absolute financial impossibility of carrying out construction works on a larger scale, the purpose that we have in mind is to begin the finishing work in the south nave, as this is where the niche of the Miraculous Image is. We will start with the area around the niche, creating an environment as dignified as possible (and, as mentioned in the exhibition, replacing as best as possible the space that would have been created by the apse, had it been built) (Memória... 1994, 46).

At that time, the context of the economic crisis did not allow any of this to happen, but it was still a priority to find a dignified place for the statuette. The project, however, never got off the ground.





**FIGURE 4**  
Project for the New  
Basilica (Source:  
ACMA)

The situation changed in 1995 when Cardinal Lorscheider<sup>6</sup> took over the archdiocese, restructured the local administration and returned institutional prominence to the Redemptorist Missionaries. Among them, one of the cardinal's main interlocutors was Darci Nicioli, who at the time became the manager priest. Finally, between 1998 and 2000, when the economic situation began to stabilize, the construction of the Basilica could be resumed on new terms. In the words of the priest:

6. Dom Aloísio Leo Arlindo Cardinal Lorscheider (1924-2007) was the Archbishop of Aparecida between 1995 and 2004.

So we were organizing the shrine's infrastructure to give more comfort to the pilgrim and more security; at the same time, we were working on the finishing of the National Shrine so that the sacred space itself could preach. So it could communicate the mystery centered there. Today, when you enter the Basilica, you are automatically taken to prayer. Despite the crowd, 30,000 people, you find space for retreat. I mean, this is art at the service of evangelization (Dom Darci in an interview 2013).

He told me that he tried to rescue an “entrepreneurial look” and a “modernization” that would make the process more impersonal to priests and artists, through which “the space itself would preach” with “art at the service of evangelization”. In our conversations, I sought to understand the causes and practices of this “modernization” that he mentioned to have coordinated. On this issue, the archbishop was emphatic in saying that the inspiration was only one: the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II).

### POST-CONCILIAR MODERNITY

Conceived and planned in the first half of the 20th century, all inspiration and projection of a new temple for the “Queen and Patroness Saint of Brazil” was contextualized to the ultramontane movement, even if belatedly materialized in that shrine that was institutionally peripheral in world Catholicism. However, less than ten years after the work began on the new Basilica, Vatican II took place drastically changing Catholic guidelines in this regard and impacting the development of the original project.

There was a need, very characteristic of the '60s, we know that very well, for a renovation. The whole world was longing to get out of a very normative time and was looking, then, for freedom. The Church too. (...) It was the whole movement of Vatican II in every sense: in the liturgy, in Mariology, in theology, in the social doctrine of the Church. It is a rethinking of the Church. No longer the Church as a model of a perfect society, of people who command and people who obey, but a Church of Communion, in which everyone is a servant. (...) This was also reflected in the construction of temples (Dom Darci in an interview 2018).

This “new idea of Church” concerned both the proposal of “communion” and a “return to the roots” of Christianity. Authorized and legitimized by Vatican II, these demands were persistently constructed and opposed throughout the first half of the 20th century, with the growing participation of laypeople. It is no exaggeration to say that, given the entire original architectural proposal, the *aggiornamento*<sup>7</sup> took both the prestige and the institutional legitimacy of the Basilica of Aparecida. Furthermore, it can be said that the Basilica came to materialize everything that Vatican II sought to overcome: a colossal, nationalist, and clerical monumentality

7. From Italian – update – this is a motto of Vatican II in the attempt to adapt Catholic principles to 20th-century modernity.

of a “strong and powerful Church” in favor of a “Church of Communion” with the prevalence of communities of laypeople.

As highlighted in documents, Calixto Neto never delivered a project for the internal finishing of the Basilica: with the external part kept faithful to the original project of the 1950s and without a project for the internal finishing, Calixto Neto’s few sketches also referred to the pre-conciliar ideals. Even though there was a willingness to overcome the baroque on the facades, its interior was still designed according to Tridentine regulations, as was the placement of the image of Aparecida under the central dome.

However, as well demonstrated by Boff (2006), one of the post-conciliar marks in all of Latin America was the loss of prominence of Marian devotions, which started to be discouraged in favor of a liturgical centrality in the “Christ the Liberator”, evoked in the episcopal conferences of Medellín and Puebla. These are the same conferences that legitimize the creation and rise of the Liberation Theology (LT) movements, which have marked social action in favor of the so-called “preferential choice for the poor” during the following decades. A choice that did not include building large temples. Asked about the practical impact of Vatican II on the ongoing construction of the Basilica of Aparecida, the archbishop told me that:

It changed everything! Now, Benedito Calixto [Neto] planned for the image of Our Lady Aparecida to be in the center, under the dome. The Church of Vatican II says: no, the center of the Church is Jesus Christ. So, in the center of the church should be the altar, and not the image of Our Lady Aparecida, because the altar of celebration is a sign of the presence of Christ. (...) Now, two celebratory spaces were created: one centered on Christ Jesus, where the Eucharist takes place, and another centered on Mary, where the devotion of the people, separately, takes place. So much so that those who are going to participate in the Eucharist and those who are going to visit the image of Our Lady can do so at the same time, without one assembly interfering with the other (Dom Darci in an interview 2018).

When one recontextualizes the trajectory of the niche, exposed in the priest’s narrative, it can be said that when he took over the coordination of the church’s works, in the late 1990s, there was a certain creative freedom, after all, there was no artistic project. At the same time, as the original project was created in the pre-Council context, with few changes throughout the works, there was a challenge in adapting the structure to norms given more than thirty years earlier. The “modernization of the Basilica” takes place institutionally as a late *aggiornamento* of Aparecida, with the center and altar of the church as an ecclesiological principle.

(...) so we started the Basilica’s finishing from this perspective. Let’s start first with the presbytery, where the main al-

tar is. Where we gather for the celebration of the Eucharist. The center is there. Christ manifests himself there. So it is from the center that we are going to rethink everything else. Now the Virgin's throne was rethought long afterward. See the mentality: For Benedito Calixto [Neto], the most important thing is the image. For Claudio Pastro<sup>8</sup>, the most important is Jesus Christ. Why? They are based on a different theology, based on a different ecclesiology, based on a different Mariology. Mariology differs from Mariolatry because there was also a very big mistake in the way the Catholic people were educated. Mary as the center: this is deifying Mary. This is Mariolatry (Dom Darci in an interview 2018).

The priest's interview and homilies also make it clear that the concern about the works in the Basilica is always related to the placement of Aparecida's image, which is continually evoked. After all, it is difficult to diminish the role of Our Lady Aparecida in her own shrine. As in Aparecida there is a fine line between what is called Mariolatry and Mariology, the clergy is in constant search of balance. Without falling into the error of seeing an instantaneous and Manichean relationship of causes and effects of Vatican II, the changes in the niche in the search for this balance must be contextualized in the late 1990s and, for this, I resort to the concept of "conciliar cultures":

We call conciliar cultures the beliefs, representations, feelings, and practices that emerge among the different actors that welcome Vatican II – interpretations of the council that are made concrete in certain narratives (Caldeira 2019, 1531).

As already mentioned, the "conciliar culture" of LT was dominant from the 1970s onwards, mainly due to the influence and alignment of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB). However, in the mid-1990s, with the exponential growth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), another "conciliar culture" began to spread.

In the 60s, in its process of adapting to new times, in the *aggiornamento*, the Church found itself on a two-way street: on the one hand, it fermented left-wing actions and led to an important institutional change that was confirmed by the Second Vatican Council and that meant an important step towards a theological elaboration that was more focused on social problems, the Liberation Theology; on the other, it took the more conservative path that led to the Charismatic Renewal. (...) Every face of Catholicism in the 20th century will be marked by the great desire for change represented by Vatican II, an expression of contemporaneity and modernity (Prandi, Campos and Pretti 1998, 30).

As I will argue in the following pages, in the Brazilian Catholicism dispute in the 1990s over which strand would be the true heir of *aggiornamento*, the National Shrine sought to build its own "conciliar culture", reconciling both strands.

8. Claudio Pastro (1948-2016) was a plastic artist of great prestige in Catholicism. The setting of the Basilica of Aparecida was his main work.



### NEOPENTECOSTAL ICONOCLASM

The Catholic Church is more than its councils and the reason for this modernization carried out thirty years after Vatican II must also be addressed in the national context. Since the Shrine of Aparecida is a privileged place in the religious dispute over national identity, it should be noted that the 1990s also marked an important “religious transit” with the “evangelical rise in the country” (Almeida and Montero 2001).

Concerning this dispute, I evoke a specific and significant event, when, by vilifying an image of Our Lady Aparecida on national television – on October 12, 1995 – a pastor of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God publicly challenged this “Catholic reign” and the holiday granted to her, accusing Catholics of idolizing images. In other words, the most substantial insult to the result of all the efforts involved in the action of the Shrine of Aparecida since the turn of the century was made precisely by the accusation of Mariolatry: in addition to the internal opposition of LT and CCR, there was the external opposition of evangelicals.

Popularly known as the “kicking the saint” (*chute na santa*) episode, with significant negative reverberation in the press, the event was repeatedly analyzed in articles such as those by Flávio Pierucci (1996) and Emerson Giumbelli (2003). Common to them was the realization that the long Catholic hegemony seemed to be threatened in Brazil. The event is so remarkable that Ronaldo de Almeida (2007; 2012) takes stock of its consequences and reverberations in the Brazilian religious field, both ten and seventeen years after the event. In the anthropologist’s assessment, it is evident that the most immediate consequence of the “kicking the saint” episode was a broad reorganization of the practices of confrontation both by the Universal Church and by a good part of evangelicals, necessarily impacting other denominations. Or, ultimately, the rules by which interreligious relations were placed in the Brazilian public space, especially with the decline of Catholic protagonism. As Renata Menezes (2012, 77) puts it:

Considering this historical process, what needs to be specifically asked about Aparecida today is whether the “kicking the saint” episode points to a new social configuration in which the evangelical growth would make the use of saints as symbols of Brazilianness unfeasible.

Responding to this question, I propose that the modernization of the Basilica of Aparecida be understood as a Catholic reaction to this evangelical onslaught: a new way of “making use of saints as a symbol of feasible Brazilianness”. In a decade when the LT declined and the CCR no longer contained the exodus of Catholics (Prandi, Campos and Pretti 1998; Theije and Mariz 2008), the National Shrine sought to regain its protagonism and the “kicking the saint” episode provided a union of forces within Brazilian Catholicism in favor of its patroness. This is not new. The construction

plans for Aparecida's Basilica had as one of their motivations precisely a Catholic unity to contain the spread of Protestant missions (Arruda 2005) in their "first wave" in Brazil. So again it would be so in their "third wave", now with the neo-Pentecostals (Freston 1995).

Cardinal Lorscheider's archiepiscopate begins two months before the "kicking the saint" episode, in a moment marked by a certain economic stability. Upon having sufficient funds and seeing itself threatened by the evangelical growth, the Catholic Church sought the theological bases for its new pastoral action in the norms of Vatican II. In order to achieve the desired modernity in this "conciliar culture" (Caldeira 2019), it was necessary to revise the building's architecture: just as the Old Basilica was insufficient at the turn of the 20th century, the New Basilica was insufficient at the turn of the 21st century.

### **ARTISTIC MODERNITY**

Parallel to the theological transformations of the Catholic Church, the beginning of the construction of the Basilica of Aparecida coincides with the consolidation of modern Brazilian architecture. In this environment, with his name recognized in the Catholic milieu, Calixto Neto was hired to build a national temple for which he opted for neoclassical forms instead of the initially expected Neobaroque. At the same time that it moved away from this local architectural tradition, it sought inspiration in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (Washington, USA), which had as one of its aesthetic proposals to stand against the modernity of the beginning of the 20th century, rescuing an eclecticism of the Catholic imperial traditions (Tweed 2011). The Basilica of Aparecida emerged as a conservative innovation.

Far from being an exception, a broader framework indicates that this movement was taking place on several fronts in Brazilian Catholicism in its process of becoming more Roman-centered. The most emblematic case would be the "public controversy" that took place in Belo Horizonte when the archdiocese refused to consecrate the Chapel of Pampulha. As Paola Oliveira (2018) demonstrates, the "modernizing agenda" put into practice by Juscelino Kubitschek in the capital of the state of Minas Gerais, in the late 1940s, was firmly rejected by the Catholic Church. The reasons they gave were the extravagance of the building, which was allegedly incompatible with Catholic practices, the fact that it was the result of a religious externality, and the political alignments of Oscar Niemeyer and Cândido Portinari. It was not until the late 1950s, when modern architecture gained even more public recognition, in addition to Kubitschek's rise from mayor to president, that the chapel would be consecrated by another bishop. Soon after, the same president would finance part of the



construction of the Basilica of Aparecida, without direct interference in the ongoing project.

Thus, it can be said that with the repercussions of Vatican II in the 1960s, if the Catholic Church still did not embrace modern architecture as a paradigm for its new temples, there was less resistance to this type of project, as it materialized in the Cathedral of Brasília by Niemeyer also in honor of Our Lady Aparecida. However, the two Brazilian Catholic movements that claim to be the result of Vatican II did not opt for modern architecture either. By seeking the “Church of Communion” in their communities, both the CCR and LT started to give less importance to the construction of churches, making use of sheds, residential houses, and open public spaces to conduct their liturgies (Prandi, Campos and Pretti 1998; Theije and Mariz 2008).

Oblivious to these two Catholic movements throughout his religious life, Claudio Pastro claimed that his artistic career began in 1975, with an exhibition of sacred art that he held on the premises of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. Having studied Social Sciences at the same university, the artist said that the major’s choice was more due to financial conditions than affinity. Wanting to become an artist and lacking resources to go to art school, he would sell his artwork as a source of income as an undergraduate student. Parallel to this, however, were his visits to the *Convento das Irmãs da Assunção*, a convent located close to his family’s home in the Tatuapé district, São Paulo. With the enthusiastic support from these nuns, he was encouraged to continue with his artistic productions. That represented an informal training as he moved through the national and international networks of the Order of Saint Benedict, which “contributed in a theoretical and practical way, to the extent to which his most frequent work orders came from them” (Sartorelli 2013, 150). That is how he began to visit and exhibit his works in convents linked to the Benedictines in several countries, in addition to taking some art courses, until he was finally hired to design churches, mainly their interior.

Called a “vernacular architect” by César Sartorelli (2013), this author says that his research aimed to give the academic recognition still denied to Pastro, precisely because he did not have training in the area. This claim is similar to that made by Marília Torres (2007), who argues that he was little known outside the Catholic Church. On the other hand, Wilma Tommaso (2013) and Egídio Toda (2013) recognize him as the country’s biggest name in religious art. The object of research by both Torres (2007) and Tommaso (2013), the Christ for the Third Millennium, is recognized as the work that marks the then peak of Pastro’s trajectory, as it was commissioned by the Vatican, in an initiative of the pontificate of John Paul II at

the turn of the century. As the name suggests, the artistic proposal was to indicate the aesthetic references for Jesus Christ in the third millennium, which was beginning. Pastro did so both by rescuing the aesthetic references of the first millennium and refusing what had been done in the second millennium of Christian art, with a special counterpoint to the Renaissance and the Baroque. It was in this context that he was invited by the cardinal to make a draft for the internal finishing of the Basilica, about which he insisted on saying “that he thought everything was very ugly”, especially “a hideous baldachin above the image”. It was a recurring theme in his interviews:

In 1997, Dom Aloísio Lorscheider, who was Cardinal Archbishop of Aparecida, wrote me a letter, asking for my collaboration, asking if I wanted to participate in some meeting, a meeting with other people, architects, artists. (...) I wrote a letter explaining why I couldn't participate and that I could collaborate from afar. I hated Aparecida. It was cheesy as hell! Kitsch as hell! All in extremely bad taste. Popular in the negative sense of the word. It was ugly as hell! So I wrote all this. And from afar, because I didn't use to go to Aparecida, because I never liked it. I did some sketches that later came out in my book, edited by Loyola. And one of the elements was a baldachin, a kind of niche, where Our Lady was, made of concrete, which I placed on my floor plan, with a small arrow, saying: “this has to go to hell”. It was my luck because that's what they thought and didn't know what to do. [Claudio Pastro in an interview in 2012] (Toda 2013, 150).

Required simultaneously in Rome and Aparecida to create avant-garde sacred art, in the late 1990s, Pastro called himself the greatest specialist in post-conciliar artistic norms. In search of the roots of Christianity, he found his aesthetic references in Romanesque churches. The primary and recurrent accusation that Pastro made, whether in published texts or lectures and interviews, was that, over time, the Roman Catholic Church lost the sacredness of its art as it became Westernized. In his view, the decline begins with the division with the Orthodox Church, which, due to the Eastern Christian matrix, has managed to maintain its artistic quality to this day. In his opinion, what most marks this artistic decadence would be the transition brought about by the Renaissance.

When looking at the artist's work as a whole, Sartorelli (2013) argues that Pastro is part of the “modern project” in Brazilian architecture with Impressionist influences. By having as some of his references the Chapel of the Rosary by Matisse, in France, and the Cathedral of Brasília by Niemeyer, the artist himself admits that not all his references come from the first millennium.

His work appropriates this “modern project” with a personal bias, as he recovers the artisanal iconographer and Romanesque architecture, also coming from a unified past prior to the Eastern Schism, but inserted in projects that value the absence of “superfluous” ornaments because they do

not fulfill the need for unity. The ornaments the artist does not design create noise in his organized utopia. So much so that whenever he intervened in the renovation of churches and chapels, he first promotes a formal cleaning, removing ornaments, adornments, textures, etc., and creates surfaces with unified colors as a base, on which he makes his paintings, redesigning the “worship furniture”, again in the name of unifying the space in all his interference possibilities (Sartorelli 2013, 110).

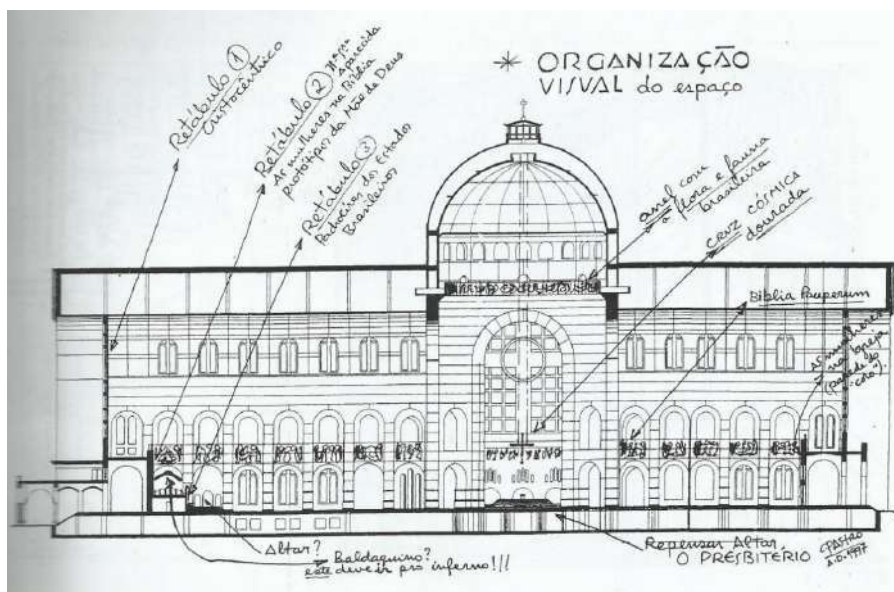
Pastro’s Catholic modernism project is consolidated insofar as its creation seeks to unite the Romanesque aesthetic references of the “first Christian millennium”<sup>9</sup> with a vernacular aesthetic of the original peoples of the country<sup>10</sup>. In his artistic and theological proposal of “return to the origins” of both Christianity and the Brazilian nation, there would be a “universal beauty” (Pastro 2010)<sup>11</sup>, achieved by divine inspiration, and which would be immune to the Luso-Brazilian baroque.

Unlike the Minas Gerais controversies in the 1940s (Oliveira 2018), the singularity and achievement of Pastro in the 1980s are precisely in proposing an architectural setting within the “modern project” both with a solid theological foundation and with the institutional support of a Benedictine intellectual elite, that had a good reputation in the Vatican. At this point, rejecting the baroque was no longer an “extravagance” and, unlike Pampulha at first, what happened in Aparecida was entirely in line with the clerical plans: even without being a priest, Pastro was seen as an “insider” to Catholicism and not an “outsider” as were Niemeyer and Portinari.

9. Pastro had as a time frame the period before the “Great Schism of the East”, which peaked in the year 1054 with the institutional separation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Catholic Church. Judging that this resulted in losses for the two religious traditions, especially in sacred art, what the artist sought in his work was to resume the aesthetic references of that period of unification.

10. As I will explore further in the next topic, elements of Amerindian and African origin are recurrent in the artist’s work. This, however, is done generically without localizing them regionally or ethnically.

11. I consider the “universal beauty” ideal an emic term, recurrent in the art world, but widely questioned in anthropological literature. In this case, what matters is how the search for this idealized aesthetic universality implies overcoming or denying established national traditions.



**FIGURE 5**  
1997 Sketch for the modernization of the Basilica of Aparecida (Pastro 1999, 253)

It is with this proposal of convergence of both post-conciliar and architectural modernism, already consolidated in his trajectory in that period, that the artist created the preliminary project for the Basilica of Aparecida, whose baldachin, which in his assessment had none of these references and was superfluous, needed to “go to hell!!!”.

### NEO-BYZANTINE ICONOCLASM

As said by Dom Darci, the internal finishing of the Basilica started with the altar and the presbytery, in the center and under the dome of that church. Then, having already decided to get rid of the baldachin over the image, at the end of the north nave, the artistic project created by Pastro transformed that place into what would come to be called the “Throne of the Queen and Patroness Saint of Brazil”.



**FIGURE 6**  
Cardinal Lorscheider presents the art project in the south nave (Revista de Aparecida, January 2003 - Source: CDM)

Announced in January and completed in October 2003, three years after the beginning of the project and with the main altar and presbytery already completed, the “Throne” was inaugurated on the patroness’s national holiday of that year, October 12. In an interview, the cardinal explained his motivations:

Among the countless projects that we have to carry out, we gave preference to this one because it is the most visited place in this shrine and, without a doubt, one of the most important places. (...) It is not just a beautiful art project. It goes far beyond that. The biblical meaning of this work is something extraordinary. The artist hired by the Shrine, Cláudio Pastro, who many are already familiar with for his unmistakable artworks and style, captured the importance of the presence of Our Lady in the entire biblical context (Cardinal Lorscheider in *Revista de Aparecida*, July 2003 - Source: CDM).

Admitting that the place where the image of Our Lady Aparecida is displayed is both the most visited and one of the most important in that church, the cardinal emphasizes that calling it throne is above all for “popular understanding” and justifies that the title of queen would be less mundane than what is assumed. This, in my opinion, points to the post-conciliar modernization that started there, not erasing but adding new factors to the devotion to Aparecida. With the end of the baldachin, Aparecida remained queen and still had a throne, even in a Christocentric project. Our Lady Aparecida, who was the sovereign queen within that church, thus passed her title to her son, but continued to be a queen mother of great prestige.

Known as “the author of the throne of Our Lady” (*Revista de Aparecida*, November 2003 - Source: CDM), in an interview that took place in the same month as the inauguration of his work, Pastro emphasizes his modern inspirations. Rejecting not only the baroque but also Roman art, the artist makes an important distinction to understand his production: in his own terms, an opposition between “sacred art” and “religious art”<sup>12</sup>. Pastro was anchored in Vatican II, which determines that “sacred art” is the “best expression” of “religious art”.

In free interpretation of the phenomenologists he paraphrased without citing (Sartorelli 2013, 56), Pastro operated in a binomial between “profane space” and “sacred space”, arguing that the church’s interior space - place of the sacred - was diametrically opposed to its exterior - place of the profane (Pastro 1999). Thus, the interior of the churches would only have space for “sacred art” and that was the art he claimed to produce (Pastro 2002).

12. For a deeper understanding of this theological binomial disseminated by the artist, see Sartorelli (2013) and Tommaso (2013).



In my opinion, in proposing a “sacred art”, Pastro fled and opposed a “baroque sensitivity” (Peixoto 2011) acting against its “tensions and turmoil” (Van de Port 2016), in search of a “universal beauty” found in minimalist forms, always having as a counterpoint the sobriety and the absence of excess. Thus, while his “sacred art” should be destined for the liturgy, “religious art” would favor “less correct devotions”, that is, “the baroque mode of knowing” (Law 2016) and, therefore, should not have space inside the churches.

At the beginning of his career, Pastro sought this sacredness of forms in what he called “primitive art”, based on his Romantic references of Amerindian and Afro-Latin elements, but he also said that this would only be appreciated among the European clergy who hired him.

In the beginning – I started when I was about 20 years old – I was looking for a very indigenous and African art, very primitive. I wanted to walk along that line, because I could not understand that Christianity in Brazil did not take this spirituality from our Indians and blacks. But as soon as I started working, the Catholic Church tamed me. I have to work to survive, and people wanted that melodramatic, cute, tearful thing. So I couldn’t advance in this area. When I have exhibitions in Europe, I can go there. Europeans feel happy and buy like crazy. But here I can’t even dare. [Claudio Pastro in an interview] (Sartorelli 2013, 126).

In his opinion, the neo-Byzantine appears as a strategy on his part to be able to “work to survive” with the approval of the Brazilian clergy, which is more conservative in this regard. By following Vatican II’s proposal of “going back to the roots”, it is in the Byzantine icon that he anchors the inspirations for his “primitive art” in order to be accepted. In the Basilica of Aparecida, this can be clearly seen in his icon of Jesus Christ (see Tommaso 2013) in the north nave panel, as well as in the Mary icon in the west nave panel, and also in the icon of the immolated lamb (see Toda 2013) on the east nave.

That said, it is noteworthy that it was not only the baldachin that did not converge with his artistic proposal: the image of Our Lady Aparecida is a colonial and 17th-century statuette, produced in the context of the Council of Trent, which fits in all of his previous definitions of “religious and devotional art”. As I heard from the artist in a lecture, statuettes of Catholic saints, in the Baroque tradition, were shaped by profane patterns inherited from the Romans and, therefore, encouraged idolatry. As Sartorelli (2013, 149-151) points out:

The memory of a baroque aesthetic in Brazil is still very strong, and its horror of emptiness runs counter to the “clean” space of his neo-Romanesque churches. This memory of a baroque aesthetic belongs to a good part of the population, which is closer to popular Catholicism than Church Orders or scholars of theology and sacred art. (...) In this



elitist perspective within the Church, the concept of sacred also ends up gaining this elitist characteristic, a sacred that requires knowledge of the liturgy to ground itself in understanding.

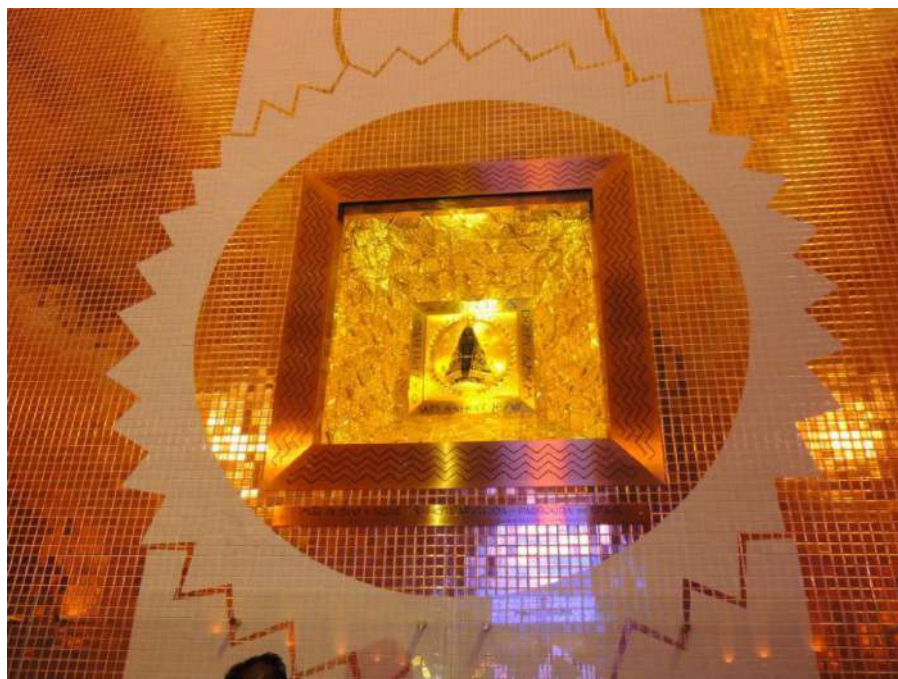
Thus, my argument is that the artist's efforts to create the niche in the south nave sought to transform it into "sacred art" within his elitist references and, at the same time, propose to overcome the "baroque way of knowing" in favor of a post-conciliar "Byzantine way of knowing". Aparecida's image was modernized at the same time as her temple.



**FIGURE 7**  
Niche of the image of Aparecida and south nave of the Basilica (Photo by author)

Since 2003, the original image of Our Lady Aparecida has been displayed in a gilded vault, located in two large panels at the end of the south nave. This has largely solved the issue of the absence of the original apse, as the vertical panel then promotes this differentiation in relation to the other naves, by partially covering the view of the stained-glass windows. With the due importance that the artist (Pastro 2007) gave to the chosen materials and themes, in this case, noble metals and Brazilian flora, Aparecida is located both as the successor of the women of the Old Testament and the "woman of the apocalypse": the female figures from beginning to end of the Bible. Without denying Aparecida's trajectory, since both her finding and her first miracles are on lower panels on the access ramps, the work's central message revolves around Catholic references about the mother of Jesus. Or, repeating his words I heard in a 2015 lecture, without "the nonsense of the sociological language" because "Our Lady Aparecida is not black, she is not poor, she is Mary". This is also put into words, since around the niche it is written: "The spirit and the wife say amen:

come Lord Jesus” and, below, “Mother of God and ours”. Christocentrism composes Aparecida’s image in the form of words.



**FIGURE 8**  
Niche of the image  
seen from the  
hallway (Photo by  
author)

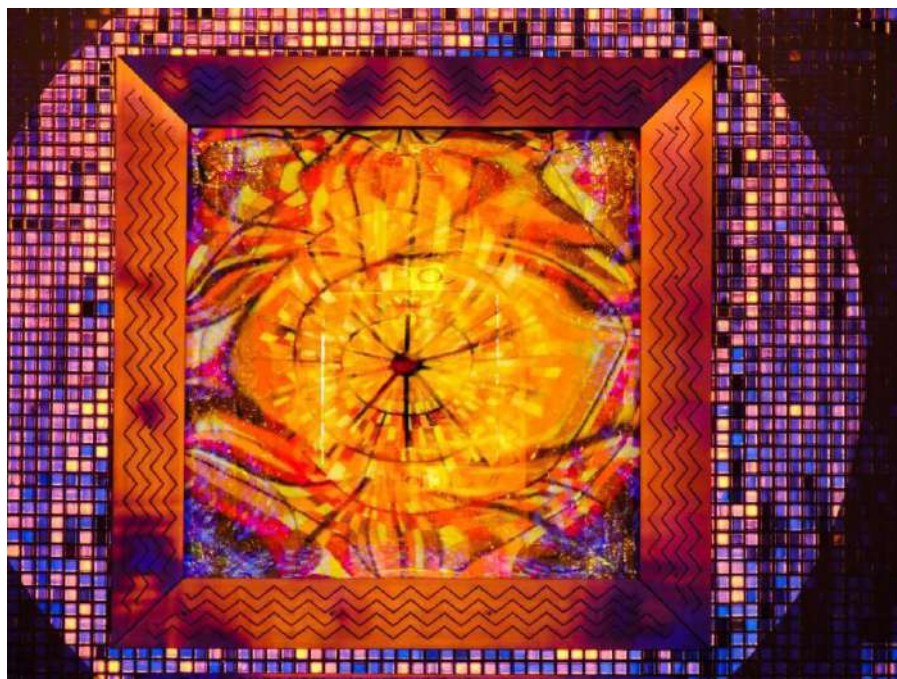
Over time, the word “throne” was replaced by “niche” in official discourse, a change for which I found no explicit justification. However, taking into consideration the artist’s ideas about “sacred art”, even lacking a written reference to this by Pastro, I want here to relate this substitution to the great influence of Byzantine art in his work. Art historian Bissera Pentcheva (2009) demonstrates the importance and centrality of Mary icons, as the mother of God (*Theotokos*), for the relations of power and authority established by the Byzantine Empire. By converging the historiographical analysis of icons’ political and artistic contexts, she also demonstrates the existence of variations in the shapes of these icons. I highlight a specific case:

The Byzantine mixed-media relief icon is the best example of this phenomenon of swaddling the ineffable. Its material sheaths of gold and gems interact with the shifting ambient light and human presence in space. I will argue that these myriad appearances - *epiphaneiai* - give rise to a powerful experience of animation in the image. Like a reflective mirror, the meaning of the Byzantine *eikon* rises from the interaction of subject and object; the faithful projects his/her own image and breath on the surfaces of the icon (Pentcheva 2009, 223).

The author explores how a large part of Byzantine icons are not strictly two-dimensional and, although the framed painting format is the most recurrent, there are all sorts of icons in high relief that mix different

materials. Common to all of them is the absence of background ornaments and a monochromatic pattern, almost always gold and metallic. In the case of “mixed-media” icons, it is this predominant background in the forms, sometimes covering and blending with the portrayed sanctity – mostly of the Virgin Mary – that promotes an interaction of reflections with those who interact with it, depending on angle and light. Far from being the result of chance, the author demonstrates how this was planned by the creators and carries an artistic and theological proposal for the place of the sacred image among the Byzantines. This, however, can rarely be seen in icons displayed in museums, as these effects were created in relation both to the temples in which they were originally exhibited and to the expected flicker of candlelight from the religious person who would observe them.

As I already mentioned, my perception of this iconization of Aparecida’s statuette was due to the difficulty I had in photographing it. At a considerable height, with a glass reflecting the church’s lights, the golden crown, and the mantle in golden threads, the image seems to dissolve in its niche. Moreover, this is enhanced the greater the distance, that is, in the view that one has of the naves of the church and near the central altar. By being placed at the center of a box covered in gold, in which the support is invisible and the statuette seems to float, for me, the niche’s composition evokes a Byzantine “mixed-media” icon in dialogue with the artist’s tiled icons in the other three naves. In the search for a clean photograph that would only highlight the statuette, at a certain point, I accepted that the frame was part of the iconography.



**FIGURE 9**  
Niche of the  
miraculous image  
with the glass  
reflecting the  
stained glass  
(Photo by author)



By dissolving the seventeenth-century three-dimensional statuette in the background of a gilded box which, in turn, dissolves into the church walls that offer a different view at every angle, Pastro sought to transform it into a neo-Byzantine icon displayed inside the Basilica. The “religious art” of a devotional character, in the artist’s conception, was thus converted into “sacred art” worthy of being in that “sacred space”.

This can be understood as a form of iconoclasm, after all, long before the iconoclastic riots carried out by the Protestant Reformation, there were the iconoclastic riots of the Byzantine Christians. Theme of Marie-José Mondzain’s (2005) dense work, Byzantine iconoclasm can be understood as a problem of translation and control of sacred images in that period of riots. Exploring the patriarchs and emperors’ theological treatises in this regard, the author indicates a binomial that structures the divergences concerning the icon, always characterized by the sacred (*hieron*) and the holy (*hagion*). In this polarization, what is at stake is not necessarily the categorization of an icon as an idol, but whether the way in which the icon was made is correct. For this, it was necessary to follow the norms of consecration, as well as observe the religious and moral legitimacy of the artist who wrote it (De Jong 2011). Thus, it was a dispute over the form and manner of making icons.

The icon itself, by virtue of its physical, tangible reality, constitutes an extraordinary treatment of space. Every graphic decision carries meanings that are both doctrinal and institutional. (...) In the struggle for mastery and control over iconic production, the two camps constantly accuse each other of being slaves to the idol, because each would like to seize power. One thing, therefore, is certain: to talk of iconolatry is to commit a serious error that shows a radical lack of understanding of the spiritual and political problems of iconicity. As for the iconoclast, it is clear that his hatred of the icon has its source in the unshakable attachment to what he considers to be the pure, true image (Mondzain 2005, 152).

In other words, what was at stake was a question of institutional power over more or less legitimate images: “the pure, true image”. And, with it, a dispute for the control of religious space and practices. Thus, as the author suggests, the analysis is fruitful if seen from the practical implications of power in the shapes of icons and not from the distinction between iconoclasm and iconophilia. These are categories of accusation and, as such, are always blurred. She recommends the use of the term “iconocracy”.

Interested in these disputes that are so recurrent throughout the history of Christianity and modernity, Bruno Latour (2008) also addresses Byzantine iconoclasm by classifying it as the most “classical” one. As the author points out, icons were a fundamental part of a convergence between religion, art, and politics of the former empire. In other words,

its destruction necessarily implied the deconstruction of “civilization”. When questioning the given opposition, he creates the term “iconoclash” to argue that this theme’s analysis is more fruitful if the focus is less on the act itself, frozen in time, than on the movement that the event implies. Which, in a way, has been an effort in this article to show the transformations of picturing Aparecida. Here, the cases of image transformation do not end in themselves. Going further, they materialize a certain institutional consensus of the present of each age, based on a specific selection from the past, and indicate a new form for the future of religious practices.

Due to the contemporary shape of Aparecida’s niche, which was yet another of these transformations, it is possible to draw a parallel to the Byzantine distinction between “holy” and “sacred” in the interpretation that Pastro evokes in his distinction between “religious” and “sacred”. Both for the chosen form – less representative of Aparecida and more figurative – and for its alleged mastery of institutional art rules, confirmed by the local clergy: his creative legitimacy came from the technique and as well as from his relationship with the Catholic Church.

As highlighted by Meyer (2019), Catholicism has long been accused of idolizing images, but it is necessary to go beyond the ten commandments when analyzing the relationship between religion and images. A look at other religious traditions shows how complex it is to assess the limits of idolatry outside of Christianity. Furthermore, according to the author, this type of assessment of the true religious meaning of an icon is not a task for the anthropology of religion. Her proposal is not to follow dogmas and commandments as categories to be analyzed, but the religious practices established in them. She indicates as a point of analysis the disputes about the correct way to materialize what is not and cannot be seen:

The title of this article, “picturing the invisible,” may appear paradoxical at first glance: after all, doesn’t the invisible necessarily remain outside of view, while the visible already presents itself as an object of our gaze? With the choice of this title, I want to signal an encompassing understanding of pictures as involving both visibility and invisibility. (...) and thus to somehow render present—what is invisible and absent through a performative act. While pictures, in general, have the capacity to re-present something else, this plays out even more explicitly in a religious setting (Meyer 2015, 334).

Coincidentally, “Picturing the Invisible” [Imagens do Invisível] is also the title of a book by Pastro (2013) in which, in the chapter on the Basilica of Aparecida, he just states that in Aparecida he proposes to “See the invisible, hear the inaudible: the silence, the nothing, the essential... to live in the presence of...” (Pastro 2013, 419). Thus, without having any pretensions or reasons to locate it in the theological debates of the Byzantine patriarchs

and emperors, even if the artist somehow referenced them in his creation (Pastro 2010), my objective in this article is to explore what were the practical implications of the cause, consequences and religious disputes of this new iconic “sensational form” – anti-Baroque, anti-Tridentine and post-conciliar – a “performative act” created in order to the Brazilian patroness and, consequently, her devotees and the Catholic Church, overcame “the baroque mode of knowing” (Law 2016) strongly identified with Brazil (Peixoto 2011, Van de Port 2016). Or how his new proposal for the image brings with it the materialization of a new invisible, without excesses.

True sacred art is **not** sentimental or psychological in nature, but ontological and cosmological. The image is man’s and sacred’s only universal language. The image, simple matter, is the loving language that the Creator chose to communicate... The Sacred is removed and the figure loses its meaning, the Spirit no longer vivifies, everything becomes permitted, the idol is born. (Pastro 2010, 53. Emphasis in the original)

In a recontextualization of iconoclasm at the end of the 1990s in Brazil, while a neo-Pentecostal iconoclasm of the “kicking the saint” episode promoted a virtual destruction of the image of Our Lady Aparecida with the accusation of Mariolatry made by the pastor, it was also with the accusation of Mariolatry made by Pastro that a neo-Byzantine iconoclasm promoted the dilution of Our Lady Aparecida in her Basilica. This was done with the intention of making that image more sacred than it already was, even if less central and less visible, based on his references of universal beauty. In his project, in order to save her from becoming an idol, instead of putting his art at the service of Aparecida, he sought to transform Aparecida through his art.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Among the most visible ways of identifying the modernizing transformation of Aparecida’s image are its replicas, sold in the shrine and its surroundings. As I have discussed on other occasions (Godoy 2015; 2017), commercial practices in the town of Aparecida are a fundamental part of devotional practices and, thus, following religious things proves to be analytically fruitful. Similarly, João Rickli’s (2016) approach indicates the centripetal and centrifugal movements that the Shrine of Aparecida provides in relation to devotional materialities. In this dynamic, with the protagonism of Aparecida’s statuettes, at the same time that the pilgrims bring with them all sorts of things to leave in the shrine, such as *ex-votos*, they also take with them other things acquired there, both to be given as gifts and to integrate domestic religious practices. The Official Store stands out, as the name indicates, for being an initiative centered on the shrine itself, that is, also managed by the Redemptorists. Unlike the vast commerce in the town, in the Official Store things acquire an official seal as they are more in line with the norms of the Catholic Church.





**FIGURE 10**  
Commercialized  
products (Source:  
[www.lojasan-  
tuarionacional.  
com.br/](http://www.lojasan-<br/>tuarionacional.<br/>com.br/))

The store sells a wide variety of objects, among which, we can find the “Aparecida’s niches”. As it becomes self-evident, the niche that houses the statuette becomes part of her iconography, becoming a constitutive part of her image, and not a mere frame or a background. However, the niche is stylized in its forms and materials, far beyond what was idealized by its creator. Ultimately, if the artist made an effort to transform Aparecida’s image in its categorizations from a “devotional art” into a “sacred art”, the Official Store takes the opposite path. In the Catholic Church’s proposal to consolidate a National Shrine, the ability to bring together in one place all the strands of Brazilian Catholicism is at stake. However, this same movement, often forced, is responsible for their separation:

Aparecida can be the one that brings together, but she is also the one that separates: she separates Southeastern Catholicism from Northeastern Catholicism; she separates a devotional Catholicism from a more liberating Catholicism; she separates evangelical Christianity from Catholicism in general (Menezes 2012, 77).

In this scope, the Catholic Church seeks to create “sensational forms” capable of engaging all this Catholic diversity. By analyzing these transformations through the plasticity of the image of Our Lady Aparecida – which could be called an act of iconoplasty if one more neologism is needed – it is possible to conclude that, for Pastro, the creator of her niche, evangelization is at the service of art or, ultimately, it is sacred art that evangelizes. This vision, however, diverges from the concomitant role of the clergy in that same place and period, which repeatedly evokes their post-conciliar motto of “art at the service of evangelization”. This apparent change of word order brought with it a dissonance that caused much of this friction: “he declared that the Order of Redemptorists, who ran the Basilica, was too ‘cheesy’ to understand his work” (Sartorelli 2013, 137). In any case, this did not hinder mutual cooperation in developing the construction work.

At the heart of this misunderstanding was the inversion of priority between the form and content of religious images. As I highlighted in the previous topic, all of Pastro's artistic production assumes the overlap between form and content of sacred art. That is, for the artist, images are only sacred if they are made of specific shapes and materials. As for Redemptorists, the religious theme of artworks is often sufficient for the categorization, including those that the artist despises as merely devotional. While the artist's religious proposition was quite strict regarding the use and manufacture of images, among priests there is a malleability in integrating a greater variety of images in their religious practices, which is more evident in the Official Store. Thus, the modernized image of Our Lady Aparecida becomes a new "sensational form", more suited to new practices of Catholicism, but not the only one. Whether in domestic altars, in the media, in the shrine itself, or even during *Carnaval* (Oosterbaan and Godoy 2020), the creation of this neo-Byzantine icon is added to the official iconography, without disregarding the previous forms, in order to provide greater adherence rather than the exclusion of pilgrims.

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## UNVEILING A PERFORMANCE RITUAL IN THE *GOEKU*: PHOTO NARRATIVES, NARRATED PHOTOGRAPHS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

This essay aims to reveal the nuances of the posthumous ceremonies performed by the Japanese Buddhist school *Honmon Butsuryu-shu* (HBS), the first to establish itself in Brazil, in 1908. The referred rite of passage, called “*Goeku*”, consists in performances by priests and adepts (faithful), which encompass a wide spectrum of relationships between humans and non-humans, in addition to a set of symbolic elements composed of sacred objects, gestures, prayers, postures and musical instruments. Therefore, I intend to elucidate such ceremonies based on the interlocutions established together with HBS, which resulted in the making of field notebooks and in rich oral narratives. In addition to verbatim (oral and written), the aim will be to make such ceremonies visible through photographs, since the images stand out for their ability to capture and expose, through a more sensory route, the complex forms of expression present in rituals.

**KEYWORDS**  
Rite of passage;  
Posthumous  
Ceremony;  
Ancestor  
Ceremony;  
Photography;  
Performance.

### INTRODUCTION

This article seeks to reveal the nuances of the ceremonies in honor of the deceased promoted by the Japanese Buddhist school *Honmon Butsuryu-shu* (HBS), the first



to be established in Brazil, in 1908, with the arrival of the monk *Ibaragui Nissui Shounin*. This rite of passage (Turner, 1967; Van Gennep, 2011 [1909]) is called “*Goeku*”, and in our country it is translated as “Posthumous Ceremony” or “Ancestor Ceremony”, whose panorama is established from performances performed by priests/priestesses and (faithful) followers of the religion, covering a wide spectrum of relationships between humans and non-humans, in addition to a set of symbolic elements composed of sacred objects, gestures, prayers, postures and musical instruments.

Here, I intend to elucidate such ceremonies based on the dialogues established by me together with HBS between 2011 and 2018, which resulted in the production of field notebooks and the capture of powerful oral narratives from my privileged interlocutors (Turner, 1967; Bateson, 1936, Schumacher, 2001; Wagner, 1967), especially the Pre-pontiff (*Gon-Soudyou*<sup>1</sup>) *Nitiyuu Correia*. In addition to verbatim (oral and written), the aim will be to show such celebrations through photographs, as I start from the premise that images stand out for their ability to capture and expose, in a more sensory and sensitive way, the complex forms of expression present in these events<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, I will present eight “visual montages” (Warburg, 2000 [1929]), here thought of as imagetic narratives of the aforementioned ritual, which will be interspersed throughout the article. The written part, therefore, aims to explain and detail the performances that make up the “*Goeku*”, taking advantage of the potential of photographs to make us narrate and thus relating image and writing, in addition to exploring the oral reports that make me were offered by privileged interlocutors during the research.

In Brazil, it is important to emphasize that HBS presents itself as “Buddhism for all”, a core characteristic and always emphasized in the *Okou* (ceremonies, in general). Consequently, the emphasis on practices of expansion of faith and “religious heritage” (*Hottoussouzoku*), supported by the existence of a series of adaptations, such as the ceremonies given in Portuguese (interspersed with Japanese, of course, but concomitantly during the celebrations); the incorporation of terms from a mostly Christian local culture; the emphasis given by adherents to the assertion “we are a religion”; and the movement for the conversion of new believers; already seem to have an effect, since, until a few decades, the presence of non-*decassequis* (with Japanese ancestry) was uncommon in the *Oterás*.

1. The monk reaches the degree of *Gon-Soudyou*, in Brazil called Pre-Pontiff, after taking expansion tests, written evaluations and interviews with superior masters, appointed by the highest authority of HBS (appointed *Gokoyuu* or Supreme Pontiff). After five years, they automatically become Pontiffs. In this article, I will also call the priest Correia by the epithets *Odoshi* (Buddhist master), Pre-Pontifical, and Archbishop.

2. I emphatically addressed issues relating to a Visual, Image and Graphic Anthropology, especially in Elias (2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021).

When analyzing the importance of the religious heritage, whether by consanguinity or by “baptism”, something that is intrinsically linked to the *Goeku*, therefore, it must be said that the “conversion” is by no means carried out in a compulsory way, since the “sympathizers” they must undergo initiation ceremonies after making explicit their desire to officially join the religion, something that will only happen when the person is 18 years or older. However, HBS do Brasil emphatically encourages the participation of children and teenagers, and their baptism may take place if there is the desire of parents who already belong to the religion. In addition, the entry of minors under 18 who are not children of the faithful, that is, do not have such a religious heritage, is allowed if the interested party is aged between 14 and 18 and expresses the desire to be part of the community. Thus, admission is made official, as long as there is the consent of the parents or guardians, through the same baptism ceremony, in which the practice of sponsorship and/or sponsorship is recurrent.

From the observation of these movements, what is common today, when a visitor arrives at an *Otera* (Temple) in Brazil, is to come across an audience made up of elderly Japanese, many descendants and a growing group of non-decasseguis, which includes priests, something unthinkable until the 1970s. According to reports collected from the community, it is estimated that HBS has about 8,000 faithful in the country, with an approximate proportion between women and men, although no more accurate census has yet been carried out. Among them, it is notable (and notorious) that approximately 85% are Japanese (*issei*) and descendants of the second (*nissei*), third (*sansei*) and even fourth generation (*yonsei*). While the more senior Japanese are retired and are characterized by having a lower level of education (up to elementary school, as they migrated in the post-World War II period and had to devote themselves mainly to agricultural practice), *issei* adults (who migrated mainly from the 80s) and descendants born in Brazil have a high educational level (complete high school, undergraduate and graduate), occupying the most varied professions (engineering, medicine, music, art, veterinary medicine, law, business administration, architecture, etc.).

Like the decasségus, approximately 15% of the faithful who are not descendants are part of the middle and upper-middle class, having access to education and other decent socioeconomic conditions. In relation to the clerics, there are precise data regarding the number and places of their work (on a rotation system in the 16 temples), available on the official website of HBS do Brasil<sup>3</sup>. Currently, there are eighteen monks, eight of whom do not have Japanese descent; and two nuns. Besides them, there

3. Available at: <<http://budismo.com.br/bispos-e-sacerdotes-do-brasil/>>. Accessed on: June 25 2021.

are three other Brazilian priests who work in Japan and India, precisely *Jyunkei Haikawa* (the youngest son of Bishop *Nittoku Shounin*) and the two sons of *Correia Odoshi* (*Nitiyuu Shounin*), *Seigyuu Correia* and *Dyun-a Correia*.

When considering the existence of a relevant number of non-descendant faithful and priests, it is essential to note that in addition to the emphasis on converting new adherents, there is a concern to make HBS Buddhism understandable to Brazilians. Terms such as “Buddhist Pope”, “Cathedral”, “Archbishop”, “third”, “drum” and many others are incorporated into the vocabulary of the followers, in addition to the cults themselves that are carried out always mixing Portuguese and Japanese. In this way, it is possible to extend the definitions of Ana Cristina Lopes Nina (2006) that, although they deal specifically with Tibetan Buddhism and its diasporic context, can serve, here, to understand the adaptations and reformulations found by HBS to “fit” in the Brazilian sociocultural context and conquer new practitioners. This proves the cultural immersion of the religion in Brazil, in a growing quest to integrate Japanese and Brazilians, followers and heirs of the Primordial Buddha’s teachings.

... outside its original context, any culture becomes, above all, an instrument that enables communication, and that is why it is necessary to take into account what will become significant in the new context(s) (...) in which it will be inserted. For a culture to successfully perform this task, it is necessary to select, within it, those significant elements that make communication possible (NINA, 2006, p. 31-32).

#### AISLE:



The “Posthumous Ceremony” or “Ancestor Ceremony”, as the terms refer, consist of rituals performed in homage and reverence to some deceased adept, whether monk or faithful (emic term). Such celebrations take place in the Hondo (nave) of the HBS *Oteras*, normally on Sundays and after the “Morning Cult” (*Asam aeri*), being offered by family and friends of the person honored in front of the “Posthumous Altar”. In this scope, it is possible to insert another ceremony, called “Cult to the Three Great Masters” (which will be discussed in the “Second Act”), which pays reverence to the founders of *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*, namely, the monks *Nichiren Daibossatsu*, *Nitiryu Daishounin* and *Nissen Shounin*.

The Posthumous Altar consists, after the Main Altar (named *Gohouzen*) and together with the “Altar of the Great Masters”, the second main place of devotion within an *Otera*. It normally occupies the right side – from the point of view of the believer, who looks at it from the bottom to the front – of the *Hondo*, being the second altar to be revered during the *Okou*, by both priests and adepts. They are also objects of *Okyuudi* (zeal) by the monks, who clean it, decorate it with censers, flower arrangements (*ikebana*) and place offerings such as *gohan* (Japanese rice), blessed water (*Okoussui*) and fresh fruit, always using masks to prevent them from exhaling over the sacred place.

These altars are also composed of wooden plaques with the names of recently deceased followers, who are honored during the ceremonies. In a sense, the Posthumous Altars do not cease to have multiple meanings, that is, they consist of “condensed symbols”, according to the turnerian definition (1967). If, on the one hand, they re(a)represent the ancestors in rituals, with names of each honoree painted in *kanji* (Japanese ideogram) with white or black paint, the plates also renew the ideal of religious heritage, both broader, with the plates with the names of the three great masters; as for nuclear/family, through the plates with the names of deceased followers. It is interesting to think about the symbolic meanings of the names painted on the posthumous plates, in black and white. Normally, white signifies purity, kindness and peace, while black is more directly connected with mourning and bad omens. However, this color also has a “positive” meaning in Buddhism, as it consists of the joining of all other shades. The black color, as mentioned by Correia *Odoshi*, “cannot be dyed”, indicating something or someone that cannot be corrupted or tarnished.

During the posthumous ceremonies, the presence of several elements that appear, in fact, in all ritual scenarios of HBS is noticeable. The first “object” that I highlight, in this sense, is the *Odyuzu*, considered in Brazil as a type of “Buddhist rosary”. In Sanskrit, an ancient Indo-Arabic dialect of North India (where Buddhist mythology orbits), the term for *Odyuzu* is “japamala” (“japa” means “to murmur” and “mala” means “string of

beads”). Used by many schools, such as Tibetan Buddhists and various branches of Japanese Buddhism, the rosary consists of a necklace composed of beads made of different materials, usually wood, although it is also made with fruit from trees, iron, bronze, pearls, jade, crystal, plastic, glass, stones, among others.

As well as “ku-kolisha”, a fortifying medicine made from leaves and bark shavings that Victor Turner (1967) observed in the context of Mukanda<sup>4</sup>, represents important characteristics related to the material of its manufacture, such as strength, resistance, protection, purification and masculinity/femininity, the *Odyuzu* has several meanings referring to the materials that give rise to it. When it is made of a tough, opaque compound (such as iron, bronze, pearls or hard plastics), it shows characteristics such as strength and protection. If molded with translucent elements such as glass, crystals and jade, it emphasizes transparency/transcendence and purification. Furthermore, the “third” has other symbolic meanings. Its “first” function is to help perform calculations, as the term “accounts” suggests. It serves for the believer to quantify a certain religious practice, such as, for example, the number of times he prayed the *Odaimoku*, *Namumyohourengekyou* emanation ritual, mantra, prayer, doctrine and Holy Image of HBS, the core of the religion around which they all orbit the daily activities of a temple, a kind of “total social fact” (Mauss, 1988 [1925]).

Following tradition, an *Odyuzu* has 108 small beads, which represent the 108 passions or worldly imperfections (such as greed, lying, arrogance, ignorance, anger, pride, etc.), plus four more in size and different colors, which represent the Four Primordial *Bossatsus*<sup>5</sup> (*Jyogyou*, *Muhengyou*, *Dyogyou*, *Anryuugyou*), for a total of 112 beads. There are also two even larger beads, which represent Shakyamuni Buddha (Historical Buddha, left) and Tahou (Buddha of many treasures, also known as the witness Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, right). Also according to HBS precepts, ancient Buddhists used the *Odyuzu* to “count the prayers they made in front of an image. They believed that each plea extinguished one of the worldly passions they had” (Correia, 2008).

Another important symbology of the *Odyuzu* is how it is handled. The devotee should join hands in a posture of devotion, called a *Gashou*. In this way, the 108 worldly passions, represented by the 108 minor beads, are crushed between the four middle beads, which represent the Primordial *Bossatsus*, and the two major beads, which represent the Buddhas.

4. Important Ndembu circumcision ritual.

5. The four Primordial *Bossatsus* are beings of exalted wisdom, appointed by the Primordial Buddha himself to spread the holy prayer *Namumyohourengekyou* to the four corners of the universe. The Primordial Buddha is also called, in Brazil, “Buddhist God”, although the definition of deity(ies) for the HBS is quite different from the Judeo-Christian conceptions (especially, in this case, those from Catholicism and Protestantism).



By crushing them, what the faithful of HBS accomplishes, according to religious tradition, is to eliminate the desires that generate karma, which allows them to finally leave the great wheel of samsara, an almost endless cycle of rebirths and deaths by which all sentient beings are subdued. Faith in the sacred mantra *Namumyohourengekyou* would thus be able to eliminate negative karma through its incessant recitation, thus being strictly linked to the practice of the *Goeku*.

The action of the Posthumous Ceremony is aimed, according to HBS, “to offer the virtues of prayer to the souls of loved ones and, by dharmic force, to equally expand these virtues to all beings in the universe”<sup>6</sup>, so that they can be led to Enlightenment and to the Pure Land of the Primordial Buddha (or the “Buddhist Paradise”, as it is called in Brazil). Karma reflects the “law of cause and effect” by stating that any act or thought, however insignificant and harmless it may seem, will return to the individual with equal impact. In this way, if a person has a bad thought or action in relation to himself or another sentient being, activating one of the 108 mundane imperfections, it will be returned with a potency that will shake his physical, emotional and/or spiritual integrity.

Ultimately, the power of *Odaimoku* is directly associated with healing physical, spiritual and psychological ailments. This prayer thus tensions an exclusively biomedical pattern of health and disease, which reproduces a positivist ideal by imposing a closed theoretical model, in which the service user (the patient, in this case) does not actively participate in the healing process, “in addition to dissociating health and illness from the historical, social and cultural aspects and dimensions of individuals” (Santos et al, 2012, p. 13). For Maués (2012), instead of considering an exclusively biomedical health model, it is necessary to take into account a broad and complex cultural system that includes specialists not officially recognized, such as healers, shamans, pastors, priests, parents of saint, among others, whose healing therapies are products of various types of bricolage that have roots in ancient practices of different philosophical, theoretical, magical and mysticism traditions.

The *Odyuzu* also has a second form of manipulation, observed during the chanting of *Namumyohourengekyou*. At these times, it is held in only one hand, usually the left, as the right is used to pace the practice of *Odaimoku*, being hit with a clenched fist on the right leg. Such positioning and hierarchy between the hands seems to have an origin in an ancient convention, as well observed by Hertz (2016 [1909]), in which dexterity, that is, the use of the right hand at the expense of the left hand in more activities important and/or considered pure, is valued. At HBS, the use of the right hand is predominant to perform the ritual gesture of prayer of

6. BUTSURYU-SHU, *Honmon*. Revista Lótus, n° 90, ano 10, 2014, p. 14.

*Namumyohourenquekyou*, as well as the use of the same hand to play different musical instruments, especially since most of the faithful and monks (as well as most of the population world) is right-handed. However, despite this custom, it is interesting to note that the priest *Nitiyuu* Correia is left-handed a of the xylophone with his left hand, without my having heard any comments or reproof (also because of the fact that he is one of the greatest authorities on religion in Brazil?) about that.

*Omamori*, on the other hand, is called in Brazil a “personal protector”, consisting of a rectangular amulet that is given to a “sympathizer” or “admirer” of HBS, at the time he makes his desire to enter the religion officially, passing through an initiation ritual called in Brazil “Batismo Budista” (emic term). Like *Odyuzu*, *Omamori* can only be acquired by a person who is or will be an adept, through a process of consecration done during some religious ceremony, as is the case with the Buddhist rosary. It serves to protect the faithful future from various evils, whether physical, psychological and/or spiritual illnesses, caused by some accumulated negative karma.

In this sense, the *Omamori* – as well as the other objects consecrated by the *Odaimoku* –, presents a kind of symbolic efficacy, in the sense that Lévi-Strauss (1975 [1949]) tells us in relation to the magical experiences of the shamans (or sorcerers<sup>7</sup>). According to the anthropologist, “there is, therefore, no reason to doubt the effectiveness of certain magical practices”. But Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that “the effectiveness of magic implies belief in magic”, a fact that is based on three aspects that complement each other: the sorcerer’s belief in the effectiveness of his techniques; the patient’s belief in the power of the sorcerer; and in the trust and demands of collective opinion, “which forms at each moment a kind of gravitation field within which the relations between the sorcerer and those he bewitches are defined and situated” (Lévi-Strauss, 1975 [1949 ], p. 195).

Although the shaman (or sorcerer) manages to cure a portion of the patients by using medicinal elements<sup>8</sup> similar to those used by so-called “civilized” doctors, Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that the essential element in symbolic efficacy resides at the other end of the system, that is, in the collective pole that includes the patient and his group. This is what I draw attention to in an analogous way, in the case of *Omamori*, whose healing and protective efficacy is not established by a shaman, but by the Primordial Buddha himself, the ultimate deity in HBS who manifests

7. Lévi-Strauss (1975 [1949]) emphasizes the existence and use of the terms “shamans” and “sorcerers”, each of which is convenient to denote the type of specific activity carried out in a certain region of the world.

8. Such as herbs, for example, from which substances that, combined, make up the remedies of Western medicine are extracted.

through the Holy Image, and, mainly, by the faith that the adepts place in this “object”.

It is also in this conception that *Okoussui*<sup>9</sup> comes into play, the “holy water” or “blessed water”, as it is called in Brazil, considered by religion as a medicine that acts through faith. Followers of the doctrine believe that, from the power of prayer, water becomes blessed, providing those who drink it countless graces, such as, for example, the cure of serious illnesses. *Okoussui* is present in small containers on all tables of the priests/priestesses on the Altar, being ingested by them during the ceremonies. It is also considered the *Namumyouhourenquekyou* in its liquid form. Therefore, *Odaimoku* is usually prayed when ingesting *Okoussui* and, according to tradition, the one who offers the “blessed water” has the duty to explain its effectiveness is associated with the recitation of the sacred mantra, a type of “magical” power -religious” similar to those observed by several important authors (Mary-Douglas, 1976; Malinowski, 1978 [1922]; Evans-Pritchard, 2005 [1937], 1993 [1940]; Mauss, 2003 [1925]; etc.).

Furthermore, the act of drinking *Okoussui* is also a ritual. It should not be used to make any other type of drink (juice, coffee or tea, for example) or to take a medicine that will help cure any disease. It should be ingested, therefore, always in its pure form, without mixing. The explanation is that by following this norm, the devotee’s faith will be 100% channelled into *Namumyouhourenquekyou*, not 50% into *Namumyouhourenquekyou* and 50% into medicine. For HBS, *Okoussui*, which must be used (drinked) to the last drop (can also wash a person’s body or be given to plants and animals), not only differs from other remedies (allopathic, herbal and/or homoeopathic), as it must, by the spiritual mode, be placed above them all. *Okoussui* is blessed water that also adds generic meanings of “goodness”, “purity”, “luck” and “vigour”. In addition, it is a “remedy that works through faith” (Correia, 2008) and cleans (or washes) the impurities and ills of those who ingest it, being made available to the faithful free of charge in small bottles, inside all HBS *Hondos*.

In *Goeku* (as in other celebrations), the use of various musical instruments is also noteworthy. It was the master *Nissen Shounin*, founder of HBS, who, in 1878, introduced the use of clubs (*hyoushiki*), metallophone (or *mokkin*, a kind of xylophone) and *taiko* (or *houko*) during ceremonies. All these instruments were suited to the main function of rhythmic concentration in prayer and mantra *Namumyouhourenquekyou*.

*Taiko*, which for Westerners would be a kind of drum, is a famous and powerful Japanese percussion instrument, played intensely with two

9. Water that becomes sacred after receiving the virtue of the prayer of *Namumyouhourenquekyou* (*BUTSURYU-SHU*, *Honmon*. *Revista Lótus*: ano 6, n. 57. São Paulo, 2004, p. 20).

drumsticks and can vary greatly in size. Its original utility dates back to feudal Japan, where it was used to motivate the Emperor's troops, set the pace on the march, and announce military commands. At HBS, it is constantly used in services because of its ability to reach a large number of people simultaneously and mark the tempo of prayers and songs.

The *mokkin* is a kind of xylophone, usually played by priests at larger celebrations, such as Morning Ceremonies, but also present at the *Okou*. It consists of two sheets of wood arranged in parallel and a stick (or stick), made of wood, rubber or other synthetic materials. Its sound is rhythmic, and like the other instruments, it accompanies the sacred prayer.

The clubs are two pieces of wood that, when they hit each other, produce a characteristic sound. They are used during services and, also, in celebrations outside *Hondo* (such as house worships and marches), due to the ease (portability) of being transported. Their sounds resemble those of *mokkin*, following the rhythm of *Namumyouhourenquekyou*'s emanation.

By definition, bells (in Sanskrit, *ghanta*) were originally wooden plate used as percussion instrument. In the Buddhist religion, it was adapted as a tool to inform the weather. In China, the bell took its current form in bronze and, thus, has remained until today (Correia, 2008). At HBS, they take many forms and meanings. Residentials are called *rin*, while the *inkin* is a portable bell, used in ceremonies performed standing, where there is no base to support it. There are also larger bells (*gan*) and flat metal bells (*kei*), which are usually rung by celebrants in *Hondo*'s nave. There are still some of great proportions, called *shou* or *kane*, which are placed outside the large temples, being played with a tree trunk. They all specifically have three main roles during an HBS cult. First, they serve to indicate when a ceremony or prayer begins or ends, as in the *Goeku*. They also act in the evocation of sacred entities, such as *Bossatus* and other deities, and, finally, serve as a metaphor to indicate that, like the echoing sound, the teachings transmitted by the Primordial Buddha must propagate infinitely, through faith and of the constant practice of the faithful.

#### FIRST ACT

After this overview of the elements that constitute the *Goeku*'s scenario, it is time to show the relationships, gestures and postures present in these ceremonies. Returning to the importance of the wooden plaques located in the Posthumous Altars and in the Altars of the Great Masters, it is noticeable that these rituals show that death is something transitory in Buddhism and that, in a way, the deceased is still there. Just as the Sacred Image *Namumyouhourenquekyou* is endowed with agency (Gell, 1998), since it not only represents the Primordial Buddha, but also consists of it, the plates made of wood – a material that in itself represents

solidity, durability and resistance – symbolically represent the death, but also life, rebirth and the strength of family and religious heritage.

In this sense, it is necessary to make a distinction in relation to traditional posthumous celebrations (funerals, Qsseventh-day masses, one-month masses, anniversary of death, etc.) of other religions. When the term “Posthumous Ceremony” is pronounced, it is plausible to imagine cemeteries, suffering and the whole repertoire of a traditional ceremony of this type. However, although all this is present, it is evident that it represents “only” the visible part of the scene, in the specific case of *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*. The word “Posthumous Ceremony” comes from the original Japanese “*Ekou*”, which means “Transfer of Virtues”. It’s the feeling you get (or should have, in theory) when you experience something you like and want to share with someone.

By its meaning, it is noticeable that the *Goeku*, as well as the ceremony performed shortly after the death of an adept, does not have a strictly posthumous nature, as its designation implies. The primary meaning would be to overcome the limit of death through feelings of compassion and from the spirit of faith. In it, the virtues of prayer are offered to the souls of the ones who have abandoned physical existence and, by dharmic force<sup>10</sup>, these virtues would not be limited to the scope of interaction (friends and relatives) of the deceased, being distributed equally to all beings in the universe that they may be led to Enlightenment (Nirvana) by the Holy Dharma.

For Stark (1996, p. 133-135), religious movements that are new in certain countries, such as Buddhism in Brazil, are likely to be successful “as they maintain a relative cultural continuity with the conventional faith of societies in which they seek new converts”. Thus, these new religious organizations, inserted in different cultural contexts, would reaffirm the conventional religious culture of sociability in which they appear. Ultimately, Stark (1996) tells us that these groups often add a substantial amount of conventional religious culture. In the case of Brazil, the Christian faith.

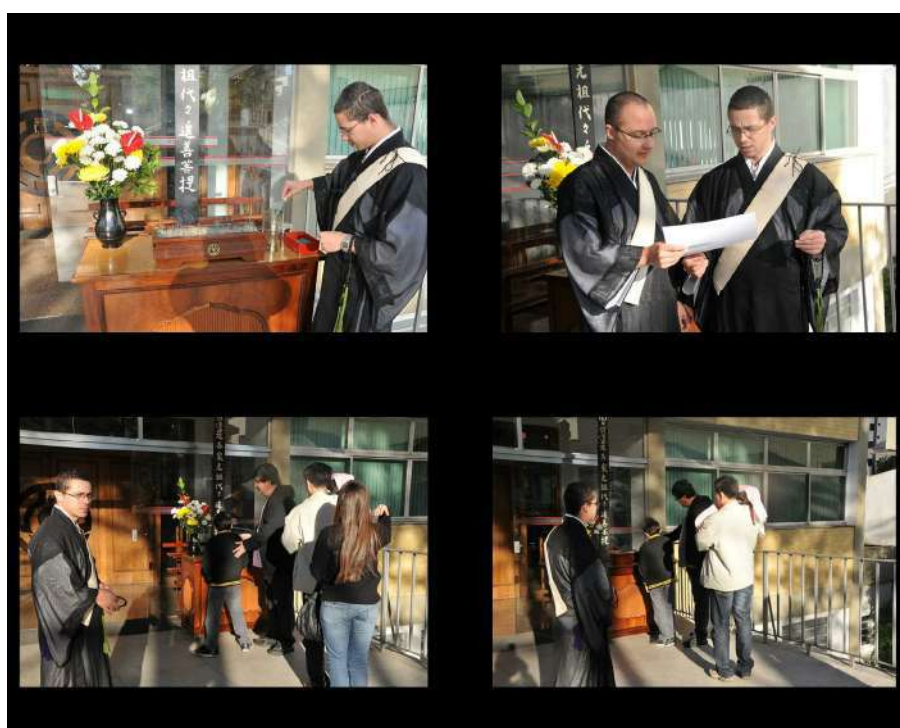
It is important to point out, in this sense, that the *Goeku*, sometimes called in Brazil the “posthumous mass”, incorporating a linguistic term from Catholicism, consists of a fundamental component of Buddhism in general, and is not exclusive to HBS. These rituals are periodically performed in memory of the deceased, each of which receives a specific name: the seventh day, for example, is called shonana, in which the deceased leaves the world we live in and continues towards a higher

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10. Dharmic force refers to the term “Dharma”, which consists of the sacred teachings, a set composed of the 84,000 Sutras transmitted by the Historical Buddha.



stage. The 49th day or seven weeks is *shijuku-nichi*, in which the person who died has completed all the steps and is ready for rebirth. I witnessed a full HBS Posthumous Ceremony in 2011, held in honour of the faithful *Yuki Oikawa*'s first year of passing (this cult is called *isshuki*, meaning the end of a period of mourning for the demise), who left her physical body with over 100 years old. This ceremony, which also has a fundamental part the recitation of the *Odaimoku*, in addition to the presence of all the sacred objects and musical instruments already mentioned, follows a script that is a little different from the other *Okou*.




The ceremony was held on a Sunday, the day when the largest number of faithful goes to *Otera*. Some priests, in this case the monks Campos and Barbosa, set the final details on the event's schedule, near the Posthumous Altar placed in front of the *Hondo*'s entrance, decorated with candles and incense. Afterwards, the priest Campos organizes the line of faithful who arrive at the Temple for Morning Cult. Before entering the *Hondo*, each person must pay homage to the ancestors before the Posthumous Altar, offering an incense for this. Backstage, before entering *Hondo*, Correia *Odoshi* wears his *koromô* (cassock or *kimono*) and *kesa* (priestly sash), with the help of a lesser-ranked priest. At the time, he does not wear the *enbi* (priestly hat), an accessory that differentiates higher priests, like him, from lower ranks and *minarais* (priest apprentices).





After the entrance of the monks and the beginning of the *Goeku* (which takes place after the *Asamaeri*), the faithful pray the *Namumyouhourenguekyou* incessantly, rhythmic with the beating of the hands, with an erect posture and eyes fixed on the Holy Image located in the center of the main Altar, “the form correct to pray the *Odaimoku*” (Correia Odoshi, 2014). However, at a certain point in the ceremony, the priests go to the Posthumous Altar. In the case I witnessed, Archbishop Correia was the first, according to the strict hierarchy of HBS, as he was the celebrant of the cult and the “bishop” responsible for the *Nikkyoji* Cathedral, followed by the 4th priest *Kyougyou* Amaral, who helped him more directly in the ritual.

At this time, the faithful continue to pray the *Odaimoku*, while the two priests place an incense (each) on the Altar of the Ancestors, as a tribute to the deceased. Archbishop Correia performs a traditional gesture of reverence, bending his torso with his hands joined and the *Odyuzu* between



them, having his gesture repeated later by the monk Amaral. He then heads back to his post on the Holy Altar, his hands still tied holding the holy rosary. Afterwards, while the priests continue the mantra prayer at the *Gohouzen*, the faithful go to the Posthumous Altar to also pay homage. A great row is formed and the devotees offer incense (one per believer) and pay the same obeisances.

Afterwards, they return to their places in *Hondo*, leaving the Posthumous Altar filled with incense and with a beautiful magenta smoke, accentuated by the sun's rays. Finally, adepts and monks return to praying the mantra and recite the dharmic words, a teaching that contains the following sayings: "I deeply respect you, in no way despise, this precisely because all of you, by practicing the path of bossatsu, will certainly attain the illumination". The Archbishop gives the floor to a relative of the deceased (the requester of the ceremony), who thanks the participation of the others present. *Odoshi* then makes the final remarks, highlighting the qualities of the honored *Yuki Oikawa*, "a dedicated faithful who transmitted her devotion in the form of religious heritage to children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, also members of HBS". The priests greet the faithful with the expression "*arigatou gosaimashita*" (thanks and farewell), repeating the bending movement with the trunk, hands together and the *Odyuzu* between them, ending the Posthumous Ceremony.





As with the *Goeku*, the ritual of closing a cycle, that is, the death of the physical body, follows the same rites of homage, which culminate, however, in the burial or cremation of the deceased's body by their relatives and friends. I obtained such information through testimonies, having not witnessed any death ritual at HBS. However, it is important to mention that, in 2013, I participated in the rite of passage of my maternal grandmother, *Fumiko Nakaoka*, who belonged to the Japanese Buddhist school Pure Land, a devotee of Buddha *Amida*. This ritual is very similar to that reported by the priests and faithful of HBS, with the same sequence of homages with incense and the disposition of those present in single file.

This means that people are organized in order of seniority and kinship with the deceased, and in the case in question, the first to offer the incense was the eldest daughter, followed by the brothers, in order of age. Next



came the grandchildren, also in order of age (I was third in that row, after my sister and a cousin, who are the oldest), my niece (at the time, the only great-granddaughter present), other relatives and friends. After the tributes, a *Bonzo* (priest or monk, corresponding to *Odoshi*, at HBS) performs a brief service, explaining the physical passage in Buddhism, which represents exactly the beginning of a new cycle and not its end. In HBS there is the pronouncement of *Odaimoku* (sacred mantra *Namumyouhou-renguekyou*) during the ritual, while in Pure Land Buddhism the mantra “*Namu Amida Butsu*” (“I take refuge in Amida Buddha”) is pronounced.

In addition to these posthumous ceremonies and places, there is also a room inside the Honmon Butsuryu-shu temples called *Nokotsudo*, the place that keeps the remains of the exhumed bodies of the deceased faithful. Each compartment of this kind of closet contains ashes and bones of people of the same family, and a part of these materials are used in homages in the Posthumous Ceremony. Van Gennep (2011 [1909], p. 140) observed the rites of passage of physical life in various groups, stating that there always comes a time when the bond between the living and the dead is broken, “after having relaxed a little just now”<sup>11</sup>. However, I have noticed that in HBS (and also in Pure Land Buddhism) this bond, although it does loosen, is not completely broken, as there are Posthumous and Great Masters Altars that are daily ornamented, venerated and mentioned in ceremonies, as well as the daily tribute and memory of the ancestors of the faithful’s families, including the presence of their mortal remains.

After these services (as well as in the funeral rites, properly), there is also a “farewell meal, judging that the dead partake of it, and people leave” (Van Gennep, 2011 [1909], p. 131). In the funeral ceremony of my maternal grandmother, for example, there was a period of the wake of the body in which, in a room next door, my family members (and me, included) offered food and drinks to those who paid homage. Afterwards, the burial continued and people returned to their homes.

This type of fraternization can be seen as a ritual of aggregation of the living (human-human) and, simultaneously, of separation (even if partial) between the living and the dead (human-non-human), in which the “deity”, in this case the Primordial Buddha (non-human), on HBS. Therefore, these communal meals serve as a pretext for the deceased’s relatives, friends and the Buddhist community involved to get together, which in fact strengthens the bonds of affinity between them at a time that still holds the mourning and, at the same time, motivates the union. In practice, an event of communion, of “gift” by the group that gathers to

11. Van Gennep thus emphasizes that there is a last commemoration or visit containing “the rites of separation from the dead and of reconsolidation of society, narrow or broad, of the living” (2011 [1909], p. 140).

remember the person who abandoned their physical body, and “counter-gift” (Mauss, 1925) by the family members who offer the food to those who attended the Ancestor Ceremony.

After the *Goeku* I described in detail above, Archbishop Correia officially started lunch by offering a prayer of gratitude for the food, accompanied in unison by the faithful, with the words: “*Negawakuba shoojioçeçe Bosatsu no doo o guioji, muhen no shujio o doshite, nagaku taiten nakaran koto o omou mononari: Namumyouhourenguekyou*”. Then, they recite the translation: “Primordial Buddha, bless this food that nourishes us, to follow the path of peace and perpetuate the Sacred Dharma: *Namumyouhourenguekyou*”<sup>12</sup>. Everyone prays, hands clasped and body bowed in gratitude. At the end, they say in chorus the expression “*Itadakimasu*”, starting the meal.

## SECOND ACT



Like the Posthumous Altar, the Altar of the Great Masters is an important target of veneration, being the third to be revered by priests and faithful during the *Okou* (just after the *Gohouzen* and the Posthumous Altar). This sacred place usually occupies the left side of the *Hondo* – from the point of view of the believer, who looks at it from the bottom to the front – and is composed of three plates in Japan and four plates in Brazil. In the above-reported *Goeku*, however, the Posthumous Altar stood outside the *Hondo*, while the Altar of the Great Masters took its place (on the right

12. This translation is in Portuguese, but here I choose a free version, in English.

side), receiving homage for the deceased (incense, prayers and ritual gestures of respect and devotion) during the ceremony.

The Altar of the Great Masters bears the names of the three forerunners of HBS, written in Japanese ideograms (*kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana*). The upper center plate is named after Master *Nichiren Daibossatsu*, the one on the left for Master *Nissen Shounin* and the one on the right for Master *Nitiryu Daishounin*. The fourth plaque, observed on altars in Brazil, bears the name of master *Ibaragui Nissui Shounin*, patron saint of religion in the country.

The founder of HBS was *Nissen Shounin*, who entered the priesthood late, at the age of 32, influenced by the work of the master *Nitiryu Daishounin*. Even with the adversities arising from the aversion of other Buddhist currents that did not accept the exclusive belief in the Primordial Lotus Sutra, the only teaching followed by this school, and with the aim of spreading and providing knowledge of the Primordial Buddha to everyone, Nissen founded it on the day January 12, 1857, to *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*. By following the Primordial Buddha's precepts, he declared himself a follower and devotee of *Nichiren* and asserted his status as the legitimate successor of *Nitiryu*.

When mentioning the "life stories"<sup>13</sup> of the founder of HBS, it is necessary to mention his two precursors, as *Nissen* is considered the rebirth of *Nitiryu*, that is, his later human life, as even these characters were not free from the samsara and the law of karma. *Nitiryu*, in turn, is claimed to be *Nichiren's* ulterior body, which was the physical body of *Bossatsu Primordial Jyogyu*. *Nichiren* is today regarded as an important Buddhist teacher and a forerunner not only of *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*, but of other schools such as *Nichiren Shu*, *Nichiren Shoshu*, Buddhism of *Nichiren*, *Soka Gakkai* Association, among many other branches.

Following the line of succession, it is still essential to tell a little about the story of master *Ibaragui Nissui Shounin*, the patron saint of HBS in Brazil. As the first monk to set foot on Brazilian soil, this character became fundamental to the religion. It all starts on April 28, 1908, when a young priest leaves the port of *Kobe*, along with 790 more Japanese, including his wife and brother. The fact of coming with family members was a requirement of the Japanese government, which gave priority to the immigration of families with at least three members.

13. It is essential to highlight that I choose to use the word "story", following in the footsteps of Vânia Cardoso, "by the implication of the sense of confabular, an emphasis on the productive dimension of the narrative", which is not taken as "an opposition to the 'real'" (Cardoso, 2012, p. 43). Thus, Cardoso speaks of a biographical individuation, which brings "back attention to the way in which stories emerge both in the space of ritual and in everyday life", pointing again "to the deviation of the anthropological look from stories as objects, as products, to 'telling' as acting in the world", a singularity that would affect "the way we think anthropologically about the stories that the subjects of our ethnographies tell us – and about the stories we tell about them" (2012, p. 60).

Therefore, the first Buddhist to set foot on Brazilian soil was called Tomo-jirô Ibaragui, and belonged to the Japanese *Mahayana* current, *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*. Thus, as Correia Odoshi emphasizes in the book (authored by him) entitled “What is Primordial – Buddhism 100 years” (2008), Ibaragui went through long paths before exercising his exclusive role as a priest. He passed away on November 1, 1971, at the age of 85 and has many thought-provoking stories. One of them, narrated by the Archbishop during a community pilgrimage that I accompanied in 2014, through Japan, India and Nepal, tells that Ibaragui’s wife, named Yasumura Tiyo, returned to her homeland before the monk and never saw him again, dying in the Toyama city.

When visiting the cemetery where the remains of master Ibaragui’s *okussan* (priest’s wife) were buried, HBS do Brasil supporters performed a ceremony that is also part of the context of the *Goeku*. On this occasion, Correia Odoshi tells the story of Tiyo and the importance of women in the life of a male priest. His relaxed appearance, with an open smile, draws attention. Although we were in a cemetery, a place commonly associated with suffering and mourning, the atmosphere was one of tranquillity and joy, as the caravan was there to pay homage to the deceased. In the image, in addition to the Archbishop who smiles and raises a bottle of sake, which would later be poured over the tomb as an offering, we have Bishop Jyunsho Yoshikawa (currently the priest responsible for the *Ren-tokuji* temple in Campinas/SP) holding a part of the remains exhumed from Ibaragui Nissui Shounin. According to the Archbishop:

Here is the tomb of master Ibaragui’s wife, the *okussan*, which in Brazil means “wife of a priest”. Women have an important role for the monk. Not that they are obligated to marry, there is no obligation. But it’s good to get the monk’s head in place. And another one, right? Married, it will be much easier for the monk to teach, to advise the families, since he goes through the same daily difficulties. So, this is where Yasumura was buried. And Ibaragui stayed there in São Paulo, without her, right? Only now, we took advantage of the trip and brought his mortal remains, the ashes of his exhumed remains, right? So, let’s put a part here, so they can finally get back together and be together forever. And let’s offer this sake, which is good, see people? It’s not the bum, it’s the good thing! Saquezinho of the good, the “top”, as young people say! Because in Japan people offer this, put the sake to honor the ancestors, the deceased (Nitiyuu Correia, May 2014).

During the posthumous ritual, the high priest Haikawa places a part of Master Ibaragui’s ashes together with the remains of the *okussan*, in a compartment at the back of the tomb, helping Archbishop Correia, who tells another little story:

So, we put the remains that are in this container back here, to be together forever. It’s a reunion right, symbolic, spiri-



tual, but a reunion. They'll stay hidden here, so no one will bother, no one will mess with them anymore. But let's just keep a part here. The other part goes with me and the people who are going to India, because we are going to put this other part in a very important place, really sacred, right, which is Pico da Águia, the place where the Historical Buddha, the famous prince Siddharta Gautama, enlightened by our Primordial Buddha, pronounced the Primordial Lotus Sutra for everyone, the *Namumyohourenquekyou* said in Sanskrit-Pali right? Because, of course, it was the language of the region, for millennia of years, and then it was translated into Japanese (Archbishop Correia, May 2014).

In addition to this experience at *Toyama Cemetery*, the group I accompanied also held a ceremony at the *Hiroshima Peace Memorial*, in order to pay homage to the victims of the 1945 genocide. This sumptuous museum site, which houses the remains of this tragic event, unites, in the same space, the past time of the atomic bomb disaster (the remains, the stories and the surviving things) and the present time, which places it as a place of culture and tourism. In the ritual, despite the more improvised character, I observed the same sequence of gestures, prayers and offerings noted in the *Goeku* performed at the *Nikkyoji Cathedral*<sup>14</sup>.

### THIRD ACT



14. This moment brought me back to another genocidal scenario erected in the context of World War II: that of Auschwitz, the main concentration and extermination camp of Jews by the nazis, which was also transformed into a museum. In the words of Georges Didi-Huberman (2009 [2002], 2014), we have “a place of barbarism” that has been transformed into a “place of culture”. Like Auschwitz, *Hiroshima* became a large and beautiful “state museum”, a place dedicated to tourism.



Along the journey through India and Nepal, the caravan of supporters of HBS went to the region where the Historical Buddha, according to Buddhist myths, would have performed his last sermon under a huge fig tree, more specifically a *religious Ficus* (popularly known as the fig tree of the pagodas), tree of the same species as the one where the “Enlightened One” meditated until reaching Nirvana. This species of tree, according to reports heard at the site, was preferred by the Buddha because of the surplus it offers and, consequently, for its protection from the harsh sun and heat of the region, during long periods of meditation and the utterance of the Sutras. After this last teaching, the Historical Buddha would have abandoned, at the age of 80, his physical existence:

So, in *Kusinagara*, which is exactly where we are right now, the Buddha died of a food infection. He ate mushroom soup at the house of Cunda, who was a blacksmith here at the time. People used to say that he died eating wild pork, but how could that be, if he was a vegetarian? Then, when he was 80 years old, he received the offering, the food, a mushroom soup and that was bad for him, so it weakened his body and he died at 80 years old. So, the first meal after his self-mortification was hominy, and the last was this mushroom soup. But then people ask, “Ah, but he is the Buddha... If he is the Buddha, how did he die of a foodborne illness? He did not know?”. Of course, he knew! But then there’s a lot involved. First, he was already 80 years old! In the case of physical death, it was caused by a mushroom soup, but in fact the body was already weakened too, but the strongest cause was old age, someone aged 80 years. Taking into account that the average lifespan of people at that time was 35 years... Today in Brazil the average lifespan is not 80 years. In Japan, it is 92 years for women and 87 for men. Brazil has not reached 80 yet, even with medicine, health insurance and all that. So, the Buddha’s 80 years of life is further proof that he is indeed Enlightened. Having sacrificed his body of almost six feet tall, at a time when the average height was between four feet and five feet, having sacrificed his body until this age group of life. You can tell if it were today, he’d be about 140 or 150 years old. If it were today, for that alone he would be the most famous man in the entire world. Someone 140 or 150 years old today would already be on television, walking, walking, preaching lucidly and everything else, right? But of course, if he wanted to, he could have avoided, meditated and got rid of this evil. It was easy for him! But he could not refuse the offer of food from a person who followed him, as he had taken a vow of poverty. And he knew that it was time to enter Nirvana at once, what we call Nirvana Full or Parinirvana. It was about time! Then, what died was only his body. But before he died, this is where the Buddha made the last conversion, it was in this place. He preached the Dharma to a very old elderly man there. On the day of his passing, he was still converting and teaching someone far more experienced, of earthly age, than he was. It’s not because I’m a Buddhist, but looking at statistical data, miracles, these things are a piece of cake, everyone can perform their miracles, just practice their faith. So, to look at that horizon there, going back to the time he spent, he had already preached the Lo-

tus Sutra, he had already fulfilled his mission. He knew he was walking to remember humility, knowing he couldn't refuse mushroom soup offered by a believer. He weakened even more and he made his last prayer. He transmitted his last visions to his disciples and passed away (Correia Odoshi, May 2014).

After abandoning his mundane existence, Shakyamuni Buddha was taken to a dome where his cremation would have taken place. In this place, visited by the caravan, we came across a huge statue of the Enlightened One, which represents the suffering of his physical body. He is lying on his side, over his right shoulder, in a position known in HBS as "*macura*" (as if he makes a pillow with his hands, to support his head), with the left side of his chest, where the heart is located, directed upwards, making the circulation flow well. His head is pointed to the north, facing geographically towards the Himalayas, which represents the closest point to heaven and a sacred place, the abode of the Hindu's gods.

This statue makes an interesting gesture, really cool, a kind of arm pillow, with the head facing north, towards the Himalayas. After he reached Nirvana there, he was taken to another place where he was cremated and then taken to Nepal, where he was born. When entering the temple of Nirvana, which has the statue, it's good to take off your shoes. It's okay, right? You are used to it already (laughs). The temple is tiny, you won't need to walk far. So, the exact location is here. Here he was cremated, but his ashes were not left. This all lasted 21 days. There was a king who was smarter... After two days, when the ashes started to cool, he arrived and said: "It's all mine!". Then there was a sage, whom the Buddha had already warned: "The ashes will be divided into eight parts". And it was placed on a scale, in equal parts. There are some old bricks there. That whole thing over there is 500 years BC. This part here was a little smaller, but then, over time, kings and kings rose to that height. And our guide also explained that in this country people are cremated because the human body is made of the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind and mind. Then, when departing from this world, you must return these five elements to nature. As the Buddha was a "superman", an Enlightened being, he had no need to let go of that. And so, they caused the parts of it to be divided and subdivided. A little of these ashes was already a reason to build a stupa or pagoda and leave them as a place of veneration. Another thing I can't leave out is that in the 18th chapter of the Lotus Sutra it says that the Buddha said that no one should worship his ashes, that's why we worship neither the body, nor the ashes, nor the statues, just the Holy Dharma (Correia Odoshi, May 2014).

After being cremated, a part of the Buddha's ashes was taken back to Lumbini (Nepal), his homeland, as mentioned in the above account. So the HBS group held a posthumous ceremony in front of the temple in which Shakyamuni, or a considerable part of his remains, would have

been deposited. Among the place where the Buddha is buried in Lumbini and the various other sacred places that would have a part of his ashes, the caravan visited the National Museum of Delhi (Mahatma Gandhi Museum), where, inside, there is a part of the exhumed remains of Siddhartha, which is considered by Buddhists to be ample proof of Gautama's physical existence. Due to the importance of this "fact", the caravan also performed, right there inside the museum, a *Goeku*.



## CONCLUSION

This article, also composed of eight visual montages elaborated as photographic essays (consisting, respectively, of 07, 04, 06, 06, 06, 06, 08 and 04 photographs), sought to show the symbolic and relational richness between human-humans (monks of varying degrees, faithful and lay) and human and non-human (Primordial Buddha and the deceased ancestors), from the ceremony entitled *Goeku* ("Ancestor Ceremony" or "Posthumous Ceremony") performed by adepts of *Honmon Butsuryu-shu*. Considering the set of elements present, such as sacred objects and musical instruments, as well as the existence of a ritual performance sequence that, as a rule, is repeated, the intention was not to limit such events as a static rite of passage. To this end, I sought to show that new situations activate the potential of these ceremonies, which have several and thought-provoking purposes (eliminating negative karma, strengthening the ties between the faithful, priests and the Primordial Buddha, emphasizing the potency of family and religious heritage, etc.).

Thus, the most elementary ritual was shown as the “first act”, which takes place in *Oterás’s Hondos*, with all the prior preparation by the priests and faithful, entitled, here, of “backstage”. Going forward, I considered as a rite of passage the ceremonial sequences in honor of the three founding masters of the religion, in addition to those directed to the monk *Ibaragui Nissui Shounin* (honored in Brazil), performed in front of a specific altar, composed of plaques that re(a)present these forerunners (as with the faithful revered at the Posthumous Altar). I also inserted, in the meantime, the ritual that took place in a cemetery in *Toyama* and a celebration at the Peace Memorial of *Hiroshima* as two *Goeku*, the first in honor of the reunion between master *Ibaragui* and his wife *Tiyo*, decades after their physical suffering; and the second offering condolences to the victims of the 1945 nuclear attack (“second act”).

Finally, I classified the posthumous rituals promoted in honor of the Historical Buddha in India and Nepal as *Goeku* (“third act”), since the ceremonies, although materially improvised (such as those that took place in *Hiroshima* and *Toyama*), also presented the same sequences, gestures, postures, sacred objects and relationships between humans and non-humans.

To elucidate the *Goeku’s* nuances descriptively and visually, I proposed the (eight) visual montages that are interspersed with the text, but that also introduces the written part graphically, also adding important excerpts from mythical narratives collected by me in more than eight years of intense and “affected” (Favret-Saada, 2005) conviviality. This is because, no matter how much I described the gestures, postures, expressions, objects and looks present in this class of ritual, I would never be able to recall and reach the power and dynamics of the performances observed without the photographs.

In the same direction, but in the opposite direction, as the other side of the same coin, the textual part plus the transcribed oral narratives are necessary in an academic work, especially one that also has the intention of describing a complex ritual practice. However, before aiming solely to illustrate the text with photographs or reduce the images to mere chronological sequences with restrictive captions, I sought to associate and explore such forms of expression in their possible intersections and tensions, investing in the narrative capacity of the images or, even, in their potential to make us remember and (re)tell the stories that took place in a more or less distant past.

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## (THE USE OF A) KEY-IMAGE FOR THE POSSIBLE UNDERSTANDING OF THE *HIJAB*

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

This article is about a photo from the photo essay *Prostitute* (1975-1977), by Kaveh Golestan. It is presented as a key photograph, able to promote an exercise of the look and enable an understanding of the islamic veil, given by the coverage of the body as the initial reason, followed by its variations in the way of use. Added to these variations are the prostitute woman's pose with the veil representing subversion (in an anti-Islamic environment) and transgression (by the desacralization of the body), manufactured by the photographer with the one photographed in relation to her place in the community, as a criticism exercise.

**KEYWORDS**  
Religion; Bahia;  
Ritual; Gift;  
Identity.

The impression was that “my eyes twinkled” at the sight of *Prostitute* (1975-1977), a photo shoot by Kaveh Golestan. Promptly, I glimpsed at its aesthetic potential. Furthermore, an ethical need took over me regarding said work, with the intention of managing the narrative by it created.

Therefore, a collection of photographs was taken from Golestan's album, becoming the main source for my postdoctoral research in psychology at the University of São Paulo. The reading of essays addressing the artistical and technical memorial of the photo

shoot and the reading of texts regarding Iranian culture were essential to the comprehension of the photographs in question, which to Trainotti e Trainotti (2018), portray a secondary source of information. There was, in this process, an articulation between the interdisciplinarity and the intertextuality regarding the chosen sources (Campos e Cury 1997).

So that the photographs were the central point of the incursion intended, a deeper methodological approach towards the vectors for the better understanding of said images was needed, as according to Miriam Leite (1993-1994). When it came to addressing the pictures, the intention was to capture something about them that could be read and written: from its spatiality to the context they were preserved in, from the experience of photographing it and being photographed in it, from defining the symbology by the pictures presented as the focal point to the meanings one could gather from them, all the way to the semi presence of those who them admire in the attempt to meeting with them. In any case, this approach lead me into a process of “decomposing” them.

At first, I took upon the task of visually analyzing the pictures to understand the elements that ruled the creation of the photo shoot. I searched for implicit information contained in the images, such as the author’s biography, the history of the place/scenario where it was shot and the meanings in it contained. The pictures were labelled with dates and locations, as well as tuned by the cultural and historical enunciation concerning the people and objects by it captured.

Notwithstanding, the search led to a narrative point where a singular picture became the key image: that one which is able to open the configuration for a breakthrough regarding one’s point of view. It singled out the investigation and defined a new pathway towards the intended narrative. Because of it, I identified and selected three alike pictures to give continuity towards a now interpretative state.

The key picture invokes something that immediately drove me into an amazed state!

That place called ground zero, quickly establishing itself; place where all questions become one and where the thought wanders. However, soon enough, or at the same time, it becomes grounded once more. Although I had seen that picture before, that instant was what made it extraordinary to me.

That intermediate place, that isn’t inside (subjective reality) nor outside (objective reality), where requests are made and it creates something concrete enough to delimit the ownership of an illusion. The picture is

the ownership of an illusion, for it consummates time, space and its intentionality in itself.

Therefore, with Barthes (1984) I approached a new perspective regarding the thread between alive and real. That moment which was captured by the lenses of Golestan does no longer exist, but remains stained by the effects of the everlasting image. Such presence allowed me to develop a perception of the characters, the narrative, the actresses, the director the outfits and the date of this rehearse-performance. A set of ideas was made, evoking a first impression of such instant, aware that the daily life captured by the photographer also revealed a representation analog to the theater and the theatrical, with the insertion of a dramatic perspective towards reality, as according to Erving Goffman (1983), which led me towards an inevitable question regarding the key picture: “what is this?”.

One of these days I looked at the picture from top to bottom, and all I saw was a piece of fabric covering a woman’s head. Suddenly, that piece of fabric became an Islamic veil (a hijab). Consequently, a connection with the sacred was made, and all I could see was a Muslim woman. Now, I ask for permission to present said picture cropped and reframed, just like I saw it.



**IMAGE 1**  
Kaveh Golestan.  
Série Prostitute.  
1975-1977.



**IMAGE 2**  
Kaveh Golestan.  
Série Prostitute.  
1975-1977

So I once again looked at the picture, from top to bottom, and then noticed that her legs were out. A contradiction was established, for a religious Muslim woman would not dress herself up in a way that shows her body, unless if she were non-practicing of the religion.

After questioning myself regarding my cut-out awareness of the image before noticing it as a whole, I must admit that it was the outfit – ah, the outfit! – that gave my mind the means to see the elements in it as a diacritical religious sign of Muslim origin and of notable presence in Iranian culture: the veil.

The device of emptying a sign took over the picture in such way that it promptly led to the obtuse emptiness that exists in it as a referent. However, this empty, or ground zero, condition regarding the sign allowed an infliction to take over my gaze, now as an allusion to the *hijab*. In this moment, I wandered: why would the photographer insert something so sacred to the Muslim Community, such as the veil, in an anti-islamic setting, as was *Shahr-e No*?

*Shahr-e No* was what we now call a sex district, found in the city of Teerā (Iran), which had its daily life captured by the photojournalist Kaveh Golestan, between the years of 1975-1977. It is a fact that the photo shoot conveys both the photographer's sensibility and the protagonism of the women who so gladly posed for his portraits. Both were involved in the construction of a visual message manifesting criticism and protest against local and national society at the time.



However, in this day and age, the photo shoot acquires a historical importance, and, why not, an archeological importance as well, for the setting and the people (prostitutes and her children, clients, *sayebs/pimps*) in them seen ceased to exist during the Iranian revolution.

Said ejection was initiated by street protesters, who assaulted peasants and workers (physical assault, imprisonment and death) in addition to setting the place on fire. Subsequently, in 1980, Aiatolá Khomeini, ordered that a square were made where once stood the ashes of this place, containing in it a fountain representing the purification of it's settings.

This afterglow of knowledge evoked Barthes and his thesis regarding the rationality contained in our attires as a "social conversion of symbols in reasoning" (Barthes 1980). The author believes that our clothes are an inherent substitutes for our own bodies: while it touches our skin, it also protects our frames from the stanger's gaze . From this thought unravels the idea of our attires as something everlasting, for infinite variations regarding it's use can be found, as well as all of them being implicitly present in the space and time where they are worn.

The *hijab*, established as a piece of clothing, also promotes the covering of one's body, although it carries within itself a religious dimension. In this sense, it becomes the depiction of the union between the being and the divine, which, as stated by Francirosy Barbosa (2013), implies the practice of the religion, as it is overflowed with the comprehension, the respect and the obedience towards both the customs prescribed by the religion as well as of the devotion that women have towards Allah.

In such way, the veil ends up embracing a system of significations aiming towards the social construction of women and their bodies, therefore, stemming from the relationships settled in primary and secondary groups (family and mosque), both in the subjective and objective dimensions of reality. The socialization of the individual occurs in these groups, with the aim of asserting them as a member of their culture, accordingly, immerse in the different subsystem that make it what it is.

I adopted a xiita sheik's words as they were said during an interview as a pinpoint to understand the normative and practical condition of his islamic practices, as in connection with native writings (Al-Musaui 2006, Al-Khazraji 2012 e Ayyatulla 2008), to present essential information to understand the act of wearing the *hijab*.

The body is considered a sacred soil in Islam, whichever are its jurisprudences, for according to it's believers, it is one of Allah's creations, one we shall dwell in and call home. When one is born a muslim, or when

one converts to Islam, there is an assortment of laws and instructions that one shall follow regarding cleansing/purifying the body from all debauchery present during the time of birth. In such manner, the intention is to make it ready and available to experience the bond with the "Other" – the divine, first and foremost, followed, in a parallel way by the people who compose the individual's surroundings.

When it comes to women, the use of the veil is also regimented by the religious practices and in favor of sanctification of the body. When one prays, for example, wearing the hijab is essential, so that she can be detached from anything but God (Barbosa 2007;2017). During the moment of prayer, the body will be the bond between her and Him. The knowledge and the protection of faith alongside the gestures and sounds depict such delivery and devotion, as says Barbosa-Ferreira (2009).

However, so that she can have a sexual encounter with her partner, the Woman shall adjust her body according to the sacralization of sex. According to Paiva e Barbosa (2017a; 2017b), converted muslim women who were interviewed said that such encounter carries within itself an imaginary apex towards the divine, for it reflects sex as another divine creation brought to us a way to use our bodies. Sex isn't something illegal in Islam, as long as it is regulated by the marriage in which it is practiced. The hijab can and must be removed when the woman is alone with her husband, for in presence of each other nudity and visible body parts are permitted.

As reported by the authors quoted in the last paragraph, sex between a married couple can cause good mental effects, as well as to make one feel safe and comfortable, for there is God's permission, the permission of both involved in the act and the purifying of both before and after said act. Everything so that the couple can touch each other and find each other in what is most intimate and deep to any muslim: the body, their bond of communication with God.

This consideration should be relativized and contextualized, of course, according to the many existing muslim communities. However, body and sex become prosperous objects of studies concerning the sexual acts in a religious context, for they overlap in a setting where certain truths and ethics are constructed and divided, where one can find the recommended social roles regarding gender that come along with the religious life.

Therefore, it is said that, coexisting with the divine living in the sacred body, there are figurative "others" that might put the body's sanctity at risk, as according to Islam and its referential groups. As a way to prevent the risk, the veil tends to emerge as an affirmative conscience of the feminine body, as this consciousness is set by biological and cultural

markers, when the veil takes the place of the body and acts as a protector of one's corporal nature.

In this sense, one of said "others" is prostitution, which, regarding religious perspective, is a territory marked by social and sexual practices that "disharmonizes" the lifestyle established by Islam. It is a place socially occupied by people who practice what is so called secularized sexual practices and whom, therefore, follow along with an estrangement from the muslim life. The ethics written by Islam towards body and sex are broken when one sells sex and when one practices said act outside of matrimony, especially with uncountable partners.

The prostitutes become the receptacle of these imaginary plans of impureness and profanity. They cross the lines of what is typically a muslim woman for they break the rules of keeping one's body guarded. Understanding the ways in which pleasure is built in Islam, according to this axiomatic perspective regarding religious normative, I allowed myself to think that, in a general way, these women become represented by the fallen veil, and therefore, are estranged from ever getting in touch with the divine. They are trapped within a body that practices the debauchery of sexual relations alienated from the muslim beliefs, therefore they are called *animalesque*, for they are dismissed from their bond with the divine (Autora e Barbosa 2017; 2020).

Now pointing out the critics regarding said thoughts, let's analyze one of Bouhdiba's (2007) discursive works of scientific connotation that discusses the path that muslim and arabian women walk once they become prostitutes. The author, based upon the freedom of choice available in Islam, promotes that said women go through a process of psychopathologization, for he considers that any woman who falls onto said path does so as a way to satisfy their sexual instincts.

He fails to take into consideration the way said reality is produced and its maintenance by the men-clients who delight themselves in the sex market, as he only translates the implications of the masculine regarding the practices of prostitution through the influences of arabian culture as a way to create a flexibility so that single muslim men may delight themselves with the sex market (as long as they are observant of the purification rituals), and never addresses a possible comprehension of women prostitute's actions in the same light.

Therefore, the religious practice inserts the being into this world in a certain way, allowing said being to both feel like he belongs within his community as well as recognize his own status regarding his peers (Chagas 2010). In this way, as I thread up a comprehension regarding the

relationship between body and islam and the sexual ethics anchored to the beliefs of sanctity, I noticed a certain play scene enunciated by the key photo and the photographer, directing the following steps of this study.

A policy of existence was implemented regarding these women. Even though the act of prostitution goes against what is socially established regarding moral and sexual, the photographer inquiries the arrival and permanency of said women in Shahr-e-No, as well as the outturns of living in such conditions – as a systematical fragility and a responsibility of all.

Did the photographer intend to bring attention towards Iranian secularized society, when the veil is a reflect of commonly worn clothing in the region? Did the photographer intend to catch the attention of local muslim communities, when the veil represents the broken bond between being-not-being muslim, but at the same time it can symbolize a possibly real rescue from such condition?

Thus, in a slightly contrarian way, the key photo (and those followed by it regarding the allusion of the veil) symbolizes a transgression concerning muslim prescriptions: the debauchery present in the practice of prostitution and the subversion represented by the way the veil was put against the women's body – and in such way photographed. Once again clarifying in case there were any doubts: the act of imprinting in the hijab the role of a cloth that covers a prostitute's head but reveals her legs, in an Iranian society built around the muslim religion, is an important simulacrum created by the artist's vision.

Which reinforces Barthe's thesis of everlasting clothing, quoted at the start of this article, and which allowed me to start a cartography of clothing variations, especially when researching pictures of muslim women on the internet as a way to study the many ways in which they wear their hijabs. Initially, I noticed there was a certain visibility towards an identitary composition, shown through by the variations regarding the ways in each the hijab covered these women's bodies in private and in public. The way in which the women expose themselves when using the hijab is highly connected with the culture that surrounds them, keeping them in an spectrum that respects the normative and the resistances promoted by them.

Iram has a majority of muslim habitants, and it follows the xiita jurisprudence. It is known that in said country the common wear is a black cloth worn in a way that covers the whole body except the face and is called a chador/xador, and it is an tradicional clothing piece for xiita muslim women considered "conservative", which exists alongside other configurations of the hejab – as it is called in persian. Said clothing is

considered traditional and remains alongside other ways of “dressing muslim”, as we’ll see in the next paragraphs.

While searching for images I came across a blog about the history, culture and traditions of Iran (<https://chadelimadapersia.blogspot.com/>). It’s especially interesting for it’s existence and the content in it found is approved by the Iranian embassy in Brazil as a reliable source about native culture. In such way, it becomes a relevant source for description, compression, analyses and interpretation of information.

It was in such manner that I came across the following terms: *bad-hejab* and *bi-hejab*. The *bad-hejab* is a veil worn loosely over one’s head, a cloth that doesn’t cover the whole body. It can be worn short and tight, with or without a *manteou*. This configuration is considered inappropriate when compared to the traditional ways of wearing a hijab. But, as found in the blog previously mentioned, it is a configuration nowadays worn as a sign of resistance towards the obligatory use of hijab. The *bi-hejab*, in succession, is a term nowadays used to describe muslim Iranian women that chose not to hide their heads and bodies under the veil, a behavior ever growing in Iran. An interesting fact is that, until the 1980s, the *bad-hejab* was considered a *bi-hejab*! In such way, women who presented themselves wearing said veil configuration, were, in reality, announcing their position of resistance (!) – which was very characteristic of and won over the streets during the Iranian revolution.

During the period that *Prostitute* was shot by Kaveh Golestan, the wearing of the veil was prohibited by the State. Said prohibition was a result of a secularization project during the Pahlavi Dynasty, reinforced by the institutionalization of practices, which was called modernization of the State and culture. Practices that were observed alongside a critical reading regarding the occidentalization in the social relations and by the voices of nationalist and religious entities (Costa 2013, Rial 2008.) There is a photograph in Costa’s thesis (2013) where one can see women alongside *xa*’s presence. They were dressed accordingly to these modernization policies, which were implemented through the forceful removal of the veil from women’s bodies when in public and in the presence of men.





**IMAGE 3**

Fonte: em Costa (2013, 108).

It's not about understanding the industrialization of practices related to a Laic State, for it would be necessary respect towards and the freedom to practice one's beliefs for that.

It's more about the governmentalization of practices and habits through cohibition and repression of it as a mean to eliminate said practices; religion as a place of resistance against foreign policies of colonization. In this scenario, the objectification of women and the many ways to use the veil were subalternized and oppressed (Costa 2013).

But they resisted! How? Although the prohibition of the veil was implemented at the time, I was able to find photographs of women wearing the hejab during the Iranian march of 1979. During this march, many voices became one in favor of a nationalist perspective. Iranian women were present and characterized different segments. (Afery e Anderson 2013).



**IMAGE 4**

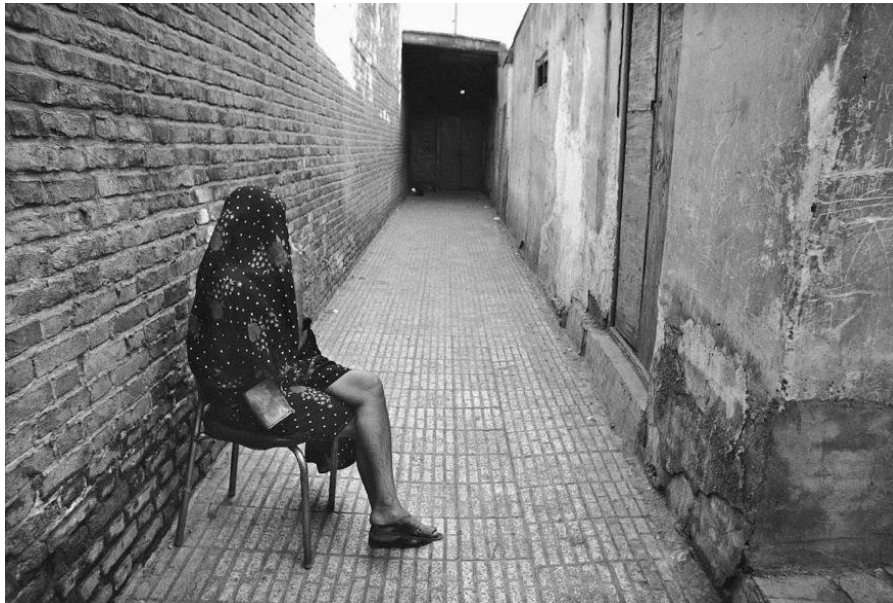
Disponível em: <https://lithub.com/my-return-to-tehran-on-family-restlessness-and-revolution/> (acessado em 31/01/2022).

I was able to notice that alongside the *hijab*-less women, there were ones that wore a cloth covering only their heads, distinctively. In the upcoming photograph, taken on May 1<sup>st</sup> of 1979 (source Getty Images), one can see women wearing the veil loosely laid against their heads, some their bodies too, some not, although they aren't tightened and still cover their figures until their feet. In any case, it seems like said cloths were held together by the women themselves.



**IMAGE 5**  
Disponível em  
<https://aventurasnahistoria.uol.com.br/noticias/reportagem/historia-ira-da-revolucao-de-1979-teocracia.phtml> (acessado em 03/05/2021).

When I look at the two pictures recently presented and then look back at the key photograph, I noticed that the cloth in it covers not only the women's head but also her face, something that can be shown when the chador/xador or other configurations of hijab are worn, while her legs are publicly exposed. The body hasn't been substituted by the clothing, and the modesty, moral inherently linked to one's way of dressing inside muslim communities, doesn't reflect the right configuration to express the ways in which a muslim woman should appear socially.



**IMAGE 6**  
Kaveh Golestan.  
*Série Prostituée.*  
1977-1979

In the simulacron aimed towards the key-photograph, the veil, while an everlasting piece of clothing and a proclamation of a system of signification regarding the muslim religion, was manipulated to unify the sacred and the deviance, to blur the lines between permissions and prohibitions and to water down what's pure and impure. This was the moment in which the key-photograph took me to the paradoxal reality photographed by Golestan.

Although aware that the individual lives their own sanctity, which refers to the fact that spirituality or it's experience is inherent to each one of us, I shall point out that this essay is oriented by a world view experienced through the repertoire found in Islam. And that in this particularity, I take upon myself the job to try and thread up an interpretation of the hijab, configurated as an element of discursive production in the frontier between historical materialism of the body and it's relationship with the world, in the cross section of social relations.

Therefore, the veil captured by Kaveh Golestan became a bad-hejab/bi-hejab, for it doesn't only defile a traditional islam piece of clothing, but also transgresses completely the promise of a female decorum and the different ways of wearing the hejab within it. An allusion of the muslim veil implied on it's fall and the exposure of a woman by her spiritual and religious covering, that in this "inside-outside" game, the prostitutes provide the hifen.

In this sense, I understood that the variations of wearing a veil are crossed by the regularity that exists in the reason of being hijab. Therefore, it's possible that Golestan and the model-prostitute chose to Include the



veil as another variation of its many ways of wrapping, be it as a religious or cultural sign. But, another point of view leads us towards a new inquieriment: could its presence be rationalized by the subversion (in an anti-Islamic ambient) and the transgression (through the de-santification of the body) captured by the photographer and the model-prostitute for the creation of a critical message?

This notion came into place after finding the following photograph. In it we can see the same women pictured in our key-photograph, now alongside another prostitute and a man, their *sayeb* (pimp). Now, we can see her face as she looks towards the camera. Apparently, with her naked body wrapped by a veil, there is an implicit reality within this: the ethical-aesthetical dimension of her life in community “inside” of her. however, their community insists that they are “outside”, for, at the end, they are part of this disturbing and obscure “other” that threatens the community and needs to be refuted, banished.



**IMAGE 7**  
Kaveh Golestan.  
Série Prostitute.  
1975-1977

In such way, even within the multiplicity of configurations of the veil or in the de-sacralization incorporated by Iranians born around the 1970s, I reflected that the woman of Prostitutes, as seen in the key-photograph, was included in the Iranian society, for she reflects her identitarian religious background as she wears her veil. However, Even with the subversion intended with the allusion of the veil in a an extremely offensive environment if put in a religious context, maybe the intention behind yearning for the attention of the local communities was to achieve some type of feeling of belonging and appreciation concerning these women's daily lives.

At the end, the veil became a transitional object, through analogy. It's not The Veil, but it is a veil. The possession of an illusion! (as is the photograph), which represents the distance established between the secularization of the Iranian society (maybe the reason why the veil is worn differently in the photograph, therefore, subversive) and the ritualistic practices within Islam that did not belong alongside *Shahr-e No* and it's protagonists (therefore why the veil is worn by non-religious women in the photographs).

The veil in the picture isn't a sacred veil, but it is a veil that denounces what is hidden and withdrawn from sight of its community. I then put into record here, my interpretation. The photograph reflects a strategy implemented by the photographer: to manifest a promise of humanization towards these women. To humanize a crippled body, shut down, submissive, taken from a dignified life in the perspective built by the other, the photographer, who captures through the reality of his camera lenses.

I interpreted it as a request to the photographer, a way to try and repair the lives of those considered (un)dignified, a spot already known in my professional and academic life. The imagery captured by his photo shoot, however, contained the impossible, for before getting to know Islam, I did not have enough background to understand the detachment between the Islamic religion and prostitution (given by the dimensions of the sexual ethics within the religion and the illegality attached to the prostitutes) (Author and Barbosa, 2017). Hence, nowadays, I can notice the incongruity between both territories. Incongruity that allowed policies of annihilation towards *Shahr-e No* and its partakers, in spite of Kaveh Golestan's suggestive critic with his photo shoot (author and Barbosa, 2020).

Our clothes are, at the end of the day, a technology of care towards our bodies, for it prevents the social exposure of its nudity. For Islam, covering your body with clothing relates to the specific way in which each community is going to deal with such holy soil, as well as the way in which each muslim woman is going to impose herself regarding religious rules,



prescriptions or social practices concerning the way a woman should dress herself in.

Therefore, regarding the hijab, one can understand the religious basis of separating women from the world through its use, in order to preserve holy dimensions regarding the bond between the body and the divine, justified by the clothing, although many criticize the way in which one should do so

However, the rehabilitation of the religious dimension regarding women who are prostitutes, through the illusion of a non-present Islamic veil, gives back to them the right of belonging in their local communities, even though they aren't recognized as such by those who surround them. In such way, the plurality of variations of the *hijab* also reflects the plurality of women and the domain they have concerning their bodies and the way they dress it.

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## SONIC COUNTERCULTURE: WHEN THE BEAT GENERATION CHANTED HARE KRISHNA TO SCARE THE WASP SPIRIT AWAY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

We analyzed the American society of the 1950s-70s as influenced and reverberated by an accentuated and unquestionable indomania. Along with such indomania, there were religions, intellectuals, alternative movements, and gurus – among which Swami Prabhupada, the founder and propagator of Hare Krishna movement, stood out – who were seen as havens in the eyes of restless young people (college students from Columbia, Berkeley, Stanford and San Francisco) that promoted the beat generation. Such young people rejected Protestant ways of acting and seeing the world, as well as a whole voracious capitalist system that grew around them, seeking mystical (exogenous or native) and oriental means and reversals against the bourgeois and lobotomized social conformities prevailing in America. Finally, they discovered that the sound of the mantras and all the vibration that it could provide perfectly resonated all the enchantment they needed.

### KEYWORDS

Counterculture;  
North America;  
Hare Krishna;  
Gurus; Mantras.

“I will make a first proposal: that everybody who hears my voice try the chemical LSD at least once - every man, woman and child over fourteen in good health. Then I prophesize we will have seen some ray of glory or vastness beyond our social selves, beyond our government, beyond America even, that will unite us into a peaceful community. America’s political need is orgies in the park, on Boston Commons,<sup>1</sup> with naked bacchantes in the national forest. I am already acknowledging what is happening among the young in fact and fantasy. I am in effect setting up standards which include drugs, orgies, music and primitive magic as worship ritual”. Allen Ginsberg (*apud* Goswami 2011, 116-117)



**IMAGEM I**  
Ginsberg cantando  
mantras com os  
Hare Krishnas<sup>1</sup>

## THE WASP SPIRIT

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare”. Along with the chanting of this

1. Boston’s central park, in which, ironically, many were accused of witchcraft and hanged by the former Protestants.

2. Anthony, Gene. *Ommmmmm*. Fotografia, in *New York City: A Photographic Portrait* (Montrouge: John Libbey Eurotext. 1995), 118.



Indian mantra,<sup>3</sup> widely vociferated in the 60s and 70s by the Hare Krishnas<sup>4</sup> and in movies like *Hair* (one of the symbols of the American counterculture), Ginsberg prophesies and wishes that minds are on high, on other planes and well aware of the futile American dream. He is one of the protagonists of our script, provoking values and inciting us to propose and analytically delineate some ways of thinking and being of a movement unprecedented in modernity, which embraced Indian thinking, creating an unimaginable subversive intellectual body that would make the German romantics or the transcendentalist countrymen of the 19th century envious; movements in verisimilitude of ideas (protest, return to nature, perceiving the gloomy economic scenario etc.)

Here, we give flame to the verbs in countercurrent and allow ourselves to coordinate opposing (temporal, spatial, and symbolic) ideas, namely: the American world in the 1950s-70s (following Oppenheimer's dating, 2003), which had emerged a particular hippie counterculture, well observed and summarized by Marvin Harris (2001, 72) with the following elements: "new ways of singing, praying, dressing, and thinking were inserted [in this period] in the name of a 'counterculture'". And giving us more detail, Messeder Pereira (1986, 20-22) adds that, on one hand, the term counterculture can refer to the set of youth rebellion movements that marked the 60s: the hippie movement, rock music, a certain movement in universities, backpacking trips, drugs, orientalism, and so on. It is, then, a dated and historically situated phenomenon. On the other hand, the same term can also refer to something more general, more abstract, a certain spirit, a certain manner of contestation, of confrontation with the prevailing order, of a profoundly radical character and quite strange to the more traditional forms of opposition to this same dominant order. A counterculture, understood in this way, reappears from time to time.

We are dealing, with the former case, a movement dated and historically situated, a manifestation of repudiation of the WASP (acronym for White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant) *modus vivendi*, predominant in the USA, but, as Pereira will say later, not from a popular or working class, but coming from a wealthy and intellectualized youth, which had access to the dominant culture and rejected this same culture from within. But

3. From Sanskrit: man = "mind", tra = "protect". Mantra, therefore, designates a metrical process of recitations of mystical, enchanted or sacrificial verses for various purposes (Monier-Williams, 2002, 786). Gilbert Durand presents mantra as one that contains "dynamic words and magic formulæ which, through the mastery of the breath and of the word, dominate the universe" (Durand 1999, 151). It is, however, an isomorphism of pneumatic images, that is, a reunion of the air-word with the vision of reality in symbol.

4. The Hare Krishnas - which we will use with initial capital letters to differentiate from the mantra - as they are commonly known in the West for chanting a homonymous mantra, are part of a Hindu religious lineage, Vaishnavism, which has in modern times a special reference to the reform movement of the Bengali philosopher, mystic and renunciant Chaitanya (1486-1533 E.V.). Religion which has been propagated and registered in the USA in 1966 by the Indian guru Swami Prabhupada.

they rejected not only the established values, but basically the structure of thought that prevailed in Western societies. And it is this structure of thought that interests us. A structure that basically summarizes what Max Weber (2004) called “Protestant ethics”, which, notoriously, started to feed a “capitalist spirit” with its Judaizing re-significations. Ethics and spirit, in the years exposed here, repudiated in a single movement and from the inside out.

To understand this social effervescence, therefore, the neologism “counterculture” is often used, which was coined by the late emeritus professor of history at California State University, Theodore Roszak (Shea 1973, 95), who also propagated the idea of “technocracy” as the apex of a devastating social engineering, through which everything goes through a purely technical examination and purely technical manipulation (Roszak 1984, 20). Technique that manifests the realm of experts and imposes “necessities” on man, as Weber also warned us about the Western rationalization process and its “spiritless experts”.

All this – Protestantism, capitalism, and the domination of technique –, according to Weber, produces a voracious rational action toward ends or ambition for profit, which tends to be associated with purely agonistic passions. A real “development monster”, through which, or in order to combat it, it is not known whether new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals. What is known is the “last men” are the ones who are heard: those “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (Weber 2004, 166), that is, “the Nothings” who delude men through utilitarian disposal, which leads to the progress of cultural values becoming a senseless hustle in the service of worthless, moreover self-contradictory, and mutually antagonistic ends, seeming even the more meaningless the more it is made a holy task; culture thus becoming senseless as a locus of imperfection, of injustice, of suffering, of sin, of futility (Weber 1979, 407).

A system that reverberates, in antithesis, what Marcuse (1987) will call the struggle for life or the struggle for Eros, and this will be a real countercurrent, countercultural struggle.

Thus, the term “counterculture” allows us to limit the whole context without further and larger definitions, without the need to crumble countless theories about culture, transculturalism, metaculture, *kulturkritik*, or multiculturalism. Mainly, for our focus one can also think of the term *vacoculture*, *vac* (from Sanskrit) being the Vedic Goddess of speech, who is in the poets, visionaries, and mystical hymns, thus a culture that represents well the poetry of the writers presented in this work.

For, when one takes a closer look at the images and matrices reflected from hippie times, they see ideas stemming from Indian culture everywhere, which landed in the US and established identities, behaviors, and magical choices. And we see “new prophets” rising with “old ideals” and new transcendentalisms with old romanticism. It seems like a cycle that revolves again and again with ideas that overwhelm by means of sounds that tear veils.

For Maffesoli (2007, 98), one can speak, in this sense, of “regredience”, as a spiraling return of archaic values entwined with technological development. He currently proposes another term: “ingression”, or to enter (in-gress) without progressing (progress),<sup>5</sup> this is what seems to be at stake for the contemporary tribes. They do not have to wait for an end, an economic, political, social project to accomplish. They prefer to “enter” the pleasure of being together, to “enter” the intensity of the moment, to “enter” the enjoyment of this world as it is.

One, thus, understands that such a movement is much more than a clash or an affront, it’s more than a syncretism of cultures, more than pluralisms or comparisons, more than resistances, and much more than evasions of consumerism or escape from the cult of futility. All of this is in this “social pack”, but it goes beyond, becoming a return, a repagination, a revolution of natural and sensitive human practices, a search for the life-giving song, which provoked a more attentive look at the Eastern worlds that were then being searched for or that came (to the West) again. At last, an (*alter*)*native* emerged, a kind of woodcutter or anti-capitalist woodstock, indeed wood, indeed *paganus*: the sound of the East.

One sought who they were, one clung to what liberated and to a recombination with re-enchantment, and all this with the help and addition of *ahimsā* or non-violence, *ganja* (marijuana with spiritual purpose), *jaṭā* (long hair in dread), incense, yoga, vegetarianism, mantras and other Indian elements that greatly influenced an entire generation – including the Rastafari<sup>6</sup> movement, also present in this context. But the mantra will be, in fact, its maximum emblem; the contagious, the frenetic, the whirlwind of consciousness that was so much wanted, and the *summum bonum* of an art capable of supplanting the chaos brought about by the WASP spirit.

The American society of the 1950s-70s is outlined, therefore, and its premises, marks, communicating vessels, and reverberations of a marked and unmistakable indomania. Along with such indomania, there were religions, intellectuals, *swamis* (renunciants) and Indian gurus – such

5. In the materialistic sense of the term.

6. Relationship well documented by ethnographer Linda Aïnouche in *Dreadlocks Story* (2014).

as Vedantists and Hare Krishnas – who claimed to be or were seen as alternatives in the eyes of the baby boomer generation.


Let's first do an imaginary-comparative exercise with some quotes about Indian renunciates, or as the Greeks called them, the gymnosophists, and try, whenever this Indian category is mentioned, to replace it with hippies or counter-culture intellectuals.

About these gurus, Louis Dumont (1993, 37-38) informs us that the man who seeks ultimate truth abandons social life and its restrictions in order to devote himself to his own progress and destiny. When he (the renunciant), hippie, looks behind him at the social world he has abandoned, he sees it at a distance, as something devoid of reality, and the discovery of the self is confused for him, not with salvation in the Christian sense, but with liberation from the hindrances of life as it is lived in this world.

Huston Smith (1997, 66) adds, in a tone of intellectual elegance, that renunciates (and imagine the hippies or countercultural agents), far from wanting to “be somebody”, remain a complete non-entity, on the surface, to unite with everyone at the root. The external life that best suits this total freedom is that of the homeless mendicant. Other people will seek economic independence in old age; the *sannyasin* (renunciant, like the hippies) proposes a total break with all economy. With no fixed place on earth, no obligations, no goal, no belongings, the body's expectations equal zero. Social pretensions also find no soil in which to sprout and interfere. No pride remains in the one who, mendicant bowl in hand, stands at the back door of the house of the one who once was his servant, and would never exchange roles.

However, and still according to Dumont as a debater in this comparison, we can broaden the concepts, the practices, and the imaginary of this Indian renunciant or the hippie, observing that both the hippie and the renunciant or *swami*, by being “outside the world” (as Weber would say) or “socially dead”, close themselves off from the idea of the individual. Except, of course, that this “individual” (Indian or hippie) is unable to erect individuality as a value, because the absolute interdependence inherent in the caste hierarchy or in the counter-cultural world prevents them from having such an individualistic vision or desire. And going even deeper into the imaginary of both, we observe that the motivation for renunciation, each in their own way, is tied to the idea of becoming an individual “outside the world”, in order to liberate the world itself, rather than to satisfy one's condition as an individual.

Dumont and Smith seem to be telling us: if you want to be an individual, be a renunciant or a hippie, but know that by becoming an individual



in this context and with such boldness, you will become an individual “spiritually” responsible for everyone. This is what the *swamis* who arrived in the New World tried (and try) to do, and all those who, in one way or another, followed in their footsteps or simply drew inspiration from them.

As Eric Hobsbawm (1995, 323) complements, this youth culture became the matrix of the cultural revolution in the broadest sense of a revolution, whether in manners and customs, in the enjoyment of the body or trance, or in art, increasingly forming a climate breathed by urban men and women, but who rejected disenchantment or ways of acting and seeing the world around them. Nevertheless, seeking mystical and Eastern means and setbacks against the current WASP, enclosed, bourgeois and lobotomized social conformity.

Victor Turner (1974, 137-138) says that these are the “audacious” members of the adolescent and young adult categories – who do not have the advantages of the national rites of passage – who have “chosen” to escape the social order linked to “status” and have acquired the stigmas of the humblest, dressing as “vagabonds”, ambulant in their habits, “popular” in their musical taste, and subaltern in whatever casual occupation they incubate. They value personal relationships more than social obligations.

Turner seems to sum up a scenario of Indian renunciants, their desires and behaviors; intellectuals’ vow of poverty that infected Buddhists so much, and then spread grossly to the West with the monastics. But unlike the latter and the asceticism of Puritan accumulation, the counterculture returns to the original Indian life/renunciation: without pietistic walls, desiring expanded consciousness, minimalism, not getting caught up in economic chains or corporate parties, escaping from an enticing and alienating gear, knowing the body deeply, realizing that in sex lies the greatest of powers, purifying the mind with natural food, and for all that, immersing oneself in art and being self-conscious. Somehow, therefore, the caste of the intellectuals of ancient India, through the modern Indian masters who arrived there, fit like a glove to those who were escaping from the disenchantment of the world or the Protestant-capitalist prison.

## **CONTEXT AND PROTEST**

Such mental and social jails are verifiable in all bourgeois institutional actions and patterns: in the conservative family nucleus, in the repressive education, in the disguised conformist secularism, in the wars that maintain consumption patterns, and in the Protestant seedbeds that maintain all this, spreading through the stone forests divinizing exploited and expropriated labor, usury and the accumulation of surplus. An overwhelming avalanche of ambition for profit that kills worlds and minds. In the face of this avalanche, Weber (2004, 156-157) makes the point that the



religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which he called the spirit of capitalism.

This is which, in our times, we can call the WASP spirit – and Weber had predicted it –, Disneyfication (Kehoe 1991) Coca-colonization (Wagnleitner 1994) or McDonaldization (Ritzer 2009). Here is the thread that unveils a rational specificity of Western development, and here the “spirit” of consumption and the sanctioned iconoclastic and puritanical “ethics” fit in. All this is what we can glimpse as the *ethos* and the cradle of the technocratic, mechanistic or disenchanting life of American culture; this real nightmare for hippies and loss of meaning for Hindus. But why is it a nightmare or a loss of meaning? Colin Campbell (1997, 20) explains that the West itself no longer showed a similar enthusiasm for its own values and beliefs. It was in the very heart of the West that ‘Westernization’ was facing its wildest challenge; a challenge that was based on a perspective that was, in essence, Eastern. This was happening because that dominant paradigm, or “theodicy” that had served the West so effectively for two thousand years, had finally lost its grip on the majority of the population in Western Europe and North America.

Linking such inferences and thoughts to Weber again, a modern paradox emerges: the extension of an instrumental rationalization – an engine that was supposed to free beings from the irrational shadows of magical thinking – that now culminates in the creation of an iron cage and armor for oneself, generating an interior in which the meanings of life and freedom dissipate and vanish into thin air.

According to Weber, it will be the Puritan asceticism, when transferred from the Catholic monastery cells to professional and secular life, the master spring that comes to dominate worldly morality (intramundane), and to order the economic cosmos of machinery and machine men. Spring that transforms daily and methodical work into a religious duty, and into the best way to fulfill the materialistic wills of a despotic god. This order that today determines the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, and perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt (Weber 2004, 165). Weber further notes that possibly the capitalist spirit has escaped from iron cage molded by the Puritan ethos, but he also argues that even with the apparent fading of this rosy gallantry, one sees its ghost in the bourgeois ethos – even if the Puritans failed in wanting to enjoy two “lords”, succumbing to the Judaizing temptations of the pleasures of wealth – hanging around the lives of everyone and everything.

Weber will add that such an effect also occurred with the accumulation of wealth of Jewish or Catholic monastic asceticism, even before the schism, sometimes yielding to ennoblement, sometimes subduing or renewing the secularizing effect of possessions, but those great religious movements, whose significance for economic development lay above all in their ascetic educative influence, generally came only after the peak of the purely religious enthusiasm was past. Then the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God commenced gradually to pass over into sober economic virtue; the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness (Weber 2004, 160).

The Protestant lust for profit, therefore, has survived and continues to fuel capitalist economic dictates, yet today one sees the same lust irresistibly shifting from mere profit and enrichment (or coercion to save) to the exacerbated custom of accumulating frivolous goods, and with no further restraint or reins weighing on one's shoulders, as if gaining increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history (Weber 2004, 165). This represents the victory and superimposition of a solvent spirit, which now dissimulates the Protestant material crutches, keeping them as subjective shadows for man to remain motivated to hard work, since the machines cannot stop and the consumption of "novelty" never ceases.

In other terms, the spirit of a good American wing and its unconditional yuppie doctrine is the absolute transcendentality of God and the corruption of everything pertaining to the flesh, explains the entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion (Weber 2004, 96). Here, Weber seems to decipher everything that the counterculture feels on the skin and in the mind, as such a spirit exudes "convenient thoughts" and full of moralisms saturating individualism (Maffesoli 2007, 97), which provokes, in our times, the reaction of the societal power of a "subterranean centrality", as Maffesoli will say, that surfaces inverse attacks: with artistic sensorialism and taste for the beautiful, Dionysian tribalism and accentuation of the "archaic" with a communitarian dimension.

In the American counterculture there is the perception, therefore, that the West is impermanent, mega-conservative, rationally unhealthy, and all its social structures cause and profit from chaos. But that, even in the face of such disenchantment, a way out is possible, since there are more solid, older, and vibrant societies and ideas that can teach or inspire another way. It is interested in the subtlety of the profound expression of an alternative world, which, circumstantially, since the discovery of its existence, slowly and deeply arrives and vibrates, presents itself and sings, and sings, and sings.

However, even without witnessing the future optimism of hippie cognition, Weber, in the face of this disenchantment, delineates an almost indelible chaos for everything that was and is being built by Puritan asceticism, since it laid the groundwork for *homo economicus* and its unbridled instrumental capitalism with the ghost of dead religious beliefs (Weber 2004, 158). But the counterculture is tired of all this, and focuses determinedly on anti-consumerism, the breakdown of the Christian *habitus*, and the psychedelics of mind, sex, and art. Factors that inhibit, at least for the moment and internally, the whole WASP foundation or framework.

Nevertheless, the WASP “spirit” is there, with very little or no depletion of its disillusioned individualism and bloodthirsty coloring, preserving itself, via capital and the desire for divinized labor, the chimerical attempt (and heir to Judaism) to subjugate the world in order to devalue it. As Louis Dumont (1993, 43) explains, the infinite value of the individual is, at the same time, the debasement, the devaluation of the world as it exists. And within the Western context, this individualism is a value, a value like any other: acquired, coercive, and contagious, but also, and here is its particular core, disenchanted.

Its power, in the 20th century, is transferred to the cultural industry, expanding its control over (still passive and) disillusioned minds due to wars and the promises of enlightenment and scientism, which generate unprecedented consumption epidemics, leading Sérgio do Carmo to conclude that in those years, the world discovered a new fear: the permanent threat of nuclear war, but the prosperity generated in the postwar years had created in the United States a climate of comfort and consumerist euphoria that indicated a new rhythm of life (Carmo 2000, 29); and of a life that was now intended to be globalized.

Globality that reverberates in what Erich Fromm calls “cultural narcotic” and Adorno calls “the monopoly of culture” or “barbarism of the culture industry”, which is linked, as Weber confirmed before them, to the development of technocracy that deprives the human spirit of autonomy, binding it to the market mechanism and the verdict of supply and demand. This inevitably causes the only use value, the only quality they enjoy (Adorno 1985), which consequently becomes illusory purchasing power without *beruf* or “meaning” to life, but as mere fickle and recycled therapies, destroying free thinking. In other words, a total alienation of man, who now has a bar-coded identity: *homo consumens*. Adorno warns that with such narcotic impacts of the consumerist industry, they can be sure that even the distracted will consume them, each being a model of the gigantic economic machinery which, from the first, keeps everyone on their toes, both at work and in leisure (Adorno 1985, 105).

For the counterculture protagonists, all this is a rotten human side that is dying, as so warns Stephen Prothero (1991, 209) that somehow Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, a book the Beat studied and discussed in the late 1940s, could help them. Inspired by Spengler's apocalypticism, the Beat announce the death of the tribal god of materialism and American mechanization. "There is a god dying in America", Ginsberg proclaimed. And following Spengler's cyclical view of history, they prophesied that a new deity was emerging from the wreckage.

And the Indian alternative values and Gods fit like a glove to reverse the culture and put leisure back in the place of business, curbing the neurosis of consumption and the association of having with being.

But what differentiates basic consumption from *homo consumens*? Erich Fromm informs us that they live for consumption and from consumption, having it as a relief from anxiety, insecurity, despair and depression, underlying our way of being and thinking. He says that one who's depressed feels as if there is an emptiness in their guts, they feel as if he is paralyzed, as if they lack what it takes to act, as if they cannot move properly for lack of something that could set them in motion. If you consume something, the feelings of emptiness, paralysis, and weakness can temporarily leave them, and, in the meantime, they will be able to feel that they are somebody after all, they have something inside them, they are not an empty thing. They fill themselves with things to expel their inner emptiness. It is a passive personality that senses to be little, and repress these suspicions, becoming *homo consumens* (Fromm 1986, 15-6).

Here is the modern neurosis, since producing and consuming has become a valid tendency and is acclaimed by the social niches that live under the tutelage of "cultural narcotics". Emotionally, emptiness, as never thought of before, is produced since now the meanings of life and the Gods have been erased by the technocratic mode, the world of appearances being all that is left; that which accelerates death (internal/emotional and external/bodily).

In the face of this whole American dream system, poets, artists and intellectuals emerged, aiming at an anonymity that would deprive them of the rights and duties of a *homo consumens*. They claimed to live an Eastern and Native American truth, around their long hair, colorful headbands, peacock feathers, "gods' eyes" mysticism, beads, miniskirts, the abolition of bras, the rejection of national symbols and anthems, the ruptures in the face of racism, speciesism, and homophobia, and the use of flowers in their hair with great care, esotericism, and the building of alternative rural communities. Jackets replaced ties, and the guilt over sex and nudity was thrown away. In short, a "un-refrainment", or disinhibition of the affections. With long robes, they ingested old and new hallucinogens,

defended pacifism and environmentalism, and made use of underground, folk, and oriental music with their respective instruments. In short, various attempts to revive ways of being and thinking in a pagan and pre-modern style, far removed from any WASP doctrine.

Marcuse argues that aesthetics, together with affectivity, has a basic acuity, since they allow one to go through and experience nature itself, abolishing man from the vision proclaimed and inflicted by *homo consumens* (Marcuse 1987). In epitome, Sérgio do Carmo (2000, 29) wonders what meant for a discontented young man to live in a country that boasted the largest middle class in the world. The malaise was caused by the tyranny of the masses, by the tendency to form herds of mediocre citizens. The writers of the beat generation were not satisfied, and sought to reflect on the solitary multitude absorbed by the desire for security, generalized submission, conformism, and the need to identify with the image that society demanded of each person. Against this criticism, the press coined the term *beatnik*, a fusion of beat and nik, the end part of the word *Sputinik*, the first Soviet satellite launched into space in 1957. It designated young American rebels alluding to the supposed sympathy for leftist ideas and revolt against conformism.

Marcuse also ponders over this probability of a subversion in industrialized society, now triggered by those who abdicate the order of labor as behavior, as an end in itself, within the youth and among artists, that is, surrounded by those who would remain motivated to let themselves be led by a plane of attunement between art and life, or resist by a “non-repressive principle of reality” (Marcuse 1987). In this way, the arena of struggle would no longer be between capital and labor, as Marx intended, but between those who would be equipped to soften labor and tune it to an aesthetic spectrum of the world, as the hippies, alternative intellectuals, and the entire North American counterculture try to do.

### **GURUS, PSYCHEDELICISM, MANTRAS AND HARE KRISHNAS**

The arena turned to pacifism, environmentalism, and romanticism to purge itself of WASP: privileging nature and its language code, rather than an institutional religiosity; perceptual communal individuation, rather than dogma; and instinctive man, rather than puritanical morals. Thus, connecting to nature, one used instinct in communal and chanted, sang, and resonated.

Dissenting voices emerged, such as that of Scott McKenzie, through the song San Francisco on the album *The Voice of Scott McKenzie* (1967). So also did the renowned The Byrds, The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, The Doors, Steely Dan, Morphine, the shrill and irreverent Janis Joplin, the wizard Jimi Hendrix, the self-taught prodigy Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, Patti



Smith, and Neil Young. In addition to Haight-Ashbury's newspaper, *The San Francisco Oracle*, and a psychedelic underground journal published in 12 issues (September 20, 1966 to February 1968) by editor Allen Cohen (1940-2004) and art director Michael Bowen. The latter even exhorted such passages as: "We were suspicious of your god who never failed you – always loving, a Christ with no human faults. The terrible truth was that your Christ carried hell with him, and that each of you had a hell, a darkness" (*apud* Goswami 2011, 153).

Connected to all this is the LSD guru, Harvard Ph.D. professor, psychologist, and neuroscientist Timothy Leary (1920-1996), who inspired the song "Come Together" and participated in John Lennon's famous *Give Peace a Chance* video anthem. Leary is in the lyrics of "The Seeker" by The Who, in "Let the Sunshine In" from the movie *Hair*, in the title of a song by the American heavy metal band Nevermore (album *Nevermore* 1995) and by the Swedish band Tiamat ("Four Leary Biscuits", on the album *A Deeper Kind of Slumber*, 1997), among other notable appearances. And, although he was one of the founders of psychedelic psychotherapy, with the use of hallucinogens, he was expelled from Harvard (October 6, 1966) after conducting an experiment on his entire class of students (Johnson and Richards 2008, 606).

Leary (1990, 11) argued that the psychedelic experience was a journey into new realisms of consciousness, with no limits to its reaches, whether with the perception of language, space-time, ego, and identity itself.

On Leary's pace, anarchist activist Abbie Hoffman (1936-1989), cofounder (along with Jerry Rubin, Anita Hoffman, Nancy Kurshan, and Paul Krassner) of the *Youth International Party* or the *Yippies* movement (1967),<sup>7</sup> also notorious as one of the biggest icons of the counterculture, he sent by mail, along with other friends, on Valentine's Day 1967, three thousand envelopes with marijuana sticks to New York City residents, randomly chosen from the phone book. Enclosed with the wrappers was a letter that read, "Happy Valentine's Day. This cigarette contains no harmful cancer-causing ingredients. It is made from 100 percent pure marijuana. [...] [A postscript warned] Oh, by the way, possession of the item you now hold in your hand can bring up to five years in prison. It matters not how or from whom you got it" (Hoffman 1998, 190).

Despite all this, the North American media only began to give full attention to the counterculture on January 14, 1967, with the premiere of the music festival (attended by more than 20,000 people) *Human Be-In*, in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. This festival would be the "birth" of

7. This *International Youth Party*, whose members were known as *Yippies*, turned to the unfolding free speech and anti-war activism of the 1960s.

the counterculture on a large scale, managing to bring together diverse tribes and philosophies. During the festival, Leary, in front of thousands of spectators, uttered his famous phrase: “Turn on, tune in, free yourself”, which became a great slogan of the counterculture. Cesar Carvalho (2002) expresses it as a slogan that has a precise meaning: to turn on is the act of ingesting any hallucinogenic substance, which means to perform an introspective dive, enabling access to multiple and differentiated levels of perception; to tune in denotes the need for a harmonious and interactive search with the outside world, based on new internal perspectives, and to free oneself designates the self-confidence acquired with the discovery of personal singularities. Thus, Leary’s slogan meets the millennial longings that certain drugs have provided for their users throughout history, as it is very evident in India.

Gayathri Prabhu (2013, 11) will say that at the *Human Be-In* festival, Ginsberg and Gary Snyder performed the Hindu rite of *pradikshina* (circumambulation usually done around a deity in temples) and thus the whole event was granted the status of an encounter in pilgrimage. Through such performances, the (Beat) poet’s individual and experiential quest was consciously shared and transformed into a common space.

Three days later, on January 17, 1967, Ginsberg, accompanied by dozens of hippies, greeted the founder of the Hare Krishnas in the West, Swami Prabhupada, on the occasion of his first visit to California, with a bouquet of flowers at the San Francisco airport (Muster 1997, 25). And, although he was not sympathetic to two ideas coming from Prabhupada, because the *swami* was opposed to the practice of sex without commitment and to hallucinogens – something that Ginsberg advocated with appreciation –, the poet sympathized with everything else, especially his erudition, mystical joy, and the boldness to preach a simple life with elevated thinking (via mantras). In other words, for the *swami*, being a spiritualist meant being musical. This is what Tomas Turino (2008) calls “participatory art”.

Ginsberg was enamored with the *swami*’s catchy pamphlet phrases, such as “Get high forever, practice Krishna consciousness!” or “Just imagine a room full of LSD. Krishna consciousness is like that”, which demonstrated what his target audience was (Hann 2008, 70-71). Ginsberg also always chanted the hare krishna mantra publicly as part of his philosophy of life (Brooks 1992, 78-79), recommending it to provide great states of ecstasy (Szatmary 1996, 149), and recognizing that such a mantra was the greatest gift the *swami* had given to Americans, and a real weapon against the evils of war and consumerism. The *swami* had always warned that this mantra was a powerful bomb against the castration of consciousness, and more expansive and liberating than any other practice. Not for another

reason, such mantra is very evident in the movie *Hair*, a seventh art emblem of the counterculture.

Turino will call all this a process of musical transformation through the deterritorialization of culture, that is, expressions that have been displaced from their places of origin and made available to geographically distant people, which leads, Turino (2008, 118) adds, to a trans-state cosmopolitan cultural formation.

To this end, Mark Slobin has adopted the term “interculture”, referring to the “the farflung, expansive reach of musical forces that cross frontiers” (1992, 42). Of the three types of intercultural he visualizes – the industrial, the diasporic, and the affinity –, it is the affinity intercultural that is most attuned in our case. The groups it produces, which Slobin characterizes as “charmed circles of like-minded music-makers drawn magnetically to a certain genre that creates strong expressive bonding”, serve as “nuclei for the free-floating units of our social atmosphere, points of orientation for weary travelers looking for a cultural home” (*Ibid*, 72-73). The basic, subcultural overtones of this characterization make it doubly appropriate to the kinds of countercultural networks we present here.

Tullia Magrini (2000), on the other hand, relies on the concept of “sound groups”, formed by people who choose a particular song or chant primarily because they identify a part of themselves with the values they connect to that song. Again, while such groups may coincide with ethnic, generational, or social groups within a given society, they can also be transnational and, crucially, remain open, acting as voluntary communities of consent (as opposed to prescribed communities of descent). Similarly, Veit Erlmann (1998, 12) adapts Kant’s notion of the aesthetic community, which forms and falls apart based on taste, by applying it to all social formations, loose affiliations, neotribal groupings, and the cult groups of individuals that float freely or are not anchored in rigid structures of control, habitus, and membership. Erlmann (1998, 12) also describes how world music styles become demarcators of community through the formation of affective bonds between dispersed places, as seen in the counterculture period.

Such themes of ritual, celebration, and intercultural identity building around sound recur in Turino, who offers an eloquent exposition of the ways in which music is socially significant. Turino’s (2008, 1) central thesis therefore shares the proposition that music is not a unitary art form, but this term refers to fundamentally distinct types of activities that serve different needs and ways of being human. Making music in this way leads to a special kind of concentration on the other people with whom we interact through sound and movement and on the activity in

and of itself. This heightened concentration on the other participants is one reason why intercultural music is such a strong force for social connection. Moreover, this participatory performance is the most democratic, least competitive, and least hierarchical, which is to say that it does not fit well with the broader cultural values of the capitalist-cosmopolitan formation, where competition and hierarchy are prominent and profit-making is often the primary goal. This is, in itself, a reason why participatory activities exist below the radar of official mainstream and of popular attention in capitalist societies.

The Hare Krishna movement is, in fact, participatory: once it started its activities in New York in 1966, it reinforced India as a pilgrimage destination, a sacred icon and the cradle of a unique thought – just as it had happened with American transcendentalism after contact with Indian philosophy, but now with the possibility of a faster, “direct” and sound contact. In fact, as Dale Riepe (1970, 273) points out, India exerted more influence on American philosophical thought than any other non-Western culture.

In addition to Professor Leary and British philosopher Alan Watts, Ginsberg (2002, 36) intended to incorporate Swami Prabhupada into the great corner of hippie ideology, and to that end organized the Mantra Rock Dance (January 29, 1967, a fortnight after the *Human Be-In*), held at Avalon Hall in San Francisco, featuring Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, and Moby Grape, and with an audience of approximately 3,000 hippies (Bromley 1989, 106, Chryssides 2006, 213). According to Kimmo Ketola (2004, 304), the stage had been taken over by many lights, strong incense and a gigantic sensory atmosphere. And after two hours of heavy music, the *swami* enters with huge garlands of flowers, receiving a shower of petals and applause from hippies and rockers, like a real pop star. And to enhance his entrance, many images of the Krishna icon were projected, while Ginsberg took the microphone and spoke, next to the *swami*, about the hare krishna mantra. After brief explanations, Ginsberg starts playing the harmonium and chanting the mantra, which caused a commotion among everyone. And soon one could see thousands of hippies dancing and gesticulating with the *swami* in his footsteps. A mantric frenzy that lasted almost two hours.

For Ketola, it will be these frequent, public, mantric frenzies, real festival-rituals that will be stigmatized by the American and academic perception that the Hare Krishnas are a religion or philosophy of life typical of the counterculture. We would even say with a lot of beat.

Ginsberg made a point of accompanying this and other mantras during his poetry readings and interviews, often using one of Swami Prabhupada's

favorite musical instruments, the harmonium. Besides the hare krishna mantra, he used to recite the famous *Bhagavati Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra* or simply “*sūtra* of the heart”,<sup>8</sup> included in the lyrics and with backing vocals of his own in *Ghetto Defendant* (1982), by the English punk-rock band The Clash.<sup>9</sup> For, according to Ginsberg himself, his protests are also religious, going so far as to state that *Howl*, his 1956 book, is a statement by individual experience of God, sex, drugs, and absurdity (Ginsberg 1976, 21), exposing that the poems are religious and he intended them to be (*Ibid*, 32).

But where did he get the idea that such sonic festivals were the best way to combat the spirit of warlike, consumerist America? Five years before all this effervescence with festivals in the US, Ginsberg, at the age of 37, traveled to India, where he stayed for two years. It was the early 1960s, and in an India full of equal protest. It was the time of the *Hungryalists* in Bengal, for example, a group of anti-establishment poets, led by Malay poet, playwright and novelist Roy Choudhury. In 1962, Choudhury hosted Ginsberg at his residence in Calcutta for a few days – days that certainly taught Ginsberg how to fight through artist, in the sense of attracting not only with words, but uniting them with gestures, sounds, and symbols. And nothing better than Indian culture and its rebel poets to show him this. What the Beats were to America, the Hungryalists or Hungry Generation were to Bengal – an emblem of modern rebellion, questioning everything that was considered conservative, in the Indian case, trying to rescue the freedom of thought and the sacredness of sex that always characterized classical India. Choudhury got into trouble for his impactful poem “Stark Electric Jesus”.<sup>10</sup>

Ginsberg, from America, already familiar with Hindu or sympathetic texts, thoughts, and friends, such as the Englishman Adous Huxley, tried to see the real India without the lens of an outsider, immersing himself in the culture and trying to adapt to the food, clothes, imaginaries, ideas, and sensibilities. Among other things, he was dazzled by the ease with which Indians understood and accepted death, for rather than being just a deeply philosophical concept, he realized that they treated death as part of everyday life, as “normal”. Consequently, his contemplation towards death and the Hindu rituals surrounding it became a constant theme in his poetry and in the *Indian Journals* – his personal pilgrim’s diary in the land of the *swamis*. Hundreds of romantics and hippies, seeking an unusual, full life and new sensations that could completely disaggregate

8. The *sūtras* are Buddhist sacred discourses, and this particular one is part of the Mahāyāna Buddhist school.

9. For more details on the relationship of the lyrics to the Buddhist mantra and Ginsberg, see: Thompson 2011, xxi-xxiv.

10. Inspired by this poem, there is a 2014 film of the same name, directed by Mrigankasekhar Ganguly and Hyash Tanmoy.



him from the WASP world, followed Allen Ginsberg to India, decades after his first trip. “Ancient heaven”, “initiation”, “existence like God”, are phrases Ginsberg uses to describe his experience in India during his interview with Thomas Clark for *The Paris Review*. In the same interview, he compares his poetry to “Sanskrit prosody” (Ginsberg 1966).

In his diary, it is more than clear his fascination with all aspects of Hinduism: yogis with huge dreadlocks, covered in mortuary ashes, some smoking sacred herbs, ecstasy in minimalism, visible expanded consciousness, smells never before known, the chanting everywhere, public philosophical debates, unparalleled musical tradition, street theater on every street corner, deep intoxicating eyes, the madness of the Gods, and, most importantly, feeling free with one’s sexuality, one’s dress and one’s thinking. Everything was, in short, poetic. And he concludes, “how can Da Vinci beat an elephant on a mouse?” (God Ganesha). Ginsberg’s point is that all the rationality of a Western genius neither conceives nor surpasses the symbolic depth of the Indians. In a letter to Kerouac, he will say, “The great rock cut [34] cave temples of Ellora, where the Great GLORY of Indian art really is, makes Michelangelo’s Renaissance look Western little” (*apud* Schumacher 2016, 376). All of this will be catalysts for the endless counterculture festivals.

It will be no different at the psychedelic summer (August 15-18, 1969) of the famous Woodstock festival. The Hare Krishnas were also present there and the Indian gurus Maharishi Mahesh and Swami Satchidananda. The attention of the media and hippies also turned to the charity New York “Indoshow” (with 40,000 spectators) organized by George Harrison and the Indian musician Ravi Shankar, *The Concert for Bangladesh* (August 1971) at Madison Square Garden.

## **A GENERATION IN INDOMANIA**

The Beat Generation was, therefore, an event that had begun in the 1940s with the young students at Columbia University – William Burroughs, Lucien Carr, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and other comrades –, who were emerging with an original poetic and literary movement that later became known as the counterculture. And it all started with their contact with the poetry of the Irish occultist and translator of Indian philosophical works, William Yeats. Yeats ignited in Carr and Ginsberg the inspiration to run a *New Vision* in America, from what the Irish poet, armed with his indomania, called *A Vision* (Lane 2017, 165).

Charles Wrenn summarizes the relationship of the poet who impacted the Beat Generation with Indian thought saying that “There was one period in [Yeats’s] early life when his imagination was captivated and stimulated by India – not the India of politicians, or historians or travellers, but

an India of pure romance, which bears some subtle yet obvious relation to old romantic Ireland” (Wrenn 1920, 09). And P. Sri (1995, 61) adds that:

This was a period when he experimented with “many pathways” in order to find his true poetic subject and voice (VP 845). One of the paths Yeats travelled on was revealed to him by Mohini Chatterjee, a young Brahmin who came to Dublin in 1885 as a representative of the Theosophical Society, but went beyond the “contemporary” eclecticism of theo-sophy to the *philosophia perennis* of Vedanta to the ageless perceptions of human existence enshrined in the Upanishads, the *Gita* and in the works of the eight-century South Indian seer Sankara. The teachings of Mohini Chatterjee left a vivid and lasting impression of Yeats; initially, they strengthened his youthful romanticism, cast a dreamy atmosphere over his early poetry and inspired some specifically “Indian” poems [...]; eventually they impelled him to transcend his cultural and national boundaries to articulate themes of universal validity and cosmic significance.

Kerouac was inspired to create the term *Beat Generation* in 1948 with the same “renewal of the Indian spell” (Dabić 2016, 59) and through Yeats, possibly reading poems like “The Indian to His Love”, “Mohini Chatterjee”, “The Indian upon God”, and “Anushuya and Vijaya”, characterizing an anti-conformist youth movement in New York. But the name actually came about in a debate about Yeats with the poet John Clellon Holmes, the term “beat”, according to Kerouac, being coined by Huncke, a street dealer, who originally used it in his colloquial phrases. The adjective “beat” meant, within its initial context, colloquially “tired” or “down”, but Kerouac soon expanded the meaning to include the connotations “optimistic”, “mystical beatific”, and an association with the “beat” of unorthodox jazz, which had already become popular among the intellectuals of his day.

The term now blended beatitude, jazz beat, and rhythm, that expressed tiredness or saturation of the system, of the “normal”, and that took everyone to a *New Vision*. Beat had become a magic word also for young Englishmen, hence the name Beatles, a fusion of the words “beat” and “beetles”.

Very quickly, beat became part of the youth and intellectual language, becoming even more popular when Holmes published an article in The New York Times entitled “This Is the Beat Generation” on November 16, 1952.

The most incisive non-conformism of this generation took a significant turn, strictly speaking, with Kerouac’s *On the Road*, which set the whole generation in motion with its account of nomadic life, like an Indian *swami*. Written in 1951, Kerouac typed the text frantically on 40 meters of a roll of telex paper to avoid the constant changing of sheets, in an attempt to symbolize the road as a journey in spiritual search. But, according to Sérgio do Carmo, all this will only have a profound impact as a rejection

of bourgeois values and in the blossoming of beat aesthetics in 1957, when the hippie counterculture will be preannounced, with all its valorization around spontaneity, nature, and the expansion of mystical perception. Something embraced via hallucinogens, alternative music, and Eastern religions (Carmo 2000, 28).

The emblematic Bowen even designed the *Human Be-In* poster with a picture of an Indian *sadhu*, attached to a triangle with a very evident mystical third eye. In another poster of the same show, one can emphatically see: “bring flowers, incense, feathers, candles, posters, flags, families, animals, percussions, bells and flutes – which, in fact, was the same kind of suggestion that the Hare Krishnas made to their public gatherings. Timothy Leary is also seen wearing Indian necklaces. The event, as always, began and ended with Ginsberg chanting various Indian mantras.

Bowen was one of the American counterculture thinkers to make a pilgrimage to India in 1969, an occasion that marked his entire artistic career and personal life, given his dedication (five decades) to the study of *Vedānta* and outcropping of various themes that represented the *Sukhāvati* or “Pure Land”, a description of the *Buddha Amitābha*<sup>11</sup> or heavenly abode of Buddha, according to the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist school.

Bowen, also known by the initiatory name Baba Kali Das (“servant of the holy Goddess Kali”), upon finding a six-foot-tall granite column (assigned to the San Francisco traffic) abandoned in a grove, immediately, because of its phallic formation and resemblance to the god Shiva’s symbol, the *linga*<sup>12</sup> – a symbol already well known to Bowen – “christened” it as such and such. He began to worship it daily (with flowers, incense, and the sounding of shells and mantras), along with dozens of other followers, believing the lithic object to have magical powers like the famous Indian *lingas*.

According to the American magazine *People* (1994), several of Baba Kali’s followers claimed the stone to be a healing element, and with the healing fame of the magic stone, its attraction to many pilgrims from all over the United States increased alarmingly, becoming (in disenchantment) a major problem for the administrators of the park and the nearby churches, and a supposed hotbed of state-conflict. It got to the point where local

11. In Tibet he is known as *Od Pagme*, and in Japan as *Amida Niorai*. He is one of the Buddhas who purifies the *karma* of desire.

12. The most popular and worshiped of the sacred deities in ancient and modern India is the *Linga*, the phallic symbol of universal manifestation and procreation. The *Linga* is seen as a popular orgiastic symbol and creative core of cosmic existence (*Prakti*), just as the pole that complements it is the feminine principle *yonī* (“womb”, “source”). This hierophany of stones represents a lithic cratophony, embodying a magical and vibrant cultural incidence. Therefore, Eliade (1998, 178) says that the cult does not address the stone, considered as a material substance, but the spirit that animates it, the symbol that consecrates it.

state authorities ordered the removal of the stone. Baba Kali fought the removal in the courts until January 1994, when it was removed from the park and taken to his garage, which soon became his personal temple and a new pilgrimage site.

Bowen catalyzed a vibrant movement of crowds of young people, claiming and propagating love in the face of an anti-Belicism; changes appreciated by many utopias and societies today. John Starr Cooke (1920-1976) joined Bowen in 1958. He was the one who created a meditation center in 1958, an Aquarian Age tarot, and the psychedelic preaching group *The Psychedelic Rangers*. Cooke meditated six hours straight in Mexico for the benefit of the *Human Be-In* event organized by Bowen, presided over Bowen's initiation ritual with the consumption of *Datura stramonium* (a plant with high hallucinogenic power), founded the *Church of One* in 1967 (Anthony 1995, 130), and, in the same year, in a large march against the Vietnam War in front of the U.S. Pentagon, he distributed thousands of daisies to the demonstrators, which were photographed when held next to the rifles and became, from then on, icons of the fight against the war, creating the stigma of flower power among them (Lee 1992, 205).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

As already seen, Ginsberg's striking poetry and mystical activism, along with the entire Beat generation, made him a charismatic eloquent on the function of sexual freedom in America (Turner 1974, 138), as well as a great sympathizer and disseminator of Indian religions. His sympathy generated many great nationally televised events and interviews involving and relating hippies to India. And the main relationship was through music, especially with the chanting of mantras, which Ginsberg wanted to introduce and coin as songs or hymns of the counterculture, for carrying an energy and identity contrary to the world proposed by modern America. He had started his mantric journey from his first trip to India, and when he returned, he met Indian masters and again echoed ancient sounds, especially the hare krishna mantra divulged by Swami Prabhupada, with whom he had long conversations and coexistence. Ginsberg even donated money and helped Prabhupada on several occasions, including for the establishment of his second temple in the West (in San Francisco) and in several excursions to promote his spiritualist cause, even getting the *swami* his first visa to stay in the USA.

Thus, the apothegm that matters to us is: the hare krishnas mantric songs, along with all the trappings of a counterculture outlined here, significantly permeate the American counterculture or *vacoculture*, possessing in the eyes of the hippies and their prophet poets, such as Ginsberg and Kerouac, an attempt to abstract or eliminate the vehement WASP way of being.

The hare krishna mantra that the musical Hair used in the lyrics “Be-In”, the clarinetist Tony Scott titled one of his songs in the same year, and the New York band The Fugs, in 1968, did the same with their song “Hare Krishna”; and even with Ginsberg reciting the mantra. Englishman Marc Bolan introduces it in his song (“Frowning Atahualpa”) of the same year, the American singer Marion Williams includes it in her album *Standing Here Wondering Which Way to Go* (1971) and the pianist and harpist Alice Coltrane makes a beautiful arrangement with the mantra in *Universal Consciousness* (1972), besides titling another one in 1976.

Something similar will be done by Ruth Copeland, Fleetwood Mac, Stevie Wonder, Marion Williams, Hüsker Dü, N.O.R.E., Ivan Wilzig, and Travel Corporation; by George Harrison, Boy George, Goldblade, Quintessence, Bill Oddie, Kula Shaker, David Sharp, and Placebo; by Nina Hagen and Toxoplasma, and by Brazilians Zeca Baleiro, Nando Reis, Karnak, Seu Jorge, among others.

Thus, under the influence of counterculture thinkers, Hair, and especially Swami Prabhupada, nowadays countless bands and artists of various musical styles chant the hare krishna mantra, whether as a form of minority protest, as an alternative to American customs or WASP, or to reach other consciousnesses.

Finally, it is well known that, as Timothy Leary himself eloquently warns us (2007, 9-10), counterculture flourishes whenever and wherever some members of a society choose lifestyles, artistic expressions, and forms of thought and behavior that sincerely embody the ancient axiom that the only true constant is change itself. The hallmark of counterculture is not one particular form or structure, but the fluidity of forms and structures, the disturbing speed and flexibility with which it emerges, mutates, morphs into another, and disappears. Counterculture is the moving crest of a wave, a region of uncertainty in which culture becomes quantum. To borrow a phrase from Nobel Prize-winning physicist Ilya Prigogine, the counterculture is the cultural equivalent of the “third state of thermodynamics”, the “nonlinear region” in which equilibrium and symmetry have given way to a complexity so intense that it looks like chaos to our eyes.

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## VISIONS OF FREEDOM, PRACTICES OF THE “FLESH”: A PERFORMATIVE APPROACH TO THE THELEMIC GNOSTIC MASS AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RECONFIGURATIONS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

Taking into consideration the emergency of new esoteric religiosities and ritual practices from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, that is, a set of magical-religious practices and discourses which represents Western's rejected knowledge, New Age movement being its main representative, this article aims to analyze the thelemic gnostic mass and its contemporary reconfigurations as performances that allow those who practice them an active transformation of the self and of the world, establishing a being-in-the-world according to values like individual and sexual freedom. The gnostic mass is one of the main rituals of *Thelema*, magical-religious system founded and developed by Aleister Crowley since 1904 in England. In order to make this analysis the critical proposals by Ernesto de Martino regarding crisis of presence and religious reintegration; by Silvia Mancini

**KEYWORDS**  
Thelema; Magic;  
Esotericism;  
Body; Ritual  
performance.

on altered states of consciousness, and by Stanley Tambiah and Victor Turner on performative analysis of ritual will be utilized.

## INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to reflect on the possibility of analyzing the ritual practices that emerge in this cultural context of the late 19th century and that extend to the present day as performances that point to a resignification of the group categories of being-in-the-world through of values worked through mythical-ritual symbolism (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012) and altered states of consciousness (Mancini 2018), promoting agency over the world through the transformation of the self – the body – and the world. I will use the Gnostic Mass and its contemporary reconfigurations, which are the result of my ethnographic observations since 2018, as the theme of this argument. It is one of the main rites, and one of the only ones that have a public version, of Thelema, a magical-religious system founded and developed by Aleister Crowley from 1904 in England. I chose this case study due to the deficiency of academic production, especially Brazilian, on Esoterism and one of its historical stages – Occultism, perhaps because of an academic prejudice on the subject. This article intends to be an impulse for new studies in the area in the light of Anthropology.

First, I will discuss the historical context of the emergence of Esotericism. Then I will make some notes on Thelema. Then, I will present my theoretical-methodological options for the analysis of these ritual practices. Finally, I will describe my ethnographic observations on the aforementioned rituals and articulate them with what was discussed in the previous section, resulting in an analysis that privileges the idea of crisis of presence (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012) as provocative of a ritual performance that promotes a being-in-the-world according to values such as sexual freedom.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SCIENCE, MAGIC AND RELIGION BETWEEN THE 15TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

The twentieth century in the West witnessed the emergence of different religious currents. The apparent (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012) disenchantment of the world elaborated by Weber (1920/2016) was put in check as magico-religious currents did not stop flourishing despite the rise of science as a sieve legitimizing objective reality, putting in the background – that of alterity – other rationalities that allow different forms of world conception<sup>1</sup>.

1. There was, in fact, a rationalization of spheres of action from the 17th century onwards in Europe, which allowed the capitalist system to take root. However, this is not why the world was totally “disenchanted”: magic and religion never ceased to be present in social life, they were just delegitimized and relegated to the sphere of the private or the space of radical alterity.



If we go back in time, in the 15th century, during the Renaissance, the production of alterity – of the conceptions of human and non-human, of barbarism and civilization – due to overseas expansion, formulated with more “property” the categories of science, magic and religion, marking its “difference”: “we are religion, faith, and the repository of science; the other is magic”. This production of the other, non-human, barbaric, has also affected the way the West relates to science, magic and religion. However, in the 15th and 16th centuries, magic, religion and science walked together: scientific production had as one of its main occupations to prove the existence of God and the Holy Christian Trinity. The appropriation of magic by the literate layer of the population at the time also served these purposes, see the great treatises on magic of the time – otherwise, magic was considered heresy and that is where the question of hunting folk magic or dissidents from magic comes in. “Intellectual”/esoteric because they threatened the Church’s legitimate monopoly of magic, for example (Thomas 1971). Even the recovery of ancient magical currents, such as the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Chaldeans, were only socially accepted if they fit into the spectrum of proof of Christian discursive practices (Hanegraaff 2012, Yates 1964/1995). Hermeticism<sup>2</sup> was a great exponent of these concerns.

In the sixteenth century, however, the Protestant Reformation brought about a change in this relationship through the attempt to exclude all magical content present in Christianity, such as the Eucharist, the cult of relics, prayers (Hanegraaff 2012). The concept of religion that was emerging is radically opposed to that of magic, which is often conceived as a diabolical, evil practice – hence the emergence of the concepts of white magic and black magic. Religion becomes a matter of faith, of the pact established with God (Pompa 2008); magic, in bad faith. The rationalization of spheres of action proposed by Weber (1920/2016) begins to take shape in this period. Capitalism itself develops through categories of a religious order, that is, from Protestantism, such as the question of the exclusivity of vocation and divine grace. However, magical practices<sup>3</sup>, despite their

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2. Philosophical-religious tradition from Greece, but credited to a supposed Egyptian magician, Hermes Trismegistus. This tradition is recovered from the 15th century onwards with the discovery of Hermetic texts and served as a promoter of an intellectual strand of Western magic, but it was always focused on Christianity, hence the formation of religious Hermeticism in the 16th century.

3. I understand by magic and religion systems of discursive and ritual practices, variable in their social legitimation, which operate transformations in the subjects-bodies who practice them and in the world, in addition to keeping the being-in-the-world out of crisis (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012). I believe that the difference between them is more in axiological than epistemological terms. Both magic and religion are historical constructs that refer to a form of elaboration of alterity, dating from the overseas expansion from the 15th century onwards. That is, such concepts are Eurocentric insofar as they establish a notion of religion for that set of practices whose similarity with Christianity is stronger (Pompa 2008). Otherwise, it’s magic. Magic, therefore, is the practice of the “other”, it is knowledge rejected by the West (Hanegraaff 2012). I prefer to start from provisional concepts, in the absence of a term that better translates such social manifestations.

increasing delegitimization, are not excluded from the social realm. In England, in the Elizabethan period, for example, there was an explosion of magical systems, such as that of John Dee (1527-1608) for conversation with angels, which resulted in the formulation of the Enochian system of magic<sup>4</sup>. Magic is withdrawn from the entire institutional field of western social life, having, therefore, to inhabit the margins through Initiatic Orders, for example, or healing practices, which reinforced the stereotype of these as a pact with the Devil, as heresy.

In the 18th century, the situation worsened with the coronation of mechanistic science as the pillar of Western Reason, which would determine civilization. Magic is derided as mere superstition and more specifically Esotericism<sup>5</sup> is relegated to an “intellectual junk category” (Hanegraaff 2012). The Initiatic Orders gained strength in this period, such as Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, in addition to the emergence of the category of ceremonial magic, which turned to ritual, with the figure of Éliphas Lévi (1810-1875)<sup>6</sup>. In the 19th century, Romanticism as a broad movement of expression of a worldview engendered questions about the extreme rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment (Guinsburg (org.) 2019, Hanegraaff 2012, Löwy and Sayre 1992/2015). In this way, the individual and the dimension of the psychological, of emotion, of the relationship between the Self and the world are brought into vogue. The idea of *natürphilosophie* – “living nature” – defended mainly by the German side of the movement, added to the importance of the religious dimension as a promoter of a union with the Whole, causes a particular articulation between magic, science and religion. The science of the time, with the theories of animal magnetism, investigations into hypnosis, about spirits, assumed a lively and organic nature, in which man needs to be reintegrated. However, these theories, seen through the prism of a mechanistic, Cartesian science, are interpreted as mere superstitions, magic. In turn, the emergence of new magical currents from the second half of the 19th century – Theosophical Society, Brotherhood of Luxor, Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Polish mysticism, among others (Faivre 1994, Hanegraaff 2012, Webb 1974) – establishes a new relationship with science: it begins to provide and legitimize the discursive practices of these emerging religiosities, that is, a way is sought to “rationalize” magic so that it asserts itself in the social environments of the educated middle class western in which it spreads later. The practice is magic, but the method is scientific<sup>7</sup>. A

4. A system of magic dating from the 16th century that aimed to converse with angels from the angelic language, Enochian.

5. According to Hanegraaff (2012), Esoterism constitutes a set of magical-religious practices and discourses initiated in the 16th century in Europe that were rejected by the West.

6. Pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant, Éliphas Lévi was a French writer and occultist, very influential for the esoteric currents of the 19th century, which recover ceremonial magic. He wrote some books on magic, the best known being *Dogma and Ritual of High Magic*.

7. This is a famous phrase by Crowley that became the motto of the Initiatic Order he founded in 1907, the *Astrum Argentum* (A.A.).

relationship of distance is also formed towards the idea of religion since this would represent oppression and dogmatism. Magical practice asserts itself as a political option against such attitudes and in favor of liberties of a different order.

The panorama of the situation, in the 20th century, is a consequence of the historical relationship between magic, science and religion. In this period, relationships are made explicit that go beyond magic itself – epistemological, political, social and cultural issues. In the following sections, we will see a specific case, arising from this complex relationship between magic, science and religion, which emerged at the beginning of the 20th century: Thelema.

## THELEMA

Thelema<sup>8</sup>, or Current 93, designates a philosophical-magical-religious system received” by Aleister Crowley<sup>9</sup> (1875-1947) during a trip to Cairo with his first wife, Rose Edith Kelly (1874-1932), and later developed by the magician and by others who followed him, such as Jack Parsons (1914-1952), Kenneth Grant (1924-2011). The Book of the Law, which is sacred to the Thelemites, forms the foundational pillar of this system, as it was dictated to Crowley for three days on the aforementioned journey by an extra-human entity called Aiwass, messenger of the Egyptian god Horus<sup>10</sup>. This text is important as it establishes a conduct towards a specific life and introduces us to some deities of the Thelemic pantheon. From an anthropological point of view, these deities appear as resignifications of other magical-religious traditions, especially the Egyptian one<sup>11</sup>. There is

8. Thelema is the Greek word for “Will”.

9. Poet and one of the greatest names in Occultism of the 20th century, Crowley was born in 1875, in an extremely religious Protestant family, which generated a conflicting relationship with Christianity, which is reflected in his magical path. It begins, in 1898, in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, having a notorious development and encountering oriental practices, but it is expelled in 1902, entering a period of magical skepticism, which lasts until 1904, with the receipt of the Book of Law. In 1907, he founded the Astrum Argentum, an initiatory order that served the practice of magick and the Law of Thelema and, in 1910, he entered the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), an order of pseudo-Masonic origin that was converted to the Law of Thelema in 1919. In 1920, he founded the Abbey of Thelema in Cefalù, Sicily, Italy, a fact that caused much controversy and caused him to be expelled from the country in 1923. Crowley assumes the leadership of the OTO in 1925 and continues to publish books and instructions for his followers as a prophet of the Aeon of Horus. He died in 1947.

10. The Book of the Law, or Liber AL vel Legis, was transmitted by Aiwass for three days. It contains three chapters and is written in the form of aphorisms. Each chapter represents one of the deities of the Thelemic trinity, constituted, respectively, by Nuit, Hadit and Ra-Hoor-Khuit. Confirmation that Aiwass was a messenger of Horus comes at the Cairo Museum when Rose points to a Stele that contained Horus, as well as Nuit, Hadit and the Egyptian priest Ankh-af-na-Khonsu. Crowley believes himself to be the reincarnation of this priest and the prophet of the Aeon of Horus, the latter instituted with the receipt of the Book of the Law, this Stele – called by the Thelemites the Stele of Revelation and being present on most altars – the summary of Crowleyn Thelemic cosmology.

11. There is no monotheistic conception of “God” in this religiosity and this idea can be thought of either in terms of a transcendent entity, which is the sexual instinct, or as aspects of the magician’s unconscious that need to be worked through mythical-ritual symbolism.

the Thelemic “trinity”<sup>12</sup>: Nuit, which represents the unmanifest; Hadit, individuality; and Heru-Ra-Ha, a dual entity comprising Horus and Set; which, united, divinize man, since they represent an active-passive polarity. In addition to these deities, Thelema also encompasses deities such as Isis, Nephthys, Osiris, Kali, as well as some extraterrestrial entities, depending on the approach. It is important to highlight the increasing emphasis on “female” goddesses, particularly Babalon.

Babalon, according to Manon Hedenborg White (2020), is a modern goddess, that is, she embodies in her ritual and discursive practices political, social, cultural issues of our times, such as the problem of gender, sexuality, freedom. and the (de)construction of subjectivities and bodies. It is very likely that Crowley took inspiration from the Whore of Babylon, contained in the biblical apocalypse next to the Beast. His family background in a Protestant Church suggests so, insofar as the reading of biblical texts is encouraged. Babalon is represented as a wanton (whoredom), lascivious, self-possessed woman, with martial attributes or under the trope of the femme fatale, who wears opulent clothes and jewelry, as well as who inspired her, the Whore of Babylon. Babalon is one of the main entities worshiped in Thelema and all these characteristics that would be a priori negative become epithets of his sacredness, an attitude towards life that favors freedom and materiality. Babalon also has a messianic character in some of its representations. The goddess, in addition to representing the feminine principle of the Universe within a gender polarity that understands Chaos as its complement, symbolizes the ecstatic union with the All, the destruction of the Ego, the breaking of borders with the Other, a state of copulation or constant transformation with the Universe (*ibid.*). The whoredom of the goddess is nothing more than the celebration of a subjectivity, a body and a sexuality that are in continuous change from the contact with the Other, whether human or extra-human.

Thelema represents a new age for humanity, that of Aquarius or Aeon of Horus, with Crowley as its prophet. This new stage has as a summary of its posture towards the world the following postulate – Law of Thelema: “Do what thou wilt, it shall be the whole of the Law” (AL I, 1904/2017, §40<sup>13</sup>). Another important postulate is: “Every woman and every man is a star” (AL I, 1904/2017, §3). It is necessary to say that such postulates are not an invitation to pure social irresponsibility, but an emic conduct necessary for the discovery of the True Will, another fundamental discursive practice for the Thelemites. This delimits a set of dispositions present in

12. Emic term for this set of deities.

13. The Book of the Law is commonly referred to as AL, as it is an abbreviation of Liber Al Vel Legis, AL meaning God. The book consists of three chapters, each being “narrated” by one of the deities of the Thelemic Trinity – Nuit, Hadit and Ra-hoor-khuit (Set and Horus). In this way, the chapter number is placed in the reference so that the deity who transmitted these words is identified. Finally, the referenced number does not refer to the page, but to the aphorism in which such quotation is contained.

all individuals, whose articulation is particular to each one (Djurđjević 2008). The Thelemite's objective is to base his life conduct on the discovery and realization of his True Will, which can also be understood by the concept of self, widely used by Western Esotericism (Heelas 1993). Gordan Djurđjević (2008) points to the importance of understanding the self as a doing, a verb rather than a noun, indicating the need to understand the primacy of individual agency in this religiosity and the practices and discourses as forms of action that constitute a subject and his body, which are not given.

Thelema can be characterized by a system of sexual magic<sup>14</sup>, that is, a set of discursive practices and rituals that use sexual fluids – semen, vaginal fluids and menstrual blood – for the transformation of bodies, creation of worlds and diverse forms of relationality, since, according to the Thelemic conception, these elements are holders of great magical power – power of transformation. The mythical-ritual horizon that allows the Thelemite to exercise his Will is called magick, being “the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will” (Crowley 2017, 7). It consists not only in sexual intercourse practices, whether heterosexual, homosexual or autoerotic, but also in situations of visualization, ritual performances, meditations, Yoga, among others, so that the magician's sexual forces are also strengthened. Sex and the body are central categories and values for the Thelemites, who resignify them in each ritual practice through mythical-ritual symbolism (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012), embodying in the body values about sexuality, freedom, gender etc. (Parisi 2021). I also emphasize the importance of altered states of consciousness for this *ethopoietic*<sup>15</sup> ritual exercise, which involves contact with extra-human bodies or even contact with oneself, whether or not using psychoactive substances. The Scarlet Woman and the Solar Beast are the main avatars, personas, or magical offices in Thelemic practices, and they often assume complementary roles because they represent a gender polarity. The idea of transgression contained in this system, both for its practices and for its cosmological representatives, is central to the understanding

14. Hugh Urban (2006), when defining modern sexual magic, that is, from the 19th century onwards, states: “Sex Magic is based on the belief that the most powerful moment of human existence is the orgasm. Sex Magic is the art of utilizing sexual orgasm to create a reality and/or expand consciousness” (Tye *apud* Urban 2006, 3). Urban indicates what he calls “four dimensions of modern sexual magic”: a-) the literature on the subject focuses on the individual and individual will as the greatest creative force in the universe; b-) emergence of new forms of *scientia sexualis*, placing sex as a key to understanding the mysteries of human existence; c-) sexual magic as a “scientific secret”, that is, the use of scientific means to reveal nature and the individual effectively; d-) practitioners of sex magic sought radical forms of freedom and extreme sexual, religious and political liberation. It is a body of ritual and discursive practices that, in my view, use the body – from its symbolic conceptions to sexual fluids and sexual organs – and sexuality to produce transformations in the subjects who practice them and in the worlds that surround them, placing sex as a vector of such changes.

15. Foucaultian term that denotes discursive and symbolic devices allied to the conscious and voluntary praxis of the construction of the individual.



of the construction of “marginalized” subjectivities and bodies, as it opens space for new types of performativity, in addition to explaining the idea of continuous transformation. of oneself through ritual transgression and magical practices themselves, contradicting the idea of an a priori subjectivity.

Finally, the socioeconomic profile of the Thelemite that I could see fits the highly educated middle classes. Most visitors are male (cisnormative) and the representation of transsexual and non-binary populations is very low. Many women are not attracted to Thelema due to its androcentric and sexist<sup>16</sup> character, which has given rise to many dissent focused on a female or queer issue, in the case of accusations of extreme cisnormativity (White 2020). Thelema is still based on an elitist knowledge base, despite the efforts of some groups to rethink this process, due to the transmission of knowledge traditionally being done through initiatory orders, the most traditional being the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) and the Astrum Argentum (AA). With the advent of the internet, the Thelemic community seems to show a tendency to create stronger ties through online study groups, discussion groups and material dissemination, production of lives and public lectures, although many Thelemites follow a more initiatory path lonely due to AA. The OTO initiation format it is a fraternal order, which enables more frequent social interaction among the members.

In my ethnographic journey, when I came across the Thelemic Gnostic Mass – which will be the core of this investigation –, I was struck by the importance of altered states of consciousness for this ritual performance, since they force the individual to act, to take control of oneself, and that this is accompanied by an axiological change in some social categories, such as sexuality and subjectivity; from a state of liminality, in which the individual is in the “between” from one social status to another; and a sense of *communitas*, in which there is a suspension of structured society. In the light of Ernesto de Martino (1948/2004; 1956/2012), I see this axiological shift as a symptom of a crisis of presence, alienation of being-in-the-world, which is being resolved through mythical-ritual symbolism (*ibid.*). Before making my ethnographic considerations, I would

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16. What has been presented so far may seem contradictory, but the contradiction is part of the constitution of Thelema as a magico-religious system (Djurđjevic 2008). Babalon, despite her characterization as a woman with strong sexual freedom and a life posture not common to women from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, was idealized by Crowley as *Femme fatale*, a very common trope in European society at the time in question (White 2020). We can infer from this information that Babalon is a masculine construction around an idea of femininity, which is problematic because, once again, agency is taken away from women. Crowley was accused multiple times by his Scarlet Women, that is, the women who performed the role of female officiant in Thelemic sex magic rituals, of misogyny and androcentrism. Crowley did not allow female initiation, treating women as mere magical tools for men initiated into Thelema. Scarlet Women were branded by him, in addition to a hypersexualization of women in rituals, such as the nudity of the Priestess in the Gnostic Mass.

like to discuss in more depth the theoretical-methodological apparatus chosen for this reflection.

### **TOWARDS A PERFORMATIVE APPROACH TO RITUAL: A REFLECTION ON MAGIC AND ITS SOCIAL EFFECTIVENESS**

I would like to work with an author who can help me methodologically: Stanley Tambiah (1985/2018). The performative approach to ritual proposed by the author is of great help to understand the rite in terms of the association between language and action, since the Gnostic Mass is precisely constituted from this association.

For the author, the articulation between these two terms occurs on two levels:

a-) internal structure, which concerns the technique of transferring an attribute to the recipient through the use of metaphorical and metonymic language<sup>17</sup> –, the way incantations are constructed, the choice of substances used in the ritual, among others, and how they are associated with a particular form of action;

b-) the external structure, marked by the context of the situation, that is, in the relationships that the ritual has with the social activities and practices in which it influences.

For Tambiah, ritual is a culturally constructed symbolic communication system. The ritual presents a sequence of patterned words and acts. Therefore, the ritual is understood in the light of the categories of formality, stereotyping, condensation and redundancy. It is a mode of social action. Every ritual action is performative because it is a conventional act; it is an intense experience of the event, made possible by the multiple means of staged performance; and indicates values linked to the actors and inferred by them during the performance.

In other words, if ritual events are performative acts (in a much stronger sense than ordinary speech acts, which also do something with words), then the connections between unitary acts and ritual utterances, logic of the rules of obligatory sequences of ritual acts per se, cannot be fully understood without understanding that they are the garment of social actions; and these social actions cannot, in turn, be understood if not in relation to the authors' cosmological assumptions and interactional social norms. Again, the form and content of the ritual are necessarily fused and the problem here is to devise a conceptual system that sees the message itself as 'both internally patterned and part of a

17. Tambiah borrows the terms "metaphorical" and "metonymic" to associate the issue of language with social action within the rite. An attribute is transferred to the recipient through figurative language or through the part for the whole.

larger patterned universe – the culture or some part of it’. ‘  
(Bateson 1972, 132). (*ibid.*, 158)

However, the rite as a performance has a dual character, because, while it is an event whose main internal characteristics are stereotyping and repetition, it also serves contextual situations, such as claims of social status and interests of the participants:

On the one hand, it can be said that, in general, a public ritual reproduces in its repeated enactments certain apparently stereotyped and invariant sequences, such as sung formulas, rules of etiquette followed, and so on. On the other hand, every field anthropologist knows that not a single performance of a rite, however rigidly prescribed, is exactly the same as the performance, for it is affected by processes peculiar to the specialist's oral mode of recitation and by certain variable aspects. , such as the characteristics and social circumstances of actors that (with the exception of purely contingent and unforeseen events) affect issues such as scale of attendance, public interest, economic expenditures, and so on. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that festivals, cosmic rituals and rites of passage, regardless of whether they have been prescribed, are always linked to the status claims and interests of the participants and therefore always open to contextual meanings. Variable components make flexible the basic core of most rituals. (*ibid.*, 135-136)

A complement to Tambiah's perspective is that of Victor Turner (1969/2013). Performance, for Turner, “reenacts traditional models of representation and gives rise to a creativity that destabilizes these same models” (Borges 2019). It has a preliminary character:

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are in the middle and between the positions assigned and ordained by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. Its ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols, in those various societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (Turner 1969/2013, 98)

Liminal entities interrupt the everyday flow, allowing social actors to rethink the social structure because it moves them away from normative social roles. Another aspect of performance is *communitas*:

It is as if there were, in this case, two main “models” of human correlation, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is that of society taken as a structured, differentiated and often hierarchical system of political-legal-economic positions, with many types of evaluation, separating men according to the notions of “more” or “less”. The second, which emerges evidently in the liminal period, is that of society considered as an unstructured or rudimentary structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, a community, or

even communion, of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the elders. rituals.” (Turner 1969/2013, 99)

Thus, the passage from low to high is made through a limbo of lack of social status. Turner also states that social life is constituted by conflict and crisis situations, which reflect the incompleteness of the social world, showing its procedural character. Performance as a rite is shown as one of the ways to understand the tensions of the social structure and its anti-structural elements. The author’s concept of “social drama” summarizes this stance: they are events marked by conflict – exaggeration – between social institutions, in which their internal characteristics are displayed. Conflict is the expression of social actors, which allows the verification of the elasticity of cosmologies in the face of practical life.

The following authors, despite not working specifically with the issue of performance, discuss important aspects for my argument: the relationship between body and ritual. I bring them here because they complement my perspective on performance, which I believe is related, in this case, to the notion of presence crisis.

Ernesto de Martino (1948/2004), Italian philosopher and ethnologist, poses the problem of what he conceptualizes as a “magical world”: the collective instability of presence, that is, of the ability to objectify the real and of the individual to understand himself as subject in History<sup>18</sup>. For this anthropologist, the fundamental human ethos is based on moral potency, which is the dialectical power in which man classifies experience and things through value judgments. The cultural presence, the idea of “being there”, is given by this “categorizing energy” that is inserted in history and, therefore, in society. Society is equivalent to History for the author, both meaning the mode of collective organization that aims at the technical mastery of nature, which is remade *ad infinitum* due to the dialectical process characteristic of the historical dimension – presence versus religious experience, discussed in terms of mythical symbolism – ritual. Presence is what guarantees the subject in the dimension of culture; if this is at risk of instability, the individual “loses the world”, that is, the classificatory energy according to values that place him as an actant.

This is because, for the author, the existential drama of the magical world is expressed in a polarity: the crisis of presence and its rescue. Such drama occurs in critical periods of existence, when a lot of presence is demanded, demanding a repair that balances the situation. The main objective is to control the crisis of presence from its rescue in order to avoid the complete dissolution of the Self, loss of individuation<sup>19</sup>, which

18. De Martino’s notion of History is not universalist, but concerns the regimes of historicity of each society.

19. Individuation, for the author, is not an *a priori*, but a “cultural achievement”.

is the ultimate risk of the crisis. The “being-in-the-world” in this case is a condemned reality – which needs to be constructed through mythical-ritual symbolism – as it is permanently exposed to the risk of loss of presence, of being alienated.

It is important to say that this dialectical relationship between crisis of presence and religious reintegration is mediated by the notion of “institutionalized de-historification” (De Martino 1956/2012), which works as an instrument to protect an act in History, the question being performance, so to speak, involved here<sup>20</sup>. It is, in short, to make history with the protection of meta-history. When the individual experiences de-historification, the crisis of presence indicating a rupture in the dialectical process – that is, the loss of differentiation between object and subject –, this causes him to be expelled from society and, thus, from History itself, causing deep anguish, this caused by the loss of classifying capacity based on values; the individual is no longer there. This alienation of presence calls for reintegration into human history, which is made from the religious experience, the “sacred”, through magical techniques, carried out through rituals:

Religious reintegration, however, is historical also in another sense because it takes very different forms even on the level of reintegration itself. In general, the hieropoetic process is to be interpreted as the choice of exemplary critical moments and as a technique—or system of techniques—for facing the risk of alienation and re-disclosing those formal powers which crisis threatens to paralyze. It is as if a part—in some given societies an enormous part—of the technical power of man were diverted from its use for the domination of natural forces by means of the economic organization of society and the manipulation of certain material or mental instruments, to find its application in the task of restoring an horizon to presence, and of preventing—in critical moments—the same fundamental power from which culture and human history come forth from being naturalized. The fundamental trait of religious reintegration is this technique of institutional dehistorification. (De Martino 1956/2012, 443)

The ritual, which has de-historification as a technique, offers a discourse that allows the resurgence of this individual in the historical situation

20. Although De Martino does not deal specifically with performance, we have glimpses of an anthropology of performance when we come across the concept of institutionalized de-historification because it is this protective mechanism of presence that purposely provokes the crisis of presence and generates a performance – a communication system. symbolic culturally constructed in which there is standardization of acts and words (Tambiah 1985/2018). When researching Tarantism, a form of musical and chromatic exorcism in Apulia, Italy, de Martino comes across a sequence of words and standardized gestures after the supposed bite of the tarantula and the attempt of the musicians to find the ideal music and color of that tarantula that the “fussy” embodies. The tarantula bite would be the seasonal cause of the presence crisis, linked in this context to the harvest, induced every year by the symbolic bite of the tarantula and its consequent embodiment, causing de-historification. The control of the crisis of presence takes place exactly through the ritual performance, through the mythical-ritual symbolism.



through the process of repetition (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012). He repeats a given situation from the exacerbation of the initial crisis that led to the loss of presence in order to control it so that the individual regains the “categorizing energy” that allows him to be reintegrated historically and socially. There is no return to the norm, but a reinvention of culture (Wagner *apud* De Martino 1956/2012) – culture is “invented” so that the motivations of all social groupings conform within these “invented” values in order to that the dialectical process of reproduction of social and symbolic relations is maintained.

Thus, the rite for De Martino becomes a performance that modifies History, the repetition opening space for the doing, for the difference, because the repetition is never the same, giving dynamism to the mythical-ritual symbolism, which is at the same time time fiction and concreteness, reformulating the categories according to values and promoting action in History, that is, the active transformation of oneself and the world.

A scholar of Ernesto de Martino, Silvia Mancini (2018) states that psychocorporal practices that imply altered states of consciousness occupy a central role in marginalized and transversal<sup>21</sup> magico-religious traditions due to a particular way of understanding, conceiving and manipulating reality, in that the problem of symbolic efficacy<sup>22</sup> emerges. The author suggests that we look at this issue through certain concepts: a-) that of technique, in which the mythical-ritual *modus operandi* is analyzed as an effective technical device, and uses should gain prominence to the detriment of meanings; b-) that of orthopractice, in which the cultural or ritual function is aimed at the active and transforming intervention of the world and the subject; c-) and ethopoietic practices (Foucault 2001 *apud* Mancini 2018), which consist of discursive and symbolic devices allied to the conscious and voluntary praxis of the construction of the individual, that is, man manufactures himself through techniques that cross his body. The altered states of consciousness occur through the divided, dissociated and plural Self, forming the “other” through psychotechniques. Altered states of consciousness are crucial in correcting disorders<sup>23</sup> that affect the body and spirit of individuals. They are important, according to Mancini, because the effectiveness of magic is based on fictional devices, which are in another regime of reality, promoting ruptures in the waking state, stimulating the imagination and the unfolding of the Self, this being the real vector. of effectiveness. Fictional devices promote an “active doing”, that is, they force their agents to act to regain control over themselves

21. Mancini refers here to the magico-religious traditions that were put in the background by the West due to the use of magic and altered states of consciousness in their ritual practices.

22. Concept developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (2012) that concerns this property of symbolic manipulation that organizes the chaos of the world.

23. Disorder here refers to any type of bodily manifestation that deviates from the established social norm.

and the world. “The magical efficacy, founded on the dissociation of the Self, resides in a kind of technical learning of knowing how to transform and repair oneself” (Mancini 2018, 59, my translation<sup>24</sup>).

In view of the theoretical-methodological discussion made above, my argument, which justifies the presence of this article in the present dossier, is: the Thelemic Gnostic Mass, which we will see below, is a ritual performance, that is, a culturally defined symbolic communication that has standardized words and actions, but exacerbates certain social conflicts, such as the issue of sexuality. It has a liminal character, since, through the dissolution of normative social roles, there is a limbo of absence of social status. This limbo and the exacerbation of social conflicts, together with the presence of ecstatic states, suggests another analytical method, that of the crisis of presence, through the mythical-ritual technique of institutionalized de-historification, which promotes a being-in-the-world of another. through the resignification of culturally constructed values. Hence the relationship between body, ritual and performance that I propose here.

### **THE THELEMIC GNOSTIC MASS AND ITS RECONFIGURATIONS: AN ANALYTICAL EXERCISE**

My ethnographic experience is dated from 2018 to the present<sup>25</sup>. I have investigated the relationship between performance, body and ritual in Thelema, and the Gnostic Mass seemed to me “eligible” for the study, since it constitutes one of the only collective and public rites of this esoteric current, both in national and international contexts. I emphasize that my journey had to be made largely via the digital environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevented me from carrying out face-to-face fieldwork. Thus, I relied on several of my research interlocutors who helped me to understand which meanings and categories are mobilized in this rite, in addition to its effectiveness for the Thelemites. I watched the rite a few times in versions made available on YouTube between July 2020 and September 2021, in addition to having participated remotely in a Mass adapted to the digital scenario held by Ecclesia Babalon in March 2021, a Thelemic institution with representation in Brazil. Before proceeding with the description of the ritual, some preliminary explanations are necessary.

The Gnostic Mass is a rite that was conceived by Crowley during his stay in Russia in 1913, inspired by the Russian Orthodox Eucharistic ritual. It is the main rite of the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), an initiatory order that admits Crowley in 1912 and is converted to the Law of Thelema in 1919.

24. “La eficacia mágica, fundada sobre la disociación del yo, reside, en fin, en una especie de aprendizaje técnico del ‘saber transformarse y repararse.’” (Mancini 2018, 59)

25. This period refers to the beginning of my scientific initiation and my master’s research.

However, Liber XV – text of the Mass – was only published in 1918. Despite rumors that the Mass had been practiced a few times during the 1920s at the Abbey of Thelema<sup>26</sup> in Cefalù, Sicily, Italy, the first public celebration of this rite took place in 1933 at the Agape Lodge, one of the OTO representations in California, United States. The Gnostic Mass is performed in its private and public versions – the latter allowing the presence of the uninitiated in the rite – in the Lodges, Camps and Oasis of the OTO, but the ritual itself is performed by the Ecclesia Gnostica Catholica (EGC), the ecclesiastical arm of the OTO. OTO

In general terms, the Thelemic Gnostic Mass celebrates the mystical union between the feminine and masculine principle of the Universe for the generation of a magical child. On the metanarrative horizon, Babalon and Chaos are such principles, respectively, and Horus – with his hidden duality, Set – is the magical child. This symbolic-mythical horizon is anthropomorphized in the ritual through the characters of the drama, in addition to being metonymized<sup>27</sup> through the ritual objects that are put on the scene, which are epithets of each character.

The characters and their attributes are: a-) deacon, who has the Book of the Law; b-) the priestess, who has the chalice, the paten, the sword and the cookies of light; c-) the priest, who has the spear; d-) children, who carry water, perfume, incense and salt; d-) and the Congregation, composed of members initiated or not in the O.T.O. or E.G.C., but who play an active role in the rite. There is a specific dress and posture for each ritual role. The interaction between the objects arranged by the characters of the Mass constitutes the core of the ritual, which has a strong sexual connotation because it is a rite whose “mystery” revolves around sexual magic – the erotic interaction, especially between chalice and spear, representing the vulva. and the phallus.

The Mass is divided into several moments, being characterized by the mixture between the reading of excerpts from the Book of the Law by the Deacon, pre-established dialogues between priest and priestess, sound manifestations – music, sounds emitted by the mouth – and ritual actions themselves, such as such as the correct preparation of the Temple, a specific walk for each character because this has implications for the effectiveness of the rite, a specific form of interaction of ritual

26. The Abbey of Thelema was a magical experience performed in a house in Cefalù, Sicily, by Crowley and his followers, emphasizing Leah Hirsig, the Scarlet Woman of the magician at the time. The practices carried out in this place had as their main characteristic the ritual transgression through sexual magic, coprophagy, among others. The objective was the discovery of the True Will of the adepts and advancement on the initiatory path. The Italians were so shocked by the events at the Abbey that Mussolini expelled Crowley from Italy in 1923.

27. Metonymy: figure of speech that refers to the whole by the parts. In the Gnostic Mass, the gods represented in the drama are referred to by the objects that the officiants wield and their clothing, hence their identification/embodiment with a certain entity.

instruments, among others. The apex of the ritual takes place with the moment of the Eucharist<sup>28</sup>, which would symbolize the consummation of the mystical marriage between the forces of the Universe – Babalon and Chaos – through the vocalization of the magic word “HRILIU”, which connotes the moment of joint orgasm between priest and priestess. Unlike the Christian Eucharist, what is consumed in this case is a cookie of light – a cookie made from spices with a mixture of boiled semen and menstrual blood – along with a glass of wine, both consecrated during the ritual performance.

The Gnostic Mass, in this sense, is a system of symbolic communication (Tambiah 1985/2018) in which there is a sequence of standardized words and acts that do something. The Mass produces its effectiveness among Thelemites from this particular articulation of elements that generate the performance, which, despite transmitting a “message” through its magic formula, is never the same; the performance repeats the difference (Deleuze 2018<sup>29</sup>) for contextual reasons and for the very issue of not being able to restore the conditions in which that rite was performed. It is also a social drama, that is, an event that exacerbates a given social conflict through the dissolution of normative social roles and the formation of a *communitas*. But how is this seen in the ritual? The Gnostic Mass problematizes, above all, the issue of sexuality for Western society, which generates conflicts due to discursive practices of silencing bodies and the imposition of a model of sexuality established by the bourgeoisie in the 19th century (Foucault 1976/2015, Weeks 1981/2012) through the extreme sexualization of the ritual and an idea of transgression – such as, for example, “desecrating” the altar by placing the Priestess sitting on it naked, or ingesting semen and menstrual fluids as belonging to the “sacred”. The celebration of the materiality of the body is also exacerbated in the ritual context, highlighting the practices of ritual erasure of the body (Le Breton 1990/2002) in Western society and a questioning about the dichotomy between body and mind, since everything it is body in thelemic practices – the affections (Favret-Saada 2005) are corporeal as the experience of the world, the being-there, is mediated by the body. In the Gnostic Mass, the body is the door to the transformation of oneself and the world, in addition to the possibility of establishing a relationship

28. Emic terminology.

29. In *Difference and Repetition* (2018), Deleuze states that becoming implies an encounter in which everything is repeated in another way. Therefore, the relationship operates through difference, not through similarity or identity. Becoming transports difference through the repetitive space thus constituted. But what is difference and repetition? Deleuze (*ibid.*), when criticizing representational thinking, postulates that in it difference was treated as opposition to what is identical, excluding difference as such. For the author, difference must be understood by itself, as a concept: as an affirmation of the unequal, as a process, transformation. Things are not; they are constantly changing – the issue here is action and not essence. The difference occurs during repetition, that is, each encounter generates a resignification of itself. The difference is enhanced by the repetition of the meetings, as something new happens in the intervals between the cycles.

with Thelemic entities. In the ritual, clothing and instruments are used as a way of adorning the body to embody this entity, taking its characteristics and powers. It is something similar to the perspective-taking promoted by Amerindian shamans (Viveiros de Castro 2015). It is a partial abduction of the agency of the officiants to return agency to them through bodily experience, for this, among other things, builds up the Thelemite person. The rite still tells the story of the Priest's initiation into a man initiated in Thelema from the idea of liminality and the formation of a *communitas*. The social roles both produced by the macro society and by the Initiatic Order are suspended in view of the ritual and a community is provisionally "structured", containing the rite officiants and the Congregation. Anyone initiated into the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) can be officiant in any ritual role. But let us return to the Priest. The Gnostic Mass establishes the symbolic passage of the Priest from an "ordinary" man to a complete initiate in Thelema, that is, one who has completed all the initiation rites of the Order. He remains in a liminal neither-this-nor-that condition for much of the ritual, a problem that is only resolved with his passage through the ordeal of the Abyss, in which he becomes "Nemo" or "No Man", constituting his change of status if this pass is successful. The Priest is guided by the only authority of the ritual: the Priestess, understood as initiatrix, that is, who initiates people into Thelemites, the one who promotes the meeting of the person with their True Will. It is she who promotes the change of the Priest's social status, which, within the normative social roles of western society from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, would normally be carried out by another man, showing us a questioning of the western social structure regarding gender roles.

If we add to the perspective of Tambiah (1985/2018) and Turner (1969/2013) the theoretical-methodological set of Ernesto de Martino (1948/2004; 1956/2012) and Silvia Mancini (2018), we will see that the Gnostic Mass, through its mythical-ritual symbolism, purposely "suspends" History from the institutionalized de-historification technique to resolve issues pertinent to that social group acting in History – which brings an echo of Turner's considerations (1969/2013) on ritual performance. In addition to a mystical wedding, the Mass stages the initiatory journey of the priest, who ascends the Kabbalistic Tree of Life<sup>30</sup> – where the O.T.O. – with the help of the priestess, the movements in the temple being motivated by the positions in this initiation system and by an awakening of a new awareness of oneself and the world, symbolized by the ascension of the

30. System of correlations on which Esoterism bases its practical-discursive apparatus, originating from the Christian Cabala proposed by Pico della Mirandola, in 1496. Also known as Sephiroth. It consists of ten emanations from Ain Soph (unmanifest and unintelligible principle) in the Christian Kabbalah that each carry a principle of existence, connected to each other by thirty-two paths, divided between three pillars that balance each other and containing a pseudosphere, Daath, which allows the connection between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death or Knowledge, the Qliphoth. It is understood as a microcosm of the Universe (Yates 1964/1995).



Serpent of Fire, Kundalini, hence the importance of the altered state of consciousness in this ritual performance. The awakening of Kundalini<sup>31</sup> is only possible through ritual techniques of consciousness alteration, such as meditation, Yoga and the use of psychotropic substances. In this case, sex – including the extreme sexualization of the ritual – induces a change in the waking consciousness state in the characters and members of the Congregation, making them see “beyond”: to dissociate means to transform. With the trance state, the people involved in the rite are taken by a torpor and, in addition, the posture of the ritual characters – tone of voice, eloquence in movements, among others – varies throughout the rite, reaching a climax in communion, when “HRILIU” is shouted. This expression is truly magical: it produces transformation because it is the word with the greatest magical force in the ritual (Tambiah 1985/2018). Words, which have magical power according to Tambiah (*ibid.*), together with ritual actions, constitute the effectiveness of the rite, as they build a culturally defined system that exacerbates social tensions. HRILIU, who represents the symbolic orgasm of the Priest and Priestess, stresses the social issue of sexuality to the maximum, since free sexuality is preached, which contradicts the western social structure of that time.

The valorization of the body as a space of magical effectiveness and the possibility of transforming oneself and the world is transposed to the central themes of this Eucharist, namely, sexuality and the question of gender, which are also linked to the social problems of the beginning of the century. XX in Europe – hence its performative character, that is, an event that exacerbates social tensions through the suspension of social roles and the association between language and social action. Sex as the engine of life and as an inducer of changes in the body – a body that structures sexuality and ways of being-in-the-world in other ways and that can also creatively construct and update realities that are not given. – enables new ways of acting on the world, since the mythical-ritual device (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012) is responsible for questioning these categories that cause “crisis” in these individuals, and, on the other hand, it opens up the opportunity to re-signify them through values attributed to them by the adepts themselves. Contact with Babalon and Chaos forces adherents to change their attitude towards life so that they can live in the wider society with other values. An example of this is the way in which a new perspective on sexuality is treated in the ritual: it is only possible from the connection of the Adept with his True Will through magical-religious practices that destabilize the current social structure, such as ritual transgression. . Ritual is a way of recovering individuals as acting beings in history. In other words, the rite produces new forms of agency

31. According to Eastern discursive practices, Kundalini is a force represented by a serpent of fire lodged at the base of the human spine that, when awakened due to specific bodily practices, promotes a spiritual awakening and consciousness in the individual.

as it rescues the sick presence and controls the crisis. This rescue is only possible if some social categories that the rite mobilizes are resignified. I cite again the examples of sexuality and the materiality of the body.

Another issue raised by Tambiah (1985/2018) is very clear about ritual performance not only being limited to the rite itself, but also to claims of social status and a wider network of sociability. The transgressive character of the Gnostic Mass, by highlighting the materiality of the body, the importance of sexuality as a factor in social life, magic as part of the West, among others, also places the status of the Thelemites themselves in society on the margins of the system because it is contrary to the ideals proposed by the bourgeois family from the 19th century onwards (Foucault 1976/2015, Weeks 1981/2012). When Tambiah (1985/2018) and Turner (1969/2013) say that ritual performance reveals conflicting worldviews, this is exactly what I am talking about when I approach Thelema: the conflict between Western social practices, which relegates magic to absolute alterity and maintains itself in a Cartesian perspective of existence, which privileges the mind and relegates the body to the mere functioning of organs, and the thelemic ritual and discursive practices, which rethink such postures. Thus, the effectiveness of the Gnostic Mass depends on this network of sociability that is created on the margins of what is socially accepted, which affirms a being-in-the-world other, other forms of construction of reality, and which has as imperative the continuous transformation of the categories, of relationships, of bodies, of worlds.

However, in the last few decades, a very extensive discussion among Thelemites and also among non-Thelemites took place about some Crowleyan conceptions that spread in their rites. For example, an overly phallocentric conception of the world, which privileges men in their magical journey and relegates women to the role of mere helpers. Another issue raised is the lack of space for other gender identities not founded on cisnormativity, such as transsexuals and non-binary people. In the case of the Gnostic Mass, such criticisms were very consistent with a certain bad reputation that Thelema gained among such circles of people, including through accusations of harassment and sexual abuse and power in initiatic orders, above all, and the profile of the initiates, mostly highly educated white men, in addition to the ineffectiveness of Thelemic institutions in dealing with such accusations and in embracing difference and producing structural changes. Because of all this, several reconfigurations of the Gnostic Mass have appeared in recent times, pointing to the question of the effectiveness of this rite (De Martino 1948/2004, 1956/2012, Mancini 2018, Stengers 2008, Tambiah 1985/2018), which needs to be rethought in

light of new times. I will stick to two ethnographic examples: the Balada Nervosa and the Liber Sophia<sup>32</sup>.

I was invited to Balada Nervosa, which took place in October 2020, by L., an initiate at O.T.O. who is my research interlocutor. This ritual consisted of a technoeucharist<sup>33</sup> – that is, a Eucharist based on the Gnostic Mass that uses digital and coding means, giving rise to a virtual event called Criptofunk. To have access to the technoeucharist, it was necessary to decipher a code, which redirected me to a virtual room with background music and a chat. In this room, I didn't know who my rite "colleagues" were, since there was no camera. When the rite begins, there is a mix between ritualistic language and songs by female artists whose lyrics have an empowering or sexualized character, poems recited by black women, odes to female deities, including the most "lascivious", a series of songs in funk styles, trap, rap, denouncing police violence in communities, indigenous genocide, social inequality, in addition to a series of images of codes and programming. The apex of the ritual takes place with the production of sigils – a pictorial representation linked to the practitioner's desire in relation to a certain magical practice – or the "seed" – correlated to the magical child – in which a free drawing program is opened so that the participants to design what they wanted and what they wanted for the internet of the future. Meanwhile, a video was played in the background, about a feminist, free, anti-racist, public, counter-hegemonic, knowledge-sharing internet. The ritual ended abruptly with the end of the broadcast.

It is interesting to think of this ritual performance as a system of codes that show a vision of the world of the people who were gathered in this event. In this sense, it is a political stance towards the world, inequalities, genocide. A defense of women's space and a performance that highlights the need for relationality between socially marginalized layers in order to reach a more libertarian society. The various elements of the performance, which often resulted in a delirious cacophony, end up becoming a whole that (dis)orders the categories called into question by the ritual. Ritual action forces agency over the world, creates the possibility of new worlds, inserting the digital medium into the rite as a character and as a space for ritual effectiveness and agency in the world. The rite in its performance becomes power to produce other relationships and ways of relating through the language that becomes an act: "what is said is also what is done" (Peirano 2006, 3). This appears in the ritual, for example, when the powerful speech defending the rights of women and marginalized

32. On the question of rethinking cisnormativity, I just say that there are experimental masses being held and queer masses, but I will not delve into the subject, as I lack ethnographic material for this.

33. This is a term created by L. himself to define his magical practice.

populations by the West together with a speech about digital security is transformed into a secrecy, a magical act.

The last ritual I wish to address in this reflection is the one contained in *Liber Sophia* (2019), performed for the first time in December 2019 in Atlanta, United States, at the Thelemic Temple of Our Lady of the Abyss by Sophia Melitodes, High Priestess of the Temple<sup>34</sup>. It is a feminine-centered review of the Gnostic Mass. As a prelude to the text of the rite, it is stated:

*Thelema* is not a naked woman on the altar. It is the sublime ecstasy of the ever-whirring divine duality. It is our approach to this ever-whirring. Our experience of it, our relationship with it, as an individual which is in itself an ever-whirring multiplicity, for the individual is nothing more than a community of stars and cells. The woman on the altar served a purpose; it can still serve one. But it cannot be the end of our work, nor the centre. And this is why *Thelema* has stagnated since its conception; because it recognised the need for the worship of the goddess, and then found itself unable to enact it; because it feared Her coming. (*ibid.*, 5)

The central problem posed by the Mass is that of the universality of the phallus without a counterpart of the same value and as the only possible path to gnosis. Subjectivity is offered only to men, relegating women to the role of degenerate. Hence, the *Liber Sophia*, therefore, promotes a magical practice of celebrating the Mysteries from a female perspective, proclaiming the arrival of Babalon.

As for the rite itself, it is a celebration of the Apocalypse. There is a conviction that this is not a Mass because it does not proclaim female passivity and does not have the same ritual instruments and characters. It is a celebration of the Apocalypse. The preparations of the Temple are indicated, highlighting a cavity at the bottom covered by a veil, representing a uterus. The ritual characters are Sophia, Melissa, the Neophyte and the Master of Ceremonies, each with specific attire and functions. The ritual has several parts in which Sophia, Melissa and the Neophyte interact with each other and with the Congregation. It is interesting to see how male entities, except for Chaos, are excluded from this operation in favor of female and androgynous figures (Baphomet, for example), reinforcing a relationality between women, evident in the relationship between Sophia and Melissa as sisters – a relationship symmetrical. When crossing the paths of initiation, this rite performs a symbolic pregnancy of Melissa, represented by the Sephiroth and the positions taken in the Temple, but the paternity is not identified. All women and forms of femininity that were considered deviant are celebrated in the name of Babalon. The Eucharist is performed through an invocation to Babalon, which reinforces the connection between

34. This information is contained in the *Liber Sophia* itself.

debauchery (whoredom), femininity and immortality. Melissa drinks the wine, sweetened with honey and thickened with a crumbled light cake containing menstrual blood, from a flower bed. Hymns are spoken and the Congregation communes from the time they go to the altar to drink this wine and receive the symbol of the Rosicrucian on the chest of each of the members of the Congregation with Holy Oil for Sophia. At the end of the celebration, Sophia blesses the Congregation in the name of Babalon and all the ritual characters remain in their “crowned” positions as the Congregation leaves the Temple.

In this last ritual performance, it becomes clear how what is questioned is not the Eucharist itself – in the sense of the magical efficacy of the ritual’s core – but the symbolic-practical construction of the elements that make up the ritual, mirroring, in a certain sense, the social life. This performance privileges, instead of the sequence of acts and words, promulgating a cisnormative and heterosexual relationality as a way of achieving a magical objective, that is, active transformation of oneself and the world, the relationship between women through the exacerbation of an experience that technically would be feminine<sup>35</sup>, pregnancy, a posture that removes the masculine gender from the center. The lack of importance given to the paternity of the performed pregnancy already indicates another position for the initiatory and even social advance as a whole – the focus on the margins. As a mythical-symbolic horizon for embracing diversity and continuous self-transformation, Babalon is of great significance as a cult center in this performance because it calls into question the need to change oneself and society through other values.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If performance is a social act (Peirano 2006, Tambiah 1985/2018), this Mass is so insofar as it constitutes a performance that deals with the contradictions of the Western world and exacerbates them in a social drama (Turner 1969/2013). Its transgressive language concerns the social rigidity in which we are inserted. The mystical marriage of the principles that govern the Universe and the initiatory path of the priest say more about the fact that things are not a priori and are always in transformation than about a sexual-alchemical formula.

While the acts of repetition of the performance crystallize social values (De Martino 1948/2004; 1956/2012) because they reinsert the individual as an actant being in History via mythical-ritual symbolism, deriving its effectiveness from there, one cannot forget that such effectiveness is also

35. I write in these terms because pregnancy has historically been linked in the West to bodies marked as female, excluding the possibility of pregnancy in non-binary and transsexual bodies.




subject to political-social issues, as we could see with the reconfigurations of the Gnostic Mass. Both demonstrate that the “problem” was not in the properly ritualistic structure of the rite that is, in the Eucharist as a magical performance that maintains the Thelemic being-in-the-world, but in the elements mobilized during the rite: cis and heteronormativity, lack of inclusion of marginalized populations, issue of abuse suffered by women. All this while mobilizing issues of gender, sexuality and the body (Parisi 2021), structural issues of western society, but which generate many conflicts.

Therefore, the performativity of the Gnostic Mass cannot be understood without the articulation between what is said and what is done, to paraphrase Mariza Peirano (2006), in addition to contextual aspects of power, politics, social, racial, among others. The rite creates relationships within and beyond it and (re)formulates ways of being in the world, producing agency (Rabelo 2008). The anthropologist must be aware of the transformations that alter the ritual performance, as this is extremely important for understanding its effectiveness and what this ritual mobilizes and experiences in an intense way. The performance is, ultimately, the dramatic update whose peculiar structure is related to the production of an intensified meaning (Tambiah 1985/2018). There are those who see the ritual as a transgression; some see it as freedom, but its effectiveness depends on how much we can relate to it.

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## THE POWER OF AXÉ AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS AMONG IMAGE, TRANSFORMATIONS AND VISIBILITY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article intends to present and to discuss some representations of Candomblé produced by those who are part of it, in three Sergipe's *terreiros*, of different lineages. Thinking about it, the imagery cutout chosen is the photograph, since, even though the photographs are seen as clippings of realities and contexts, they present a series of interpretations about what they want to communicate. In addition, I try to think about the performative and political acts that these subjects perform by making visible or not the images that are produced in these three houses. The word Power was thought precisely by the fact that the word Axé represents Force, and therefore referred to its potentiality as a maintainer of religion. With my experience in the field, listening to the reports and in many moments, seeing the photos of people in trance, especially the photos to which I had access in the houses, I heard a lot the phrases “You can feel the *axé* in the photo”; “this saint there has a lot of *axé*”, among other phrases that refer to a feeling, to a ritual force, which despite being fixed in an image, is felt by those who recognize it in their daily lives.

### KEYWORDS

Altars;  
Performances;  
Folia de Reis;  
Popular Religiosity;  
Materiality.

## INTRODUCTION

Much has been discussed about rituals in *terreiros*, dealing with ritualistic performance, in particular trance and how to present it in the form of an image. For this article, what I want to bring up is another bias, that of performance, of the agency of this subject who also appears in the photos and who is putting her or himself as a saint's son or daughter in front of a reality that brings a lot of intolerance, a lot of prejudice.

Dealing with issues within the Afro-Brazilian religious universe is a constant challenge, whether for those who, like me, are part of one of these religions, or for those who are curious or study about it. I tried to bring some of my experience as the daughter of Ilê Axé Omin Mafé to discuss a central issue about the power of photography.

During several field trips that I took in 2015, 2016 and 2017, actively participating in the processes and routine of the researched *axé* houses, not only as a member of one of them, but also as a researcher, I was able to learn about various narratives and speeches from various people. Among them, were people who attend those religions and that occupy important positions within this religious hierarchy, as well as people who are not yet fully inserted in this religion or do not occupy positions within this context. Starting from these narratives, knowing the different processes and contexts in which they are inserted and to whom these discourses are intended for and for what purpose, further edified my concern to understand and problematize the controversies of the positions, including the controversies of the photography act and be photographed.

This implied in the discussion of an ethical and political issue that involves not only the preservation of religion against attacks from other religions, but also the *possession of a special wisdom* (Collins 2008, 48) that would give a place "crystallized" or even "naturalized" to this knowledge, as if the heritage registration of this knowledge or of the places where ritual processes take place would guarantee stability.

However, given all the history and semiotic processes that Candomblé presents, this stability based on the fixation of objects, images and heritage registration of its places and rites does not happen. In this sense, disclosing your image, regardless of whether the image is, of the person posing or of her/his embodied *orixá*, is also a political performative act, and this context, this circulation, this selection of images, are also made in a thoughtful way.

Based on examples from different fields, from my doctoral thesis, I bring the example of these three houses that I presented throughout the research: the Santa Barbara Virgin *terreiro*, located in the city of Laranjeiras; the



Abassá Axé Ilê Pilão de Oxaguian, in Aracaju; and the Ilê Axé Omin Mafé, in the city of Riachuelo, all cities in the state of Sergipe. They made me think about the importance of this image and of the *axé* power, as it carries symbols, diverse interpretations and multiple subjectivities, making this ritualistic complex.

When I talk about the potencies of *axé*, thinking of these potencies as being multiple and *axé* being able to encompass several, one of these potencies also affects the issue of image use and the way in which this image is controlled. In other words, the way in which this control and circulation have been carried out in these houses also makes me think about the performance of bodies in rituals and their images.

Geertz (2005) has shown us that religions are complex symbolic systems, whose multivocality, multiplicity of meanings and ways of performing rituals, carry different possibilities for interpreting an individual's reality. It appears that Geertz is more concerned with how subjects think and interpret religion than with a definition and classification that is based on Western scientific methods, and with how religion influences the course of life. In other words, the author thinks about the issue of interaction, what people are communicating, what relationships and meanings are being shared. This concern has a lot to do with my attention both to displacement and to the different interpretations of images and their circulation, as well as to the attention that the subjects in question, my interlocutors, dedicate to these issues.

It is important to highlight that the relationships network provided by this system of control and circulation of images in Candomblé brings different interaction forms between the symbols that are intertwined in these rituals and in the contexts and cuts made from the photographic images. Thinking about these symbolic interactions and forms of communication, we began to perceive performative aspects of these relationships, focusing on non-discursive elements of rituals, analyzing elements that assume a multi-vocal role and seeking to understand how these elements produce their effectiveness, and what are the effects of these elements combined will produce or provoke in the rituals through the production of these images.

With this in mind, I turned to Tambiah (2007), who states that the language of magic is not qualitatively different from the usual language, but that it acts as an intensified and dramatized form. He claims that the same laws of association that apply to language in general are present in magic and that effectiveness derives from the performative character of the rite.

For him, rituals share some formal and standardized features, but these are variable, so the ritual cannot be considered false or wrong in a causal sense, but rather improper, invalid or imperfect. In the same way, the ritual semantics cannot be judged in terms of the false/true dichotomy, but in terms of the expansion of meaning, as a continuity of meaning.

Therefore, treating images as a way of legitimizing something is one of the tools used by Candomblécists to prove, especially for the *axé* community, that the *orixá* is on land, or that the entities are on land.


Furthermore, as it is a religion that suffers persecution and that has always had its memory made invisible and erased from the history of Brazil, recording memories through image files becomes a performative act of resistance, a political act, of safeguarding the narratives through the images registered on each occasion, even if the secrets of the deities are protected from this registration in images. Preserving the image, disclosing it, is a way of demonstrating not only that the rituals exist, but also of fighting religious intolerance, since these religions are erased through various forms of violence to which they are subjected.

For Schieffelin (1985; 1998), these performative elements, and the performance itself, do not aim to construct a symbolic reality in order to present an argument, explanation or description. According to him, the purpose of performance is to make participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process to which they are already submitted and in which they are acting, that is, the performance works through a double transfer experienced by the actors and the process of interaction between the participants and the discursive symbols and mainly the non-discursive ones.

The author points out that the world is not something concrete or given, but in constant construction, and that the question for ethnography must be how this world is produced. Can we, then, think of these cropped images as a reconstruction of realities related to these spaces?

Drawing a chronological line on my field research, I realize that over these more than 5 years of research, the realities have not been modified and altered only in the sense of having more or less interdictions and circulation of information, or even of members and supporters in the houses, but thinking of a way to also reconstruct the past through the fixation of these images.

Perhaps it is pretentious to use the word reconstruction of the past through ritual images, but I mean a reconstruction in the sense of fixing a rotating memory, which is present there in all environments, based on the preservation of symbolic objects, rituals, clothing, among other objects



that they symbolize a story to be assembled and reassembled through the lens of the person who tells it.

In other words, when we talk about assembling, fixing, circulating, we cannot fail to talk about the agency and control that these images have within these *axé* contexts. So, taking up works like Ortner's (1996), in which the question of power and control will place debates with a political bias, culture will now have a central role, such as building ideologies, which will justify certain social inequalities.

Once again, it is important to think about the context in which these discussions emerged and their limitations within Anthropology itself, especially when it comes to studies on Afro-Brazilian religions. That is precisely because in those contexts, such problems had not emerged or they had not been thought of in different ways or relevance, so that it actually constituted an issue to be problematized by the study of symbols. That's why some people point to the Anthropology of religions as theories that do not address certain contemporary issues, but because they are fixed in a current context as if these contexts and concepts were fixed and could not be revisited.

### **THE POWER OF SECRET**

One of the elements of great importance for these supporters and the houses in question is the preservation of the secret. For mother Martha Sales, Yalaxé of Ilê Axé Omin Mafé, the secret is constitutive of the sacredness of various symbols, such as the herbs used and the way they are used in Yoruba rituals, phrases and chants to manifest something at a certain moment in the ritual, the manipulation of knives and razors, blood and animals, also considered sacred, and all the dances, costumes, and performative acts in which the trance process is imbricated, for example.



**IMAGE 1**  
Orixá Ogum,  
incorporated in  
Mãe Bequinha,  
Yalorixá or *mãe*  
*de santo* of Ilê Axé  
Omin Mafé.<sup>1</sup>  
(Photo: Pai Tony,  
2018)

For Babalorixá, or Father, Cristiano José and his sons and daughters, caretaker of the Abassá Axé Ilê Pilão de Oxaguian, for example, it's not necessary to make posts with people in the house in a trance. The only photos I've seen on their social networks of an orixá on land, it does not show the face of the saint's son or daughter, it is not possible to identify his/her identity. Even the photos of the rituals, the ones that are posted are always the ones where people are not in a trance.

For Pai Cris, the moment of trance is something sacred, which does not need to be shared in this way. He is also concerned with the exposure of

1. Photography captures and fixes the moment when the Orixá gives his ilá, his voice, when he/she is called to dance.



the sons and daughters of saints, who often suffer prejudice in the work environment, or in the school environment, such as it was reported to me by people in the house.



**IMAGE 2**  
Ritual's photo for Oxalá at Abassa Ilê Pilão de Oxaguian. (Photo: Terreiro's archive)<sup>2</sup>

The issue of the sacred in the rituals for the Orixás practiced by these houses is very similar to a relationship of pure and impure, like the contagion relationships quoted by Douglas (1976). The author deals with purity and impurity rituals as religious acts that present extremely functional notions in people's daily lives, specifically in the daily lives of religious people, seeking to understand these phenomena by comparing them:

First, we will not hope to understand religious phenomenon by limiting ourselves to studying beliefs in spiritual beings, even if we refine this formula. At certain times in our research, we will perhaps need to examine all known beliefs in other beings: ghosts, ancestors, demons and fairies. But following Robert Smith, we will not assume that, having cataloged the entire spiritual population of the universe, we have grasped the fourth essence of religion. Instead of con-

2. For this house, unlike the first one in question, the photographs must avoid showing the moment of trance, and in this image we can see that the person who is in trance, under the allah or white cloth, does not appear completely. We know that there is someone there, in a trance (for those who are in *axé* and can identify), but for those who see the photo, it is not noticeable who is in a trance.



structuring exclusive definitions, we will try to compare the different conceptions that people have about destiny and their place in the universe. Second, finally, we cannot hope to understand others' ideas about contagion, sacred or secular, before confronting our own. (Douglas 1976, 41)

But how can we compare our ideas of contagion, purity and impurity if the context is completely different? How can we make a comparison between our forms and the forms of others, if in doing so, we are already assuming that there is a common denominator between these concepts, and that there are also the same concepts in these contexts, only with different meanings and interpretations?

Therefore, thinking of the symbol as comparable or as a representation allows the process of interaction and subjectivities that produce these meanings to pass, and not merely a representation of something as already given, pre-established or closed concept.

In the Sergipe's city Laranjeiras, a few kilometers from the capital, the Nagô Santa Bárbara Virgem *terreiro* began its rituals a little more than a century ago, becoming, for the region's residents and practitioners of Afro-Brazilian cults, one of the most traditional and old-timers of the state. An important, if not the most important, aspect for this family of *axé* is the treatment given by the *terreiro* to a notion of "purity". When questioning the Brotherhood about what makes it different from other *terreiros*, not only from Laranjeiras but also from Brazil, Lôxa, Bárbara Cristina dos Santos, responds that this *terreiro* is the only "pure" in the country, a concept developed by the group from "tradition" as a determining factor of "purity":

We classify the Nagô of this *terreiro* as pure because we preserve the African roots, that is, everything that was brought from Africa by the Africans who lived in Laranjeiras remains in the same way as it was brought. The Virgin Santa Bárbara Brotherhood did not adhere to new things such as the question of the *caboclo*, for example, which comes from the *toré*, which is from the indigenous, culture, and not African. That purity comes from there, from the preservation of what is traditional African. (Santos, in an interview with the author on 02/04/2011)

The idea of "purity" for this Candomblé *terreiro* is seen as something reminiscent of what comes from Africa, especially the Nagô cults. Dantas (1987, 122) refers the idea of purity to African cultural institutions that it aims to reproduce in a trustworthy manner, thus becoming a form of resistance to transformation. Capone (2009, 122), quoting the work of Dantas (1988), "Vovó Nagô and Papai Branco", states that this heterogeneity in the religious field means that religious identity is constantly negotiated between social actors.

According to Capone, what constitutes the daily life of certain Afro-Brazilian cults is the opposition between a “pure” form— which represents more an ideal model than a reality—and a “mixed” form, that is, this opposition marks the central difference among Candomblé houses of worship. This “mixture” would result in confusion, and it is necessary to maintain the general order of the world expressed in the classification scheme.

However, it is not always possible to prevent certain undesirable “mixtures” that introduce disorder, and in this case, it is necessary not only to identify the types of “mixtures” that cause harm, but also to determine the place for the hybrid, the one that confuses the scheme general of the world. It is this task that faces what would be “mixed Africans” (Dantas 1988, 121).

For the members of the Santa Bárbara Virgem *terreiro*, the pure Nagô model is what marks the difference between them and the “other”, previously mentioned by Dantas (1987). Those that mix other elements, those in which the original tradition is incorporated with other elements, are considered perverted. Also according to Dantas (1987, 124), this idea of purity can be articulated with the idea of power, since within this religious system, demarcating the types of *terreiro* as pure and mixed is also a way of marking the space of each one, thus seeking legitimacy and hegemony within this classification of power.

Regarding the Virgin Santa Barbara *terreiro*, in order to understand how they conceptualize, see and use this concept of purity in their daily rituals and practices, it was necessary to deepen what this native concept is and how a non-native anthropologist can deal with this concept without appropriating it as your own.



**IMAGE 03**  
*Terreiro* Santa  
Bárbara Virgem,  
prepared for the  
yam harvest ritual,  
september, 2017.  
(Photo: The author).

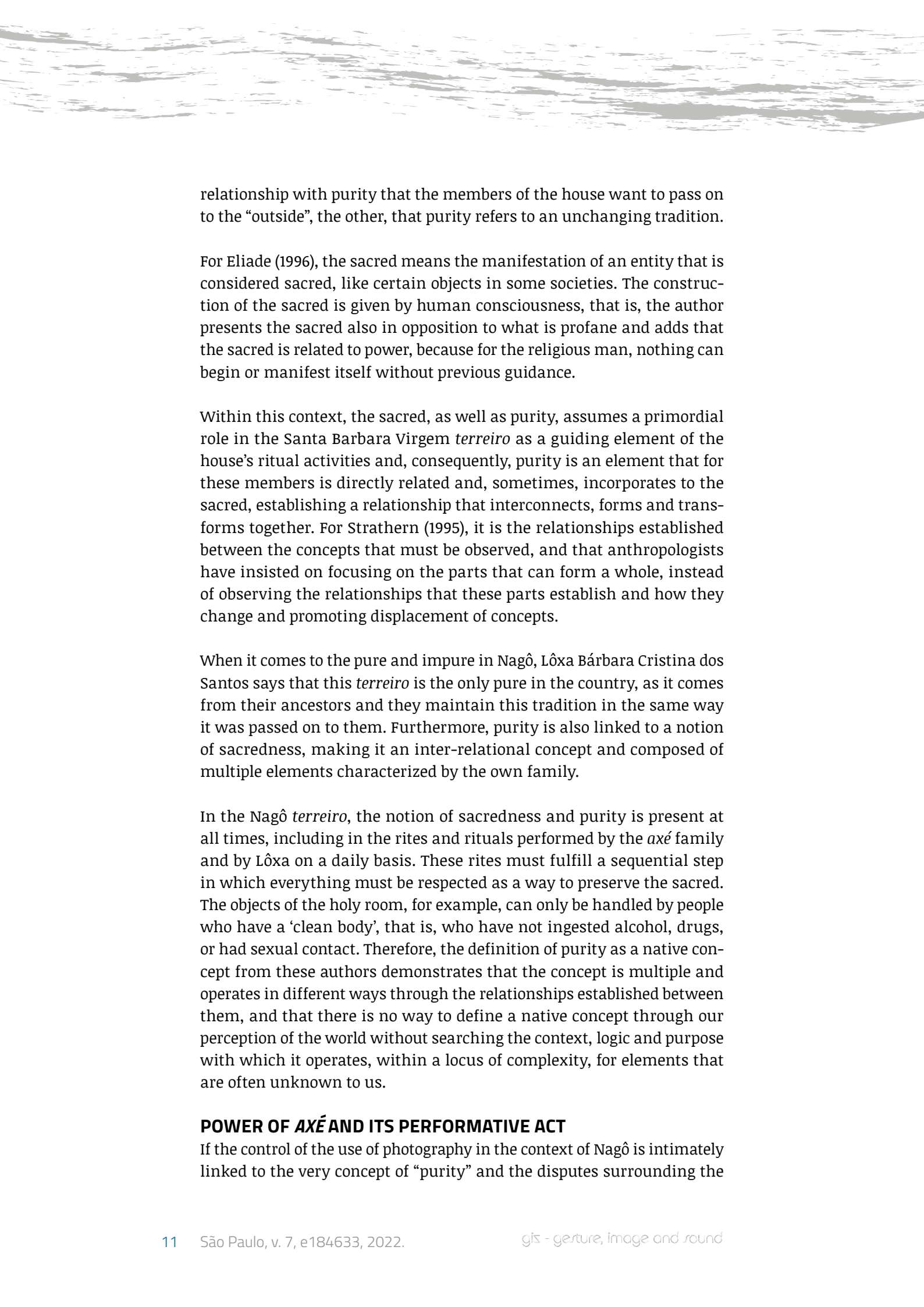
3. In this house, photography of people in trance is prohibited, and photographing or fixing on images, as people in these *terreiros* studied think of photographs, of moments of trance and sacred rooms of the house is to disrespect movement, memory, which should be fixed, for them, but not through the photographic image.

According to Deleuze and Guatari (1992), the way of operating the concepts is not through the mode of contemplation or communication. For the authors, concepts are not objective and do not need to be, they arise in the controversy or rivalry between knowledge. The authors claim that several components make up the concept and it is always under construction.

In this sense, they make use of the notion of the other to demonstrate the relationship with the other, showing that there is no transcendental self, but that the self and the other are interconnected. Therefore, the way to work the concept within this scope is to think about how the concept was assembled, in this case, how the concept of purity was built by the Nagô Brotherhood, without assuming our vision of purity as something rooted and fixed, but working with conceptions as possibilities, destabilizing the concept we are used to. Thus, the translation of the concept varies according to the individual view, the context and the purpose, therefore, it cannot be treated as just a form of mediation:

There is no simple concept. Every concept has components, and is defined by them. So, it has a figure. It is a multiplicity, although not all multiplicity is conceptual. There is no single-component concept: even the first concept, that by which a philosophy “begins”, has several components, since it is not evident that philosophy must have a beginning and that, if it determines one, it must add to it. a point of view or a reason. Descartes, Hegel, Feuerbach not only do not begin with the same concept, they do not have the same concept of beginning. Every concept is at least double, or triple, etc. There is also no concept that has all the components, since it would be pure and simple chaos: even the so-called universals, as ultimate concepts, must leave the chaos circumscribing a universe that explains them (contemplation, reflection, communication...). Every concept has an irregular outline, defined by the cipher of its components. This is why, from Plato to Bergson, we find the idea that the concept is a matter of articulation, cutting and superposition. It is a whole, because it totals its components, but a fragmentary whole. It is only under this condition that it can leave the mental chaos, which does not cease to spy on it, to adhere to it, to reabsorb it (Deleuze e Guatari 1992, 25).

Based on these assumptions, Sahlins (2001) reiterates that the concepts are linked to other concepts, the readings or the way of doing things, it is that they are different, and therefore, the translations are different. In this sense, “purity” becomes directly related to the concept of “tradition”, since the pure is the unmixed, that is, that which is not impure, profane, which for them would be the elements of Umbanda or *caboclo* rituals. In the case of the Catholic religion, for them, the elements are not considered impure, but sacred. Douglas (1976, 196) cites in his work ‘Purity and danger’, that purity is the enemy of change, that is, it is incompatible with ambiguity, and, therefore, inflexible. In Nagô, it is exactly this



relationship with purity that the members of the house want to pass on to the “outside”, the other, that purity refers to an unchanging tradition.

For Eliade (1996), the sacred means the manifestation of an entity that is considered sacred, like certain objects in some societies. The construction of the sacred is given by human consciousness, that is, the author presents the sacred also in opposition to what is profane and adds that the sacred is related to power, because for the religious man, nothing can begin or manifest itself without previous guidance.

Within this context, the sacred, as well as purity, assumes a primordial role in the Santa Barbara Virgem *terreiro* as a guiding element of the house’s ritual activities and, consequently, purity is an element that for these members is directly related and, sometimes, incorporates to the sacred, establishing a relationship that interconnects, forms and transforms together. For Strathern (1995), it is the relationships established between the concepts that must be observed, and that anthropologists have insisted on focusing on the parts that can form a whole, instead of observing the relationships that these parts establish and how they change and promoting displacement of concepts.

When it comes to the pure and impure in Nagô, Lôxa Bárbara Cristina dos Santos says that this *terreiro* is the only pure in the country, as it comes from their ancestors and they maintain this tradition in the same way it was passed on to them. Furthermore, purity is also linked to a notion of sacredness, making it an inter-relational concept and composed of multiple elements characterized by the own family.

In the Nagô *terreiro*, the notion of sacredness and purity is present at all times, including in the rites and rituals performed by the *axé* family and by Lôxa on a daily basis. These rites must fulfill a sequential step in which everything must be respected as a way to preserve the sacred. The objects of the holy room, for example, can only be handled by people who have a ‘clean body’, that is, who have not ingested alcohol, drugs, or had sexual contact. Therefore, the definition of purity as a native concept from these authors demonstrates that the concept is multiple and operates in different ways through the relationships established between them, and that there is no way to define a native concept through our perception of the world without searching the context, logic and purpose with which it operates, within a locus of complexity, for elements that are often unknown to us.

### **POWER OF AXÉ AND ITS PERFORMATIVE ACT**

If the control of the use of photography in the context of Nagô is intimately linked to the very concept of “purity” and the disputes surrounding the

preservation of a “secret” sphere that surrounds the “knowledge” and the “foundation” of this purity, this control leads to other issues in a broader disputes territory over recognition, and therefore power, in the relationships network of these religious houses.

Although there is a standardization and chronological sequence of events and the material use of symbols, no ritual is equal to another. Unpredictability is also an important marker for these and other Afro-Brazilian houses.

There is no way to predict certain events, the trances of some people who are not part of the family and, often, the saint’s daughters who have never gone through the incorporation process and who go through these rituals for the first time. In addition, there is also a dispute territory and power relations that is not evident to the “outsiders”, but which is recognized by the “insiders”, as situations in which fathers or mothers of saints from other houses participate in the festivities not only as a way to honor, but to observe what is being done, if there are “flaws”, if the Yawós are really incorporated and incorporated with the orixás, among other situations that were reported to me and others that I experienced in other ritual moments in the houses.

These power relations and these disputes also operate as symbols within the social dynamics that are experienced by these groups, at least in the city of Riachuelo, in which the *axé* house I am part of is. All this material and immaterial symbology is not visible in the photos, not even to the eyes of those who photograph, or those who act as interlocutors through the images taken.

According to Dubois (2010, 168), the photographic act implies the idea of passage, unlike our time, which is thought from the idea of duration, the time of an image abandons the idea of real, chronic time, and passes to the idea of a symbolic time, that is, inscribed in a new temporality, and this small passage or fragment is installed forever as something immutable in the image.

The article by Etienne Samain and Fabiana Bruno (2016), “How to think about a photographic archive: a double experience”, in which they write about the experiences and sensations provoked by seeing images, and how to think about photography and photographic archives, leads me to reflect on my own experience when looking at the photos I found in the field—whether those kept in bags in people’s homes, or those stored in social media albums or even those displayed on the walls of *terreiros*—an experience that provokes sensations and emotions that also evoke feelings related to the past and my trajectory with these people and in these homes.



Samain and Bruno (2016) state that images are also a documentation, a memory and a revelation:

Seduced by the curious appeal of the images, the producer, in turn, undertakes a slow descent into the heart of his/her images. With them, he/she evidently goes to encounter memories, and other reminiscences that surface without, however, satisfying him/her. Not only do the images remain silent but, in this case, they do not necessarily recall the context of the records, even less the reasons and reasons for the emergence of the photographs. This muteness provokes the memory that demands a response to which the return to the text of the diaries offers a way out (Samain e Bruno 2016, 115).

In this sense, photography “represents” something that is not itself, referring to something outside of itself, bringing a transfiguring character to the signs and symbols that compose it, not only refracting these signs, but also re-signifying them. Based on this re-signification of signs, Gonçalves and Head (2009, 11), when speaking of mimesis as a “perception through images that allows a fusion between the object of perception and the body of the preceptor, creating a relationship that is not limited to the visual or audiovisual, but that permeates the senses”, make us think about how the image and its use are capable of affecting not only those who see them, but also as an anthropological practice, through corporeality and all the connections that the photographic image is able to arouse. One of these connections that became evident throughout the field research is the issue of image and its relationship with memories.

Between texts and images, complicity as well as reciprocity are obvious, necessary and decisive. It is good to remember what Gombrich wrote: “If we consider communication from the privileged point of view of language, we will discover that the visual image is unique in terms of its ability to awaken, that its use for expressive purposes is problematic and that, reduced to itself, the possibility of being equal to the enunciative function of language is radically lacking” (Gombrich 1995, 323).

It will be important, therefore, to discover even better the complex grammars of the verbal and the visual, when their singular conjugations decline. (Bruno & Samain 2016, 115).

There is a dispute over the costumes (which look like the garments of the old court, made with expensive and sumptuous fabrics), there is a dispute over the dances (the orixás who dance well, the orixás who don't dance well), dispute for the public (more crowded parties, less crowded), decoration (room with lots of flowers, fabrics, etc.), chants, strength of Rum, Rumpi and Lé (three drums that are considered entities because of the sounds they emit to call the orixás), in short, this whole range of

symbols that appear through the relationships and experience of those who see and experience something related to or close to religion.

Therefore, I also return to Briggs' argument (1996), when he says that culture is performed in small acts (which for me would be rites), and that these acts are dynamic, that is, they are reiterated daily, transformed through contexts, moments, situations, in which conflict permeates relationships. Briggs and other authors argue that the symbol creates processes of communication and relationships that will give its meaning in the context in which it is inserted and that it is also transforming through experience and practice. The contexts and appropriations of symbols and their meanings are different, and to understand or seek the meaning of each symbol, we must first understand in which context it is inserted and its meaning as emergent in each of these contexts.

So, if we take this type of photography—the photograph of the sacred or secret—as a “product”, we can see that this product is formed by a set of practices, which go beyond a bricolage of symbols that fit together, but that include a series of factors that act simultaneously, such as sound, action, movement, and which can be “read” and interpreted as something that expands beyond what is “visible” and mounted on a piece of paper or a picture on the wall.

According to Mitchell (1996), in “What do pictures really want”, images are not intended to be decoded and interpreted. They do not speak, but whoever speaks produces them through their eyes, the voice we perceive in the image is the voice of the interlocutor. Anyway, the interpretation of those who see the image is also what gives voice to it, that is, those who produce and those who see the image act as interlocutors.

In addition to the interpretation and elements that an image presents, Didi-Huberman (2012) alerts us to think of the image as a visual impression of time, in which the present acts more as a supporting element than as a main element of all relationships of time that an image presents and that are questioned by the different interpretations and interruptions. Thinking about it, how to treat the symbols that the photographs present within this religious context, without defining them?

In “Stories, Becomings and Fetishes of Afro-Brazilian Religions: An Anthropological Symmetrization Essay”, Goldman (2009) provides an overview of symbolic discourses and interpretations within Afro-Brazilian cults, focusing on the forms of interaction between these studies on the symbols with society.

Historically, in Brazil, the stories and myths produced about Candomblé were told by its followers, but adapted to a scientific language in academic works, since, until today, the discourses produced by science tend to be classified as the “true ones”, to the detriment of the discourses of religious adherents as “fictitious”. Goldman points out that perhaps this is why what would be “the other” is necessary, to become “the self” in the academy.

In this sense, I place myself as a researcher, but also as a native of the religion, even if with limited knowledge within this sphere, since in Candomblé, learning is constant and continuous, and time acts almost in a materialized way, as a body that determines the right time and time to learn the rituals and meanings inside the *axé* house.

What appears is not always what it is, and what it is, is not always what appears. But if we cannot delimit the symbols and define them, how can we also define what it is or is not inside these houses? How to deal with these symbols and with this entire performative event that is a celebration or ritual in Candomblé, without delimiting and defining the symbols and without transforming them into a universalization of characteristics?

An image can be assembled through the experiences of those who are photographing, but it can also be multi-interpreted and have several intertwined readings, not only for those who observe the photograph, but also for those who photograph and transpose countless passages and experiences to that montage that helps to compose the photographic act. The body, in this context, manifests itself as a holistic being, in the sense that the body manifests itself as a whole, including in writing— writing also expresses a corporeality.

From this, there is a fine line between what may or may not be real in the image, not because of the incorporation itself, but because when showing a fixed image of the trance, its *axé* potency will only be understood as such, through the image, for those who know this power, for those who have already had access to it. That is, even if there is a photographic image or a video showing some symbol or ritual that supposedly makes up the secret of *axé*, such a secret is not necessarily unveiled or it is not shown how to reproduce it by other people who are not religious, or even for those that are, because each ritual is unique, even if the same tools, the same fundamentals are used.



**IMAGE 4**  
Xirê's opening in Olubajê, or ritual to Orixá Omolu at Ilê Axé Omin Mafé. (Photo: The author).

In the photo above, for example, there is a food used for Exu that, for those who do not understand, it is just a food, and for those who understand, even though it is a known type of food, they may not know how it is made, what is the order and arrangement in the clay dishes, as well as the songs that are sung when celebrating this orixá, among other factors that make up the potency of the axé of Exu's food. There is a gap between the world and what human beings produce. This void between the thing and the copy produces something, it can be a reaction, reproduction.

As much as the image has the ability to freeze, fix, the meaning and the signifier, it is important to think of the body as a whole, and its parts, as something that cannot be externalized as a whole.

The fixation of the image is a cutout, it shows something incomplete, even in relation to the extension of the body, if we think of trance as an extension of the orixá in the body— or vice versa. Also, according to Dubois (2010), it is worth noting that the photo is not just an image, but an act, that is, something that is not possible to be conceived outside of an action technique, and when I use the word incomplete, it is in sense of conceiving the image as an act without limits in its conception and reception by not only the one who manufactures it (or activates it), but also by the one who receives it.

If we think of this mounted image as an experience of perception, we can think of photography through another bias than the reinforcement of stereotypes, Rabelo (2008) proposes to think of this type of photography in another way, thinking of the image as a political act developed from past experience. The political act that the author mentions, refers, above

all, to fixing these realities that reflect these daily lives, but which are daily erased out of this imagistic world.

The surface of the body—dressing is a way of communicating our social status—and body adornments constitute a cultural medium, perhaps one of the most specialized in forming the communication of a personal and social identity. Turner (2008) says that we can think about the social roles and social structure of a people through their ornaments. If Turner is interested in how we adorn the body, other authors are concerned with the body itself in this social participation:

The body is in constant relationship with space, not only inhabiting it, but also being space. Thus, the body is a social space, it relates to other spaces and participates in the production of space. In this way, bodies have an enormous potential - bodies outside the norm even more -, as they have a strong potential for subversion that can allow the transgression of the norms that regulate public spaces. If we add artistic performances to the body, we perceive forms of activism and resistance in which we use our own body as a support for action in the public space, which makes visible the relations of domination and social injustice, generating a new way of doing activism (Santos 2019, 137).

We make the mistake of treating differences as things and things as naturally different from others, not thinking in a reflexive way about what the networks of relationships produce, especially when it comes to forms of sociability also between houses.

We know that there is a lot of research on the persecution suffered by Afro-Brazilian religions, as well as a lot of material about this in the press, in discussions in social movements and in other spaces for welcoming the *terreiro* population. In this sense, I do not come through the research to show the violence rates against these peoples, or the intolerance crimes, or talk about the persecution suffered over so many decades.

What I tried and proposed to think and do, as an Orixá's daughter, anthropologist and researcher, is to reflect, based on my experience in *axé* and as a researcher—since I became a Orixá's daughter throughout the research, between the master's end and the beginning of the doctorate—on the preservation of memories fixed and reflected through photographic images, as resistance acts in moments of intolerance and political conservatism, in addition to thinking about the ways in which subjects, through their bodies, as means of communication between the sacred and the mundane, bring a potentializing perspective of *axé* through what is fixed in the image during ritualistic processes.



The permanence of these *terreiros* is also an act of resistance, and all these images of ritual performance extend their existence beyond a temporal moment when people gather for the consecration of the sacred.

## CONCLUSION

This article was developed from my inquiries and experiences over a decade, since I had my first practical contact with Afro-Brazilian religions and cults. My work field started from the Santa Bárbara Virgin *terreiro*, in the city of Laranjeiras, which culminated in a master's thesis on gender relations and kinship in the area. From there, for the doctorate, I decided to research the circulation of images, the control over their production and circulation, and I added two houses: the Abassá Ilê Axé Pilão de Oxaguian, and the Ilê Axé Omin Mafé. The first is the house of a great friend and pai-de-santo, and the last is the house of which I belong as an Orixá's daughter.

In addition to the relationships of affection, the choice of houses was due to the fact that they are from different nations, within the Afro-Brazilian religious universe, as well as because they are houses with relationships of sociability between them, but that think very differently about the control and circulation of photographic images in religious rituals.

I opted for field research, or the ethnographic method, taking on the role of a native researcher, after many reflections on whether or not to move away from the field. I stopped to think and I couldn't make this separation, and I wouldn't even be able to, because there are the relationships and I believe they are what make the body of this text have substance, perhaps not as classic theoretical research, but thinking of a bias that also raises questions from a native and academic point of view, thinking that it is not necessary to dissociate one from the other.

Initially, my proposal was to analyze the uses and potencies of photographic images in Candomblé *terreiros* in Sergipe, thinking of introducing concerns about the photographic image in Candomblé, in order to seek to think, through its relations and concepts, the issue of secrecy, prohibition and its relations with the public and the private. These concerns were considered throughout the text, since houses have different ways of doing and thinking, as we could see throughout the writings presented here.

It is in this sense that I think the most coherent way to deal with the use of these images and their circulation has been to point out the processes by which I arrived at certain interpretations and to pass this on to whoever is reading them. After all, we can no longer think of an Anthropology that can handle everything, and this reflection on how we can speak or pass

on this knowledge and in what context we can do it is what seems to me to be the most pertinent path, closer to what Anthropology intends to do.

In line with Benjamin's (1987) critique of the way photography is generally used as an index of the real, as a clipping of reality in some way, we were able to problematize here, albeit briefly, the power of the photographic image to fix something and be able to shift it to another place, showing that the image is the medium of the real and not a copy of the real. The great challenge of working with images, especially ritual ones, is to think precisely about the context and the image in a relational way, how they are thought of in relation to the other by those who are watching.

In addition, photography takes us to a multivocality based on the interpretations of each subject and their experience or experience. It is as if the photograph approached what is considered real, as if it penetrated reality. And this is where questions that are still open come in: How do we deal with the other's scene without running the risk of creating dichotomies between the other's knowledge and ours? Thinking precisely about how to portray this intersubjective space that presents itself between what would be reality and the imaginary.

We have also seen that the power of photography to establish a world of images that replaces its referents is found all the time in our daily life. Photography produces an immediate moment, while in anthropology temporal displacement can be seen serving specific power interests.

Dealing with issues within the Afro-Brazilian religious universe is a constant challenge, whether for those who, like me, are part of one of these religions, or for those who are curious or scholars of the subject.

I tried to bring some of my experience as the daughter of an Orixá of Ilê Axé Omin Mafé to think about the power of photography. This whole premise, as far as I was able to verify and perceive throughout my observations and conversations with members of the houses, is that it is founded not only on the experiences lived and told by mothers and fathers to children of Orixas, but also on the narrated and told stories intertwined within the contexts presented in the images seen.

The word Power was conceived precisely because the word Axé represents Strength, and, therefore, refers me to its potential as maintainer of religion. In Candomblé, when people want *axé* or say that a house or ritual is full of *axé*, it means saying that there is strength, there is an energetic potency that makes people there come out strengthened and move this *axé* so that everyone who is there present, receive this force from the energy of the Orixás.

With my experience in the field, listening to the reports and in many moments, seeing the photos of people in trance, especially the photos I had access to Mãe Bequinha's house, I heard a lot the phrases "You can feel the *axé* in the photo"; "that saint there has a lot of *axé*", among other phrases that refer to a feeling, to a ritual force, which despite being fixed in an image, is felt by those who recognize it in their daily lives.

When I talk about the potencies of *axé*, thinking of these potencies as being multiple and *axé* being able to encompass several, one of these potencies also affects the issue of image use and the way in which this image is controlled. So, as I mentioned before, in this issue of the uses of images and social networks and the way in which this control and this circulation have been carried out in these houses, it is also necessary to think about the performance of bodies in rituals and their images.

I leave these questions here, and I go on to say that this work was an attempt to catch a breath to also face the lack of physical archives, such as academic production on Candomblés in Sergipe, and the lack of research production on these stories that should be recorded beyond orality.

I believe that there is still a lot to be thought about, added and said, however, I leave the open lines in these writings, which, as in Candomblé, flow to the most diverse fields, paths and present contexts that unfold over time and processes of the houses.

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## WHAT DOES THE PHOTOGRAPHY REVEAL? ETHICS, IMAGE, AND MEMORY IN AFRO-RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses photography and Afro-religiosity based on the researcher's experience as a photographer in the field of Afro-Gaucho religions. First, the text situates the relationship between photography and Afro-Brazilian religiosity to explore the different facets of obtaining technical images within the sacred, pointing out cases that can help us reflect on the prohibitions imposed and accesses granted to photographic productions in the Afro-religious context. It argues that the construction of an ethics of visibility within religious practices is intertwined with the contexts of meaning production in which these images appear. The essay reflects on the challenges of construing an anthropological ethics of image production in such contexts, and the possibilities of an intersubjective negotiation when photography acts as a material support for perpetuating the collective memories of religious groups.

### KEYWORDS

Photography;  
Religiosity; Afro-  
Gaucho religions;  
Ethics; Memory.



## WHAT DOES THE PHOTOGRAPHY REVEAL? ETHICS, IMAGE, AND MEMORY IN AFRO-RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

This paper discusses photography and Afro-religiosity, considering my experience as a photographer and researcher in Afro-religious contexts. This research is based in the project: The Tradition of Bará of the Market [*A Tradição do Bará do Mercado*], in which I worked as a photographer between the years of 2006 and 2007, and in the ethnography of the Center of Umbanda Kingdom of Yemanjá and Oxóssi [*Centro de Umbanda Reino de Yemanjá e Oxóssi*], in the Ilha da Pintada<sup>1</sup>, between the years of 2009 and 2010, both in the city of Porto Alegre, RS. Initially, I place the relation between photography and Afro-Brazilian religiosity in the search to understand the different facets of obtaining technical images in the sacred realm. Without doing a historical revision on the topic, I point out to some cases that can help to understand the interdicts or the accesses imposed or conceded to the photographic productions in the Afro-religious contexts. I intend to show that the construction of an ethics in the visibility of the religious practices is intertwined with the contexts of production of meaning in which these images appear. I discuss the challenges in building an anthropological ethic in the production of images in such situations, and the possibilities of an inter-subjective negotiation when the photographic production acts as a material support for the reverberation of collective memories of these religious groups. I also analyze the interpretation of the interlocutors' comments about a set of images obtained by me in a ritual festivity.

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE SACRED TERRITORY: PLACING A QUESTION

The photographic documentation in various rituals that involve Afro-Brazilian religions has historically been a controversial subject. Inescapably, the researchers who engage in this field are faced with the barrier of secrecy. There are dimensions of religiosity that are not possible to enter or unveil without a process of initiation or a long coexistence with the group (Carvalho 1985, Gonçalves da Silva 2006). Researchers, as those who seek a religious initiation, do not receive information and orientations. To the contrary, they are challenged to “join the pieces”, trying to make sense of the scattered narratives and experiences found along the way (Goldman 2003). Seen as a barrier or a path, the dimension of secrecy always prompts the anthropologist to face a negotiation of meaning within their own construction of knowledge, namely between the rationality as a privileged quality in the scientific knowledge and the order of the unknown that govern the terrain of the research. In this game of hide and seek, in which secrets and revelations shape the inter-subjective relation between researcher and researched group, the production of visual images – photographic or filmic – often interposes itself as an

1. The Ilha da Pintada is one of the sixteen islands that constitutes the neighborhood Arquipélago, which belongs to the municipality of Porto Alegre.

unwanted revelation of visible and non-visible aspects in the ritualistic of a *terreiro*<sup>2</sup>.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the relation between photography and *Candomblé* has been mediated by conflict. Historically, the photographic records of *Candomblé* have recorded the processes of tradition and change in this religion, in which the hierarchical relations in the liturgical structure and the oral system of knowledge transmission and spiritual powers take a decisive relevance in the determinations of the interdicts of the image photographed.

The most emblematic and foundational example of the controversies involving the photographic documentation of the forbidden rituals in Brazilian *Candomblé* was the news article which had a national reach: the news magazine *O Cruzeiro*. In 1951, with images taken by the photographer José Medeiros in the *terreiro* of *Mãe Riso da Plataforma* in the outskirts of the city of Salvador, in the state of Bahia. José Medeiros documented an initiation ritual of the three *iaôs*, showing through photography details of the ritualistic procedures never shown before by the Brazilian media, causing a very strong public commotion. The anthropologist Fernando de Tacca (2009), in his research about the repercussions of the publication of these images made by José Medeiros in *O Cruzeiro*, showed that the interdiction in the production of images of some *Candomblé* rituals was mainly associated with the possibility of revealing initiation secrets and the occurrence of psychic damages for those who are photographed in trance during ritualistic procedures.

The tradition of the Afro-Brazilian religion *Batuque* or *Nação*<sup>3</sup>, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, also imposes a rigorous interdiction in documenting the *orixás* or Entities of the world. In other words, it is forbidden to photograph the practitioners in trance (Correa 2006, Pólvora 1995). This interdiction was explained to me by another *Babalorixá* during the visual documentation of the project The Tradition of Bará of the Market<sup>4</sup>, as a result of the fact that the *batuqueiro*<sup>5</sup>, according to tradition, does not know that he experiences the possession of his *orixá*. Therefore, the episodes of possession, although frequent and essential in a house of religion, are always kept secret. The portrait of the *orixá* in the world would constitute a testimony to the trance, and to know that one is possessed could lead to mental disturbances. For the *Batuque* tradition, to capture the image

2. Terreiro or terreira is a temple in Afro-Brazilian religions.

3. Regional denominations for *Candomblé* in Brazil.

4. It took place between 2006 and 2007 in a partnership with CEDRAB-Congregation in defense of Afro-Brazilian Religions [*Congregação em Defesa das Religiões Afro-Brasileiras*], UFRGS-Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, and the Cultural Memory Coordination – Municipal Secretariat of Culture of Porto Alegre [*Coordenação da Memória Cultural – Secretaria Municipal da Cultura*], sponsored by Petrobrás Cultural.

5. *Batuqueiro* is a member in the religious practice.

of possession could mean the interruption, the blockage, and even the revelation of transcendence (Pólvora 1995, 140).

The whole secret dimension of existence needs to be surrounded by interdiction, as showed by the anthropologist Mary Douglas (1976), since it is in its nature the imminent danger of losing its distinctive and fundamental characters. Religious cults are, for different cultures, spaces of sensibilities that express circumstances in which photography, as John Collier Jr recognized, “could be completely unacceptable, extremely dangerous, or literally impossible” (Collier Jr. 1973, 61). In the Afro-Brazilian cults, photography, for its character of “double real”<sup>6</sup> that removes what is portrayed of its context inserting it in new fields of meaning, could corroborate for the violation of sacred time and space (Coster 2007). For the anthropologist Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (2006), sound and photographic records are frequently considered illegal by Afro-religious groups, because they represent a distortion between what is said and done with when is said and done.

In this perspective, if *Candomblé* and *Batuque* traditionally keep an orientation of interdiction of capture of images of the *orixá* “in the world”,<sup>7</sup> *Umbanda* would be more accommodating to the integration of new elements in its religious forms. However, the structure of the Afro-Brazilian religions does not contemplate a centralizing and agglutinating power in a single religious hierarchy, but is organized in a plurality of *terreiros* and federations endowed with divergences and rivalries among themselves (Oro 1997, 15). This means that the positioning of spiritual leader is not tied to its religious affiliation, assuming consensual criteria in *Candomblé*, *Batuque*, *Linha Cruzada* and *Umbanda*. On the contrary, the same branch could express different determinations following the orientation of the *Babalorixá* or *Yalorixá*<sup>8</sup>, and above them, from the *orixá* that governs the house.

The polemics involving the authorization of *Mãe Riso da Plataforma* in the visual documentation of the initiation of the three *iaôs* is enlightening in this sense: Mother Riso consulted and had permission of her *orixá* *Oxóssi*, which means that she was supported in her decision in order of the divinity, or more specifically, in her mythical ancestry. It is in this perspective that Fernando de Tacca (2009) discusses the responsibility attributed to Mother Riso in the case of the reportage published in this religious context, where the representativeness of the leaderships and

6. For Phillip Dubois (1993), photography triggers “an insurmountable feeling of reality that we cannot get rid of, despite our awareness of all the codes that are in play in it and that have combined for its elaboration” (1993, 26).

7. “*Orixá* in the world” is an emic Afro-religious expression that denotes the moment when the *orixá* descends from the spiritual plane to manifest itself in a human body.

8. Male high priest and female high priestess in *Candomblé*. This article also uses the expressions *pai de santo* (father-of-saint) and/or *mãe de santo* (mother-of-saint) as synonyms to *Babalorixá* and *Yalorixá*, respectively.

federation can always be questioned, since in the mythical quality of the African-based religiosity the spiritual leaders have legitimate channels of communication with the *orixás*<sup>9</sup>.

Frequently, the authorization to take photographs depends a lot on the relation that the photographer/researcher establishes with the *Babalorixá* or *Yalorixá*. If a relation of proximity, trust and reciprocity exists, the researcher could obtain authorization to take pictures, even in forbidden rituals, as reported by Norton Correa in an interview given to Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (2006, 61). The revelation or preservation of the secret in the photographed images is, in this sense, connected to the anthropological ethic. For José Jorge de Carvalho (1985), these are the situations that the anthropologist is challenged to evaluate his primordial fidelity: on the one side, with the research partners in safeguarding their secrets, which guarantees the continued existence of an ethical agreement and also the maintenance of an inter-subjective negotiation process; on the other side, with their peers, to the extent that the anthropologist uses a specific Anthropology code to rationally interpret the information collected in the field (Carvalho 1985).

If the inter-subjective relation that is established between photographer/researcher and the religion or the religious authority initiates the construction of an ethic that leads and guides the production of technical images, the interpretative contexts that underlie these images are crucial to the establishment of an ethical understanding with the researched group. The publication of these images reshapes the culturally determined situations caught by the lenses of the anthropologist/photographer to the measure that they begin to circulate in the public domains as part of research or are broadcasted in the media, associated with various discourses. In this sense, interdicts imposed on the visual documentations of Afro-religious cults not only express the issue of the revelation of secrets, but also question the imprisonment of these images in offensive and discriminatory discourses about the Afro-Brazilian religiosity.

The headline-grabbing discourse that involved the publication of the photographs of José Medeiros in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*, for example, marked a rupture in the negotiation built in the field, since the content was predominantly offensive to *Candomblé*<sup>10</sup>. Six years after that, the same

9. The realization of the Bará of the Market project was also possible only after the permission of the *orixás*, in special the *orixá* Bará, responsible for opening the way, for being the messenger *Orixá* between the world of men and the world of the *orixás*. A series of bureaucratic obstacles prevented the release of the resources for the occurrence of the work, which was effectively developed and concluded in 2007, the year of the Bará for the religions of African origin.

10. The photographs by José Medeiros were published in 1951 in an article called "The Brides of the Bloodthirsty Gods" [*As Noivas dos Deuses Sanguinários*], containing 38 photographs accompanied by a text from the journalist Arlindo Silva.

publisher of *O Cruzeiro* magazine, put out a book called “Candomblé”, with 60 photographs taken by José Medeiros, 22 more than those published in the magazine. Without the same appeal used in the former, the book highlighted the visual narrative of the initiation made by the photographer, which later was considered a material of ethnographic value. If in the first version the images represented a profanation of the sacred, the new contextualization offered by the publication of the book crowned the images with a new aura of the profaned sacred (De Tacca 2009).

The French photographer Pierre Verger, a contemporary and friend of José Medeiros, extensively and intensely documented *Candomblé* and African cults, establishing ethical agreements not only with the subjects directly portrayed by his lenses, but with the African-based religiosity as a whole. To Fernando de Tacca (2009), Pierre Verger’s work on the religious world of *Candomblé* and Afro-Brazilian culture acts as an ethical “counter-field” to the sensationalist discourses in which the images made by Henri-Georges Clouzot<sup>11</sup> and José Medeiros were inserted.

Pierre Verger’s decision to keep many of his negatives under wraps, waiting for an occasion away from the polemic caused by José Medeiros’ images to publish some (but not all) photographs of Afro-religious rites, refusing proposals from publishers interested in his images, displays how this photographer shared a common feeling with the subjects he photographed, showing solidarity in maintaining the secrecy.

In Pierre Verger’s work, as Jérôme Souty (2011) has rightly pointed out, the relational and affective use of photography is inseparable from its documentary and heuristic uses. Beyond his emotional involvement with *Candomblé*, Verger was, in his own way, a researcher deeply involved in the themes he photographed. Even while been a photo-reporter of *O Cruzeiro*, the magazine was never the place where he published his photographs about *Candomblé*. His images of religiosity were accompanied with texts of Roger Bastide, with whom he established a prolonged friendship and shared points of view about the cultural and religious influence of Africa in Brazil (Lühning 2002). The interpretative view offered by texts that went along with his photos, initially by Roger Bastide and later by himself, offered a semantic and reflexive uptake to the images, inserted in his investigations about the shared bonds, both cultural and religious, between Brazil and the African continent.

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11. French filmmaker who came to Brazil with the objective of “showing Brazil to Brazilians”, he published in 1951 an article in the magazine “Paris Match” named “The possessed of Bahia” [As possuídas da Bahia]. The publication of a reportage about Brazilian *Candomblé* outside Brazil encouraged José Medeiros and the editor of *O Cruzeiro* to produce a similar material in the country, generating a journalistic dispute around the theme.



After more than half a century of controversy involving José Medeiros' photographs, the centrality of discourses in the configuration of meanings involving the publication of photographs of Afro-Brazilian religions remains. Especially in the mass media, there are frequent images followed by discriminatory or offensive texts. The research of Stela Guedes Caputo (2012) shows how different meanings can be made around the same image. When she was a photo-journalist of a daily newspaper, one of her photographs of children in the *terreiros* of Baixada Fluminense<sup>12</sup> was sold by the agency of that newspaper to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God [*Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*], and later published in the newspaper of such group called *Folha Universal*<sup>13</sup>, in an article with the title "Children of the Devil", generating terrible consequences for the children whose images became part of a religious discourse in which they appeared as examples of bad behavior and "problem children".

Is important to note that all these examples are part of an outdated debate in the relation between photography and Afro-religiosity, in which the discussion is placed in terms of a binomial between the "subject that photographs/holder of technical knowledge/outsider" and "subject photographed/holder of the image and religious knowledge/insider". This simplification reduces the complexity of the motivations associated with the visual record of the Afro-Brazilian religiosity, specially in the context of the new digital medias, where texts and images circulate and are widely reproduced and shared, providing greater visibility and expression to dissensions in the Afro-Brazilian religious body.

During the writing of the doctoral thesis, I accompanied the debate around the spreading of a set of images in a virtual social network that showed the complexity of aspects interwoven in the production of photographs of Afro-religiosity. The photographs had been united in an album<sup>14</sup>, containing images of Afro-Brazilian cults, notably in houses of different religions, which suggested that images of different sources had been gathered to create a visual narrative around Afro-Brazilian religions.

The album was shared on the social network by an Afro-Brazilian religious leader from Porto Alegre, who expressed with practitioners the indignation over such images. The album, which was not of his authorship, was called "What a shame of these people my Gooooood!" and contained 374 photos of Afro-Brazilian cults, which mainly depicted parties and rituals in honor of spiritual entities and initiation rituals that involved the cutting of

12. T.N. [Translator Note] Baixada Fluminense is a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro.

13. *Folha Universal* is a print newspaper owned by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a company that quickly won concessions/licenses for mass media in Brazil, such as radio and television stations. In 2012, the newspaper weekly circulation reached 2.4 million copies printed, more than any other Brazilian newspaper.

14. The compilation of photographs or images into virtual albums is a recurring practice facilitated by a virtual tool in these web-based social networks.

animals, images always controversial for its known ritual interdiction in certain religious affiliations. Some of these photographs had a strong sexual connotation in the gestures, body positioning and facial expressions of those portrayed. At the parties of spiritual entities as *Exus* and *Pombagiras*<sup>15</sup>, the images showed excessive drinking, cigarettes, and men incorporating *Pombagiras* with daring female attire. Other photographs depicted dead or injured people, ritual sacrifices, suggesting violence and dangers in the Afro-Brazilian cults.

The diversity of the photographs gathered in the album showed an ambiguity that made it difficult not to emphasize a devaluation of this religious matrix. All the pictures were taken by amateur photographers and showed an “inside look” that engaged with the subjects and obtained their consent. We could see an explicit interaction between photographer and photographed, expressing a desire of visibility, to be seen as *Pombagira*, to be seen in trance, to be seen initiated. The images were interpreted by components of a social network as a bad example that would be ending religion and bringing negative visibility, in the sense that the free circulation of these images could serve as illustration of discriminatory discourses. Some religious leaders argued against the sharing of these images, urging that they should be deleted because they would promote religious intolerance.

On the one hand, the documentation of rituals in photographs and their dissemination in virtual networks allows the religions of African origin to broaden their knowledge about the heterogeneity that characterizes the different worship practices, explained by both belonging to distinct religions basins and lineages, and by ignorance and unawareness of its fundamentals. In this context, photography acts as a testimony capable of proving what is considered as a mistake in the conduction of the rituals: some images featured descriptions satirizing carnival inspired vestments, the use of plastic flowers in the offering to entities as something poor, Omolu using sandals instead of being bare foot, or the substitution of ritual elements by cheaper ones. Nevertheless, the set of images did not explicitly demonstrate a criticism of the loss of foundation and tradition: the comments that followed the images questioned the absurdity of certain scenes, like the picture of a spiritual cleansing rite performed by a woman lying in a plastic pool without water, placed in a small room between the bed and the closet, using a jocose tone that made one laugh. Even though many Afro-religious people disagreed with and ridiculed the

15. *Pombagira* is very popular in the Afro-Brazilian cults. It corresponds to the female version of the *Exu*, the trickster *Orixá*, phallic, a messenger between the world of men and the world of all *Orixás*. The Kardecist influence in *Umbanda*, modeled *Pombagira* as the spirit of a woman with a mythical biography “who in life would have been a prostitute or courtesan, a woman of low moral principles, capable of dominating men by her sexual prowess, a lover of luxury, of money, and all sorts of pleasures” (Prandi 1996, 140)

conduct of the rites displayed in the photographs, the concern with the unrestricted circulation of such images was not consensual.

On the other hand, some religious leaders, especially those with political activities, raised the debate about the loss of foundation and the value of actions in benefit of the knowledge of practices of the cults among the African religious matrix. It was possible to perceive the existence of a code that recommended a selection of what would be visibly desired for the Afro-Brazilian religions, associated with a concern of the leadership that participates in the public debate against religious intolerance and in favor of public policies that safeguard the continuity of the cults: photography figured as one important piece in a game of hide and seek that reveals the dissensions in the structure of a religious matrix. The limits placed in what can be glimpsed through photography clash with the jocular uses of photographs made by/for adherents who do not participate in the religious debates in the political scene.

Evidently, nowadays the photographer no longer holds the secrets of the image: it is captured by cameras and cell phones and shared on the web, available to different interpretations and discourses. The control of secrecy and visual interdicts in religions becomes much more difficult with the multiplicity and fluidity in which these syncretic forms are taken and made accessible in spaces of virtual sharing. If the case of the magazine *O Cruzeiro* started a controversy in which people who occupied very distinct social spaces and can be representative of the inside/outside, black/white binomial – the *Mãe Riso da Plataforma* and the photographer José Medeiros –, the current issue intertwines these two places in a field of tensions of difficult negotiations on the “inside” of a religious matrix that shows itself as multiple and fragmented.

A very different case are the photographers specialized in Afro-gaúcho<sup>16</sup> religions whom I met at various public parties and tributes during the documentation of the Bará of the Market project. These freelancers sold their images to newspapers specialized in Afro-religiosity, as well as to the adepts of the religion who wanted to keep a memory of a public party in which they took part. In many cases, they were called by spiritual leaders to take portraits in vestments for publicizing services in newspapers or magazines, or even images of parties and incorporations in the houses of worship. These were pictures that were consented, requested, and paid for.

Within the circulation of photographic images in blogs, websites and social networks that show, in virtual environments, different houses,

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16. T.N. The author uses the term “gaúcho”, that in Brazil is specific to the people of the Brazilian state where she did her research.

traditions and Afro-religious practices, the website *Grande Axé*<sup>17</sup>, self-titled as the “newspaper of the Afro-umbandists” brings a photographic collection of parties, rituals, and processions of different *Babalorixás* and *Yalorixás* of Porto Alegre.

The photographs that make up the site’s collection are separated by year, month, spiritual leader of the houses of religion and commemorated event. When we click on the name of *Babalorixá* or *Yalorixá*, a set of images containing the title of the event is open, followed by the address and telephone number of the place in question. The photographs resemble social column images, where the hosts are pictured with the practitioners, relatives and guests. With certain frequency, the public recognizes the people in the pictures, such as politicians or local artists. The photographs depict public parties and, in some cases, personal events of *Babalorixás* and *Yalorixás* outside the *terreiras*, in graduations and weddings<sup>18</sup>.

Recognizing the importance of these debates and the complex nature of the place of technical images in the context of the African matrix religiosity, I propose to resize this question based on the ethnographic research carried out in a *terreira* of Ilha da Pintada, during my doctorate, searching for some meanings used by these people-of-saint [*povo de santo*]<sup>19</sup> in the production and observation of photographic images.

## ENTERING THE CIRCLE

If in my experience in the *Nação* or *Batuque* the photograph of the *Orixá* in the world revealed a mythical identity of the practitioner, bringing dangers to his consciousness, when researching the Center of Umbanda Kingdom of Yemanjá and Oxóssi, I could find other meanings brought by the photographed image in the rituals and practices of *Umbanda*. In this *terreira*<sup>20</sup> the photograph revealed the celebration that the eyes of the practitioners could not see when incorporated. Looking at these pictures was a way of sharing an imagistic set of ritual circumstances experienced only by the *Orixá*. Details in the clothes, decoration, manners and even the confirmation of the presence of the guest could be observed in the photographic images. This impossibility of seeing when other senses

17. The *Grande Axé* was founded in 2008 and it is still today one of the main references of media content production of Afro-religions in Rio Grande do Sul. The data related to the website refer to the year of 2011; currently the website is off-line, but the content is still being published on virtual social networks such as Instagram and Facebook.

18. In this regard, the instigating research by Leonardo Oliveira de Almeida (2018) brings important and more recent data on the phonographic field of Afro-gaúcho religions and the growth of Afro-religious media in that state.

19. The expressions *povo de santo* [people-of-saint], *filho/a de santo* [children-of-saint], *mãe de santo* [mother-of-saint] and *família de santo* [family-of-saint] inform the belonging in an Afro-religious congregation.

20. I use spelling in italic in reference to the expressions self-defined by the interlocutors. Although in some moments they use the expression *terreiro*, *terreira* is the main form of denomination of the place that gathers the cultural and and Afro-religious activities of this family-of-saint.

operate during the trance was reported by Bia, mother-of-saint, when she saw the pictures of the Gypsy Party [*Festa da Cigana*]:

Guys! What a beautiful thing! And you got the details like that, from the people who were there, isn't it! (...) These things people tell us, but we don't see, we don't know!<sup>21</sup>

The place that I started to occupy and be recognized by the residents in the Ilha da Pintada during my fieldwork was of photographer and photography teacher<sup>22</sup>, even though I was also a researcher doing interviews and taking notes.

During the year I was in the field, I could participate in a series of rituals, tributes, and celebrations, which mobilized the whole social network of the *terreira* and put on display a set of Afro-religious cultural expressions. The group was organized on an annual calendar of festivities that demanded from the people of the house participation and mobilization, and in some cases, such as carnival, of a wider social network that connected residents from inside and outside the island.

The annual calendar marked several moments in which the *terreira* was intensely mobilized, among special celebrations and regular rites, tributes, works, processions, and excursions. Among these, the Gypsy Party was a celebration of the upmost importance, mobilizing work, resources, and strong spiritual and social investments. In some rites of lesser scale, I got used to hear comments of children-of-saint that indicated the Gypsy Party as a good opportunity to photograph: it was a very long party, which often ended at daybreak. That year it would mark the inauguration of the new hall of the *terreira*, which had been finished just a few days before. Since it was a year of heavy expenses, the party would be considerably smaller than in prior occasions and was scheduled to end at one o'clock in the morning.

I arrived at the party carrying my camera, as usual. There was intense movement inside and outside the *terreira*. Food, flowers, and ornaments arrived by the hand of the children-of-saint. The entrance of the *terreira* was illuminated by a tent with torches: there, some practitioners dressed in white clothes received the guests. From the doorway I caught a glimpse of the colorful pink robes of the people of the house, who were dancing in a circle in the center of the hall, lit by the lamps and by the brightness of the wood in the new building. As usual, I was gradually recognized

21. Interview with Bia in December 2009.

22. The doctoral field work research took place mainly during the years of 2008 and 2010 and was characterized by engagement and performance via cultural projects in the research areas. Therefore, while I was a researcher interested in photographs of this family-of-saint, I was also responsible for teaching photography to the young people of the *terreira* and members of this network, as well as a photographer of the events in the house [*terreiro*].



and received gentle smiles or nods from my students, their parents, and acquaintances.

Even though in all my trips to the Ilha da Pintada I took my camera with me, I had not previously agreed with the mother-of-saint that I would photograph the party. Despite being in the field for about six months, the possibilities and interdiction in the documentation of the parties and rituals of the *terreira* were still unclear matters to me. I had never received formal consent to take photographs in the field. There was no harassment around the camera: no one sought to smile or pose for the photo, no one asked to see the photographs once they were taken. In the beginning I felt indifference towards my presence, with or without the camera. Little by little, in the interstices of some comments made among the practitioners, I realized, throughout the months of field work, discreet manifestations of gratitude towards the presence of the camera, as well as regrets on the occasions in which the camera was not there.

On the night of the party, I asked Rosi, Bia's biological sister, if I could take pictures and she replied positively. I started to move discreetly in the little space available in between the chain [*corrente*]<sup>23</sup> and the guests. When she saw me bending down, positioning the camera between the legs of the children-of-saint that were part of the chain, Rosi came close and, looking me firmly in the eyes, she said that I was the only person authorized to enter the circle. Rosi was referring to the uninitiated, those who did not belong to the house and the religion, and who only attended the ritual as spectators. By authoring my entry to the chain, she was placing me inside a sacred space in which I was summoned to produce images<sup>24</sup>. There, amidst the entities that took over the bodies of those present, it was difficult to ask myself whether or not I would photograph the entities in the world: I found myself immersed in this religious atmosphere. Nevertheless, I could only stay down and look at them from the bottom up making portraits in *contre-plongée*.

Gradually, I noticed the presence of other photographers at the party, who positioned cameras and cell phones, with or without flash, documenting the party, the guests, the children-of-saint, the circle, the drummers, and the entities in the world. These photographers positioned themselves outside the chain, looking for stools and higher surfaces to frame the largest number of people and situations in the party. The exception was

23. Chain [*corrente*] is an emic expression that relates both to the circular alignment of the people-of-saint at the *terreira* parties, and to the movement of spiritual elements among the practitioners.

24. As the sociologist José de Souza Martins (2008) points out when reflecting on religious and acts of faith photographs, not only the photograph is incorporated to the sacred, but also the photographer. To admit the photographer in the sacred scene, to tolerate his acts that are not exactly liturgical, is to recreate him symbolically as a protagonist of the cult (Martins 2008, 94).

a practitioner that documented the entities inside the circle with his cell phone, and minutes later fell into the saint, receiving an *Exu* that made him abandon the place of photographer.

I perceived that the authorization for me to remain inside the chain was linked to the fact that I was an outsider carrying professional equipment, who had good relations with the house directors, privileged access to sectors of the municipal and cultural policy and to the university, and all that enlarged the reach of the images I would produce. It was not at stake the risk for me to produce images that would work against the people of this house or its leaders. The party was beautiful, the entities ruled the celebration, and I was affected by the atmosphere shared in that aesthetic experience. In that night, I met several collaborators who offered to hold my bag, guard my shoes in case I entered the circle, or even change places so I could have better positions to photograph.

### **IMAGES AND MEMORIES OF THE FAMILY-OF-SAINT**

On more than one occasion, women of the *terreira* commented on the need to organize the photographs taken during the rituals in albums, so that these records would not be lost. As the photographs of the festivities were often taken by people from outside the *terreira*, due to their privileged access to equipment and technical knowledge, as well as their availability, to the extent that they were not part of the chain, to record in simpler devices as compact cameras or cellphones, most of these images did not return to the *terreira*. As Bia told me when I brought to her house a package containing all the pictures taken in the field work, “people consume and then we never see them again, we never know”.

The necessity of the *terreira* to have autonomy and to act with protagonism in the production of visual records informed both a rupture of a logic of reciprocity by the researchers and outside photographers, as well as the value attributed to photography in the documentation of the memory of the *terreira*. Bia’s concern about building a memory in photographs that would communicate to her descendants the ritual practices in the *terreira* was rooted in her frustration with the lack of previous records of her people, in which she could ground the recognition of a religious tradition.

In part, the private photographic collection of Leoni, Bia’s biological mother, brought this memory of religiosity and belonging to her mind. Leoni was the “memory keeper” of the paths taken by the family connected by blood and spiritual ties. Among the images of family celebrations, trips and portraits of Leoni and her children and grandchildren, there was a set of scattered photographs depicting the Afro-religious historical trajectory on the Ilha da Pintada in its various expressions: images of offerings,

incorporations, parties, rituals, and public presentations of the Afro-Brazilian culture and carnivals.

The photographs in Leoni's collection also showed her religious trajectory and some of her passages<sup>25</sup> in *Umbanda*, showing entirely different manifestations on the same body that was taken by different entities. One of the photographs in black and white, showed Leoni still young, with her eyes closed and smoking a cigar with an expression of an Old black man [*Preto Velho*]. Like most photographs of her collection, Leoni could not say who the photographer was. In that image, the entity taking over her body was the photographer's focus. A more recent image depicted Mother Mary [*Mãe Maria*] cradling a child in a white skirt, both intensely linked by the gaze. In both images, the surroundings are emptied or left to the margins of the photographic frame, favoring the representation of Leoni's religious identities.

The portrayal of spiritual entities as a photography consented and posed appears more explicitly in one party of *Pombagiras* and *Exus* in the Madam Tereza *terreira*. The photographs were organized in an album made by a long-gone photo-developing company in Porto Alegre. At the opening of the album, the slogan "where the amateur becomes a professional" alluded to the democratization of the access to photography in non-professional segments, something that made more explicit the domestic character of this photographs of ritual contexts. The photographs of the party in the album show two incorporated entities dancing in a frontal pose, facing the photographer who was documenting the scene. In the first photograph, *Exu* looks at the camera displaying his robes under the watchful eyes of five children in the background, behind the table. The photographs of this entity that dances in its red and black robes, that holds cigars and display laughing faces, surrounded by images of Jesus Christ, the symbolism of the cross that shapes the decorated cake, shows well the intersection of religious symbols in this *Umbanda terreira*.

A completely different atmosphere had been captured in the set of photographs that showed a party in the old and small *terreira*, constructed by Bia next to Leoni's house. The white robes, the half-closed eyes, with almost everyone present framed in the little space of the hall, reflected the early days of the *terreira*.

Oh, A party of Preto Velho, here's a Preto Velho cattleman arriving, oh. Inside the old terreiro. (...) It is Father Ogum that is in this world, oh. This is an Ogum party. This here was when Bia lived here, it was an old terreira, and then Bia took a room of it, and we never stopped doing it. Because

25. The expression "passage" [*passagem*] is used by *Umbanda* practitioners to describe an opening of the body to *Orixás* and entities that temporarily take over during moments of incorporation.

we had dismantled the *terreira*, right, and then she took a room, made the *terreira*, and we never stopped doing our works, oh. And it was a party, by chance, of Ogum, and we made the party there, and it was a small party, just like this one here. But I think that, our roots have been shown always, in any place, right<sup>26</sup>.

Another children-of-saint, upon seeing the photographs, also referred with great emotion to this little *terreiro*, whose portraits showed a spiritual force condensed on the place:

Then we would spin on...it was a little thing like this, oh, from my bookcase to there, oh. It was a long thing like this, and everyone spun around. Perfectly, nobody fell, nobody got hurt...it worked very well. Then when it was Exus', something like that, we would put some tarps in the street, and do it in the street, because then more people would come, you know. We used to do it in the street, it was oh, a beauty of *terreiro*. If you were moved by that one that was bigger, if you saw the other smaller ones, you...it would then burst in tears.<sup>27</sup>

Children-of-saint who have left the house or moved to distant places, people who had died, the changes in the space of the *terreira*, the changes in the body due to the passage of the time. A whole memory of religious expressions recognized in the material support of the photographed moments that marked the trajectory of this family-of-saint and the intersections and encounters between individual, collective and spiritual trajectories. Kept within a family memory, the image does not profane the sacred, because it becomes a part of the individual and collective memories of important moments in the biographical trajectory of the people, just like baptisms and other religious initiation rituals that are carefully organized as objects of remembrance in the family photo albums of the most varied religious tendencies<sup>28</sup>.

The photographs that depicted collective moments at the parties and homages at the *terreira* were complemented by portraits referring to the status of the individuals as members of this family-of-saint, articulating the dimensions of a collective and individual memory that intertwined and built this kinship.

26. Interview with Rosi in August 2009.

27. Interview with Eliane in June 2009.

28. Even though the research of Fernando De Tacca (2009) emphasizes the controversy caused by the publication of the images of the initiated *iaôs*, his investigation also shows how this images that profane the sacred when printed nationally, decontextualizing the religious event, are rearranged in the context of the family memories of the *iaôs*. In an interview with a daughter of Perrucha, one of the *iaôs* portrayed by José Medeiros, she shows an album of memories organized by a niece of her mother with clippings of the photographs and captions published in the magazine, rearranged under the title "Memories of my epilation", featured in the magazine *O Cruzeiro* of September 1951 (De Tacca 2009).

Sometimes, while recording the collective preparation of the parties, my attention was led, even if under the appearance of disinterested attention, to portray scenes that would be overlooked from my lay point of view. Being available and allowing my gaze to be directed in the field by these interlocutors, assuming a “collaborative” mode in the production of images (Caldarola 1998), helped me to understand the place these images would occupy in the ordering of individual memories, as in the occasion that I photographed the preparation of a big cake in honor of Oxum, made by two children-of-saint, one of them honoring an obligation with the homage. During the preparation, in which four women chat excitedly in the kitchen while I took the pictures, Cláudia commented on her interest in having a picture of the whole cake, as a reminder of the tribute. With some difficulty, I framed the big cake in the visor of my camera and took the photo that she received with enthusiasm days later. For Cláudia, more important than the photograph of the ritual itself, was the photograph of the cake, which she would offer to Oxum. Carefully prepared, the large cake with yellow icing represented a series of spiritual investments made by Cláudia, to be consecrated in the ritual homage.



**FIGURE 1**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.





**FIGURE 2**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 3**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 4**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

The many portraits taken at the wedding of Bia's biological sister, Rosi, also reaffirm a spiritual journey, but in this case, a journey intertwined with a rite of union between a woman and a man and their respective families. Besides me, the wedding had the presence of another photographer carrying professional equipment. At the wedding, the photographs framing Bia's incorporation, who received Yemanjá to bless the bride and groom, were scaled in the context of a ritual family where the photography is part of the rite. Photography was a means to acknowledge such culminating moments of social life in which the group solemnly reaffirms its unity<sup>29</sup>, whose family ties celebrated in the ritual was not restricted to the blood family but incorporated to the entire religious network linked to the *terreiro* as the family-of-saint. Rosi, at the wedding held in a small ceremony restricted to a few guests and family, made sure that there would be photographers with professional equipment, in addition to the guests' records.

29. As Pierre Bourdieu states "everything leads one to believe that there is no marriage without photography" (Bourdieu 1965, 40).



**FIGURE 5**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

In other cases, the photograph operated as a witness of the children's bond to religion, such as the image made of a grandson of a children-of-saint of the *terreira*. The baby was less than a month old when he accompanied the image of Our Lady of Aparecida [*Nossa Senhora de Aparecida*] in the same boat in the procession that would take it to the Gasômetro<sup>30</sup> for the tributes of October 12, 2009. When they arrived on land, after the image was brought in front of the stage where homages would be made in an ecumenical ritual, the mother of the young baby dressed in yellow positioned him in front of the image of the saint to take photographs. In capturing the image of the photograph, I was able to register the moment in which the mother held the fragile body of the newborn baby in front of the image of the saint, and the moment afterwards in which the mother, aunt and grandmother celebrated the making of the photograph under the somewhat apprehensive gaze of the father. The photography embodied this belonging of the little child's body to a spiritual entity, "the saint" [*a santa*], incorporating the image of the expression of a spiritual connection.

During the field work, in which I frequently acted as the photographer of the house, the images I produced were added to the memories of this sociability of the family-of-saint. Many of these images delivered to the people portrayed, which narrated an individual, familiar and spiritual journey of these women, would be added to other images in the line of their biographical trajectories.

30. T.N. A popular and open place in Porto Alegre, near the Guaíba Lagoon.





**FIGURE 6**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 7**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

### **FROM IMAGES OF RESEARCH, NEW SENSES**

Over a year after the beginning of my field work research, having photographed different parties and tributes at the *terreira*, I had a meeting with Bia at her house to show her the set of photographs I had taken. It was a long and unhurried conversation. While showing the photographs to Bia and her son-in-law, our comments were registered in a small tape recorder placed on the sofa. Together, we looked at the amount of printed photographs I had brought with me.

Like most of the images taken in the field, the photographs of the Gipsy Party were taken with photographic film and an analog camera. This

option for an analog technology was due in part to the equipment that was available and my preference for film, but also to the recognition of the liminal space of the latent image, which made me believe in the creative power of a time that goes through and, little by little, forms the printed image in milliseconds in the period between the shot and the photo development, unlike the immediate unveiling of digital photography. This quality of latency seemed to create a more effective, emphatic dialogue, between photography and ritual, in which I shared a kind of lack of control with my interlocutors. It was as if my rationality was unable to control or govern the photographs I took, subject to the co-emergence between photographic capture and the ritual, where the choices of shots and framing were guided by conscious and unconscious motivations, contemplating the unpredictable, the unintentional<sup>31</sup>.

During the party, I played with high and low velocities, trying to “dance” and move together with the people I was portraying. As a photography teacher, I used to teach my students the motto of the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson: “the world is in motion, and we cannot have a static attitude towards what is moving” (Cartier-Bresson 2003, 223). But far from making concise images that would translate the concept of the “decisive moment”, my corporal attitude resulted in imprecise, confused photographs, with blurred movements and overlapping people. More than the precision of lines and shapes, my interest was to capture the ambiance, the movement. In a way, it was an attempt to extent the reduction operated by the camera in the “freezing” of the image<sup>32</sup>: the non-freezing of the image caused the effect of a distention of the bodies in the flow of time.

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31. For the anthropologist David MacDougall (2006) no matter how directed the camera is, there is an irreducible part of the photographic image that eludes us, that uncovers something uncontrollable and uncontrolled in this attempt of technical reproduction (MacDougall 2006, 03).

32. To the sociologist José de Souza Martins, the photographic instant does not “freeze” the image but reveals the reduction of mismatched times in a single time, the time of photography (Martins 2008).





**FIGURE 8**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 9**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 10**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 11**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

Yeah...[she looks at the photographs for a long time and in silence]. Well, but what looks like that, it doesn't look like me! Where am I, where am I!?<sup>33</sup>

The experience of multiplicity and the disappearance signaled by Bia pointed to a real presence of the *orixá* and the recognition of a third party in the dual relation between photographer and photographed. Bia did not recognize herself in the picture: she wasn't there. She had not

33. Interview with Bia in December 2009.



witnessed, on the night of the party, the images that now showed through the details and the atmosphere created by the Gypsy Party. As Bia studied the photographs, she was surprised at every detail captured by the lens: the candles, the bare feet, the pink tones of the gypsy robes, the dance of the entities, the audience at the party.

Bia's surprise when looking at the photographs of the entity took over her body, spoke of the ever-present relationship between the non-individualization that characterizes the incorporation of the *orixá* or entity, and the individualizing instances that mark the peculiar qualities resulting from the encounters of the *orixá* or entity with the body that receives it. Even though the photographs had a lack of sharpness and a lot of movement, favoring a confusing ambiance for the recognition of a physiognomy in the individuality, they displayed the change in the faces and bodies of the subjects who, that night, took on the features of their entities. Cláudia's gypsy, Nice's Padilha and Daltro's Exú were commented in their beauty, strength, and exuberance. In this environment of positions, relationships, and individuality, where the limits between the individual, the person, and the spiritual entity were fluid and shifting (Velho 2003, 61), I asked myself, after all, who the camera was actually portraying.



**FIGURE 12**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

For the Gypsy Party, I took only two films: the first was an ISO 800 color film, which allowed me shoot without flash, taking advantage of the ambient light, although at low speeds, which blurred the movement. The other was black and white. The multicolored film ended just as the gypsy people were saying goodbye, giving way to the *Exus* and *Pombagiras* who took over the salon. Therefore, all the visual documentation of the second part of the party happened in black and white portraits, giving another

tone and atmosphere to the images, which until then had been softened by a certain harmony between the pink of the clothes and the gestures of the gypsy people. These pictures, in spite of being taken from the same position I occupied in the salon, showed another aspect resulting from the encounter with the *Exus* and *Pombagiras*.

Bia's son-in law often attended the parties and photographed his wife with small cameras and cellphones<sup>34</sup>. He was a vocalist of the samba school presided by Bia, but was not initiated into the religion. Like Bia's husband, he participated on the outside in the parties and rituals of the *terreira*, helping in the preparation, welcoming guests, and even taking pictures. Despite being well acquainted with his wife's incorporation, the contact with the photographs I had produced seemed to have triggered an unusual and even uncomfortable effect in the unveiling of the multiplicity experienced by his wife. Something that, as he said, was impossible to understand.



**FIGURE 13**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

34. It is worth noting that in the year of 2009, the camera technology available in cellphones was quite precarious, resulting in pixelated and non-shareable images.





**FIGURE 14**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

Most of the images framed the circle, delimited by the chain [*corrente*]. That place was inhabited by the people of the street. Rarely centralized, the *Exus* and *Pombagiras* appeared at the edges of the pictures, sometimes framed by the details of the bodies that composed the chain, in the foreground. The Lady [*Dama*] appeared in the “confines” (Calabrese 1987) of a permeable boundary that separated and united her multiple and possible identities and passages. Bia and her son-in-law, when mentioning that “it’s in the photos that we see”, and that “we see even things that we don’t want to”, showed how the photograph, in its unveiling instant, had anticipated something that one day her husband would see, and would not like, as his wife’s biological grandmother and mother-of-saint had warned him. The entity in all its strength, in its mocking laughter, provoked the young man to know the multiple facets of his wife.



**FIGURE 15**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.



**FIGURE 16**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

The photographed image also becomes part of a set of symbols embedded in the production of religious meanings and knowledge<sup>35</sup>. Unlike the idea of photography as a dead being, a representation devoid of vividness, the uses and narratives that unfold from the technical image, reframe photography as a “living representation”, filled with emotion (Martins 2008, Head 2009). The anthropologist-photographer, therefore, begins to build

35. Regarding this aspect, the dissertation of Eliane Coster (2007) shows interesting interpretations of *ialbs* and *babalorixás* concerning images of Bahian *Candomblé* produced by professional photographers such as Mário Cravo Neto and Adenor Gondim.

images, symbol-signifiers, interfering in the composition of the symbolic universe of the group she researchers.

Among these symbols produced by photography, the details of the party were object of special attention in Bia's eyes. In photographs with closed frames and close-ups, the details of the party gained importance by being resized in the entire frame of the photogram, in a "boundary plane"<sup>36</sup> (Satt 1996) that directed the gaze to contemplate separately scenes that composed, in an integrated way, the aesthetic experience of the party. The motion cut and the choice of close-ups showed the detail apprehended in depth, thanks to the immobility of the object observed, indicating what the anthropologist Scott Head (2009) calls the "paradoxical advantage" of photography over audiovisual languages, in the sense that it evokes something not fully visible, involving more the expression of emotions than the impression of reality in motion (Head 2009, 54).

This emphasis on detail, as pointed out by Omar Calabrese, allows for a reconstruction in the system of which it is a part (Calabrese 1987). The specifics of the interlaced hands, the bare feet, the lit candles, did not create a dissociation from the integrated atmosphere of the party, but deepened the meaning of every single thing that had been carefully planned by the Gypsy entity and executed by the children-of-saint. Bia, as she looked at the photograph that framed the detail of the two hands joined in the composition of the chain, paid attention to the non-visible dimension of energy in circulation, something that was allowed by the linking of the bodies in the chain..



**FIGURE 17**  
Fernanda  
Rechenberg.

36. In her dissertation on the circularity of *Batuque* images, Maria Henriqueta Satt (1996) proposes this concept to designate an aesthetic choice of framing video-graphic images where the detail configures the edge of the scene.

Also in this direction was Rosi's comment when she saw the pink candles that illuminated the crestfallen faces of those present. During the party, Rosi's non-incorporation allowed her to report to Bia the conduction proposed by her Gypsy.

Oh, this here was in the *terreira*, this is what I told you about the Gypsy who made all the lights go out..., oh... gave each one a candle...<sup>37</sup>

What a beautiful thing, I saw this picture...well, I fell in love! It's one thing for you to say, but it's another thing for us to see, right...<sup>38</sup>

The comments made around the photographs showed how the images in their plasticity could communicate a religious cosmovision of the group. Not only the framing proposed by my perspective selected the images that seemed expressive of that *terreira*, but the very limitations imposed by the equipment in the visual documentation built this concreteness of the apprehended forms, which could be looked at and narrated later.

If by framing the images of the party we produce religious symbols that begin to converge with the other images that make up this sacred atmosphere, it is when they are translated in the light of a religious "ethos" that animates these images, that the meaning of the photographs opens itself to an investigation, evoking reactions, comments, alignments, and comparisons. This space of interaction constituted in the return of the images allowed me to reconsider the pictures based on interpretations that were entirely different from the ones I had learned about the fundamentals of photography in my professional career, and which I tried, with great difficulty, to teach to the young students on the island who were part of the *terreira*.

TRANSLATION  
Felipe Benedet  
Maureira

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## VAI- VAI – PROTECTED AND BLESSED BY OGUM – A PRIVILEGE THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN TO JUST ANYONE

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

This article presents a brief overview of the religious influence that *Escola de Samba Vai-Vai* has in its daily life and transmits to its members. Such references range from the European Catholic ones to the Afro-Diasporic ones, especially the devotion that the samba school has in relation to Ogum, Vai-Vai's *orixá*. This profane way of expressing faith is part of *Vai-Vai*'s routine, and votive parties are part of the institution's annual calendar. However, that is not all. In the carnival parades—the moment of greatest visibility that *Escolas de Samba* have throughout the year—this religiosity is also evident, with representations of yorubás deities appearing in the parades, especially representations of Ogum, which have appeared more frequently in recent years.

### KEYWORDS

Afro-religiosity;  
Candomblé; *Escolas de samba*, Carnival,  
Ogum

## INTRODUCTION

Vai-Vai<sup>1</sup>, a samba school founded in 1930, is one of the most traditional carnival associations in São Paulo and in Brazil. With a trajectory marked by the religious influence of different origins, the school located in Bixiga—a traditional neighborhood in the central region of São Paulo— switches from saints to *orixás*.

Once established in an area with a strong presence of Italian— and Catholic—immigrants, black people who settled in there needed to blend into the reality of the same place, so they ended up approaching European and Christian religiosity, even though they still continued to worship the deities of their homelands or their ancestors. Thus, as a way to resist, survive and keep their faith, religious syncretism set the tone for the establishment of black groups in Brazil.

For black people, faith and party were never dissociated, therefore carnival and samba schools find in Brazil a lively and vibrant way to link these two important elements of human condition.

The links between the sacred and the profane can be observed, in a denser perspective, in social practices such as carnival, whose origins, articulated in different ways in distinct cultures, accentuate the polymorphic meaning that characterizes it. Carnival, because of its ritual dimension, inaugurates a specific time for its manifestation. It is a cycle time that breaks historical linear time and makes possible the reconstitution—even if temporary—of the social universe through new rules. These rules invert and transgress those that are in force in everyday life and are responsible for establishing a heterogeneous web of achievements and meanings. This means that, beforehand, it is necessary to think of carnival in terms of its plurality, a fact that opens up space for conflicts and negotiations between the values of the sacred and the profane. (Pereira 2004, 44)

In Vai-Vai, people say “Amen” and also celebrate Catholic saints such as *São Benedito*, *Cosme e Damião* and have a straight relationship with the Parish *Nossa Senhora Achiropita*, who is the patroness of Bixiga—with its nationally famous church. However, there is also a lot of “*axé*” going through this samba school. *Axé*, in general terms, could be translated as “vital energy”. Nevertheless, in *Candomblé* philosophy, it is much more than that.

*Axé* is constituted from an interactive, interdependent and intercrossed movement from the contraction of two coexistent places: *Orun*—metaphysical world without limits between spiritual and ancestral universe—and *Ayê*—physical

1. In its official site, the association is designated as “O Vai Vai”, taking the male gender article “o”, despite the fact that the Portuguese word for samba school (*escola de samba*) takes a female gender article “a”. The explanation for this is that before becoming a school, it started as a small group (*cordão*— male gender word in Portuguese), then a recreational club (*grêmio recreativo* – male gender) and just afterwards a school (female gender word). Available at: <https://www.vaivai.com.br/sobre/>. Accessed on: 04/29/2021.

world with limits between human and natural universe. Axé is shared between worlds, between forms and between worlds and forms. Axé is interchanged, shared and restituted in a continuous circular movement. *Orun* cohabits in *Ayê*, and Axé, as vital energy, is “an ancestral blood”. (Faislon, L. L.; Benedicto, R. M. 2020, 19).

With this cosmogonic view, it is understandable that all beings that inhabit *ayê* have their own *axé*, which interacts, connects and integrates with the *axé* of all living forms around: human or non-human, animals, plants, inert or animate. They all collaborate so that the balance between *orun* and *ayê* is maintained, through the movement of *axé*. Besides the religious aspect, in Brazil, *axé* has also become an identity marker. “Being from *axé*”, “*axé* house” and “made in *axé*”, among others, are expressions commonly used by African Brazilian religion practitioners and they refer to them as to a place of pride and resistance, over other religious denominations, mostly of dominant European origin in social culture.

The main *axé* that supports Vai-Vai comes from Ogum *orixá*, the great civilizing hero of Yoruba people, the lord of metals, war and technological advances, who comes to the school—along with Exu—in the 1970’s, through the hands of a priestess (*yalorixá*) who ritually consecrates the school’s court<sup>2</sup> so it could also become a place of worshi

In the 2010’s, when Neguitão became the school’s president, Ogum gained even more prominence and was formally considered the patron of the association and this *orixá*’s presence became a constant in Vai-Vai’s parties, rituals and parades.

Vai-Vai follows its path, with parties and faith. And as the school is “the black soul of Bixiga”, a place of resistance of African descendant identity and culture, in its fans, members and components’ vision and faith, it is Ogum who comes forward, guiding their steps, and filling them with *axé*.

### **VAI-VAI: AMONG SAINTS AND ORIXÁS**

At the beginning of the 20th century, when urban centres in Brazil were still developing, new freed blacks—who were gradually replaced by immigrant labor on large farms in rural centres, in a movement to whiten the country—were considered cheap labor, did not have any institutional support for their establishment and ended up with a few options to work (Souza, 2005).

Most blacks and mixed-race people were kept in the most disadvantaged segments of the population, not only by the precariousness of the opportunities offered for their education and professional improvement, but also because of the

2. The samba school’s court is the headquarters where the school has its rehearsals and social events take place. In Portuguese, it is called *quadra*.

general preference for whiter people to occupy the best jobs in the labor market. (Souza 2005, 142-143).

Thus, blacks—from both urban and rural areas—began to occupy the central area of São Paulo, the industrial and commercial region of the city, where they could find, in addition to small job opportunities, housing options at low cost. Among these districts were Barra Funda, Baixada do Glicério and, one in particular, Bixiga, or as it came to be known later, Bela Vista.

Bixiga became a district from 1879 on, with the arrival and establishment of Italian immigrants—and it was precisely there that, for more than 90 years, the headquarters of *Grêmio Recreativo, Cultural and Social Escola de Samba Vai- Vai*, or, simply, Vai-Vai, one of the most important carnival associations in Brazil, are. Founded in 1930 by young blacks and poor people—with great influence from the *samba de bumbo* (also known as rural samba), a very present element in Catholic festivities in the countryside of the state, especially played in celebrations in honor of Bom Jesus, in Pirapora<sup>3</sup>—and until today it represents an African culture resistance place.

Even with the arrival and permanence of blacks in Bela Vista, the Italians were the ones who determined much of the neighborhood's characteristics, including its religiosity. Among the sacred festivities that took place in the neighborhood was the Feast of *Nossa Senhora Achiropita*, which until today fills the streets with aromas and faith directly from Italy.

In a stereotyped view of the neighborhood, people may think that Bixiga was a reference for coexistence and racial integration, with Italians and blacks living harmoniously, but the reality was not quite that.

The poor Italians accepted to live in the tenements with the blacks only in case of necessity. Despite maintaining friendly relationships, Italians and blacks very rarely defined marriage relationships. The relationships were much more of 'master and servant'; more permeated by paternalism than truly by ethnic and social integration (...) (Sccarlato 1988, 71)

Thus, with the imminent tension among the residents in the area, the division was physical and spatial, too. The Italians inhabited the more noble parts of the neighborhood, while the blacks stayed in the steep areas or at the bottom of the Saracura river valley, areas that usually experienced floods during rainy seasons.

3. Pirapora is a small city in São Paulo state. Because of its festivities to *Nossa Senhora das Dores* and *Bom Jesus*, it became a famous original samba place. At that time, the various black "battalions" coming from different locations "challenged" each other through improvised chants, marked by the presence of the bass drum and other percussion instruments, typical from rural samba.



This small, less noble area of the neighborhood became a reference for black people in the region and surrounding areas. Bixiga has become a “new *quilombo*”.

(...) To “become a new *quilombo*”, that is, to organize against any oppressive attitude or system, becomes, therefore, nowadays the rekindled flame to, in the contemporary condition, give meaning, stimulate, strengthen the fight against discrimination and its effects. Now, it throws light on a part of the past, one that stands out for the emphatic reference contained in statistics where blacks are the majority of socially excluded. It now comes to illuminate a part of the past; *quilombo* is, therefore, the main motto to discuss a denied citizenship (Leite 2000, 349)

It is within this “new *quilombo*” understanding that Vai-Vai has sought throughout its history to keep its importance as a place of resistance for a citizenship that was denied. In a way, it takes place through the cultural, artistic and even religious point of view since samba schools represent an environment of relationship between the sacred and the profane, between party and faith.

[...] the complexity of the sacred compels us to analyze the resulting implications of the way it is lived and the multiple functions it assumes in society. In other words, the sacred is present in social circles linked to religious experience. Nevertheless, it transcends these circles to establish itself in other spheres, in which it dialogues, in a complex way, with the profane (Pereira 2004, 44).

When one goes into Vai-Vai court, a sacred environment is noticed. Sharing space with costumes, musical instruments and trophies—this association is the biggest champion of São Paulo carnival, with 15 titles in *Grupo Especial* and one in *Grupo de Acesso*<sup>5</sup>—, there are altars, ostensibly maintained, with their lit candles, flowers and other offerings, where images of Catholic saints and *orixás* of African cults coexist. There are representations of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, *São Cosme and Damião*, *Oxum*, *Obaluayê*, *Iansã*, *Santa Bárbara*, among others. In addition to several images of *São Jorge*, which within the structure of religious syncretism, is associated with *Ogum* (Valente 1955), the school’s patron *orixá*.

In addition to the deities that occupy the various altars, in another part of the court, there is a non-religious element, which has great importance and receives its own honors and reverences as if it were also a deity.

On the other side, facing all the altars, a small stage was built on top of the bar, where the imposing school flag (*pa-*

4. In Brazil, during slavery time, “*quilombo*” was the name given to hinterland settlements of runaway slaves.

5. Inside the annual championship that takes place on Carnival, samba schools are divided in groups. The best and most traditional schools are in *Grupo Especial* (Special Group) and compete among each other; when a school gets bad grades during a parade, it may be downgraded to *Grupo de Acesso* (Access Group) where other associations compete in order to be in *Grupo Especial*.

*vilhão*) is located, its largest symbol, which cannot be removed, giving the impression that it is a religious settlement. For samba dancers, the flag is like a deity (Alexandre 2017).

The religious experience within Vai-Vai also includes more specific attention to the symbology of the deities represented on its altars, the school has a reserved space, where the settlement of some *orixás* (*orixás* sites), guardians of the association, are kept.

Settlements are physical representations of the *orixás*, formed by elements that refer to their mythology and domain, where devotees believe that the divinity's vital energy is set and in which offerings and sacrifices are made. They represent the direct relationship between the devotee and the *orixá*. The settlement is also a connecting portal between the visible and the non-visible world. It is from it that the circulation, transformation and replacement of *axé* takes place, the exchange of information between the worlds happens. Thus, the presence of these elements inside Vai-Vai court, guarantees the connection of the school—and its members—with the deities set there, as well as with other *orixás*, and the protection of the spiritual and energetic integrity of the association.

The presence of the settlements in a room intended for them within the court makes Vai-Vai space not only festive, but also religious. The deities set there need specific care, which is carried out by specialized hands far from the eyes of most of the community, in private moments, having just a few people involved.

The routine for taking care of the sacred space involves the *babalorixá* coming and going to the court, cleaning the room and the settlements, cleaning (*ebós*) all internal and external spaces with leaves, baths and smoking, and sacrificial offerings. On days of festivals and services, the *babalorixá* says he does not hesitate to comply with all the precepts, before and after, justifying the holding of services, in which drums are played, people sing in Yoruba and dance properly dressed to praise the *orixás* (Alexandre 2017, 128).

Some of this part of Vai-Vai's religious experience is restricted, while others are open to the public, with the participation of the community, curious people, school fans and members of other associations. Contrary to what people who do not have a closer relationship with Carnival may think, samba schools are active throughout the year, with an intense calendar of festivities and activities that directly involve—or not—the Carnival parade. In the case of Vai-Vai, in addition to the common activities to almost all samba schools—such as rehearsals, samba contests, plot announcement, costume presentation, among others—, there is also a series of events in honor of the saints and *orixás*, showing even more the vocation of linking the sacred and the profane that the association has.

In Vai-Vai's sacred-festive calendar, the one who starts the year, opening the way, taking the first step on a journey to Carnival, is Ogum. With a big party that includes a procession and a *feijoada*, the patron deity of the school is celebrated.

## OGUM - 4 FACES OF A WARRIOR

### a) OGUM: LORD OF IRÊ

Ogum is a commonly worshiped deity until today in Yoruba territory, having a river and a state named after him in Nigeria. However, its importance for African peoples who worship him goes beyond the religious aspect:

Ogum is seen as a warrior *orixá*, bloodthirsty, cruel, unstable, dominating and impatient. On the other hand, he is the one who opens the way, shows new opportunities, and provides the necessary strength in everyday disputes and difficulties. He is the one who gives us enough material instruments for our survival, who guarantees our security, who wins battles for us. Finally, Ogum is also the protagonist of myths that speak of carnal love and passion, and even goes to war for love.

Ogum is above all a civilizing hero: in the memory of his people, he is at the forefront of shaping culture and history, personifying the different moments in the evolution of humanity itself. (Prandi 2019, 23)

In addition to being a deity, Ogum is also known as a historical figure, a great community leader, who has in his biography great deeds and achievements. He would even have won a title of nobility.

Ogum, as a historical character, would have been the eldest son of Odùduà, the founder of Ifé. He was a fearsome warrior who fought incessantly against the kingdoms nearby. From these expeditions, he always brought a rich booty and numerous slaves. He made war against the city of Arah and destroyed it. He sacked and devastated many other states and seized upon the city of Ire, killed the king, put his own son on the throne and returned in glory, using the title himself: "Onìrê" (King of Ire) (Verger 1981, 40)

Due to the great importance that family and ancestry relationships have in the cosmogony and philosophy of this ethnic group, a tradition among Yorubás is to elevate people who stood out during their lives, with remarkable achievements, whether for the community or the family, or in any other circumstances, to deity status. It was not different with Ogum.

The myths say that when he returned to Irê, after spending a period in Ifé, kingdom of his father, Odùduà, Ogum realized that his subjects did not recognize him. He was hungry and thirsty, and as much as he asked for food and drink to Irê people, no one answered his requests. As he felt despised by the inhabitants of his own kingdom, Ogum was seized by

revolt and wrath, and started to destroy the whole city. Still not happy, he started to cut off the head of anyone who crossed his path, promoting a great massacre, bathing the streets of Irê with the blood of its residents.

After a while, Ogum's son came to meet him, bringing his favorite food and drink, and paying all the honors a king deserves. The young man then explained to his father that, because of an ongoing ritual in honor of the ancestors, everyone had to be completely silent, and that was why people were not speaking to him.

Ogum then, ashamed and regretting his moment of anger and intolerance, decides that he should no longer live, takes refuge in the forest due to his torment, and starts to martyrize himself. No longer able to forgive himself, as his last act, Ogum stuck his machete in the ground, which opened and swallowed him inside. At that moment, Ogum ceases to be human and becomes an *orixá* (Prandi, 2001). He becomes the lord of war, paths and technology. Ogum becomes then the civilizing hero of Yorubá people.

#### b) OGUM ARRIVES IN BRAZIL

As a divinity, Ogum crosses the Atlantic Ocean and lands in Brazil in the company of black men and women who came to the new world enslaved. As well as other *orixás*, worshiped in present day Nigeria, Togo and part of Benin, Ogum is part of a pantheon and organizational system which, in Brazil, was institutionalized as *Candomblé da Nação Ketu*, based on practices and devotions of Yoruba origin (other Nations originate from the devotion of other deities, worshiped by other peoples, such as the Nkisses, from *Candomblé of Angola*, and *Voduns*, celebrated in the *Candomblé Jeje*).

Among the main domains attributed to Ogum in his homeland, some were either suppressed or even destined to other deities. An example of this is agriculture, which in Brazil ended up without a protective *orixá*; or hunting, which has been conferred on Oxossi, a deity originally worshiped in the kingdom of Ketu, Nigeria and, in Brazil, is mythically related to Ogum, as if they were brothers (Verger 1981).

Thus, in *Candomblé* born in Brazilian lands, Ogum is the deity related to work, technological advances, iron, steel, and especially war. His representation in Brazil assumes elements with military references, resembling warriors of European origin, such as the Templars. The helmet replaces the kufi<sup>6</sup> traditionally used by this *orixá* in Nigeria, as well as a sword and a shield replace the machete that opens paths.

6. The kufi is a kind of rounded cap, without a brim, widely used by men in different regions of Africa and southern Asia. Priests and devotees of Ogum often use an elongated model, which falls to one side. Many representations of the deity appear using the same model.

c) OGUM MEETS *JORGE*

*São Jorge* is a Catholic saint, who would have lived around the end of the third century, in the region of Cappadocia, which is today in the region of Turkey. Popular tradition says that

As a child, he lost his father, and his mother took him to Palestine, where he was educated for a military career. His dedication and skill led the Emperor Diocletian to bestow on him the title of Tribune. *Jorge* becomes a Christian, but at the age of twenty-three, he started to live in the Roman imperial court, exercising high functions (Marques, Morais 2011, 4)

When Diocletian decided to kill all Christians who, he believed, could threaten the power of his empire, he made a public decree against which *Jorge* spoke out. Diocletian, angry at the knight's posture, demanded for his arrest and torture, so that he would renounce his faith. Periodically, the prisoner was taken to the Emperor, so that he could check if *Jorge* had already abandoned Christianity, which he denied to do. Given the situation, the Emperor condemned the soldier to death, and he is beheaded on April 23, 303 AD, date chosen for the celebration of the now martyr (*Jorge*, 1958).

The faith in *Jorge* expanded throughout Europe and he became the official Patron Saint of Portugal, and with the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family—who fled from the Napoleonic invasions in Europe—the first image of the saint, with its iconography built around of the knight who rides a horse and defeats a dragon, came to Brazil.

In Brazilian lands, a religious phenomenon was established since blacks began to express their faith: the syncretism.

As conceptualized by the Dutch researcher Andre Droogers, the term syncretism has two meanings, the first one being a quite objective meaning “mixture of religions”, and the other, more subjective, meaning the social evaluation of this mixture (Droogers 1989). The author also recalls how much the meaning of the word has changed over time, and that this transformation from objective to subjective meaning has historical roots.

In Brazil, several authors have studied the phenomenon of syncretism—especially the religious one—at different times. From the pioneer of Afro-Diasporic religiosity studies in Brazil, Nina Rodrigues (although the author does not use that term) to the current discussions on the re-Africanization of *Candomblé*, promoted by activist groups and priests throughout the country.



For this article, we will take as reference the perspective<sup>7</sup> provided by Reginaldo Prandi (1998), considering that some of the aspects this author presents are in agreement with the devotional and syncretic universe of the samba school.

According to Prandi (1998), one of the biggest obstacles for Africans and their descendants to faithfully revive their religiosity was a great contradiction: “originally, Bantu, Yoruba and Fon religions were ancestral worship cults, which are based on families and their lineages, but the social and family structures to which religion gave meaning were never reproduced here” (Prandi 1998, 153).

As the reality of black people in Brazil had very little (or nothing) to do with family, since from the slave trade, families, tribes and ethnic groups had been separated, one of the main aspects of the daily religiosity experienced in Africa could not be rebuilt in the New World. Thus, the deified ancestors and family members (known as *egungun* in Yoruba tradition), who were extremely important in their homelands, end up losing space in the cults which were reconstructed in a fragmented way. In this way, the *orixás*, deities with a broader and more generic cult, as they represented elements of nature and conditions of human experience and not necessarily family relationships, gained more prominence in the rites and cults recreated in Brazil.

An important point made by Prandi for the connection between enslaved blacks and Catholicism is in the identity:

If a black religion, even in its fragmented reconstruction, was able to endow black people with a black identity, African originated, which ritually recovered the family, tribe and city lost forever in the diaspora, it was through Catholicism, however, that he could find himself and move in the real, day-to-day world, in a society of the dominant white, who was responsible for ensuring the existence of the black, even in conditions of deprivation and suffering, and that controlled their lives completely. Any attempt to overcome the slave condition, as a reality or as a historical heritage, first implied the necessary inclusion in the white world. Soon it came to mean the imperative of being, feeling and appearing Brazilian. Blacks could not be Brazilians without being Catholics at the same time (Prandi 1998, 154).

Socially, blacks found their place based on Catholic practices and rituals. On the other hand, Catholic religion assumed an inclusive character at the time, as it was practically hegemonic in the country and wanted to keep its *status quo*, so it did not oppose to the presence of blacks, and ignored the practices still promoted by blacks, who also adopted the saints, relating them to African deities.

7. For other interpretations and aspects of syncretism in Afro-Diasporic religions, see Valente (1977); S. Ferretti (1995); Sanchis (1995).

Also according to Prandi (2001b), syncretism is not just an association between a Catholic saint and an African *orixá*. The process is more complex.

Syncretism represents the capture of the religion of the *orixás* within a model that presupposes, above all, the existence of two antagonistic poles that preside over all human actions: good and evil; virtue on one hand, sin on the other. This conception, which is Judeo-Christian, did not exist in Africa (Prandi 2001b, 51).

With African-based religions still in process of development, their concerns were different. These new religious practices were

released, since birth, from matters related to the administration of justice, which presuppose universalist principles and collective agreements above individual desires, since this was the exclusive domain of the general religion of the general society, Catholicism; disinterested in the person's formative contents for the profane world, because the model here is white (Prandi 1998, 155)

Devotees of *orixás* could then find new ways to worship their gods, finding correspondences in a hierarchical—and manicheistic—system similar to those of Catholic saints. While on the good side of Catholicism there is the Holy Trinity (one God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) as well as, below them, all the possibilities of angels and saints, on the opposite side there is the Devil and all his denominations; the same logic was followed with the deities of African origin.

The good side, let's say, was thus filled by the *orixás*, except Exu, being Oxalá, the creator *orixá* of humanity, compared to the role of Jesus Christ, the Son god, remaining at the top of the hierarchy, a position he already occupied in Africa, where his name was Orixanlá or Orixá Nlá, meaning Great *Orixá*. The remote and unattainable supreme god Olorum of Yoruba was adapted to the conception of the Judeo-Christian Father god, while the other deities gained the identity of saints. However, by forcing a model that presupposes Catholic virtues, the syncretized *orixás* lost much of their original attributes, especially those that, as in the case of sexuality were seen as a source of sin that could harm the field of good. (Prandi 2011b, 51)

In this way, devotional practices to certain *orixás* were abandoned in the name of a religious system that had a Manichaeian worldview. In this way, the *orixás* were approaching saints (and vice versa) and had their mythologies, cults and devotions increasingly shared. It is in this context that in some regions of Brazil—such as the Southeast—Ogum and *São Jorge* come closer. Furthermore, the main characteristic that unites them is their relationship to war.

*São Jorge*, it is said, was born in Cappadocia (currently Turkish territory), and comes close to Ogum due to his quality of a soldier mounted on his white horse (symbol of purity), fighting a dragon (evil, Satan), commonly represented by the images sold in *Umbanda* houses. (Marques, Morais 2011, 10)

*Jorge-Ogum* partnership finds a special place in Brazilian imagination, one of devotion and affection, going beyond the limits of religiosity, with deities celebrated even by non-religious people.

#### d) OGUM DANCES SAMBA

According to *Candomblé* doctrine, there is a deity within each person. Every human being is a child of a certain *orixá*.

Whether among traditional *Yorubás*, or among Brazilians and other American peoples who were influenced by Africans, *orixás* are primordial deities who received from Olodumare (the supreme god) the mission to create and maintain the world, being then responsible each one for an element of nature, or even aspects of life in society or human nature (Prandi 2001, 20). In such a way, for example, Xango controls fire and lightning, as well as justice; Oxum rules the fresh waters and the emotions; Oxumaré is the rainbow itself and the symbol of transformation, and so on. As well as life, the worship of *orixás* is dynamic:

In Africa, most *orixás* have worship limited to a specific city or region, while a few have worship spread over all or almost all Yoruba lands. Many *orixás* are forgotten, others appear in new cults. The Yoruban pantheon in America contains about twenty *orixás* and, in Brazil and Cuba, each *orixá*, with few exceptions, is celebrated throughout the country. (Prandi 2001, 20)


In the religious field, a person dedicated to a certain *orixá* owes him/her devotions, rituals, offerings and other practices in search of a better life. This *orixá* will even determine this person's characteristics and behavior, according to what the archetype of the deity says.

For those who have faith, institutions (just like people) also have their patrons or even ruling *orixás*. Following this thought, the relationship between Vai-Vai and Ogum was established: the association is "protected and blessed by Ogum".<sup>8</sup>

The school's relationship with *Candomblé* deities begins with the administration of president Chiclé, an assumed practitioner of African cults, son of Oxóssi, and who set the sacred deities in a profane space for the first time, by the hands of Dona Nenê, *yalorixá* who took care of the *terreiro*<sup>9</sup> Chiclé used to attend. In 1972 (the year Vai-Vai became a samba school), Exu and Ogum arrived there (Alexandre 2017).

8. Verse of the samba song "*Quilombo do Futuro*", played in 2019 Vai-Vai parade. Composers: Edegar Cirillo, Marcelo Casa Nossa, André Ricardo, Dema, Gui Cruz, Rodolfo Minuetto, Rodrigo Minuetto and Kz.

9. In African Brazilian cults, *terreiro* is the place where ceremonial cults are held and offerings to the *orixás* are made.



Ogum, in addition to being always present in Vai-Vai's religious life from the moment it started in 1972, was elevated to the position of patron of the school from 2010 on, when president Neguitão started to rule it. A Candomblé practitioner, Neguitão is a devotee of *São Jorge* and Ogum's son, what explains his decision. With this *orixá* officially taking over the regency of the school, another religious feast became part of the official Vai-Vai calendar: Ogum's *feijoada*.

Ogum's *feijoada* is the first religious festival in the annual Vai-Vai calendar. According to Pai Francisco de Oxum—priest responsible for the religious activities of the association at that time—the creation and the inclusion of the festival in the school's official calendar was a direct request from Neguitão, as soon as he assumed the presidency, in 2010, and the community promptly accepted the event. (Alexandre, 2017). It is in the *feijoada* that the preparations for the next Carnival officially begins. According to Pierre Verger, Ogum's importance “is associated with the fact that without his permission and protection, none of the works or useful and profitable activities would be possible. He is then and always the first and opens the way for other *orixás*” (Verger 1981). For this reason, the year in Vai-Vai begins with Ogum.

Ogum's *feijoada* is divided into two moments, the religious and the festive. Starting in the morning, the court is prepared for the beginning of a procession. Carried on a stand, the real-size image of *São Jorge* goes through the streets of Bela Vista, accompanied by the school's drums, members, directors, members of partner samba schools and guest religious leaders. Along the way, the procession stops off at the church of *Nossa Senhora Achiropita*—the patroness of Bela Vista—where it receives the priest's blessings, before heading back to the court to continue the festivities.





**PICTURE 1**  
Ogum's feijoada  
in 2017. Photo by  
Haroldo Nogueira/  
SHEZ

On the way back to the court, *São Jorge* gives space to Ogum, who the community will revere. But not only him. Following the logic of *Candomblé* houses, several deities are greeted, as in a *xirê*. It starts with Exu, who receives his *padê*, followed by Ogum, Oxossi and other *orixás*. To each of them is offered a series of songs, which are accompanied by dancing, clapping and participant's great joy.



At the end of the ceremony, *feijoada*—food traditionally associated with Ogum—is served to all those present. Around 6pm, one of the most important moments for a samba school takes place: the plot or theme<sup>10</sup> for the following year is officially announced. Then, the community goes on with the party, with samba taking up *Bixiga* streets until dawn. Now, with the blessings of Ogum (and *São Jorge*), the carnival (re)starts.

The last edition of *Feijoada e Procissão de Ogum* took place in 2018. In 2019, for internal reasons, the party that would have taken place in February was cancelled, and in 2020 and, so far 2021, the festivity has not occurred due to the pandemic of Covid-19.

### **PARADE AND RITE AT ANHEMBI: 4 TIMES OGUM**

It is not only in everyday life, at parties, and events that Vai-Vai and its components express their syncretic faith. This experience also happens in the parades that it presents at carnivals.

Despite having its history and daily life closely related to blackness and black religiosity, few plots taken to the avenue explicitly presented this theme. In 90 years of stories, Vai-Vai presented *Orun Aiyê – O eterno amanhecer* (1982 – Champion), *Amado Jorge, A história de uma raça brasileira* (1988 – Champion) and *No Xirê do Anhembi, a Oxum mais bonita surgiu... Menininha, mãe da Bahia, Ialorixá do Brasil* (2017 – 3rd place). Other Afro-themed plots were presented by the school, such as *O Negro em Forma de Arte* (1991, 3rd place) and, more recently, *Sambar com fé* (about the singer and composer Gilberto Gil 2018 – 10th place), *Quilombo do Futuro* (2019, 14th place –downgraded to the Access Group) and, in next carnival—possibly 2022—Sankofa.

However, even in parades that were not explicitly religious or even afro-themed, the presence of representations of *orixás* is a constant in Vai-Vai parades, a fact that was accentuated when Neguitão took charge of the presidency of the school, in 2010.

It was in the coverage of 2011 carnival that the silence was broken, through the media. That year, the samba school paid homage to conductor João Carlos Martins, talking about the artist's trajectory of success and overcoming difficulties, with the plot “*A Música Venceu*”. With a surprising show, the school was champion and had its religiosity assumed. The president, Darli Silva (Neguitão), while giving thanks on national television did not hide his gratitude: “First, I thank my father Ogum, my protector, the entire community and conductor João Carlos Martins, who is an angel.” And continued: “He [Ogum] is my protector, who is with me in battles and does not leave me alone...” (Portal G1, 03/08/2011). Neguitão, in short, was revealing his devotion

10. The plot (theme) is the narrative that the school proposes to tell in its parade, through the wings, allegories and the theme song.

by thanking the deity, but not in an individual attitude. He revered the *orixá* Ogum on behalf of an entire community (Alexandre 2017, 20-21).

In the year before Neguitão's declaration, when Vai-Vai took to the avenue the plot *80 Years of Art and Euforia, É Bom no Samba, É Bom no Couro, Salve o Duplo Jubileu de Carvalho*, which celebrated the 80th anniversary of FIFA World Cup, as well as the 80th anniversary of the School, the devotion to the warrior *orixá* was explicit in the parade. Ogum opened the way and was present in the opening float. To represent the celebration of the school's Oak Jubilee, an immense Ogum sculpture, made of mirrors, carrying an anvil, was the main element of the last part of the float, which was divided into three parts. The Lord of Metals was at Anhembi, announcing himself as the patron and regent of the association.



**PICTURE 2**  
Vai-Vai opening float in 2010. "African Empire, 80 Years of Glory". Reproduced on Instagram

In the late 2010s, when Vai-Vai began to address issues related to blackness in the plots of 2017, 2018 and 2019 more clearly, Ogum's presence became constant, and he was represented in three parades.

The most explicitly Afro-religious plot that the school has ever brought to the avenue was the 2017 *No xirê do Anhembi, a Oxum mais bonita surgiu - Menininha, mãe da Bahia - Yalorixá do Brasil*. Among various

representations of *Candomblé* deities that formed the procession, in addition to a wing (*ala*)<sup>11</sup> devoted to Ogum, the association brought an allegorical element, with a very stylized representation of the divinity.



**PICTURE 3**  
Wing “Ogum”,  
part of 2017  
parade. Photo by  
Armando Bruck.  
Reproduction:  
SASP

*Sambar com Fé* was the 2018 plot and told the story of singer and composer *Gilberto Gil*. Among many moments and songs that marked this artist’s career, Vai-Vai brought to the avenue its last float—where the honoree was present—decorated by a series of representations of *orixás*, forming a veritable *xirê*. Right in front of the float there was Ogum, the patron of the school, next to Exu, other deity widely worshiped within the religious experience of the school.

Completing this “Afro trilogy”, in 2019, Vai-Vai presented its “*Quilombo do Futuro*”, the most overtly critical and social plot, with several references to racism, violence and oppression suffered by black people in different parts of the world and, in particular, in Brazil. Here, Ogum appeared at the back of the opening float, which was called “Africa’s Civilizing Legacy”, thus representing, not only his best-known archetype, the Lord of War, but also the great civilizing hero of Yoruba people.

11. The parades are organized into sectors and each sector is subdivided into wings (*alas*). Each wing has a certain number of components; all wearing the same costume, telling a part of the plot. Among the sectors there are the floats that usually close and summarize the idea presented in that sector. Some wings and allegories are special, such as the front committee—which presents the school to the judges and the public, and the opening float, which presents the plot and the following wings.





**PICTURE 4**  
 "Gil, son of  
 Gandhi" float,  
 2018, with the  
 image of Ogum  
 next to the  
 honoree Gilberto  
 Gil. Photo by  
 Carnival Lovers



**PICTURE 5**  
 2019 Opening  
 Float "Africa's  
 Civilizing Legacy".  
 Reproduced on  
 Instagram

## CONCLUSION

Vai-Vai is one of the most traditional carnival institutions in the city of São Paulo. With its origins related to the celebrations of Bom Jesus, in Pirapora, it carries in its essence the religiosity, which is part of the daily life and experience of the association and its components.

Over the years, the arrival of new members as well as social and historical changes at Bixiga meant that different religious elements were included in the daily life of the school. The main one was the incorporation of Afro-Diasporic religiosity, in particular, with the arrival of *Candomblé* deities.

Vai-Vai visibly exhibits in its physical space its characteristic devotion, with altars decorating and protecting its court. In a small room, there are the settlements of *orixás*, which makes that environment sacred.

Above all, it is a place of parties where sacred rites and festivities are merged, and the festivals in homage to saints and *orixás* are part of the school's official calendar.

It is not only in daily life that Vai-Vai expresses its faith. It gets to the moment in which samba schools gain the greatest prominence: the carnival parades. As much as the school proudly carries its blackness, and is a space of resistance, few plots have addressed explicitly afro (religious) themes throughout its 90-year trajectory, the school always pays tribute to deities of afro origin, either in allegories, wing costumes or floats, though. Ogum, the association's patron *orixá*, stands out in these representations, especially in 2010, when he was officially made the school's protective entity. In other years Vai-Vai brought plots explicitly more related to issues of religious, artistic or social blackness to the avenue.

Thus, Vai-Vai clearly represents the expression of the religious syncretism. In its sacred space for the profane festival, saints and deities are celebrated in the same degree of importance, as well as the school itself, which, in the view of its samba dancer, is also a deity, worthy of praise.

By experiencing the daily religiosity within Vai-Vai environment, and revering the association itself as a divinity, the members already celebrate their afro heritage and ancestry, which guides the association's daily experience.

In this way, from a manifestation of the intrinsic relationship between sacred and profane, religious syncretism and party, which are part of the social conception of São Paulo carnival, Vai-Vai arises and resists with its hybrid, syncretic and unique religiosity.




Ògun yé, mo yé!<sup>12</sup>

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12. Greeting to Ogum that means, “If Ogum is alive, I am alive!” (free translation)



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## BLACK WADADA: DREADLOCKS, BEARDS, AND ANTICOLONIALISM AMONG RASTAFARI MEN IN JAMAICA

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

In this essay, I unpack the politics intertwined with two bodily practices observed by many Rastafarian men in Jamaica: the sporting of dreadlocks and beards. I begin with the political history of the dreadlocks and beards in Jamaica, showing how they became connected to notions of Africanism and the social life of biblical texts in the Rastafarian Movement. I argue that these techniques of caring for the body translate Rastafarian anti-colonial politics that challenge and criticize colonial and postcolonial aesthetics and modes of existence on the Caribbean island, which gives rise to reflections on belonging, sovereignty, and diasporic Africanity.

### KEYWORDS

Rastafari; Body;  
Dreadlocks;  
Politics; Jamaica.

*“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”*

—Genesis 1:26, King James Version

*“...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”*

—2 Corinthians 6:16, King James Version

*“Wadada means love in Africa*

*[...] Black Wadada*

*Revive for I & I*

*Wadada! Wo-ho-ho! Wadada!”*

—Burning Spear, “The Invasion (Black Wadada)”

In May 2020, a 78-year-old Rasta elder had the beard he cultivated for decades shaved without his consent, or even knowledge, while admitted to a hospital in Linstead, Jamaica. The episode caused outrage among the Rastafarian community and brought to light once again a modality of symbolic violence inflicted upon Rastas since the inception of the Movement in the early 1930s: the cutting of locks and beard against a person’s will. The Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sports, Olivia “Babsy” Grange, requested the Minister of Health and Welfare to investigate the episode, and asserted that trimming dreadlocks and shaving beards of Rastas who seek public health services is not a government policy (Jamaica Observer 2020).

Dreadlocks form when hair and beards grow freely, forming spontaneous knots. This way of caring for the body—which, at first sight, may evoke more negligence than care—became widespread among Rastas between the 1950s and the 1960s. Dreadlocks and beards became strong indexes of Rastafari praxes related to blackness, Africanness, and belonging, challenging the colonial and postcolonial aesthetics and bodily politics that valued and privileged British looks and gestuality. Cutting dreadlocks and beards is one of the historical forms of physical and psychological abuse inflicted by the Jamaican state upon Rastas through its armed and police forces, along with imprisonment in jails and mental asylums.

The materiality of Rastafarian bodies and the sets of symbolic and political relations they activate and translate are not limited, however, to a technique of caring for hair. Modes of eating, dressing, and adorning, and, especially, the narratives about these practices also constitute the Rastafarian body. In what follows, I analyze how the word becomes flesh and flesh becomes word among Rasta men in Jamaica. Rastafari bodies enunciate a series of relationships and conflicts related to citizenship,

belonging, history, morality, and justice in the Caribbean country. They activate links with Africa, challenge British colonization and the postcolonial state, create alternative modalities of relation with the world and the things that exist in it.

As Miriam (Rabelo 2011) noted, the subject of corporeality is not new in the social sciences. It goes back to the classic essays of (Mauss 1973; 1985), inspires Bourdieu's (2010) and Butler's (1993) works, and animates the concept of embodiment proposed by (Csordas 1994; 2002; Csordas and Jenkins 2020). In the field of indigenous ethnology, the paradigm of corporeality stimulated an epistemological reorientation since the classic essay penned by Seeger, da Matta, and Viveiros de Castro (1979); a classic in the sense attributed to the concept by Italo Calvino (1991). It does not cease to speak years after its first publication and was recently translated into English and published in a prestigious magazine (Seeger, Da Matta, and Viveiros de Castro 2019).

I want to follow the ideas of Seeger, Viveiros de Castro, and Da Matta about the fabrication of bodies in the indigenous Amazon and mobilize them to unpack a Caribbean experience. I will take the Rastafari body as an "instrument, activity, [something] that articulates social and cosmological meanings," taking it as "a matrix of symbols and an object of thought," (Seeger, Viveiros de Castro and Da Matta 1979: 11) but also of action. Several Rastafarian bodily practices translate the Movement's politics: the sporting of dreadlocks on the head, the bearded face, the food taboos, the use of ganja.<sup>1</sup> The performance of these practices creates Rastafarian bodies and persons. The Rastafarian body, therefore, can be thought of as a microcosm—to use an expression that Turner (1967) mobilizes to describe the Ndembu body. It is a tool that creates a world and modalities of relationship with it that configure particular modes of existence (Latour 2013). In this essay, though, I will focus on the political history of dreadlocks and beards among Rastas in Jamaica.

The history of the Rastafarian Movement is widely known. Its roots date back to the coronation of Ras Tafari Makonnen as Emperor of Ethiopia in November 1930. When the news about the coronation of a Black emperor in Africa reached the Jamaican shores it was soon connected to the long tradition of Ethiopianism deep-rooted in the island.<sup>2</sup> Popular prophets

1. On the use of ganja among Jamaican Rastas see Rubin e Comitas 1976; Chevannes 2004; Murrell 2008; Niaah 2016; Araujo, 2018. On the politics of I-tal see Dickerson 2004 and Jaffe 2010.

2. According to Charles Price (2003, 31), "Ethiopianism has provided a racial, religious, and moral framework for comprehending and criticizing history, the social world, and especially racial and economic inequalities." It emerged before the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and spread throughout the Caribbean, Europe and Africa (ibid.). In Jamaica it gained strength with Marcus Garvey's activism and his advocacy for the return of Black people to Africa. In his speeches and writings, which were strongly inspired by biblical language and imagery, he stressed the need for an exodus towards the original land, the



began to spread the idea that Selassie was the embodiment of Jehovah; the reincarnated Christ that had come to redeem Black people from the violence of captivity, colonialism, and racism. God, in the Rastafarian translation, is a Black African Living Man.<sup>3</sup> Haile Selassie I's coronation was perceived through political and symbolical lenses in Jamaica. Several people connected the African monarch's coronation to biblical prophecies about the redemption of God's chosen people and pan-Africanist politics of sovereignty and self-determination for Africans in Africa and the diaspora.

In Rastafarian discourses and narratives, the biblical texts are detached from their original interactional contexts and mobilized to give life to another history, that of African people enslaved by Europeans and taken by force from their places of origin to captured lands across the Atlantic Ocean. The process of entextualization and recontextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990) operated through biblical and Pan-Africanist Rastafarian poetics blurs the borders between the Americas, the Caribbean, Egypt, Babylon, and Zion. The figure of the "chosen people" is translated, through embodiment and language, as the African people in the diaspora. In Rastafarian linguistic ideology, Egypt and Babylon become Jamaica; Eden and Zion are synonymous with Africa and Ethiopia; David, Solomon, and other biblical characters are portrayed in Black bodies. As Carole Yawney has pointed out (1977, 233), "the terms Africa and Ethiopia are frequently interchanged [in Rastafarian discourse], following a precedent set by Marcus Garvey, who referred to Africa as Ethiopia." These processes of decontextualization, entextualization, and recontextualization operate in the fabrication of meanings and show how discourse is "a rich, intricate, and dynamic expression of, mediator of, and indeed creator and recreator of the language-culture- society- individual nexus" ( Sherzer 1987, 302).

Bodily techniques play a fundamental role in the performance of and reflexivity on Rastafarian personhood and, among these techniques, orality has an important place (Chevannes 1994; Homiak 1995; Nettleford 1998; Pulis 1999). The careful mobilization of lexicon and discourse in everyday and ritual situations, which requires poetic skills, underlies Rastafarian ontology and epistemology and is materialized in the expression *Word, Sound, Power*. In what follows, I analyze the politics of Rastafarian personhood and show how it is constituted through the fabrication of bodies and narratives about them. My focus, as previously stated, is the political history of beards and dreadlocks. I argue that Rastafari bodies

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place of redemption for the Black man. Many times Garvey mobilised biblical topography to name the African continent, calling it Ethiopia or Abyssinia. Garvey enacted a politics of belonging by articulating geography, cosmology, and soteriology through the image of a biblical exodus of God's chosen people towards the African continent. On Garvey see Lewis 1987, 1998.

3. On the roots and transformations of the Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica see Barnett 2018 and 2002; Bonacci 2016 and 2013; Chevannes 1994 and 1995; Hill 1983 and 2001; Hutton et al. 2015.

and narratives about them are powerful tools for challenging colonialism and racism in Jamaica and that bodies are fabricated, cultivated, and mobilized to refashion the past, the present, and the future (Scott 1999).

Before proceeding, however, I must make it clear that I will not discuss identity processes, identity politics, or even resort to the category of “identity”. I deal with bodily politics and aesthetics whose semantics challenge the British colonial standards in Jamaica. In particular, I want to consider how the embodiment of Rastafarian personhood operates a cultural translation of Christianity, a colonial tool, to reclaim belonging, sovereignty, and Africanity; to fabricate and mobilize memories (Hanchard 2008). A translation is always a political act, as Talal Asad (1986) taught us. I mobilize the category of “person” and think of Rastafarian personhood throughout the Movement’s history by following the enactments of bodily politics. These are the categories that guide my reflection. My central argument, I advance, is that the Rasta dreadlocks and beards are political tools that challenge British aesthetics and question the legitimacy of British rule. I articulate the categories of corporeality and personhood to unpack the historical process of struggle against colonialism.

### **BODY, HISTORY, POLITICS**

Joseph Owens (1976) noted that Jamaican colonial society inscribed negative connotations in the semantics of the words *black* and *negro*. According to Jah Bones, a social scientist, and Rastafarian, everything that is bad in the eyes of the white colonizer was described as black, “while white is good, correct, pure and everything that opposes black” (Jah Bones 1986: 46). In colonial language, everything that was black or derived from it was taken as bad and impure, including bodies. Historically, in Jamaica, skin color can either open or close doors, it can make life either easier or much harder for a citizen (Alexander 1977; Ford-Smith 1994; Henriques 1951; Nettleford 1998). Many Jamaican citizens expect to marry a lighter-skinned person to achieve social mobility, to be perceived as more respectable, and, thus, to be able to provide a better future for their children (Altink 2019b; 2019a). The expression that names the desire and practice of marrying a fair-skinned person, preferably white, allows a glimpse of the persistence of the racial hierarchy in Jamaica: *marry up*. The fairer the skin, the higher its position in the social/racial hierarchy. Another practice that allows us to apprehend the strength of Jamaican colorism is that of bleaching the skin with chemicals that are often toxic.<sup>4</sup> Historical racial hierarchies have also produced stereotypes of exacerbated sexuality and vulgarity and portrayed violence as a “cultural trait” of Black Jamaicans—characteristics attributed to their African cultural heritage.<sup>5</sup>

4. On bleaching see Brown-Glaude 2007 and 2013; Charles 2011 and Robinson 2011, but compare with Hope 2011 and James 2013). On the body as a social index in Jamaica see Hurston 1937; Alleyne 2005 [2002] and Araujo 2014.

5. See Thomas 2011, especially chapter 4.

When American anthropologist, folklorist, and novelist Zora Neale Hurston visited Jamaica to conduct fieldwork on religious practices, in 1937, she was impressed by the fact that many Jamaicans, in a country of overwhelmingly African-descended people, made great efforts to look like Europeans by imitating British accents and affections. It seemed to Hurston that “in Jamaica, it [was] the aim of everybody to talk English, act English and *look* English.” (Hurston 1990, 6. The emphasis in the original.) She also noted (*ibid.*, 7) that “[e]verywhere else a person is white or black by birth, but it is so arranged in Jamaica that a person may be black by birth but white by proclamation. That is, he gets himself declared legally white.” She underscored the contrast between Jamaica and the US, “where anyone who has colored blood, no matter how white they look, refers to themselves as black” (*ibid.*). And to refine her description, she tells us an anecdote she heard. It is worth citing the full passage:

I was told that the late John Hope, late President of Atlanta University, precipitated panic in Kingston on his visit there in 1935, a few months before his death. He was quite white in appearance and when he landed and visited the Rockefeller Institute in Kingston and was so honored by them, the “census white” Jamaicans assumed that he was of pure white blood. A great banquet was given him at the Myrtle Bank Hotel, which is the last word in swank in Jamaica. All went well until John Hope was called upon to respond to a toast. He began his reply with, “We negroes—.” Several people all but collapsed. John Hope was whiter than any of the mulattoes there who had had themselves ruled white. So that if a man as white as that called himself a negro, what about them? Consternation struck the banquet like a blight. Of course, there were real white English and American people there too, and I would have loved to have read their minds at that moment. I certainly would. (Hurston 1990, 7-8.)

Being a Black American intellectual herself, she commented that this “situation present[ed] a curious spectacle to the eyes of an American Negro” (*ibid.*, 7.)

I wonder what Hurston would have to say about the adepts of the Rastafari Movement, which was gaining momentum by the time she visited Jamaica. She did not have contact with them—or, if she did, she did not register it in her published work. I strongly believe that she would be interested in a movement that opposed the Anglophilia of the Jamaican economic elite and wanted to distance themselves from the colonial modes of existence. From the early days of the Movement, Rastas valued blackness and Africaness, denounced the British government for the crime of slavery and the physical and symbolic oppressions mobilized by the state against its black citizens.

During the first decades of the Movement's existence, the sporting of dreadlocks was not as widespread as that of beards. The cultivation of beards activated a link to the bodily techniques of biblical characters such as Solomon, Samson—whose physical strength, according to Hebrew folklore, emanated from his long locks—and Jesus Christ, in addition, of course, to those practiced by Haile Selassie (Chevannes 1994, 157-158). In the late 1940s, with the radicalization of some wings of the Movement, growing and sporting dreadlocks became widespread, and became an index of Rastafarian corporeality and politics. This bodily practice was then connected to the biblical Nazirite vow (Numbers 6) which, among other precepts, prohibits the cutting of hair and beard.

In his 1954 novel "Brother Man, Jamaican novelist Roger Mais handled this theme with sensitivity. The main character of the story is a peaceful Rastaman, who embodies serenity in his ways of walking, acting, and speaking. Although he is neither a violent person nor a potential threat, some people despised him due to his dreadlocks long beard. In a certain scene, Brother Man finds himself surrounded by children who insult him and tell him to shave his beard. Brother Man, however, observed this bodily care as he followed the path indicated by the sacred texts of the Bible. There is an important scene where the Rastaman tries to explain why he doesn't shave his beard to a little boy. The boy and the Rasta are sitting on a beach where Brother Man had met the child selling crabs. After some considerations about dietary practices, they start talking about the Rastaman's body. The child was curious to know why Brother Man let his hair and beard grow freely instead of keeping it trimmed and coiffed. The Rastafarian elder then explains to the boy that he observes the Nazirite vow, a vow that was also observed by Samson according to the Hebrew folklore. He tells the child that he follows the way of biblical men, and how Africans became Jehovah's chosen people:

"Brah man, why you wear beard on you' face?"

"Son, it is de Bible way. It is de way of John de Baptist, an' of Samson, who killed a thousand Philistines, an' a lion with his naked han's (sic)."

(...)

"De spirit of de Lawd was wit' him. Amen."

"Is dat why you grow you' beard? Cos you wan' to be like Samson?"

"De spirit of the Lawd went over into Ethiopia when Israel was parted among the nations. (...) So it was black men out of Africa who became God's chosen people, for they have learned the Way." (Mais 2004, 75-76.)

In the 1950s, when *Brother Man* was published, Jamaican society “simply did not accept unkempt hair. Not to comb one’s hair was to declare oneself not merely antisocial but extra-social, like mad derelicts and outcasts” (Chevannes 1994, 158). But there was more in the Rastafarian politics of bodily techniques. The emergence of dreadlocks in Jamaica also points to the attention Rastas paid to the aesthetics and politics of other anti-colonial movements that challenged the British Empire at the time. Jamaican sociologist Horace Campbell (1987) asserts that dreadlocks began to emerge and became widespread at the same time that stories on the Mau Mau warriors of Kenya, who also sported dreadlocks and fought against colonialism, started to appear in the pages of Jamaican newspapers. The aesthetics and politics of the Mau Mau have influenced the Rastafarian collectivity called The Youth Black Faith, which instituted the sporting of dreadlocks as a tenet. The display of dreadlocks instituted by this collectivity sought to relate the anti-colonial struggle of Jamaicans to that of their African peers, both directed against the British Empire (Campbell, 1987). A Rasta elder told me, some years ago, in Kingston, that one of the etymologies of the term “dreadlocks” refers to the terror (dread) around in colonial authorities by those who sported this hairstyle. Many decades before I conducted my fieldwork in Kingston, Rastas told the Jamaican anthropologist Barry Chevannes that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, precisely in the period when dreadlocks began to emerge, Rastas began to recognize themselves as outcasts and outsiders in the Jamaican society, giving these concepts another political meaning. They began to understand and accept that Jamaica was not their homeland, and that, being Jamaican-born *Africans*, they belong in Africa (Chevannes 1995).

## I & I A NATTY DREADLOCKS

*“Nowadays dem a braid, twist, and dem a plait*

*But I & I a Natty Dreadlocks”*

—Israel Vibration, “Natty Dread”

The years leading up to Jamaica’s independence from the United Kingdom in 1962 saw an escalation of state violence against Rastas (van Dijk 1995). One of the reasons for the increased repression, as Deborah Thomas (2011) points out, was the Movement’s strong criticism of the nationalist project that was being built—a project that aimed to establish a postcolonial national state “within the parameters—violently maintained—that were established by the Cold War and growing US hegemony” (Thomas 2017, 84). I should add, however, that the years after Independence—and let us take 1963 as emblematic when the Jamaican state massacred Rastas in Montego Bay (Thomas 2011) and began the destruction of historic Rastafarian communities in Kingston (Clarke 2016; Araujo 2018)—were also of constant



physical and symbolic violence directed at Rastafarian individuals and collectivities. In this context, the bodily politics of sporting dreadlocks has caused a series of barriers to Rastas throughout history: dismissals, unemployment, unwanted attention from the police and military forces, physical and verbal aggression from members of the civil society, prohibition to attend certain public institutions. Thomas (2011: 200) also highlights that “as recently as the 1980s and 1990s, examples abound of elders being denied entrance to public businesses or Rastafarian children being removed from prestigious schools because they refused to trim their hair.”

The politics and poetics of cultivating dreadlocks and beards, which challenged colonial aesthetics and politics, contributed to the energetic reactions of the Jamaican state. Violence against Rastas became part of the generalized state violence that has dragged on the Caribbean island since the slavery period. Ras Mortimo Planno, one of the main Rastafarian leaders from the 1960s until his death in 2005 used to say that between the 1940s and 1960s, the Rastas became extremists. According to him, still, his parents' generation was against this extremism and feared the state's reprisals that materialized not only in the form of home invasion by the police but also in beatings, incarceration, and commitment to mental asylums. When sociologist Anita Waters conducted fieldwork with Rastas and their families in Kingston, in 1982, an interlocutor told her that many parents became uneasy when their children became Rastas:

The pressure come from when shall Rasta in our house, anytime the policeman can kick in the door and come in. People have them one son them love, them check them, son, come back in with all these dreadlocks... They might feel vex but that is not the thing. The only thing that them fret for is because he is a Rasta, they have to feel him gone to prison soon... So your people fret for you under the circumstances there, so them say “no come here Jah Rastafari, policeman come too.” (Waters 1985, 104-105.)

The persecution of dreadlocks and the tensions it generated in the social relations of Rastas throughout the Movement's history were also registered in the Jamaican cultural production. In 1980 the Twinkle Brothers released an album titled *Countrymen*. In *Since I Throw The Comb Away*, one of the album's tracks, the Rasta duo sing about the misfortunes suffered by a dreadlocked Rastaman:

Since I throw the comb away/ My mommy don't wanna see me no more/ My papa say “don't come at the house no more”/ I used to be the pride of the family/ But now I'm the black sheep (...)/ I got fired from my job last Monday/ For no reason at all/ The boss man called me to his office and gives me a two weeks pay/ And say: “You throw the comb away! There's no vacancy for you today” (Twinkle Brothers, 1980: track 7.)

The song's lyrics refer to the problem described by Anita Waters' interviewee: when an individual starts cultivating dreadlocks, his parents start to treat him differently. If before he was well regarded and well-liked after he starts to observe a technique of bodily care that indexes his belonging to the Rastafari Movement, he becomes an unwanted person. He loses his job despite claiming to be a hard worker. The social roles he had—a son, a worker—are now violently denied. But he also disowns them, for now, he has fabricated different ontological and political positions for himself. Now he is a Rastaman, he severed his ties to the Babylonian society and devotes himself to Jah. For dreadlocks not only mark but also *constitute* a separation between the Rastaman and Babylon. Once a man accepts the call of Rastafari his social relations are reconfigured, but so are his cosmological relations. The dreadlocks become an index of belonging to the African lineage of Jah, Creator of the Earth and everything that exists on it; Creator of humanity and time.

Still in the field of Rastafarian music, songs like *Revelation Time*, by Max Romeo (1975: track 1) denounced the abusive practice of cutting off Rastas dreadlocks and beards, a modality of physical and symbolic violence enforced by the Jamaican police and military forces. Descriptions of these and other forms of violence also abound in the literature on the Movement. But despite the violence perpetrated by the state and the civil society,<sup>6</sup> the Rastafarian Movement has grown exponentially since the 1960s, having even attracted the attention and the sympathy of progressive politicians like Michael Manley, who served as Prime Minister of Jamaica from 1972 to 1980 and from 1989 to 1992 (see Waters, 1985). Since the 1970s, Rastafarian colors and symbols have been co-opted by the Jamaican government and entrepreneurs in the processes of creating and marketing the “brand Jamaica” (Lewis 2017). This process, however, is carefully articulated not to endorse the Afrocentrism of the Rastafarian Movement, but to promote the liberal ideas of the Jamaican postcolonial creole elite embodied in the national motto; “Out of many, one people”.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout history, Rastafarians have transformed the cultivation of dreadlocks and beards into symbols of Africanness and defiance of the Jamaican state. This bodily politics is also a way of operating and translating differentiations between those who follow the sacred prescriptions and seek to live in the image and likeness of the Creator and those who reject his commandments. But there is more to Rastafarian bodily politics. The ways of dressing configure a set of important political practices as well. Some Rastas dress to emulate the image and likeness of Emperor Haile Selassie in his official appearances, in khaki military uniforms.

6. On the persecution and violence against Rastas by the Jamaican and civilians see also the ethnographic documentary *Bad Friday* (Thomas et al. 2011).

Instead of the military medals worn by the Ethiopian emperor, however, they bear the medals of a holy war waged against the pagans. Some medals bear the emperor's face; others bear Marcus Garvey's. They might also be R-shaped medals—the R for Rastafari, Redemption, Reparation, Repatriation—painted in green, red and yellow, the colors of the imperial Ethiopian flag. There are also medals shaped like the African continent, with biblical quotes, and quotes by or attributed to Selassie, Garvey, and other prophets. Other Rastas decorate their bodies with clothing in Ethiopian colors, whether tunics or T-shirts, pants or robes, turbans or wool hats. Symbols such as the Lion of Judah and the Egyptian ankh cross are also popular in the fabrication and decoration of Rastafari bodies. The many ways of dressing—and talk about dressing—among Jamaican Rastafarian men deserves a study.

I must also underscore that this essay dealt with the bodily practices of Rastafarian men, but there is literature that deals with the place of women in the Movement and that deserve to be consulted when thinking about corporeality among Rasta women.<sup>7</sup>

As a closing remark, I would like to recapitulate and summarise my arguments. The Rastafarian body evokes a series of relationships between the Chosen People and Jah, the Creator—and in the Rastafarian discourse and narratives, both Jah and His Chosen people are Black and African. The love for Africa and the scorn for the British Empire were seen as threats first by the colonial authorities, and later by the postcolonial creole elite who wanted to build a sense of Jamaicaness by homogenizing and whitewashing history, sweeping the violence of colonialism under the carpet by promoting the post-independence motto “Out of many, one people”. The refusal of Rastas to forget Africa and Transatlantic slavery is a refusal to accept the official narrative of peaceful miscegenation. The Rastafarian body is, therefore, an instrument of memorialization—to use Hanchard's (2008) expression. It is an instrument. Not a mere bodily reflection of a symbolic repertoire, but an active tool of a Rastafarian politics of remembering the past, assessing the present, and refashioning possible futures.

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7. See, e.g. Rowe 1980; Austin-Broos 1987; Lake 1994 and 1998; Yawney 1994a; Tafari-Ama 1998; Julien 2003 and Christense, 2014. For a reflection on the implications of being a woman ethnographer and conducting fieldwork among Rastas in Jamaica see Montlouis 2013.

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## IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE ROCK, AND THE ROCK WAS IN THE CAVERNA DE ADULÃO, AND THE ROCK WAS THE CAVERNA DE ADULÃO<sup>1</sup>

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

In this article<sup>2</sup>, we will present how heavy rock in a general way with heavy metal and its subgenres, was able to foster a form of belonging and sociability in the beginning of the Cave of Adulão Community in Belo Horizonte. What we noticed with the research is that at first rock became the main founding element in the socialization of young people to communicate the Gospel in the very language and culture of the urban headbanger tribe, and later, other elements came in its

**KEYWORDS**  
Comunidade  
Caverna de Adulão;  
Heavy rock and  
heavy metal;  
Urban headbanger  
tribes; Religion and  
culture; Sociability  
and spirituality.

1. We made an analogy of a biblical passage to signal the socialization in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in Belo Horizonte with heavy rock. Through artistic manifestation with rock music, with the verb as the sung word, the youth were able to give meanings or re-significations to their cultural and religious practices. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1.1,14).

2. This article is linked to the master's research in Religion Sciences with the title: The religious phenomenon among young people in urban tribes: an analysis of the relationship between culture and religion in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão - Belo Horizonte/ MG, oriented by Professor Dr. Flávio Senra and presented at the PPGCR of PUC Minas in 2018. This research was conducted with support from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brazil (CAPES) - Funding Code 001.

place. The methodology consisted of a literature review, having as main theorist the sociologist Michel Maffesoli in dialogue with other authors. In the field research we used the socio-anthropological-ethnographic method that happened with participant observation and the focus group technique.

## INTRODUCTION

With the intense urbanization process that has occurred in Brazil in the last decades, there has been a great impact on the lives of citizens in many cities in Brazil and around the world. Belo Horizonte also experiences this demographic explosion, which has fostered socialization in urban tribes with youth culture<sup>3</sup>. Reflecting these changes that touch post-modernity<sup>4</sup> and affect the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious areas, we use the thought of the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli<sup>5</sup> with the tribalization or neotribalizations. For Maffesoli, these transformations have enabled closer relationships with tribalism in the sharing of the same feelings, emotions, and affections, and are a response to social institutions, breaking the rigidity of social relationships and individualism.

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3. For the concept of culture, we use Maffesoli (2010). He points to two cultures within the same culture. On one side he showed the owners of society and are the ones who have the power to say what to do, being the instituted power, in the various forms: cultural, religious, social, and economic. This instituted power makes the decisions far away from life and thus from the reality of the majority of the population. On the other hand, it shows wild, anomic, and disorderly life as an instituting power. Also, according to Maffesoli (2010), wild thought is admitted by the experience gained from contact with primitive societies. Here, anthropology turns its gaze to the everyday life of contemporary societies, to what it called company cultures or other phenomena that seemed too close to be analyzed. This division of two cultures, for Maffesoli, is beginning to be accepted by the erudite culture. "This is also true for the erudite culture, which begins to admit the existence of another culture: that of common feelings. We can agree with this emergence. Numerous researches demonstrate it, the fact is that there exists between these two cultures a distance that sometimes does not fail to become an unbridgeable gap." (Maffesoli 2010, 240). The concept of culture that I work with here is closer to the instituting power, the feeling of being together, the sharing, the sociability, and the sense of belonging. This culture is built by the young people themselves who are in the headbanger urban tribes with rock, heavy metal, and its subgenres with cultural elements that are not accepted by the instituted powers as cultural standard, which often makes them underground and marginal in society.

4. For Maffesoli, postmodernity is characterized by tribalism. This phenomenon has been studied by him as a factor of sociability for more than three decades. For him, what counts in the present time is daily life and its rituals, the collective emotions, and passions, symbolized by the pleasure of being together. He also highlights as two essential axes, the simultaneously archaic and juvenile aspects of tribalism, and also its communitarian dimension and the saturation of the concept of the individual. In his view, these are the two roots of postmodern tribalism. (Maffesoli 2010). We will use the term postmodernity instead of contemporaneity.

5. We used the book Maffesoli (2010) as the main work in our master's research, anchored by other works by the author.

We researched the youth of the urban tribes headbangers<sup>6</sup> who like heavy rock<sup>7</sup>, who have experienced these social transformations, among them, the contemporary religious phenomenon. We tried to understand how this cultural and religious construction occurred among the headbangers of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão<sup>8</sup>, where rock music, at first, was used as an instrument in juvenile socialization. In the field research<sup>9</sup>, we observed that the adaptation of some evangelical churches to the needs of the youth and their cultural practices was what attracted them to the community, and then other socializing elements took the place of rock.

## MEMBERSHIP OF YOUTH TO THE COMUNIDADE CAVERNA DE ADULÃO

To talk about this adherence of young people to the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão we need to understand, that rock and religion<sup>10</sup> are culturally

6. The term headbanger is used by fans of heavy metal culture, as well as its later variations and musical subgenres. It originated around 1970 in England and immigrated to the United States. The English band Black Sabbath was the forerunner of the heavy metal style and the incorporation of the aggressive headbanger aesthetic in concerts. The expression urban headbanger tribe is given to young people who interact in small groups or tribes in urban centers. For this tribe, socialization revolves around the sound of heavy rock and the production and consumption of this music among young people. They also consume a variety of clothes, shoes, and accessories, which are often defined by the members of the tribe itself. During the concerts, these young people dance in a circle with the mosh, which is reminiscent of the Indian tribes in their dancing. In the mosh, the young people make the circle dance and punch and tiptoe through the air. They also bang their heads, which is the literal meaning for headbanger, with the up and down movement, throwing their hair in the air, as the violent movement of the head in rhythm with the music.

7. In the research, we approached heavy rock with heavy metal and its sub-genres such as thrash metal, death metal, black metal, among others, from the sociological perspective and the power that this musical style has in bringing young people together. We describe rock as a founding element in the community and the paths it has established among the members of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão. This way, we will not work in the research with the rock bands that existed at the beginning of the community and the ones that exist today. We will also not do a biblical-theological analysis of the lyrics of the songs of these bands or their performances during concerts and evangelistic events. This could be the fruit of future research since the community, in the beginning, had more than 20 bands in the varied styles of grindcore, metalcore, punk, heavy metal, thrash metal, death metal, power metal, among other styles and today has only 2 heavy rock bands, the bands Trombada and Pesadelo.

8. The beginning of the community took place in 1992 when some young people and the pastors Fabio de Carvalho and Eduardo Lucas started evangelistic work among young people who belonged to the urban tribes headbangers in Belo Horizonte. The community went through several places in the center-south region of the capital city of Minas Gerais, and in 2004 it was established at 482 Aimorés Street, in the Funcionários neighborhood, where it is now.

9. In the field research, we used the anthropological-ethnographic method that took place with participant observation and with the focus group technique. In the participant observation, 4 visits were made to the Sunday services, at 6 pm. This field research took place in the months of July, October, and November 2016. The focus groups were conducted with 3 mixed groups and 2 meetings for each of them in the months of August and September 2017. At this stage, primary data, originally obtained through focus group discussions in the community, was observed and collected. These focus group discussions offered insights into the religious and cultural phenomenon in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in an interactive way, through the insider's view of the group.

10. In the master's degree in Religious Sciences, we researched the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, with a strict relationship between religion and culture, with heavy rock as a youth socializing element there. But, in the city of Belo Horizonte, there were many conflicts at that time regarding the use of rock music allied to religious practices, coming from some more radical members of the secular underground scene, who were in the



constructed elements. This construction reveals a complex and varied pattern of behavior with beliefs, artistic and intellectual manifestations, arts, laws, customs, and habits that are acquired by human beings in society. These collective transmissions signal human beings as transformers of culture, in which young people are also builders of their realities and cosmovisions, with the use of rock music in their religious practices<sup>11</sup> in urban tribes.

Urban tribes - and, in this more specific case, rockers - have a whole peculiar cultural characteristic way: the long hair, the tattoos, the piercings, the black clothes, and rock band shirts, as well as the different way of speaking, using slang and jargon that only those who are incarnated in the tribe can understand. They need to hear the Gospel in a contextualized way. The message must be transmitted in a way that they, in their way of living, thinking, and feeling, can understand. (Rodrigues, 2006, 65).

We noticed that in religious practices, openings and appropriations of cultural elements have also occurred, which, until a few decades ago, were not accepted. In this aspect, Christie showed how rock and heavy metal, besides not being accepted, still suffered attacks and discrimination in the United States.

While Slayer evoked the profane in their underworld, headbangers appeared in public everywhere, wandering around galleries with long, unkempt (or often even well-groomed) hair and T-shirts that often bore the terrible names and images of bands like Ratt, Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, and Venom. The authorities in the United States were beginning to feel strongly threatened, as there was still a large group for whom Def Leppard sounded like a bestial atrocity. To the eyes of the older generation, the clearly visible and seem-

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urban headbanger tribes and did not accept this relationship between rock music and religion. What we observed is that the Christian underground scene suffered prejudice and discrimination both in religion by other churches and communities that did not understand this appropriation of culture with rock music, and from society in general. Adding to this, there was also a non-acceptance of this Christian underground scene by some followers who had a more radical posture in the secular underground scene. This shows that the prejudice and discrimination suffered by Christian rock bands as well as churches and communities like Caverna de Adulão were much greater. This discrimination becomes even more evident with the attacks against Christian heavy rock bands, which are pejoratively called white metal, as a clear form of prejudice and delegitimization of the use of rock and religion, which in this case is in opposition to the black metal style. We realized that the secular underground scene with the urban headbanger tribes is a very broad group, with various aesthetic, political, musical, philosophical, religious, and why not to say theological views, with people who call themselves religious and also non-religious. Therefore, we have extended our research on religion and culture, also with rock music. In this case, we are currently researching the people without religion, represented by the rockers without religion in the doctorate in Religion Sciences with the title: Rock as a non-religious spirituality. A study on rituals, sociabilities, and cosmovision of rockers without religion in Belo Horizonte, under the supervision of Professor Dr. Flávio Senra, in the PPGCR of PUC Minas. This research is carried out with the support of the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brazil (CAPES).

11. For more information on churches and Christian communities, which use heavy rock, heavy metal, and their subgenres in religious practices, see: Rodrigues (2005), Rodrigues (2006), Rodrigues (2007), Rodrigues (2017), Rodrigues (2018a), Rodrigues (2018b), Rodrigues (2018c), Rodrigues (2018d), Rodrigues (2019a), Rodrigues (2019b), Rodrigues (2020a), Rodrigues (2020b) and Rodrigues (2021).

ingly universal appeal of heavy metal was the invasion of something terrible and wrong. (Christe, 2010, 153-154).

We can see in this situation that the rock bands, heavy metal, and its subgenres, as well as the young adepts of the headbanger urban tribes, were not well seen by the American authorities and especially by the older people who saw these bands and tribes as a desecration of the social and religious values of that nation in the 80s. Still according to Christe, at that time a real cultural war against heavy metal music broke out.

A culture war was brewing, and heavy metal became the punching bag. Even when not explicitly inciting a revolt in the streets, heavy metal acts represented a real threat to public order. Even though metal was not the only type of music to bother the morality warriors, because of its obvious sarcasm, the movement served as the perfect scapegoat. For the same reasons that Iron Maiden's *Number of the Beast* piqued the interest of teenagers, the album terrified adults. Soon, a veritable array of reactionary forces launched an unexpected and successful attack on the foundations of heavy metal. (Christe, 2010, 154-155).

This prejudice and discrimination against heavy metal were not limited to the United States but also happened in various parts of the Western world. This was also shown by Lopes, who researched heavy metal in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the world. In his vision, there is a rupture, with the appropriation and use of sacred and religious symbols. We could say in this case that the sacred symbols have enabled an artistic signification or re-signification by the heavy metal members.

The present research aims, then, not only to provide ethnographic descriptions, history, quantify, enumerate, map, and dissect to exhaustion the artistic world of heavy metal in the city of Rio de Janeiro (which requires a similar task about heavy metal in the world and Brazil, It is an artistic world that operates in extensive national, international and, above all, virtual networks), but also demonstrate that this artistic world, through its aesthetic conventions, transforms the perception of sacred symbols by its members, from the realm of religion to the realm of art, from the given to the constructed. (Lopes 2006, 23).

For Lopes, his research goes beyond a simple ethnographic description of the socialization generated around heavy metal to embody it in its national, international dimension and the last decades in the virtual space. He delves into the historical moment of the emergence of this musical style with young people without hope and future perspective, coming from the working class and living the crises that society was going through at that time, who were discriminated against for addressing religious issues of evil through the bias of Christian tradition.

The historical moment of emergence, the working-class origins of the first musicians and fans of the genre, the greater presence of middle-class participants today, the ongoing intense generic subdivision, the history of the main con-

ventions of the genre and its creators - conventions related to the disadvantaged social strata and the historical period of crisis of the beginning of heavy metal, which are essential to understand the discrimination against the genre because they address religious issues from the ontological domain of evil from the Christian tradition, and thus convert sacred symbols into artistic conversions - will be discussed here. (Lopes 2006, 71).

This discrimination or rejection of heavy metal in society occurs for two reasons, for Lopes. First, it occurs because of the values, ideas, and beliefs that are created by this marginalized group, which finds in the apocalypse and in the chaos proposed by heavy metal songs a direct attack to change social institutions. The second occurs with the appropriation of sacred symbols and also of the signs presented in the biblical book of Revelation, resigned in profane art.

There are then two major factors in the social rejection of the genre: the ethos of dangerous and subordinate layers (which recurrently appeal to an apocalypse, or twilight of the gods - Ragnarok which appears in heavy metal lyrics, in the case of heavy metal via art - in which hierarchical social structures will be altered), and the religious set of sacred symbols of evil (common also in the Bible's book of Revelation) transmuted into profane art. (Lopes 2006, 71).

This rejection to rock, heavy metal, and its subgenres shown by Lopes occurred worldwide. What was not different in the Brazilian context with the prejudice and discrimination that this musical style suffered. However, the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in Belo Horizonte, managed to give a new meaning or resignification to rock, heavy metal and its subgenres in their religious practices.

Rock music is one of the examples of this signification and openness, where new forms of language, expression, icons, signs, and other objects are used in religious manifestation. Language is the first cultural asset of a people and from it, that meaning is constructed and understood by the group. For Maffesoli, language can connect individuals to the most varied social networks. "Without pronouncing on the content of this tendency, we can consider that communication, at the same time verbal and non-verbal, constitutes a vast network that connects individuals." (Maffesoli 2010, 139). Language or even communication in its most varied forms expresses the internal experience of the group, reinforces its boundaries and helps in its ethical construction. The ethos, in the context of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, is constituted at first with the young people who do not fit into the models of traditional churches and take refuge there to express their religious practice in their language and culture. These cultural and religious constructions are vital, for "there is no way to ignore culture, all the more so because it is not static, for it is always in the process of transformation." (Rodrigues, 2006, 70).

This is evident when a young rocker, involved in the urban tribe, has the freedom to express his spirituality with the practices of his tribe or group. Thus, rock music, like other musical styles, the clothes, the long hair, with extravagant or colorful cuts, tattoos, piercings, enlargements, and other elements that used to be the marks to point out what is not the stereotype of a member of a traditional evangelical church, can be incorporated into religious practices.

There is a great effort on the part of theologians, religious leaders, and the faithful to use elements that are culturally constructed. Faced with the openness and appropriation of cultural elements, churches and Christian communities are challenged to welcome and provide these young people with religious practices that make sense and are connected to all areas of their lives. The possibility of these practices, connected to the daily life of youth was captured by the pastors of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão. We verified the impact of cultural elements such as rock music on the religious practices of the community. Thus, it is not the youth who change their cultural patterns, but the religious institution is the one who changes and molds itself to their needs.

In 1992, the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão began, when some young people and the pastors Fábio de Carvalho and Eduardo Lucas, awakened to the need to take the Gospel message to the rockers of the headbanger tribe in Belo Horizonte. The work began in the streets, squares, and the city was considered the Brazilian capital of heavy rock. “This concern is easy to notice, for being Belo Horizonte, at that time, considered a true granary of bands of radical styles, such as Progressive Rock, Popular Rock, Heavy Metal, Grind Core, Hard Core, Crossover, Punk Rock, Gothic and Grunge, among others.” (Rodrigues, 2006, 130). The look of these pastors, reveals a sensitivity for the revolts, uncertainties, contestations, way of thinking and restlessness of this age group, and also their indifference to established social institutions, including the Church. “It is from everyday life that the reflection of the context of young people and adolescents present in urban tribes and the alternative<sup>12</sup> and underground<sup>13</sup> scene occurs.” (Rodrigues, 2007, 155). Thus, these pastors understood that the traditional churches could not communicate with the urban headbanger tribes.

How they understood socialization in the juvenile practice and how the public spaces of the city worked, for these rockers who were in these tribes.

12. As a sociological term, the alternative is established as the succession of two reciprocally exclusive things, an option between two ways of relating within a social group or society. The alternative scene with the young rockers begins in 1990, this youth movement opens the possibility between one or another alternative in the fusions of rock music with other musical styles, which before was not accepted within the youth movements due to the radicalism of its members.

13. Culture that is not disseminated by the mass media, underground, clandestine, or hidden before a social group or an entire society.

The appropriation of squares, parks, and other public places was done not only for the lack of money for leisure, but mainly for the pleasure of being together and doing the same practices as the tribe. The community gave a new meaning to the religious practices, by welcoming the rockers that were in these tribes. “Many are the young people reached through the Word sung in rock music, and this occurs with bands, churches, and communities that develop events, both in temples and in streets, squares, villages, and clusters, to evangelize young people and adolescents, use such contemporary style as an attraction.” (Rodrigues, 2007, 155).

These churches and communities, when developing such events in the most varied public spaces, signalize a religious opening to the elements of culture. Young people who did not have any religious practice started to live and experience Christianity together. Over the years, this work has reached other urban tribes, which have been attracted to the community. In 1995, after working with other churches and Christians, the group received help and the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão was born. Currently, the community has twelve Ministries<sup>14</sup> that function as both an internal arm, serving its members, and an external arm, serving society. We highlight the Pastoral Ministry with five pastors and one female pastor, and the Ministry of Pastors in Training with two pastors. Other Ministries are also highlighted, such as: Deaconry, Children, Worship, Tithes and Offerings, Reconstruir Project, Evangelism on Guaicurus Street and Prayer Vigil, Prayer Meeting, Couples Meeting, Communication, Press Office, Archive and Memorial.

Because sociality occurs more specifically with urban headbanger tribes and the underground scene, at the beginning of the community there was a distrust of other evangelical churches, for not accepting these young heavy rock fans in their temples. Although the religious practices are very similar to other churches and traditional evangelical communities, there was in the Cave the socialization and acceptance of groups that would often be marginalized in the religious context and society. There these young people connected to the urban headbanger tribe, could express their spirituality in their language and worldview.

Social ties go beyond instituted forms and are created and recreated in encounters. For Maffesoli, the elaborations of the divine are social. They are potentiated and dynamized in the sharing, in the most ordinary life situations, that is, they occur in the encounter with the other: “However, it is good to remember that the divine comes from daily realities, that

14. The Ministries are areas of action of the pastoral service of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, which develop work in the community, with other churches, in the streets and squares, and also in the villages and settlements. These Ministries rely on the service of community members to act, both in the community and in society in general. This survey occurred between 2016-2018 and may have changed.



it elaborates itself, little by little, in the sharing of simple and routine gestures. It is in this sense that *habitus* or custom serves to concretize, to actualize the ethical dimension of the whole society.” (Maffesoli 2010, 61). Not only does *habitus* foster the ethical dimension of society, but also mutual aid, which is based on proximity, on contact, on the simple moment of being together, on sharing the same ideas and attitudes. “We can say, then, that ethics is, in a sense, the cement that will make various elements of a given set form a whole.” (Maffesoli 2010, 53).

The socialization in the headbanger tribes is structured with the rock that is produced and consumed in the sociality of the group. Young people, who are often on the margins of their rights in society, use this style of music, not only as entertainment but also as an instrument of denunciation and claim for their basic rights. These young people are attracted to the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão precisely because of the proximity and acceptance of cultural expressions in their language in religious practices. As well as by the new way of choice, which makes it possible in an elective way, to which tribe or religious circle to belong in post-modernity. The social dimension and the possibility of interpersonal relationships are what give meaning to life in the community. “More than the purity of doctrine, it is living and surviving together that preoccupies grassroots communities.” (Maffesoli 2010, 109).

In this openness to new possibilities and different ways of religious manifestation, the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão appropriates and adapts itself to the culture in order to communicate the Gospel to the most varied urban tribes. As described by Maffesoli: “Indeed, what tends to predominate in founding moments is the pluralism of possibilities, the effervescence of situations, the multiplicity of experiences and values, all that characterizes the youth of men and societies.” (Maffesoli 2010, 117-118). We realize that the most varied human experiences contribute to the construction of social bonds. For Maffesoli, religion is also an important factor in the construction of social bonds, because it brings people together around the same thought and feeling. Still according to the sociologist, religion is fundamental for sociability, because “religion, here, is what connects. And it connects because there is shoulder to shoulder, because there is physical proximity.” (Maffesoli 2010, 74).

Social and religious groupings as in the case of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão go beyond the boundaries of traditions and social institutions to delve into the communal dimension of connecting or reconnecting people. “The communitarian ethos designated by the first set of expressions refers to a common subjectivity, a shared passion, while everything concerning society is essentially rational.” (Maffesoli 2010, 110).

Rock music and religion adapt to the most diverse cultures in which they are inserted, which can give young people the possibility of using them in their cultural constructions. As we have seen, for Durkheim, religion has the power to unite all the members of the group in collectivity. “The individuals who compose it feel connected by the mere fact of having a common faith. A society whose members are united by the fact of conceiving, in the same way, the sacred world and its relations with the profane world, and of translating this common conception into identical practices is what is called a church.” (Durkheim 1989, 75-76).

Therefore, the adherence of young people to the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão can be tied to commonalities and identical practices of young people. In this community, religion and rock music enabled the socialization with the cult in a contextualized and free way to its participants. What could be a religious manifestation in the traditional molds of evangelical and protestant churches, here occurs with rock music and the most varied urban tribes that get together to express their spirituality in an alternative way. This opens up possibilities for new religious practices and cults in our days, which manifest themselves in different ways by appropriating cultural elements that were not used before.

### **APPROPRIATION OF CULTURAL ELEMENTS FOR A CONTEXTUALIZED RELIGIOUS PRACTICE**

We see that there is no way to develop a religious practice without observing and appropriating the elements of culture and human daily life. This practice can only be fertile when it is not divorced and alienated from the diverse areas of life. Its fullness occurs when religious practices and cultural constructions are in constant dialogue. This dialogue with segments of society signals a religion that is contextualized, open, alive, and dynamic. Culture is in constant transformation, human life only makes sense when we manage to build and transform culture, with the most diverse forms and meanings.

In Tylor’s view, “Culture or Civilization, taken in its broadest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor, 2005, 69). Everything that human beings construct or cultivate in culture is eventually established later by social living and practice. Among the various areas that Tylor points out, beliefs and art stand out here. Both refer to the cultural construction with rock as a religious manifestation and an element of an alternative spiritual practice in the urban headbanger tribe among the youth of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão.

Tylor's definition shows that culture is built with the knowledge that is socially acquired. Maffesoli signaled the two cultures within one culture. On one side he showed the "owners of society" as "instituted power", who have the power of decision and change. On the other hand, he showed the "instituting power," which sits on the sidelines of decision making and thus power. "In short, instituted power, in its various forms: cultural, religious, social, economic, versus instituting power" (Maffesoli 2010, 01). Maffesoli, exposes the tension within culture concerning cultural manifestations. What is not accepted by the instituted power, can be suffocated as it was with rock music and the headbanger urban tribes decades past. This can happen even within the religious context, as it happened with the Californian band Stryper, which even being Christian suffered countless prejudices in society and even from religious groups in their own country, the United States. This is due to the use of the album title: *To hell with the devil* and a pentagram on the cover of the same album in 1986.

Not even the Christian metal band Stryper has been spared the fervor of truth owners. The band voluntarily redid the artwork for their 1986 album, *To hell with the devil*, because of controversy over the New Testament-inspired cover: "We got backlash from Christians who thought we put a pentagram on there just for the fun of putting a pentagram on there," says Stryper vocalist Michael Sweet. "One of the angels had torn a cord from Satan's neck and thrown it away, and that was the pentagram. People misinterpreted it, and so to avoid controversy and potential problems, we did an all-black cover with just the Stryper logo." (Christe, 2010, 159-161).

The amplitude in the forms of socialization with the plurality and diversity of life in the city context enables the opening and acceptance of cultural cosmovisions in post-modernity. Culture comprises all the possibilities of intellectual enrichment and learning that will be built throughout the individual's life. This individual in the cultural environment will have his gaps filled in the representations of various social roles. Religion, as a part of the great cultural mosaic, enables religious manifestations that absorb cultural elements with new senses and meanings. Around the cultural construction as a space of alterity, young people find the possibility of fusing rock with religion. Another aspect that facilitates the use of elements like rock in religious practice in the community is the openness to the diversity of cultures. However, fusion and openness may not occur when communities and churches close themselves in their theological and cultural reflections, not observing the richness and cultural diversity provided by the several cosmovisions nowadays. This richness of diversity for Maffesoli has fertile soil with postmodern tribalism. "The quotidian and its rituals, the collective emotions and passions, symbolized by the hedonism of Dionysus, the importance of the body in spectacle and contemplative enjoyment, the revival of contemporary nomadism, here is everything that accompanies postmodern tribalism." (Maffesoli 2010, 03).

Postmodern tribalism, with archaism<sup>15</sup>, returns to the source, to the bases and the primitive, at the same time it goes through the vitality of life. We can observe here a correlation of archaism with the name Caverna de Adulão, which gives origin to the community in Belo Horizonte. The mention of the Caverna de Adulão is found in the Old Testament<sup>16</sup>. This biblical text shows David's escape to the Caverna de Adulão fleeing from King Saul. Subsequently, about 400 men who were marginalized and oppressed joined David, who became their leader. In the biblical context and the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão today, we observe that both are places of refuge, refreshment, healing and acceptance of differences. Young people who do not fit into the patterns of traditional evangelical churches end up seeing in the Cave a place of encounter, of belonging to equals, and of affection. The counterculture<sup>17</sup> is established there with socialization that goes against the grain of many Christian churches and also of today's society.

In the same way that David shared the same emotions and feelings with those who went with him to Adullam's Cave, this also occurs today with the urban tribes spread throughout the cities, which are agglutinated in the sharing, shared feelings and belonging, in being together and in sociability. In this respect it is good to remember that Maffesoli uses the term tribe in a pioneering way. "At a time when this was not fashionable, I proposed the metaphor of the 'tribe' to observe the metamorphosis of the social bond." (Maffesoli 2010, 04). The changes in the postmodern social bond, according to Maffesoli, occur with two essential roots. "On the one hand, that which stresses the simultaneously 'archaic' and youthful aspects of tribalism. On the other, that stresses its communal dimension and the saturation of the concept of the Individual. Here, it seems to me, are the two roots of postmodern tribalism." (Maffesoli 2010, 05).

We can notice that the return of young people to the archaic, the search for a community dimension, and the saturation of the concept of the individual already signal disbelief and dissatisfaction of these young people with the institutions in force today. This makes it possible to read and reread previous phases of culture in search of stability or maturity in social organization in its most diverse areas.

15. Maffesoli (2010, 07) has "shown that one could characterize postmodernity by the exacerbated return of archaism." Also according to Maffesoli, archaism causes certain discomfort to social observers, who seek a linear and secure progress, whereas archaism is a return that for him characterizes: The Time of the Tribes. This return is a spiraling return of archaic values coupled with technological development.

16. "David fled from the city of Gath and went to the caverna de Adulão. When his brothers and his father's family heard about it, they went there to find him. He was also joined by all those who were in trouble, the indebted and the discontented; and he became their leader. There were about four hundred men with him." (1Samuel 22. 1-2).

17. Counterculture starts from the principle of rejecting and questioning the values and practices of the dominant culture of which they are apart.


Also, according to Maffesoli, archaism points to the richness of the communal dimension, which occurs in the encounter with the other, with the different, and breaks the domain of the individual and the private. “This is the lesson of postmodern ‘archaism’: it becomes to represent, in all domains, the communal passion. We can defend ourselves against it, take offense at it, deny it, protect ourselves from it, it matters little; the tendency that pushes us toward the other, that urges us to imitate him, is present.” (Maffesoli 2010, 15). What Maffesoli called “archaic,” we can see among youth tribes today with the movements that are established as countercultural, with the alternative and underground scene. Both, too, signal the fertility of community life and the fall of individualism. “In this sense, before being political, economic, or social, tribalism is a cultural phenomenon.” (Maffesoli 2010, 06).

The Comunidade Caverna de Adulão translates both the archaic and youthful aspects of tribalism, and points to the communal dimension and the decline of individualism in its religious practices. The community manifests its religious practice openly and enables the use of rock music as a cultural element in the youthful language of the urban headbanger tribe. It also enables religious practices in postmodernity that go beyond traditional evangelical churches. With new forms or religious practices these young people signal an alternative spirituality with new clothes, readings, and languages that are accessible to manifest their religiosity in an open and contextualized way.

With ritual, its repetitions, and with worship, the youth express their religiosity and make the tribe’s internal bonds stronger. According to Durkheim: “rites are rules of behavior that prescribe how a man should behave with sacred things.” (Durkheim 1989, 72). This signals the ethical behavior of the group, in face of the sacred or religious practices. Also, according to Durkheim, a religion can diversify by using elements of the culture in which it is inserted. It presents itself as a whole, but is formed by different parts, with each individual, their experiences and subjectivities. “[...] a religion is not necessarily fixed on the same idea, it is not reduced to a single principle which, even if it diversifies according to the circumstances to which it applies, would, at the bottom, always be identical to itself: it is a whole formed of distinct and relatively individualized parts.” (Durkheim 1989, 72-73).

Christianity exemplifies a religion that conforms to the diverse circumstances and cultures through which it passes, in which the whole is made up of different parts. Where Christianity was introduced, it used the elements of culture, starting with language, to express itself and make itself intelligible to the faithful. The Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, in its religious practice, also presents itself as one of these parts and





differentiates itself by the use of elements of culture such as rock. Although it is a church like many others spread around the city of Belo Horizonte, it develops a religiosity that fits the language and the needs of these young people. The otherness and responsibility of the church members towards the youth and their sociability are what matters to the tribes that join the community.

The religious practices in the community have been established with the socialization of the young people from the urban tribes and also with people of various ages. This heterogeneous formation shows the diversity of religion as a big mosaic, where the parts, represented by each individual, compose this big mosaic and establish there the socialization among all the members of the community. For Durkheim, this diversity of related groups does not occur by spontaneous and pre-established agreement, but happens by the same force that drives individuals in the same direction. “If all hearts vibrate in unison, it is not because of a spontaneous and pre-established concordance; it is because the same force moves them in the same direction. Each is dragged along by the others.” (Durkheim, 2011, 37).

Durkheim shows a vibration of groups that move in the same direction and one infects the other within the larger group. Maffesoli observes that the feeling of belonging, affection and being together, to share the same emotions is the force that moves urban tribes in the same direction. This sharing of the same emotions, tastes, and affections generates a concordance, a driving force between individuals in their social practices and can be observed in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, in the religious practices developed by the young people who socialize there. Also, according to Durkheim (1989, 73) religion is a “whole formed of distinct and relatively individualized parts.” In this aspect, in religion the different ones socialize by some common point, that is, something that can unite them as a “tribe” in the metaphor proposed by Maffesoli, which does not undo the individuality of each part makes up the whole.

Based on this principle, we consider that even if the religious practices of the community provoke some estrangement for traditional churches with their different way of communicating the Word of God to marginalized groups, among them, the young people who are in the urban headbanger tribes with rock music, these practices end up guaranteeing their place in contemporary society. For these young people what is important are personal and interpersonal relationships. By adapting the message to the needs of the young people, each member sees himself as a small part, with his small story that fits into and makes sense in a larger story. In this way, these young people, who otherwise would not be able to express their spirituality in their language, find the possibility to do so.

The community appropriates rock music as one of the cultural elements and the religious practice here is established as a part of a whole that also forms the other Protestant and Evangelical churches.

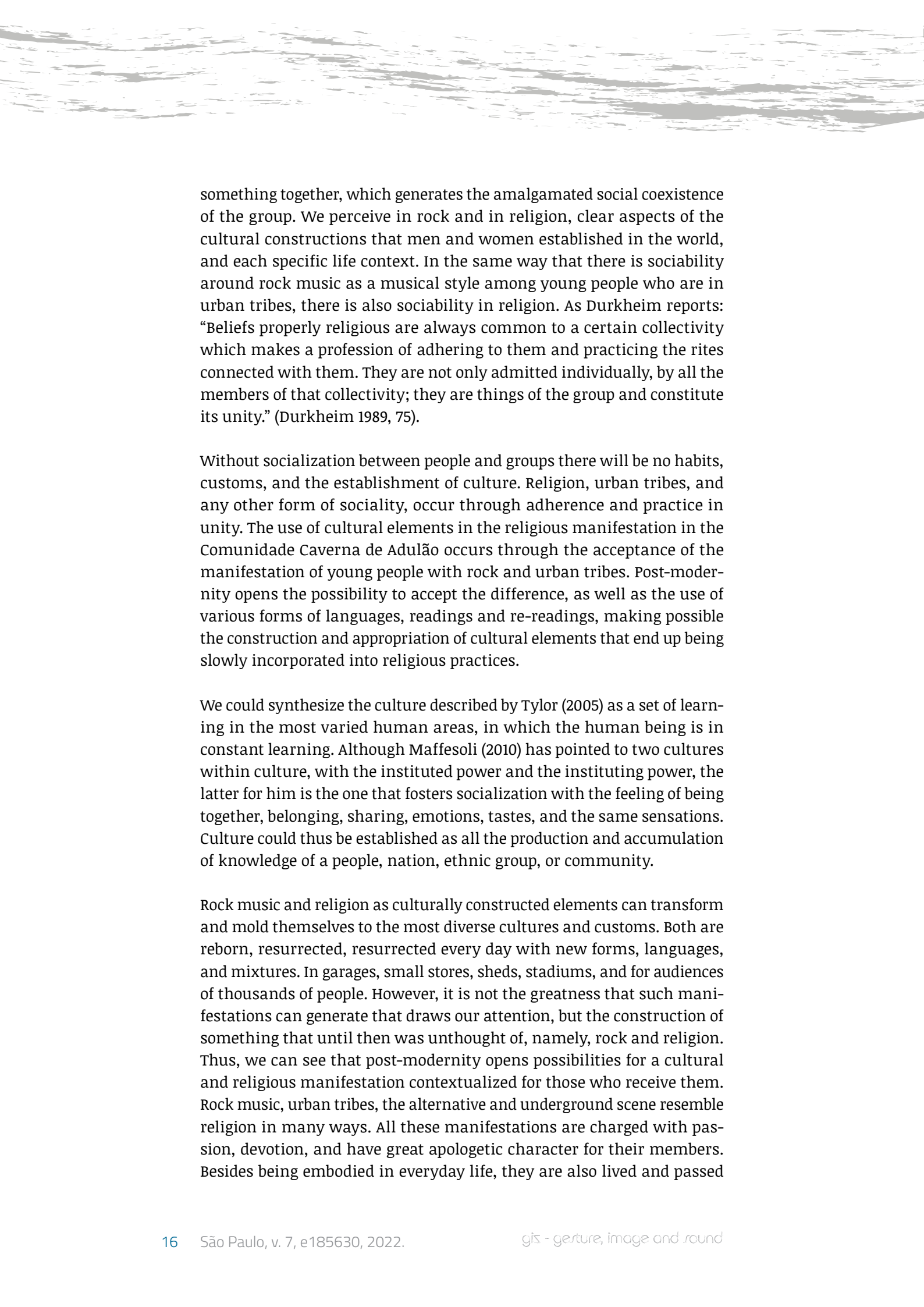
We realized that in religious manifestation, Protestant churches can be seen as the organizational center for being traditional or historical, but there is also the peripheral manifestation of Ministries, Churches and Communities that develop their religious practices in a freer and more spontaneous way today. This spontaneity points to religious manifestations that have the power and freedom to create, shape, and transform their religious practices with the adherence of elements proper to culture, such as rock music.

Thus, with today's great diversity, religious manifestation and practices spread and develop in situations and places that for many religious leaders and their respective institutions, would be unthought of, "[...] and there is no religion however unitary it may be that does not recognize plurality of sacred things." (Durkheim 1989, 73). In Durkheim's thought religion recognizes that the field of sacred things is very vast. We note that not only religion has this breadth within culture. Other cultural elements also have a very large production and consumption. Music is an example of this vastness of cultural production, which can vary between cities, states and countries. From the perspective of underground culture there is a large network of meanings for the young people who socialize in it, because they use cultural elements to give meaning to the group's practices.

By sharing what is produced by the urban tribe, with the same tastes, sensations, ideals, and gestures, young people are united by the fact of being together and by the feeling of belonging. Thus, the underground culture is sedimented in the ritual and repetition of youth production, which generates an identity and its sociability. The community exhausts all its forces in the creation and recreation of group boundaries, with the union of community ethics and solidarity. These end up developing the ritual, which by its repetition gives security to the community.

The community, in turn, exhausts its energy in its creation (or, eventually, recreation). This is what makes it possible to establish a link between community ethics and solidarity. One of the particularly striking aspects of this link is the development of ritual. As we know, this is not exactly teleological, that is, oriented toward an end; on the contrary, it is repetitive and, for this very reason, provides security. Its only function is to reaffirm the feeling that a given group has of itself. (Maffesoli 2010, 47).

As demonstrated by Maffesoli, the creation of a community is also established in recreation, that is, it is structured by the simple pleasure of doing

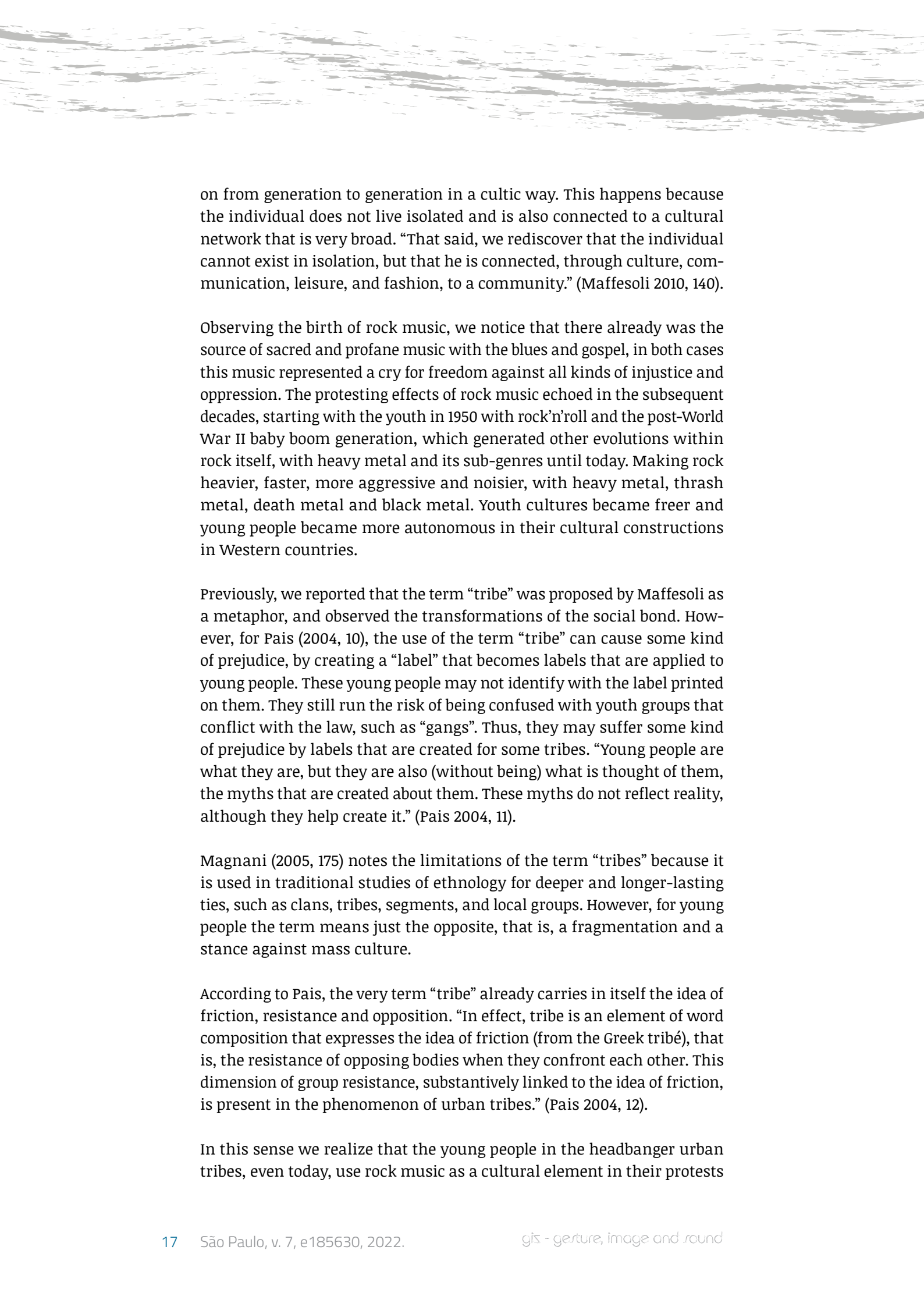


something together, which generates the amalgamated social coexistence of the group. We perceive in rock and in religion, clear aspects of the cultural constructions that men and women established in the world, and each specific life context. In the same way that there is sociability around rock music as a musical style among young people who are in urban tribes, there is also sociability in religion. As Durkheim reports: “Beliefs properly religious are always common to a certain collectivity which makes a profession of adhering to them and practicing the rites connected with them. They are not only admitted individually, by all the members of that collectivity; they are things of the group and constitute its unity.” (Durkheim 1989, 75).

Without socialization between people and groups there will be no habits, customs, and the establishment of culture. Religion, urban tribes, and any other form of sociality, occur through adherence and practice in unity. The use of cultural elements in the religious manifestation in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão occurs through the acceptance of the manifestation of young people with rock and urban tribes. Post-modernity opens the possibility to accept the difference, as well as the use of various forms of languages, readings and re-readings, making possible the construction and appropriation of cultural elements that end up being slowly incorporated into religious practices.

We could synthesize the culture described by Tylor (2005) as a set of learning in the most varied human areas, in which the human being is in constant learning. Although Maffesoli (2010) has pointed to two cultures within culture, with the instituted power and the instituting power, the latter for him is the one that fosters socialization with the feeling of being together, belonging, sharing, emotions, tastes, and the same sensations. Culture could thus be established as all the production and accumulation of knowledge of a people, nation, ethnic group, or community.

Rock music and religion as culturally constructed elements can transform and mold themselves to the most diverse cultures and customs. Both are reborn, resurrected, resurrected every day with new forms, languages, and mixtures. In garages, small stores, sheds, stadiums, and for audiences of thousands of people. However, it is not the greatness that such manifestations can generate that draws our attention, but the construction of something that until then was unthought of, namely, rock and religion. Thus, we can see that post-modernity opens possibilities for a cultural and religious manifestation contextualized for those who receive them. Rock music, urban tribes, the alternative and underground scene resemble religion in many ways. All these manifestations are charged with passion, devotion, and have great apologetic character for their members. Besides being embodied in everyday life, they are also lived and passed



on from generation to generation in a cultic way. This happens because the individual does not live isolated and is also connected to a cultural network that is very broad. “That said, we rediscover that the individual cannot exist in isolation, but that he is connected, through culture, communication, leisure, and fashion, to a community.” (Maffesoli 2010, 140).

Observing the birth of rock music, we notice that there already was the source of sacred and profane music with the blues and gospel, in both cases this music represented a cry for freedom against all kinds of injustice and oppression. The protesting effects of rock music echoed in the subsequent decades, starting with the youth in 1950 with rock’n’roll and the post-World War II baby boom generation, which generated other evolutions within rock itself, with heavy metal and its sub-genres until today. Making rock heavier, faster, more aggressive and noisier, with heavy metal, thrash metal, death metal and black metal. Youth cultures became freer and young people became more autonomous in their cultural constructions in Western countries.

Previously, we reported that the term “tribe” was proposed by Maffesoli as a metaphor, and observed the transformations of the social bond. However, for Pais (2004, 10), the use of the term “tribe” can cause some kind of prejudice, by creating a “label” that becomes labels that are applied to young people. These young people may not identify with the label printed on them. They still run the risk of being confused with youth groups that conflict with the law, such as “gangs”. Thus, they may suffer some kind of prejudice by labels that are created for some tribes. “Young people are what they are, but they are also (without being) what is thought of them, the myths that are created about them. These myths do not reflect reality, although they help create it.” (Pais 2004, 11).

Magnani (2005, 175) notes the limitations of the term “tribes” because it is used in traditional studies of ethnology for deeper and longer-lasting ties, such as clans, tribes, segments, and local groups. However, for young people the term means just the opposite, that is, a fragmentation and a stance against mass culture.

According to Pais, the very term “tribe” already carries in itself the idea of friction, resistance and opposition. “In effect, tribe is an element of word composition that expresses the idea of friction (from the Greek *tribé*), that is, the resistance of opposing bodies when they confront each other. This dimension of group resistance, substantively linked to the idea of friction, is present in the phenomenon of urban tribes.” (Pais 2004, 12).

In this sense we realize that the young people in the headbanger urban tribes, even today, use rock music as a cultural element in their protests

against the established powers. Although he uses the metaphor of the “tribe” to designate the transformations of the present time, Maffesoli understands that this metaphor cannot express this concept with confidence.

There is, I recognize, a true paradox: to indicate a guaranteed direction with “words” having in no way the security of the concept. [...] Perhaps one has to know how to accept, and live, this paradox. [...] one must know how to be content with metaphors, analogies, images, all vaporous things, which would be the least worst possible means to say ‘what is’, what is in a nascent state. (Maffesoli 2010, 04-05).

When using the term urban tribes, we think about the metaphorical issue proposed by Maffesoli, who demonstrates the transformations in social bonds, with the feeling of belonging and being together, affection, passions, and community devotions among young people who join these tribes. Another factor for the use of this term is that the members of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão called themselves a rock tribe at the beginning of the community, and today they call themselves a more heterogeneous tribe, open to cultural diversity. We emphasize that not only the cultural manifestations in the community are developed in a counter-cultural way. The preaching, the liturgy, the evangelism<sup>18</sup>, the

18. We emphasize that evangelism at the beginning of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, is closely linked to the urban headbanger tribes and the newly formed secular underground scene. The city of Belo Horizonte in the mid-1980s was experiencing an explosion of the underground scene with the creation of many heavy metal bands and their subgenres. In this cultural ebullition of the capital of Minas Gerais concerning rock music in 1991, a group of young people meets to exchange information about foreign Christian rock bands and music. This group feels the need to evangelize their old friends from the alternative and underground scene and so they start praying to God for a pastor identified with the subculture of heavy rock. In 1992 this group exchanged some correspondence with Pastor Fábio de Carvalho, who lived in Londrina, in the state of Paraná. In July of the same year Pastor Fábio and his family move to Belo Horizonte. At this time the first bands of White Metal of Brazil appear, among them: Saved, Razão and The Joker. The group gets permission to perform with these bands in the hall of Comunidade Atos, located on Rua Levindo Lopes, on Savassi, on Saturdays. This event was named Refúgio do Rock (Rock Shelter). Due to the growth of the group and the demand created, Pastor Fábio begins to lead the Sanctuary Ministry, created to disciple the members of the newly established bands and also to evangelize the youth connected to the urban headbanger tribe. Later on, growth groups are created with weekly meetings at homes, with the purpose of communion among the youth and Bible study. In 1993, more bands appear, and the concert schedule grows. In April of the same year, a group of 12 youth from the Apostolic Church Renascer em Cristo, from São Paulo, visited Belo Horizonte to get to know the Shrine Ministry. From this visit and from the experiences they had, the band Antidemon was born. In September, Pastors Fábio and Geraldo travel to São Paulo, where they attend the presentation of the American band Bride, in the event SOS da Vida promoted by the Apostolic Church Renascer em Cristo. In 1994, the group strengthens relations with other Christian ministries, such as JOCUM (Youth With A Mission) and Hippies of Christ. The year of 1995 was crucial for what would happen with the Christian underground in Belo Horizonte. In January Pastor Fábio disconnects from Comunidade Atos and some time later Pastor Eduardo also disconnects. Pastor Fábio tries to take that flock to some church, but the few that approved of this type of work with young people still had difficulty understanding and living with the alternative and underground Christian culture. Here there is a perception of recognizing that group no longer as a ministry of a church, but as a church, so Pastor Fábio invites Pastor Eduardo to pastor them both and after a while he accepts the invitation. In June, in a garage of a house in the Cruzeiro neighborhood, the first service of the new church takes place, formed by two distinct groups. Pastor Fábio with his underground flock and Pastor Eduardo with his conventional flock. At that time there was a concern not to put a



participation of the members and the pastors in the community's life, shows a different format from the traditional evangelical and Protestant churches. In which young people and the whole community build their religious practices in a more organic, open, and contextualized way.

These young people create with rock their aesthetics, ideology, and posture towards the world, and they signal friction and opposition to mass culture. Starting with the fact that they use a different language in the group and the musical production with guttural vocals and a fast, aggressive, and very noisy sound. The extravagant clothing also demonstrates this friction and opposition to what is conventionally defined by mass culture. "The trust that is established between group members is expressed through rituals, through specific signs of recognition, which have no other purpose than to strengthen the small group against the large group." (Maffesoli 2010, 159).

Ritual occurs with repetition, and although tribes appear to be unstructured, contestatory, and subversive, "the reference to ritual underlines that the essential quality of group and mass resistance is that it is more cunning than offensive." (Maffesoli 2010, 159-160). In resisting the mass culture that is set as the standard to follow, urban tribes may suffer some depreciation and prejudice, with the label and stigma that are given to their members. "It is certainly no accident that many groups of young people take with them the appellation of the tribe. It is because their conduct is seen as misaligned, confrontational, exotic." (Pais 2004, 13).

But it is precisely the non-acceptance of the tribe by what is imposed as the cultural standard by the mass culture that we can see the feeling of belonging, the conviviality, and the feeling of being together. In this aspect, tribes unite young people who have the same sensations, emotions, interests, and ideals. "If the individuals who integrate some urban tribes distance themselves from certain social standards, it is not exactly to isolate themselves from everything around them, but to reunite with reference groups closer to their ideals." (Pais 2004, 17).

This sociability occurs in eye-to-eye like the horizontal relationships with the large streams of small tribes.

When we look closely, this indistinct shoulder to shoulder, which resembles animal pilgrimages, is in fact made up of a multitude of interacting small cells. It is also punctuated

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name on the new community, so as not to create a new denomination or movement. In terms of evangelism, because Pastor Fábio worked with the underground, he was more present with the juvenile public. This made possible his articulation with several urban tribes, and not only the headbangers, with rock and heavy metal, but also with other urban tribes that socialized around the theater, cinema, skateboarding, sports, tattoos, music in general, and other situations that generated belonging. Even if this was a simple way of stopping to spend time together, to watch a movie or go to the concerts of favorite bands of these young people and teenagers.

by a series of recognitions, of people and places, that make this broth of culture signs a well-ordered whole. (Maffesoli 2010, 168).

We can observe that the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão uses cultural elements like rock music in their religious practices. Even if such practices seem contrary to the vast majority of traditional evangelical churches, the practices of the urban headbanger tribe with rock and religion have the power to unite opposites. “The tribes and their struggles, the strong interdependence that constitutes these tribes, and at the same time the need for a God who unites the contraries, here is the epistemological-mythical framework in which the dialectic “of love and estrangement” that seems to be the basis of all social structuring is inserted.” (Maffesoli 2010, 185).

Therefore, what we noticed in the religious practices of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão and the alternative spirituality developed by the young people there, is that there is an opening for the appropriation of the cultural elements of the urban headbanger tribes. This points to a contextualized religious practice that respects and accepts the manifestation of these young people.

### **UNDERGROUND CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES: NEW ECCLESIAL MODELS?**

To talk about underground churches and communities or new ecclesial forms today, we asked the following question. Underground Churches and Communities: New Ecclesial Models? With this questioning, we sought to understand how the construction of the relationship between religion and culture took place in a practical way with the experience of young people who liked rock music and were in the urban headbanger tribes, in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão. Subsequently, we observed if there was the occurrence of a new church model there.

We realized that the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in Belo Horizonte was consolidated as a Christian community that used elements of culture, including religion and rock, with the sociability of young people from urban tribes. We notice that this relationship between religion and rock was not always so harmonious, with conflicts that intensified even more against heavy metal bands and their subgenres. The documentary *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (2005), presented by Canadian anthropologist Sam Dunn, who became a heavy metal fan when he was 12 years old, shows his journey around the world, capturing different opinions and perspectives about the musical genre known as heavy metal. He researched its origins, themes, aesthetics, visuals, stances and attitudes, as well as the controversies, and the reasons why it is so admired and loved by many young people, teenagers, and people of various ages around the world.

In this documentary Dunn, shows that in 1986 heavy metal became the most popular music worldwide with millions of fans and at the time of his journey in 2005, he tried to understand why heavy metal suffered so much prejudice and was discriminated against. As he relates, “This music has millions of passionate fans all over the world. Yet for 35 years it has been stereotyped, repulsed, and condemned. I know, because I’ve been defending it since I was 12 years old.” (Metal 2005).

The documentary shows how the hunt for rockers and heavy metal began in the United States in 1984, via the US Congress and the creation of the PMRC Parent’s Music Resource Center. The band Twisted Sister was the first to suffer this discrimination with heavy metal music. Dee Snider, lead singer of the band was the first to be summoned to Congress, as reported.

1984 was a pretty mindless year for Twisted Sister. We were hearing things about this Parenting and Music Resource Center and Tipper Gore, but not paying much attention, because we had protests from religious groups at every show. So, for us it was just another parent group that you know, put Twisted Sister on their hit list. (Metal 2005).

From then on, Dunn noted that discrimination and persecution against heavy metal bands intensified, as “the PMRC classified the songs according to violence, occultism, sex, drugs, and alcohol.” (Metal 2005). In this same direction, Christe shows that the PMRC tried to attribute to heavy metal many social problems and all kinds of juvenile delinquency at that time.

Responding to what some saw as a radical music crisis, the political activism group Parent’s Music Resource Center, or PMRC, formed in 1984 out of the disquiet of Susan Baker, Tipper Gore, and many other wives of well-known members of Congress. The group spread the theory that the growing statistics of suicide and rape among teenagers could be attributed to lewd rock lyrics. (Christe, 2010, 155).

Also, according to Christe, an expansion of this persecution and discrimination against heavy metal by the PMRC occurred during the administration of US President Ronald Reagan, which spread to other sectors of society with professionals from various fields of endeavor, including Protestant religious leaders.

Still, the fear campaign continued to expand during the Reagan administration, as PMRC hearings granted self-proclaimed occult connoisseurs professional status - bizarre modern-day witch hunters who lectured at PTA meetings, encouraged campaigns to write letters of protest, and infiltrated the news segments of television with alarming regularity. The joy train extended into a procession of resurrected comedians, retired police officers, and evangelical ministers, such as Bob Larson, author of a series of works attacking rock music. In his independent book, published in 1983, Rock, Larson feeds the terror of the ignorant with improbable warnings about Black Sabbath’s alleged use of astral projection and rituals with chicken blood. (Christe, 2010, 159).

Observing Christe's reports about the indiscriminate persecution that happened against heavy metal in the United States, by people from every society that supposedly could form an opinion, even with the sieve of religion, in this case the evangelical one. Today it is not difficult to understand the difficulty that this rhythm faced, as well as the barriers that would be faced by churches and Christian communities that dared to use it in their liturgy.

However, this is what happened with the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in Belo Horizonte in the Brazilian context, less than a decade later. Besides using this rhythm inside the community in services and evangelistic events, pastors Fabio and Eduardo also encouraged the formation of rock bands, heavy metal and its subgenres. This showed a deep sensitivity and respect for the culture of these young people, who besides not being discriminated against there, could still worship God in their own worldview and language. They were also encouraged to leave the four walls of the church, to minister in the streets, squares, and unusual places in Belo Horizonte, in Brazil, and in other parts of the world.

For Maffesoli, religious practices can help in the expansion of sociability, because they establish closer ties between people and this helps to face the adversities of life. "That religion (re-ligare) is the expression of a plural sociality, [...], is by no means surprising. Indeed, it should be remembered that before becoming institutionalized, with known rigidity, religious meetings serve, first and foremost, to keep warm, to close ranks in the face of the harsh social or natural 'order of things.'" (Maffesoli 2010, 185).

This plural sociality that religion can provide with the feeling of belonging, and the warmth produced by shoulder to shoulder, can also be observed in the composition of the community. In the beginning, the work was focused on young people who were in marginalized and discriminated groups in society. Today, its members include men, women, children, and people of all ages. We also observe that it is not a new church or community, but religious practices that make use of varied cultural manifestations, with readings, re-readings, and new forms and meanings, which here use rock music as a youth cultural element. Before we go on, it is good to point out some differences between churches and communities. According to Brakemeier (2004, 49), "community is the local congregation, while church designates a set of communities." Also according to the author, church and community are neo-testamental synonyms.

According to the New Testament, however, church and community are synonymous. The difference is only in the etymological origin. Church comes from the Greek *ekklesia*, meaning assembly, while the community is a Latin term, designating a group united by something common. From this perspective, to live in a community is to live in the

church and vice versa. Christian community always has an ecclesial nature. (Brakemeier, 2004, 49-50).

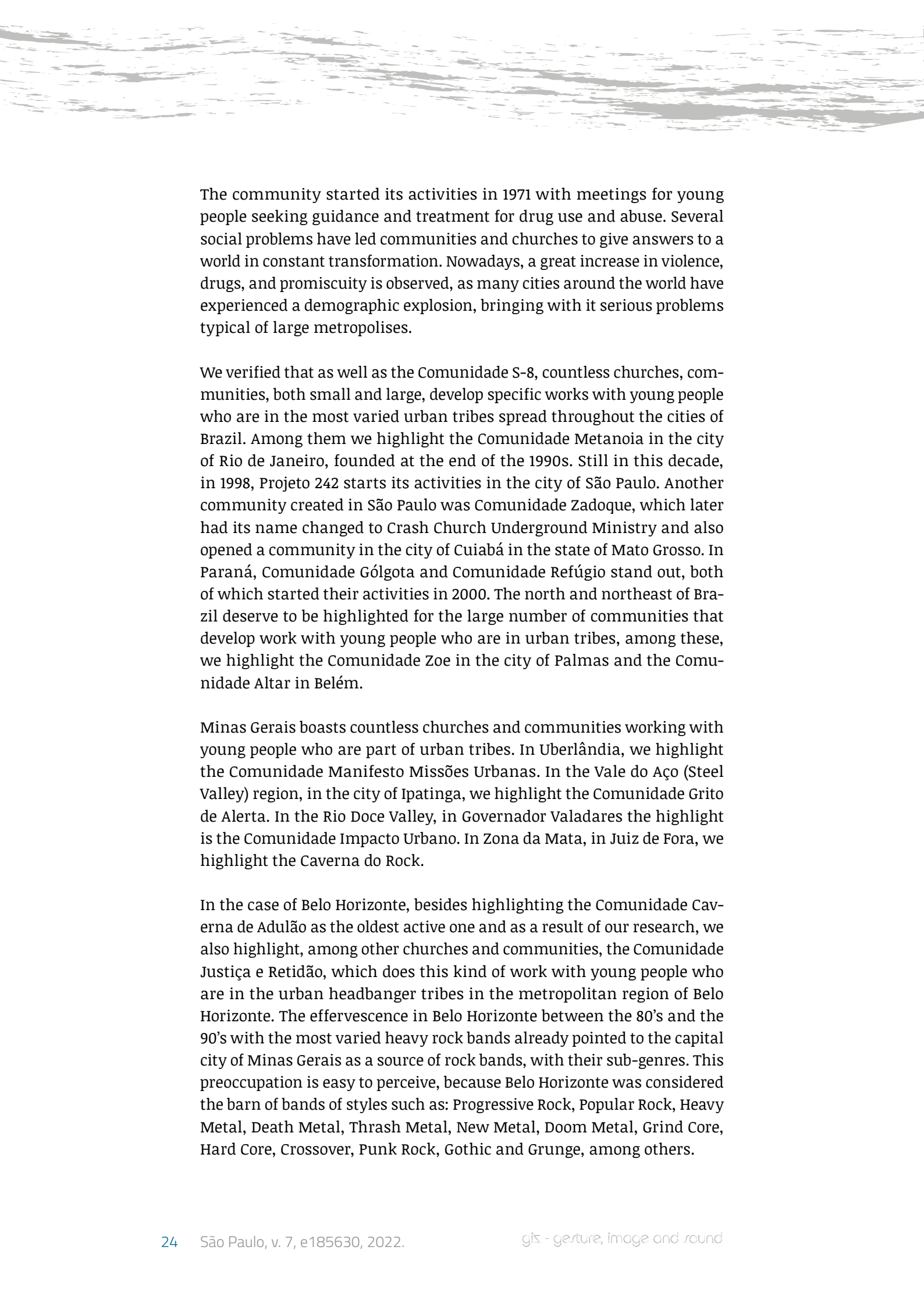
Another prominent factor is that communities are more open to cultural elements than churches. Thus, they are more involved in what is produced by culture. The community also ends up being more receptive to culture because of its freedom regarding customs, dogmas, and ecclesial structures, which are less rigid and plastered than churches are when it comes to changes. Many evangelical communities that develop their work with young people use this nomenclature to distance themselves from the format of conventional churches and to be more open to all kinds of youth groups. These communities are often not connected to the large churches, whether historic or not, but they are faithful to the gospel and are wholly contained within the church of God.

This does not prevent local communities from presenting themselves in a variety of forms and cultural colorings. They have the right to be different. Already in early Christianity, Hebrew and Greek-speaking Christians lived together, thus coming from different environments. Traditions, customs, ethnicities differed. Plurality did not always fit into a single community organization. The church of Jesus Christ cannot claim uniformity. It needs to adapt to the context in which it lives, to articulate the gospel in its respective culture, to speak the language of the people. It is noteworthy that the Christian community is not tied to any specific culture ("cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19ff."). It can wear the typical costumes of the respective locality and region. It is open to multiculturalism. It brings together concrete people from all nations (Matthew 18.18). (Brakemeier, 2004, 50).

Local communities establish themselves as fertile ground for the varieties of forms in different environments. This plurality can go beyond the community organization and thus signal that no community is locked into a specific culture. In this way, regionalism is respected, with the incorporation of elements that are specific to certain groups. This makes it possible to open up to multiculturalism without falling into the temptation of monopolizing or flattening manifestations that are outside the large urban centers. We have verified that these churches and underground communities that appropriate elements of culture, such as heavy rock concerts in their facilities, like the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, and other communities and churches that hold events with other musical styles like electronic music, which resemble raves and nightclubs. They develop this kind of work with young people and are not restricted to the big Brazilian metropolises, but have spread to several parts of Brazil, and have reached small and medium-sized cities.

According to Baggio (1997, 72), the Comunidade S-8 in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro, was the pioneer in Brazil to develop its work geared toward young people, challenging cultural standards and supporting bands with their styles.





The community started its activities in 1971 with meetings for young people seeking guidance and treatment for drug use and abuse. Several social problems have led communities and churches to give answers to a world in constant transformation. Nowadays, a great increase in violence, drugs, and promiscuity is observed, as many cities around the world have experienced a demographic explosion, bringing with it serious problems typical of large metropolises.

We verified that as well as the Comunidade S-8, countless churches, communities, both small and large, develop specific works with young people who are in the most varied urban tribes spread throughout the cities of Brazil. Among them we highlight the Comunidade Metanoia in the city of Rio de Janeiro, founded at the end of the 1990s. Still in this decade, in 1998, Projeto 242 starts its activities in the city of São Paulo. Another community created in São Paulo was Comunidade Zadoque, which later had its name changed to Crash Church Underground Ministry and also opened a community in the city of Cuiabá in the state of Mato Grosso. In Paraná, Comunidade Gólgota and Comunidade Refúgio stand out, both of which started their activities in 2000. The north and northeast of Brazil deserve to be highlighted for the large number of communities that develop work with young people who are in urban tribes, among these, we highlight the Comunidade Zoe in the city of Palmas and the Comunidade Altar in Belém.

Minas Gerais boasts countless churches and communities working with young people who are part of urban tribes. In Uberlândia, we highlight the Comunidade Manifesto Missões Urbanas. In the Vale do Aço (Steel Valley) region, in the city of Ipatinga, we highlight the Comunidade Grito de Alerta. In the Rio Doce Valley, in Governador Valadares the highlight is the Comunidade Impacto Urbano. In Zona da Mata, in Juiz de Fora, we highlight the Caverna do Rock.


In the case of Belo Horizonte, besides highlighting the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão as the oldest active one and as a result of our research, we also highlight, among other churches and communities, the Comunidade Justiça e Retidão, which does this kind of work with young people who are in the urban headbanger tribes in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte. The effervescence in Belo Horizonte between the 80's and the 90's with the most varied heavy rock bands already pointed to the capital city of Minas Gerais as a source of rock bands, with their sub-genres. This preoccupation is easy to perceive, because Belo Horizonte was considered the barn of bands of styles such as: Progressive Rock, Popular Rock, Heavy Metal, Death Metal, Thrash Metal, New Metal, Doom Metal, Grind Core, Hard Core, Crossover, Punk Rock, Gothic and Grunge, among others.

The band Sepultura, from Belo Horizonte in the 90s was considered the biggest heavy rock band in the world. In the city there were also several successful bands among them: Overdose, Sex Trash, Sarcófago, Mutilator, The Mist, Eminence, Absolute Disgrace, Chakal and many others. The city, due to the great amount of bands, in 1994 receives the title of “Capital of Rock” in the secular alternative and underground scene. The capital of Minas Gerais entered definitely in the world rock scene with the “BHRIF” (Belo Horizonte International Rock Festival). National and international bands performed at Praça da Estação and at Serraria Souza Pinto. This festival was held by the Belo Horizonte City Hall, in partnership with the private initiative, open to the general public.

The alternative and underground Christian scene were not left behind either, with the pioneering of the first Christian rock underground bands and the emergence of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão in the early 1990s. “In Minas Gerais, according to Tibério, the first white metal bands emerged. The Minas Gerais Ministry of White Metal, as Tibério reported, was initially called ‘Sanctuary Church’ and, in 1994, was renamed ‘Caverna de Adulão’, the name it bears today.” (Costa, 2004, 54). Also, according to Costa, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, communities and churches began to change their field of action to reach the youth in the suburbs of the cities. “More or less from that moment on, religious communities and evangelical churches began to emerge, which started to change their way of acting and the methods of co-optation of this youth coming from the suburbs of the Brazilian cities.” (Costa, 2004, 48).

In this way, both communities and churches began to accept the cultural manifestation of young people within their religious practices, and the support given by religious leaders to these groups or tribes reflected in the attendance and permanence of these young people in their churches. “One of the attractions was that as long as they accepted ‘Jesus’ and started attending churches, they could continue to ‘be as before.’ Which meant being able to wear the traditional clothes, hair and props, listen to and participate in concerts and musical and cultural gatherings, in a peaceful way, among other possibilities.” (Costa, 2004, 49).

In summary, we realize that the adaptation of these churches and communities points to a new way of evangelizing and also a new way of being a member in these religious circles. It is worth emphasizing that this is not a new model of church or community. However, in these religious practices open to the appropriation of cultural elements, we can see that the religious institution is the one that changes and adapts itself to the needs of its members, and it is not the person who changes in the act of his/her conversion. The continuing “to be as before” described by Costa above, refers to the openness of religious institutions to the practices



performed by young people in urban tribes. “Thus, the traditional figure of the ‘believer’ wearing a black suit, holding a Bible and followed by his wife wearing a long dress and keeping her hair long, was replaced by the faithful wearing casual, colorful clothes and fashionable hair.” (Costa, 2004, 51).

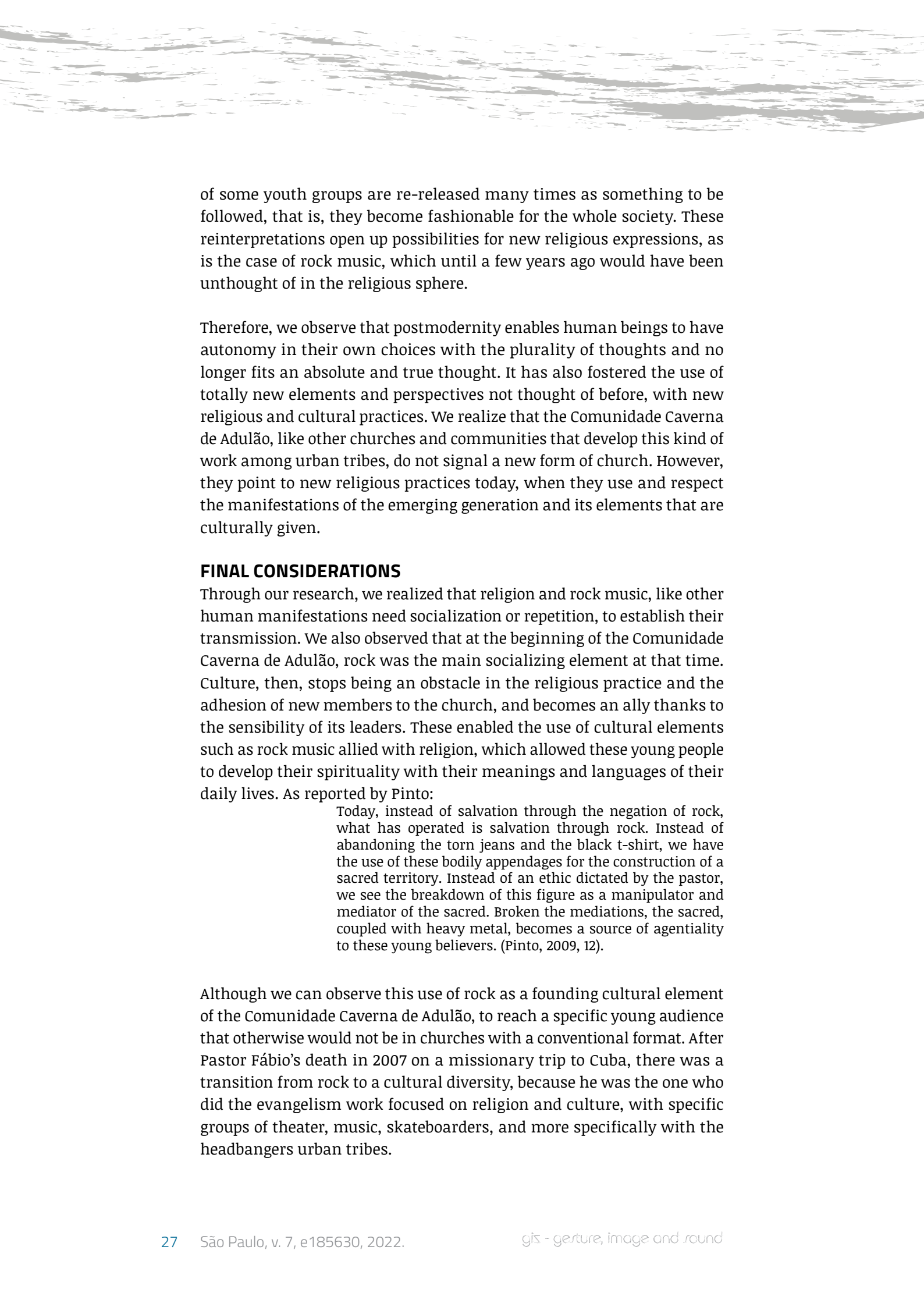
This that at first seems to be a new church model that breaks the rigidity of institutional religion, as it seems, develops new religious practices, which use cultural elements as a form of religious expression that erupts within the culture itself. The services of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, even if they seem to have a different form from the traditional patterns of evangelical churches today, do not differ from the religious practices of these churches, although there is a more inclusive participation of its members and also a greater freedom for cultural manifestations in the community.

Similarly, to Costa, Maffesoli notes that these alternative spiritualities signal new religious practices in postmodernity, in which the faithful are the ones who make their choices with the religious goods that suit their needs. “This religiosity can go hand in hand with de-Christianization, or with some other form of de-institutionalization. And for this very reason, sociality designates, precisely, the saturation of the great systems and the other macro-structures.” (Maffesoli 2010, 135).

In this respect, religion and rock music can establish sociality among small groups or in urban tribes as an expression of this broader culture. This sociality breaks with the big systems and big structures by the distancing and relational coldness they cause. “The religion that defines itself from a space is an aggregating cement of an ordered whole, at once social and natural.” (Maffesoli 2010, 211).

Both religion and rock music use clothing and elements used by other social and youth groups from past decades to give a new meaning to religious practice. In these religious practices rock music could be what Maffesoli described above as “space” because through it many young people are drawn to communities and churches that work with urban tribes and express religiosity in alternative and underground culture.

In this way, rock music as a youth music style, can establish itself as a symbolic “space” that helps religion lay its foundations in sedimenting the bonds between young people. In parallel, Costa notes that music has the power to unite young people with the same ideals. “In the case of certain youth groups, music is experienced collectively as a source of meaning and identity.” (Costa, 2004, 58). In these bonds, in the feelings of belonging and being together, ideologies are rescued, postures and aesthetic elements



of some youth groups are re-released many times as something to be followed, that is, they become fashionable for the whole society. These reinterpretations open up possibilities for new religious expressions, as is the case of rock music, which until a few years ago would have been unthought of in the religious sphere.

Therefore, we observe that postmodernity enables human beings to have autonomy in their own choices with the plurality of thoughts and no longer fits an absolute and true thought. It has also fostered the use of totally new elements and perspectives not thought of before, with new religious and cultural practices. We realize that the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, like other churches and communities that develop this kind of work among urban tribes, do not signal a new form of church. However, they point to new religious practices today, when they use and respect the manifestations of the emerging generation and its elements that are culturally given.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Through our research, we realized that religion and rock music, like other human manifestations need socialization or repetition, to establish their transmission. We also observed that at the beginning of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, rock was the main socializing element at that time. Culture, then, stops being an obstacle in the religious practice and the adhesion of new members to the church, and becomes an ally thanks to the sensibility of its leaders. These enabled the use of cultural elements such as rock music allied with religion, which allowed these young people to develop their spirituality with their meanings and languages of their daily lives. As reported by Pinto:

Today, instead of salvation through the negation of rock, what has operated is salvation through rock. Instead of abandoning the torn jeans and the black t-shirt, we have the use of these bodily appendages for the construction of a sacred territory. Instead of an ethic dictated by the pastor, we see the breakdown of this figure as a manipulator and mediator of the sacred. Broken the mediations, the sacred, coupled with heavy metal, becomes a source of agentiality to these young believers. (Pinto, 2009, 12).

Although we can observe this use of rock as a founding cultural element of the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão, to reach a specific young audience that otherwise would not be in churches with a conventional format. After Pastor Fábio's death in 2007 on a missionary trip to Cuba, there was a transition from rock to a cultural diversity, because he was the one who did the evangelism work focused on religion and culture, with specific groups of theater, music, skateboarders, and more specifically with the headbangers urban tribes.

There was the exchange of rock for the internet as an instrument of evangelization and sociability in the community, which was no longer aimed only at reaching urban headbangers or other specific groups and tribes. Among the elements that replaced rock and took its place, we can highlight the social projects developed by the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão and its members, such as the Projeto Reconstruir, the Projeto Lamalma, and the Projeto Cupim Sagrado, among other forms of socialization of the members.

We also verified factors that differentiate the composition of the members in the community. The aging of the people who were in the beginning of the community has occurred, and there has also been a change in the profile of those people who were single, students, didn't work, lived in the outskirts, and thus depended on public transportation. Today these same members are married, many have children, are professionally and financially established, live closer to the central region of Belo Horizonte, and have cars. However, they are not as involved in the work of the community as they were in the beginning.

Therefore, what we see is that there was a diversity of tribes in the Comunidade Caverna de Adulão with varied social groups. If "in the beginning was the rock, and the rock was in Caverna de Adulão, and the rock was Caverna de Adulão", now, what we verify is that the rock opened space for other forms of socialization in the community. This diversity and plurality of tribalization also occurs frequently in urban centers in our days and show these varied forms of socialization. "That which links religion and space, as a double founding polarity of a given whole, cannot be said any better. Physical proximity, everyday reality has as much importance as the dogma that religion admits to conveying." (Maffesoli 2010, 212). In this way, society can only exist when its everyday personal and interpersonal relationships in the most diverse groups are varied from one another. The encounters, social ties, and individual experiences are consolidated with the feeling of belonging and being together in the construction of collectivity in society.

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## CONTACT BETWEEN WORLDS: DRAWINGS PRODUCED DURING AN ECUMENICAL RITUAL WITH MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE ARCA OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

The article makes a synthetic ethnographic description, seeking to explain the principles of the Arca da Montanha Azul group and the production of drawings carried out during an ecumenical ritual with medicinal plants, an innovative practice when compared to other similar houses. Therefore, the article contextualizes the space according to its social and political aspect, explains the ritual process, the initiation process, about the concept of healing, and brings some excerpts from interviews carried out with house practitioners who talk about their relationship with the drawings. The text ends with an argument about the agentive character present in the drawings obtained during the ceremonies.

### KEYWORDS

ayahuasca;  
art; religion;  
anthropology;  
agency.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of research that I have been developing for a little over two years with a trans-religious house in Rio de Janeiro. Normally, the *Círculo Holístico Arca da Montanha Azul* (CHAMA) holds weekly ceremonies with the use of so-called indigenous medicines, notably ayahuasca and snuff. This study focuses on the presentation of an ethnographic synthesis of the field, some drawings that are produced during the ceremonies and through them we seek to unveil the native ontology that characterizes the practitioners of this house<sup>2</sup>.

The structure of the article was divided into some topics to facilitate the presentation of the material under study: we contextualized the space according to its social and political aspect, we went through an explanation of the ritual process, the initiation process and about the concept of healing, which will become show central to understand the production of this space. Finally, we enter more deeply into the analysis of the drawings produced during the ritual and conclude the article by presenting an argument featuring one of the possible readings regarding the role of drawings during the ceremonies.

This work intends to present an innovative contribution in relation to current literature regarding the production of drawings/artistic expression within the universe of ayahuasca practices. The place where this study is carried out can be considered a pioneer in the insertion of this technique of artistic production: the drawings are made during the ritual, under the effect of ayahuasca, considered a medicinal plant and which produces the effect of changing perception<sup>3</sup>.

Literature on the subject registers the widespread and, for many groups, long-standing use of this drink (produced by mixing the *Banisteriopsis caapi* vine, popularly known as “jagube”, with the leaf of the *Psychotria viridis* shrub, popularly known as “chacrona”) by the indigenous populations of the Amazon region on the border between Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. As attested by the specialized literature, ayahuasca plays an important role in the shamanism and healing rituals of the Arawak, Tukano and Pano peoples of the region (Labate (2008), Lagrou (2007), Langdon (1992), Reichel-Dolmatoff (1971)), alongside other psychotropic plants such as tobacco. Indigenous and non-indigenous populations who use

2. For more information about the house and other details about the ayahuasca universe in Brazil, see SOUZA, 2006; DA MOTTA, 2017; ROMANOFF, 2021.

3. Also known as Hoasca, nixi pae (by the Huni Kuin), Yagé (Colombia), Kamarampi (Piro), Caapi, Natema, Pindé, Kahi, Mihi, Dápa, Vine of the spirits, Santo Daime, Vegetal, Hoasca. It is worth commenting here on the category we work with when describing Ayahuasca. Generally speaking, researchers of the phenomenon in an urban context prefer to work with the term “entheogen”, which, analyzed etymologically, means “God within itself”. This category is consistent with the native conception of the nature of the beverage-induced experience and is the concept advocated by urban practitioners of ritualized ayahuasca consumption.

ayahuasca consider it a master plant capable of revealing hidden things and “teaching great mysteries” (Luna, 1999).

An analysis of the drawings is carried out based on the native discourse, while another perspective is highlighted that takes the idea of “agency” (Gell 1998/2020) of art objects as the central point to understand the representations. arts raised here. Therefore, we will introduce the ritual and social context in which these are produced.

The Arca da Montanha Azul can be considered one of the houses that make up the neo-ayahuasca field<sup>4</sup> in Brazil, constituting a trans-religious space that creates subjectivities and new worlds. The house seeks to integrate different sacred traditions. Thus, we find in this environment elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, Catholicism, Spiritism, Candomblé and Umbanda, with emphasis on the latter religion. The proximity of the approach between the house and Umbanda is due to the influence of Barquinha<sup>5</sup>, a religious tradition that is closely linked to the tradition of worshipping the *Orixás* and the *caboclos*.

The ceremonies are conducted by psychologist Philippe Bandeira de Mello<sup>6</sup> who guides participants through scientific knowledge (mainly Jungian-inspired psychology, as well as the works of psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1990) and others) and knowledge of sacred texts and traditions. In addition to this center, there are many others throughout the country that constitute what the anthropologist Bia Labate (2004) calls “*neo-ayahuasqueira religions*” or “*neo-ayahuasqueiro field*” in Brazil. Another popular name is urban ayahuasca shamanism.

## CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE SPACE IN ITS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECT

### ARCA AS A TERRITORY


The active group of initiates in the Arca today is currently mostly from people who met and/or participated in the 2013 demonstrations in Rio de

4. Proposed by Bia Labate (2004), the term “neo-ayahuasca field” seeks to account for a set that involves different forms of ritualized consumption of Ayahuasca in urban centers, notably in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

5. In addition to this religious tradition, Santo Daime and União do Vegetal - UDV also make use of ayahuasca in their ceremonies cf. Labate, 2008.

6. “Jungian and Transpersonal Therapist (graduated in Psychology); Former Technical Director and Supervisor of Casa das Palmeiras, psychiatric clinic founded by Dr. Nise da Silveira, with a book co-authored with her; Teacher; Clinical Supervisor; Transdisciplinary Researcher in Science of Religion and Esoterism; Training in Past Life Therapies with Roger Woolger; Author of the book “The New Dawn of an Ancient Morning – Surprising Differences between Sacred Plants and Drugs – The Mysterious Properties of Entheogens”; He was the founder and advisor of Barquinha in Rio de Janeiro; Founder and Guider of the Arca da Montanha Azul (Multi-religious and Scientific Space for Research, Dialogue and Coexistence between different Religions and Sacred Traditions, ceremonially using Ayahuasca and other ancestral technologies), Initiate and Priest by the OMR – Mystic Order of Regeneration (Initiation School)”. According to text used in dissemination of lectures and courses.





Janeiro. This year, a large contingent of the population, mainly young people, but also members of other age groups, led large protests throughout Brazil.

Within the context of the 2013 demonstrations, a space in Rio de Janeiro was in evidence that year and beyond: the Maracanã village. This movement claimed the establishment of an indigenous space in a region close to the Maracanã stadium and, in addition, it spoke about indigenous rights in Brazil, pointing out, for example, that many words commonly used by Brazilians had indigenous origins. This is an example to draw attention to the original right of these populations over the territory that is now called Brazil.

A significant part of the initiates involved with the 2013 movements and with the Maracanã village migrated to the Arca space. A significant example is that of the current companion of the house's spiritual coordinator, Philippe, who plays an important role in organizing the house's tasks and with the entire Archean community. Simone Cunha once told us of a period of intense political pressure in which she was living together with other comrades in the Maracanã village and that after that moment, perhaps with a dispersion caused by the police, they were living in disorientation and very shaken. It was then that they left as a group for an ayahuasca ceremony that would take place that night in the Arca da Montanha Azul and which, according to Simone's account, would have been a very good work and would have defined the conduct of that group from then on. After this moment, at the next initiation opportunity, many of them participated in the process and today they are initiated into the Arca, taking the homework in terms of the spiritual content and the practical part that involves managing a place of prayer.

This point is consistent with recognizing the Arca as a territory, in terms of what Deleuze and Guatarri (1972) propose, which will function as political resistance through the emotional and material solidarity established there. I was able to observe this from the exchange practices that take place in the field, as well as from the speeches in which I was able to participate, where the tone of political organization prevailed, most of the times proposing an alternative to the social, political, and economic organization model that we live.

## **PRACTICING AUDIENCE**

It can be hypothesized that there is a median that identifies the greater presence of individuals belonging to the middle classes of the population and with a high level of education. The very location of the house in Laranjeiras, in the south of Rio de Janeiro, already indicates a considerable presence of people living in the vicinity. If we analyze the indices

of wealth distribution and quality of life, we will see that this region, when compared to other locations in the city and in Brazil, presents a high level in both indexes.

Most of the practitioners during the time I was in the field are young people, aged between 20 and 30 years. There are older practitioners, like Philippe himself and other older initiates, however they are an exception when compared to the “dominant group” of young people. Most of these young people seem to have a connection with the university and/or the world of music and therapies.

There are many practitioners who are initiated into other religious traditions and come to the Arca to share their knowledge. During the “Hour of the Word”, a ritual moment that will be described later, these initiates share with us that they have learned in their original traditions. They are people from Rio de Janeiro and others from traditions originating in Acre, where the ritualized consumption of tea among the people of the city began and still representatives of different indigenous traditions such as those of the Huni Kuin and Shawādawa people.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE RITUAL**

The work on the Arca is generally made up of three large blocks. In the first part, the concentration work takes place, through meditation and singing techniques, putting visitors in tune with each other and with the house’s *egregore*<sup>7</sup>. In this first block are sung the Psalms that are part of the tradition of Barquinha, a large part of them has an influence of Christian origin and are directed to the great references of this tradition (Jesus, Our Lady and the Holy Spirit). There is an image that is often raised by the spiritual coordinator of the Arca that at the beginning of the work we are all preparing to take a spiritual “takeoff”, like a plane that leaves for other destinations, practitioners all also take off in search of other dimensions. That’s why the initiates are also part of the crew, which will aid the passengers. There is also the “indoctrination of holy souls” where suffering spirits are referred for spiritual treatment. Towards the end of this first part of the work, Ayahuasca (or “divine wine” as it is also called in this place) begins to be served, initially for musicians and first-time visitors.

The second part consists of a ballet (a mediumistic ballet, a practice also inherited from Barquinha) that makes continuous references to gods and entities present in Vedic texts and in African-based religions; it is the most active part of the work, where practitioners sing and dance. This ballet

7. *Egregore* is the word used to express the spiritual force created from the sum of collective energies, the result of the congregation of two or more people. The concept is explained with reference to the biblical phrase: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am among them” (The Bible, 1753/2008).

takes place in all Arca's works. Philippe believes that this practice has a high therapeutic potential because there people can recognize themselves through the body, find ways to express themselves, and it is also a key moment of connection with the entities that come to the *terreiro* to work. It is at this moment that the inferior energies are transmuted into good energies, as one of the chants says, "and whatever evil is here, I throw it to the bottom of the sea". As such, a lot of cleansing takes place at this time.

In the external part of the hall where the cleaning buckets are located<sup>8</sup>, the practitioners who are in this process are concentrated, some stay longer until they lie down on the floor and others only perform cleaning and return to the hall to dance.



**IMAGE 1**  
Image of the ballet  
with details of the  
house decoration  
- Photo by Ale  
Migueis

From the beginning of the work a warning is given that it is important that we stay inside the hall to strengthen the current and keep the energy of the work "up there" high. This warning is made especially for the first part of concentration, but it is also valid for the rest of the work. There is a conscious effort by the coordinator of the house and by the crew to keep people dancing, moving, because that is what will guarantee a work with a higher energy.

In the third part, sacred texts referring to the different traditions that are worked in the house are read and often the texts are in dialogue with the festive date on which they are read. This reading opens a dialogue about

<sup>8</sup>. Cleansing is a term commonly used within the ayahuasca world to refer to the process of vomiting or diarrhea that ayahuasca can induce. Within the Peruvian indigenous universe, for example, this process is called "purging" and is considered part of spiritual work.

the topic being discussed. In addition to these sacred texts, there are also texts on theology and human sciences (with emphasis on psychology).

The fourth and last part ends the work with a little more ballet in gratitude for the graces achieved. This moment joins the sunrise (all work is done during the night) symbolizing the rebirth of each one present in that space, both of incarnated individuals and of the Arca community (Da Motta 2017).

## THE INITIATIC PROCESS

The analysis of the initiation process becomes interesting to understand the steps through which a visitor becomes part of the crew. In Candomblé, one of the religious traditions present in the Arca, there are three stages of this process: 1 - when you suppress your previous identity; 2 - it is between two ways of placing oneself in the world, as an egoic indefiniteness; 3 - the birth of a new Self based on the religious tradition that follows<sup>9</sup>. The process at Arca can be understood from these three steps that are encouraged by the coordinator of the house. Unlike other traditions, the beginner does not need to be confined to the environment for certain days or go on a diet as in some indigenous ethnic groups, what is said is about the suppression of strictly rational thinking during ceremonies, making room for intuition, for the voice of your inner master.

The initiation process also includes the uniforming process<sup>10</sup> divided into steps that can be compared to the dating, betrothal, and marriage process. Dating is characterized by the “pre-shirt”, the shirt that beginners receive when they take their first vows of commitment to the house and to the spiritual path. The full shirt, which indicates a deepening of the practitioner along the path, would correspond to the engagement. And the full shirt with distinction of some symbols, indicating those who have been in the house for a longer time and who have fully fulfilled their initiation vows, corresponds to marriage.

The initiation processes always take place during the month of July of each year, which is the month of foundation of the house. You must wait for this period to advance through the steps listed above. Thus, after two

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9. According to the oral communication carried out by Bruno Balthazar, initiated in Candomblé and Arca da Montanha Azul. This process can be further analyzed in the light of the work of Victor Turner, who was a British anthropologist recognized for his studies in ritual and performance. Highlighting his interpretation of the initiation process carried out among the members of the Ndembu society. cf. Turner ([1967] 2005). The work of this author, as well as that of Max Gluckman (1911-1975), his advisor, are a fertile field for the interpretation and analysis of themes that talk about religion, ritual and performance that could be further worked on in other moments of the research;

10. It is the way that is conventionally called the moment when practitioners of different ayahuasca religions in Brazil officially become part of the brotherhood. Practitioners wear a uniform that works as a uniform identifying that practitioner to the religious group in which they started.

years of service, for example, the initiate can apply for uniform with the full shirt corresponding to the engagement.

During the initiation process, practitioners commit themselves to the egregore of the house through a commitment to a few vows, such texts include a commitment to the spiritual master, the brotherhood, and the traditions of the house. The first of them is related to the tradition of the Essenes<sup>11</sup>, compiled together with the book *Essene Gospel of Peace* (1981). The Sevenfold Vow is one of the annexes that make up the book, it discusses the Tree of Life, the importance of communion with the angels of the earthly mother and heavenly father and gives other instructions. There are also vows related to the Buddhist path, where some members of the more advanced brotherhood within the tradition commit, for example, not to leave the earth even if they reach enlightenment<sup>12</sup> until all existing beings also reach it.

In addition to the initiation process within the Arca's working methodology, there are other initiations that enable practitioners to act as therapists or "healers" in the future. Among them, the initiations in snuff, pipe and Reiki stand out<sup>13</sup>.

## THE CONCEPT OF CURE

To understand the Arca space and the ayahuasca universe, it is necessary to keep in mind the concept of "cure". The literature on the subject is quite vast and is not intended to be the focus of this article. However, to elucidate what kind of cure we are talking about, it is worth mentioning some ways to characterize the concept. What is cured? How is it cured? To what extent is healing different from that operated through traditional medicine or established therapeutic methods?

The expression "spiritual healing" is generally used in space and the adjective that accompanies the concept informs about the paths to be taken in view of the issues raised above. In the Arca space, illnesses are generally linked to aspects of the psyche (depression, anxiety) and to help

11. A people who lived in the Middle East between the 2nd and 1st centuries BC and with whom Jesus possibly had some relationship, as reported by Philippe Bandeira.

12. Buddhist concept that refers to the "highest spiritual attainment" where the individual frees himself from all suffering and mental afflictions. Cf.: <<https://olharbudista.com/2019/05/09/o-que-e-o-despertar-ou-iluminacao/>> Date of publication: 09/05/2019. Accessed on 05/14/2021.

13. "The Reiki Natural Healing Method is a healing technique based on channeling energies that harmonize the recipient's chakras. REI stands for "Universal Energy" and KI is "Personal Energy". The technique was rediscovered and disseminated by the Japanese monk Mikao Usui in the early 20th century after a 21-day meditative retreat on Mount Kurama. Usui was known throughout Japan for healing countless people and teaching his very simple technique to many others, among them about 20 have reached the degree of master. Around the 1940s, the technique arrived in the West and since then it has been widespread". According to written communication offered by Robson Madredeus initiated in different spiritual traditions including Reiki.



in the treatment of drug addicts. The house coordinator usually says that the anxiety we feel is an anxiety to know God, in whatever form he takes. Many of the people who participate in the ritual today arrived at the Arca due to a depressive process. Philippe himself went through a similar process that he now calls the “dark night of the soul”<sup>14</sup> (a two-year period in which he sang, prayed but felt nothing, lacked the spiritual connection).



**IMAGE 2**  
“Puja ” ritual for  
Narasimha held at  
Arca - photo by Ale  
Migueis

According to Phillippe, using the work of psychiatrist Stanislav Grof (1990), such processes can be understood as forms of “spiritual emergence”, where the individual undergoes profound changes in their subjectivity, reaching other levels of consciousness, understanding of themselves and of the world around you. Communing with holy medicine<sup>16</sup> will have some effect. Often, especially in early experiences, these effects can be positive such as beautiful mirages, appreciation of heightened senses, a feeling of ecstasy and connection with the divine. However, the spiritual path that for many ayahuasca began with the first glass of ayahuasca is full of obstacles that are inherent to this path itself, ups and downs of the spiritual life that manifest themselves in different ways. Thinking about these mishaps, Cristina Grof, companion, and co-author of part of the work of psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, will indicate in the book A

14. With reference to the process described by São João da Cruz in the book *A Noite Escura da Alma* (1960).

15. In this ritual, a Hindu deity is worshipped. The spiritual master of the house, the one who would have been responsible for entrusting Philippe with the mission of creating the Arca, Narasimha, is an entity of Hinduism and is worshiped through Pujas.

16. One of the ways practitioners refer to ayahuasca.

Tempestuosa Busca do Ser (1990) practices for everyday life that can help alleviate heavier processes that may arise during that search. For example, the practice of meditation is strongly recommended in different traditions and even by science. However, in some cases, meditation can speed up the process of discovering traumas and wounds in the unconscious, which can aggravate the person's condition if they are already going through a difficult process. In this sense, Christina Grof recommends the interruption of practices that may accelerate this exploration of the unconscious, even those linked to the spiritual world. Within this process, despite the spiritual development being an individual experience, the category of brotherhood<sup>17</sup> is very necessary, given the need to share some stages of what is lived for the integration of contents. Therapeutic activities such as artistic expression sessions, psychotherapy sessions, experiences and other forms of expression are strongly recommended by the authors.

#### THE DRAWING TABLE

According to reports from the field and from my own experience during the ceremonies, the drawing table functions as a living altar. It has sacred characteristics in relation to the space it occupies and the spiritual and intellectual tradition in which it is inserted.

It is an integral part of the entire ritual process, at the different stages of the process, it is available for visitors and initiates to express themselves. It is located at the entrance to the house on the left, opposite the main altar and has the figure of the Hindu god Jagannatha made in tiles by one of the house's initiates.

Philippe considers the drawings produced during the rituals in the Arca da Montanha Azul as scientific documents that attest to the psychological treatment carried out through the works. Furthermore, it also considers them as artistic objects. "Super conscious art" is the term the house's spiritual coordinator uses to characterize the type of art that is performed during the ceremonies. In his words: "*it is called "super conscious art" because it is neither conscious nor unconscious, it is above the conscious, facilitating the connection with the sacred.*"<sup>18</sup>.

#### SPEECH BY INTERLOCUTORS IN THE FIELD ABOUT THE DRAWINGS

To better illustrate the relationship between the practitioners and the drawing board, I selected some of the practitioners quite frequently in the works and who produce with a certain regularity to answer some questions. I constructed a series of nine questions that were equally applied to practicing-artists. Below, I transcribe some excerpts from these interviews,

17. It is formed mainly by the initiates of the house and also by frequent visitors. The "brotherhood" establishes strong emotional bonds that are essential for the healing process and spiritual experience..

18. According to Philippe's interview.

as well as pointing out common elements of the speeches presented and/or interesting elements for us to think about the theme proposed here<sup>19</sup>.

I begin this point of the article through an interview with the artist Caleb, born in Goiânia and a regular at the house for three years. Caleb always drew even before he came to the house; he is an illustrator, so drawing practice is a constant in his life.

When asked about the possible relationship between the drawings and the entities that are worshiped in that space, Caleb says: “Drawing is a form of contact with these archetypes and works as a means of tuning and channeling the energies related to them. When drawing something with dedication and love, I feel like I’m preparing my body and mind to receive that energy. Sometimes I decide on my own to draw some entity because I want to bring more of what it represents to my personal life. nothing begins to feel the need to draw some specific entity, either because I don’t know I need it or someone close to me is”.

In the excerpt above, two elements can be seen that are interesting to highlight: drawing as a means of connection with spiritual forces and the relational characteristic of the act of drawing under the conditions described in the field. The construction of the drawings in this environment points to processes that can be experienced beyond an intra-psychic cure - as described in the theories of Jung and Nise da Silveira - then there is the possibility of healing from an external source - the entity - that it demands the practitioner to bring it to life or through interaction with other practitioners present there.

The second excerpt of the interview was conducted with Mayra Muniz, 33, born in Nova Friburgo and a designer. For her, at some moments during her artistic production at Arca, mediumship is present through the *eres*, very agitated children’s spiritual beings, as she explains, and then the drawing works as a pacifier of this agitation: “[...] the approach to the drawing board comes to soothe some restlessness and dissipate confusion that usually accompany some of my mediumistic processes, especially when I am spiritually accompanied by *eres*. The *eres* (enchanted beings from the spirit world that correspond to the child’s energy) who work with me are very agitated, messy and have a very fast mental and physical activity, a temperament quite different from mine. So, now I’m radiated by them, I’m having a hard time balancing it all. In this sense, the drawing board helps me a lot”.

---

19. Respondents agreed to be interviewed for this work, as well as having their names mentioned.

The third excerpt of an interview that I would like to highlight was conducted with university professor Marcelo Asth, born in Nova Friburgo and who has been attending the house for six years. Marcelo was already in communion with ayahuasca even before he met the Arca, but he felt that he had not yet found his spiritual family. It turns out that in the year 2014 your partner starts to visit the Arca; Marcelo then began to consecrate himself with medicine in that space. The practice of drawing was also presented as a constant in his life since childhood; with the affairs of adult life, he was putting this practice aside a little, but he never stopped it completely. At Arca he understands that he had a “connection with drawing in a way I’ve never had before [...]”, for him, by consecrating with the drink, we enter a state of expansion of consciousness that favors the opening of several smaller layers of the mind that in everyday life we don’t have access to, so we are left with “a mind a little freer also to create and test things that we don’t know yet [...]”.

He characterizes his drawings prior to his practice at Arca as very plastered, while at Arca he was breaking patterns and making room for a freer production “testing other formats, adapting, getting to know... [...]”. Marcelo also talks about the difference that exists between the mediumistic process of dancing with the whole body and the transition that takes place to the practice of drawing, since for him this practice demands more concentration; despite this he sees “many similarities in these two ways of working”. Similarity also highlighted by Mayra’s speech.

In this last excerpt of highlighted interviews Mariana Prado Barros, 34 years old, born in Sorocaba/SP, Plastic Artist, and educator, talks about her close relationship with the drawing board and about the sacred characteristic of the space: “[...] and the drawing table which is one of the places that I feel is a really big altar, since I got to the Arca I have always prayed for the spirit of art”. She draws attention to the process of drawing during the ceremony “[...] it’s very special for you to be in the power of medicine that brings you this pile of information from other dimensions and to be able to express that, the grandeur of it, right, the value of this space there, as much as the ailments itself, this vomiting there, the encounter with the pain, and also all this light, being able to be manifesting everything we see in strength, these angels, these saints, with colors and with the art that expresses itself from this path [...]”.



**IMAGE 3**  
Drawing table  
- Photo by Ale  
Migueis

### **DRAWINGS PRODUCED DURING THE RITUAL AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORK OF DR<sup>a</sup> NISE DA SILVEIRA**

Through field research, I could see that for an expressive part of Arca's visitors, the drawings indicate the presence of spiritual entities that work together with ceremonies in healing and *miração* processes, thus configuring themselves as objects bearing agency (Gell 1998 /2020) and making present the otherness that marks the relationship between different worlds (Lagrou 2009). After their production, the drawings are displayed next to the place where they came to life (a worktable that dates to the studies and practices undertaken by Dr. Nise da Silveira (Silveira 2017)) where they continue to act as sacred objects, bearers of spiritual messages. These drawing-entities eventually go to external exhibitions<sup>20</sup>, in addition to functioning as a document proving the therapeutic character of the works that are developed in the Arca<sup>21</sup>, in line with the tradition of Jungian psychology.

The drawing table dates to a therapeutic tradition inaugurated in Brazil by the psychiatrist Nise da Silveira. It was she who, through dialogues with the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, introduced different forms of treatment for the patients she used to call "clients", both at the Engenho de Dentro Psychiatric Hospital and, later, at the House of Palms.

The drawing board with the image of Dr. Nise da Silveira - Photo by Ale Migueis

20. In 2014 there is an exhibition at the State University of Rio de Janeiro - UERJ and in the beginning of 2020 another exhibition was being scheduled that had to be canceled due to the pandemic.

21. According to a report by the psychologist and spiritual coordinator of Arca Philippe Bandeira de Melo.





**IMAGE 4**  
The drawing board  
with the image of  
Dr. Nise da Silva  
- Photo by Ale  
Migueis

Although there is a fundamental difference between the inmates of the Hospital do Engenho de Dentro and the clients of Casa das Palmeiras in relation to the practitioners of Arca da Montanha Azul, considering that the former are in deep states of immersion in the unconscious, often presenting, as Dr. Nise, failure of the Ego to manage the contents of the unconscious, there is something similar between them. Arca practitioners are relatively healthy individuals who undergo a “controlled” ritual practice where the unconscious content is in evidence but follows a process of interpretation within the “controlled” context where it emerges. Even highlighting these differences, as Philippe argues, who for many years acted as Dr. Nise’s right-hand man at Casa das Palmeiras, the serial study of the images produced in the Arca can reveal healing processes such as those described by Nise and the presence of archetypes of the unconscious collective as stated by Carl Gustav Jung that will give the coordinates for an effective psychic treatment.

### **THE DRAWINGS AGENCY DURING THE RITUAL**

In the context of the ritual performed in the Arca da Montanha Azul, the images, once produced, seem to come to life and participate as entities during the ritual process. They are placed on the table and exert influence on the practitioners (carnal or not) who are involved in the ballet. Furthermore, as we draw, they will also exert influence, with the quality and intensity of energy varying according to what is being played at that moment.

It is interesting to mention that the drawing board holds up to four practitioners drawing at a time, which allows for a kind of “joint work”, even if the drawings are being done individually. Every gesture, body movement,

look or an eventual speech will influence the creation process; in this way, in addition to the people who are effectively involved in the creation process, there are those who are dancing and pass by the drawing board and with their energy can modify what is being undertaken there.

Drawings produced under the emanation of a specific entity will often have similar motifs and representations. For example, on February 2nd when the day of Iemanjá is celebrated, images related to this entity will appear. The images also act, in a way, to witness the cures that took place during that day, through an individual perspective of each creator, but which converge to the same theme, given the repetition of motifs or representations, as Lagrou says about it. from Taussig's text, "drawing has for Taussig the function of witness" (2018, 148). More than a text or a photograph, for Taussig drawing in the field and scratching is a testimony that what he saw happened. The anthropologist witnesses what he observes in the field and writes it down on paper. Similarly, practitioners of the Arca da Montanha Azul witness their healing process, and also their visions, which they observe under the influence of the drink, through their creations, commonly influenced by a super-conscious perspective (as the house coordinator puts it) or even transpersonal (concept built and defended by the Czech psychiatrist Stanislav Grof).

In his analysis of the Huni Kuin drawing, Lagrou writes: "If the dead and the living have different perspectives on almost everything, the same does not happen with drawing, drawing is the path that connects and attracts them" (Lagrou 2018, 131). It seems to me that something similar happens in the drawing production space during the ritual on the Arca.

### **CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE FEATURED IMAGES IN THIS WORK**

As the reader can observe, the registration of most images presented here is not the same authorship as the author of the text. The house's practice is to delegate the work of photographic recording to one of the initiated practitioners, in the case of recording the images with people creating drawings on the table and in the images of the ceremony itself, the recording was overseen by Ale Migueis who kindly provided the images so that they could be linked to this work. There is a general orientation, given at the beginning of each ceremony, which prohibits the registration of images, except for the initiated practitioner, to preserve the image rights of those involved in the ceremonies.

Regarding the registration of the drawings, it was performed most of the time by the practitioner-authors themselves, after the ceremonies and later shared on their social networks and made available so that they could be part of this work. In the case of the drawings produced by the practitioner Eliane, they were registered by me after the ceremony.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research presented in this article proposes to act as yet another contribution to the field of symmetric anthropology (Viveiros de Castro 2002) that raises the theme of frank dialogue between different forms of knowledge production, interpretation and construction of worlds. The aim here is to understand the spaces of ayahuasca practices as knowledge production spaces. These practices can be placed in dialogue with scientific knowledge in order to build links and alliances in terms of what Stengers (1989) proposes.

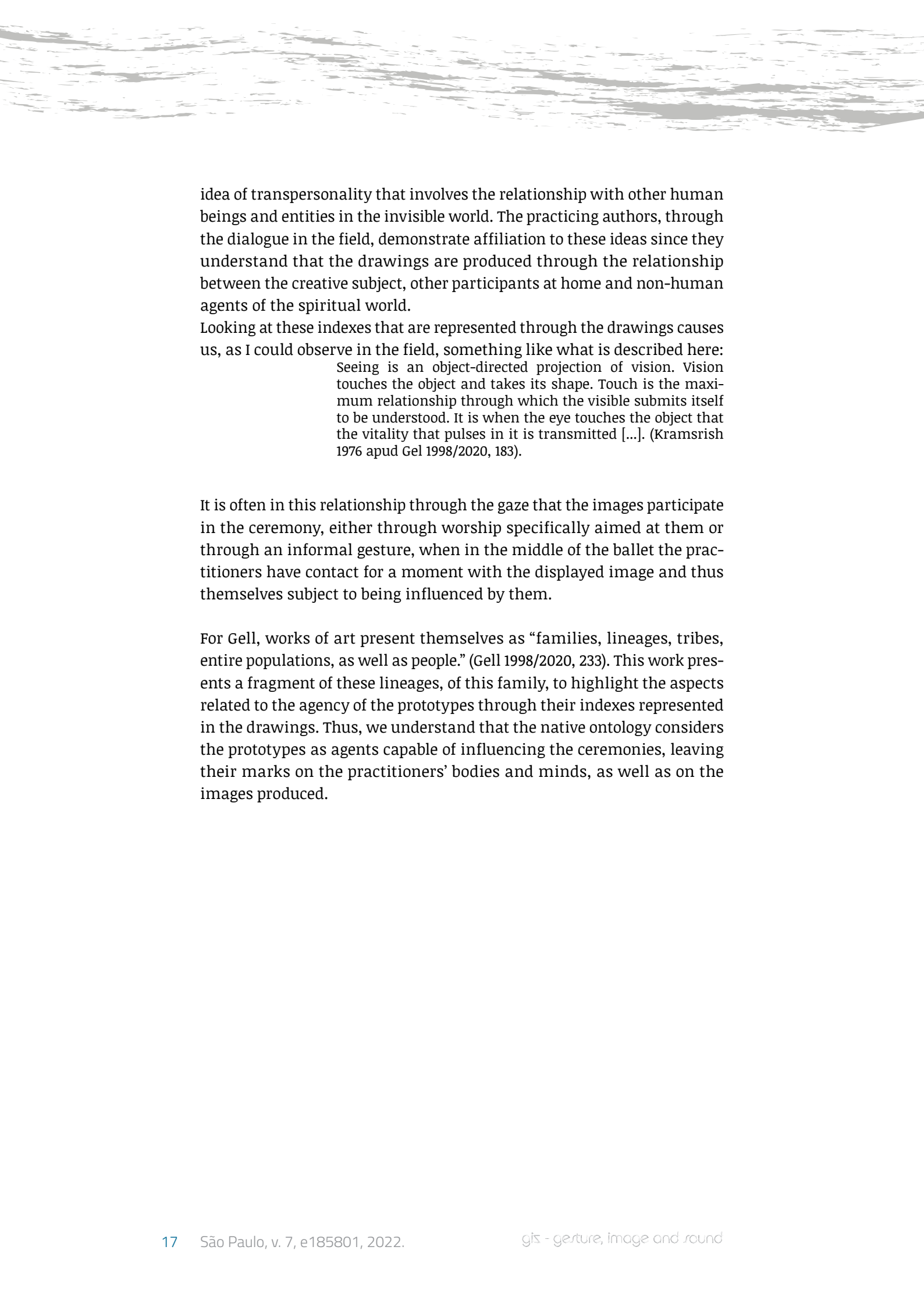
Anthropologist Alfred Gell built an innovative proposal to understand art through anthropology. Moving away from the proposals defended by Jung, the author emphasizes the character of agency attributed to art: “Instead of emphasizing symbolic communication, I focus on the ideas of agency, intention, causality, result and transformation. I see art as a system of action whose purpose is to change the world, not to codify symbolic propositions about it.” (Gell 1998/2020, 31).

An important concept for Gell’s anthropology of art, which together with the ideas of “Index”, “Artist” and “Recipient” form its theoretical framework, is the idea of “Prototype”, which in Arca can perhaps be understood as: “[...] an entity (such as a king, a magician, a divine being, etc.) endowed with the ability to intend to seek a specific appearance for itself.” (Ibid. 74). It seems then that these entities, as prototypes, exercise agency over the practitioners so that their indexes are represented along with the artistic creations produced during the ceremonies.

In some chapters of the book “Art and Agency” (1998/2020) Gell resorts to the idea of “darshan”, which roughly refers to the vital energy transmitted by the deity to its worshiper, very present in Hinduism and which, I believe, can keep correspondences with the way in which practitioners of the Arca relate to the images and vice versa:

*Darshan* thus proves to be a two-way street. God’s gaze toward the worshiper bestows his blessing upon him; conversely, the worshiper reaches out to touch the god. The result is union with the god, a fusion of consciousness, according to the devotional interpretation. This brings us to the question of reciprocity and intersubjectivity in the relationship between image (index) and the recipient. Based on the thesis developed in these chapters, we can state that it is possible to have an intersubjectivity between people and indices, in particular indices that, like images of the gods, have a human form. (ibid., 184).

This intersubjectivity that Gell tells us about is also present in the native discourse through the ideas of “transpersonal” relationship, recurrent in the discourse of the spiritual coordinator of the house. For Philippe, a good way to understand human beings is to look at them through the



idea of transpersonality that involves the relationship with other human beings and entities in the invisible world. The practicing authors, through the dialogue in the field, demonstrate affiliation to these ideas since they understand that the drawings are produced through the relationship between the creative subject, other participants at home and non-human agents of the spiritual world.

Looking at these indexes that are represented through the drawings causes us, as I could observe in the field, something like what is described here:

Seeing is an object-directed projection of vision. Vision touches the object and takes its shape. Touch is the maximum relationship through which the visible submits itself to be understood. It is when the eye touches the object that the vitality that pulses in it is transmitted [...]. (Kramsrish 1976 apud Gel 1998/2020, 183).

It is often in this relationship through the gaze that the images participate in the ceremony, either through worship specifically aimed at them or through an informal gesture, when in the middle of the ballet the practitioners have contact for a moment with the displayed image and thus themselves subject to being influenced by them.

For Gell, works of art present themselves as “families, lineages, tribes, entire populations, as well as people.” (Gell 1998/2020, 233). This work presents a fragment of these lineages, of this family, to highlight the aspects related to the agency of the prototypes through their indexes represented in the drawings. Thus, we understand that the native ontology considers the prototypes as agents capable of influencing the ceremonies, leaving their marks on the practitioners’ bodies and minds, as well as on the images produced.



## ANNEX - DRAWINGS PRODUCED DURING THE RITUAL

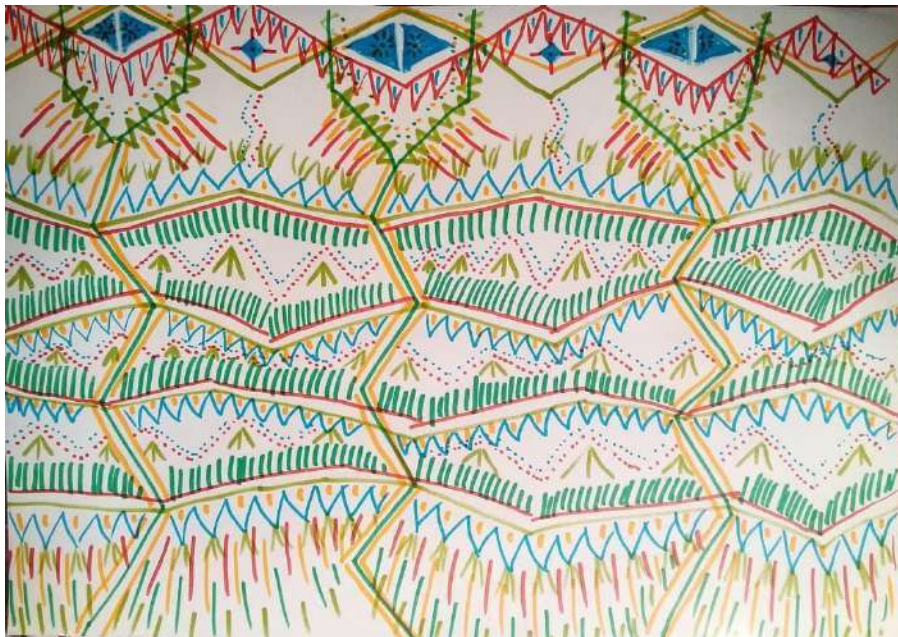


**IMAGE 5**  
The royalty of the  
Orixás - Marcelo  
Asth (initiated).  
Author registration.





**IMAGE 6**  
Image of  
Narasimha -  
Marcelo Asth  
(initiated). Author  
registration.



**IMAGE 7**  
Organelas -  
Marcelo Asth  
(initiated). Author  
registration.

Untitled - Elaine Abreu (visitor). My record.



**IMAGE 8**  
Untitled - Elaine  
Abreu (visitor). My  
record

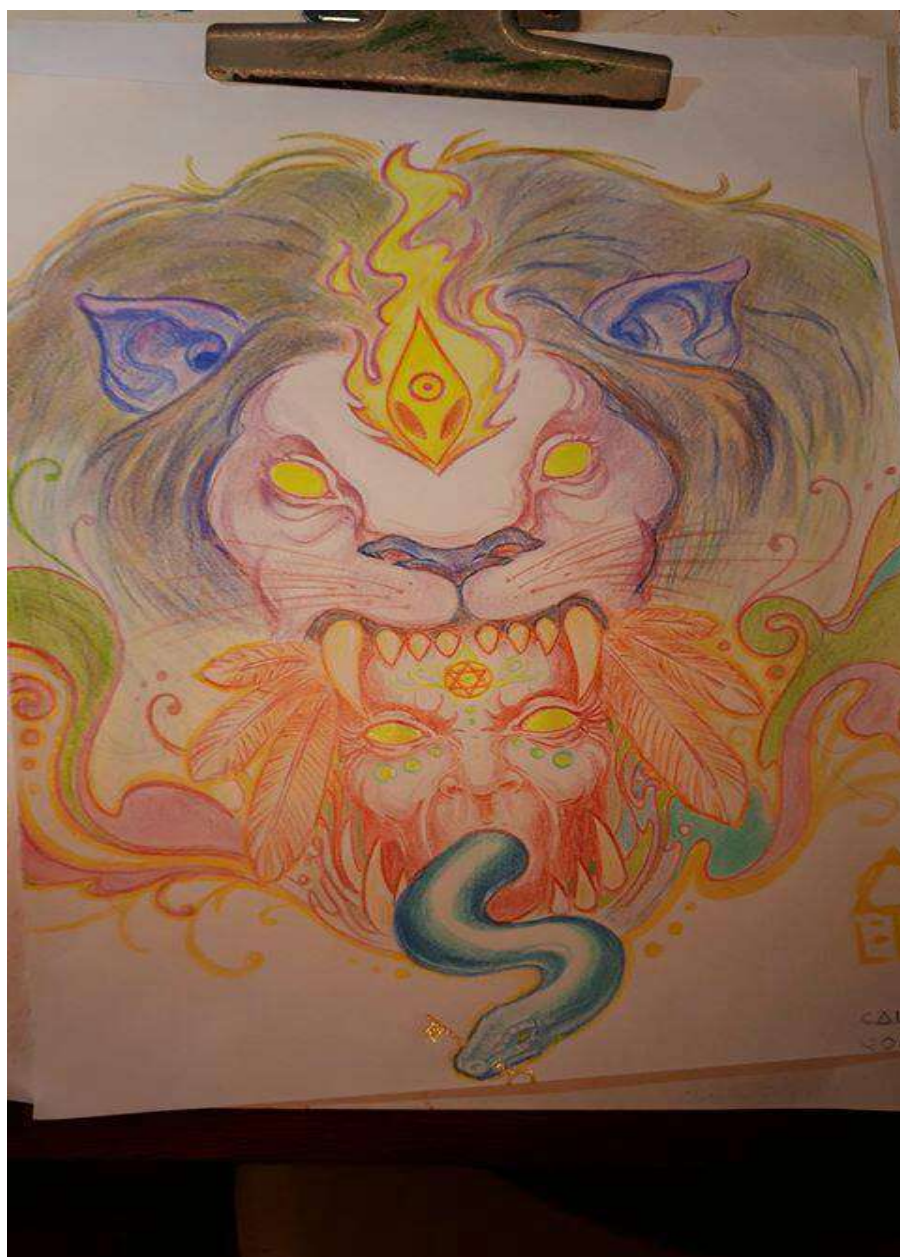
Untitled - Elaine Abreu (visitor). My record.





**IMAGE 9**  
Untitled - Elaine  
Abreu (visitor). My  
record

**TRANSLATION**  
Mariana Casals



**IMAGE 10**  
Untitled - Calebe  
Alves (visitor).  
Author registration.





**IMAGE 11**  
 Untitled - Calebe  
 Alves (visitor).  
 Author registration.

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## THE ALTAR AS A PERFORMANCE IN POPULAR RELIGIOSITY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents the altar as a place from which emanate performances visualized in symbols, actions, gestures, songs arising from religious practice. With a focus on popular religiosity, the experiences of the Folia de Reis are highlighted in order to provide a reflection on the performances of the altar. In the light of studies in Cultural Performances, the emphasis given to gestures, sounds, images and tunes allow reflections on the performativity revealed in the dynamic materiality of the altar, which remains alive in different contexts. The altar is thus configured as a place of the sacred that highlights the set of synesthetic qualities of the various performances involved in or before them; including those constituted by their simple materiality and presence.

### KEYWORDS

Altars;  
Performances;  
Folia de Reis;  
Popular Religiosity;  
Materiality.

### THEME PRESENTATION

The altars are places where elements of the human connection with the sacred, material expressions of faith, are revealed in religious practices perpetuated by humanity. From the Latin, *altar*, the term etymologically carries the meaning of elevating; elevating from a lower place to a higher one, thus revealing itself as

an intermediary of the human condition before the deities, symbolically situated on a higher plane.

Among the practices belonging to Catholicism, especially those arising from popular religiosity, the altars present in the houses represent the vicissitude of the faith practiced, whether in groups or individually, from the cultural heritages safeguarded in the people's actions.

Worshiped in various religious contexts, the altar is particularly evident in the verses of *Folias de Santos Reis*, such as in this song, collected in the city of Uberaba/MG:

*In God's hours, amen/ when will we start  
God save you the beautiful altar / with the saints who are in  
it (bis)  
God save you the beautiful altar / with pleasure and joy  
God save you the Minino Deus / Saint Joseph and Saint  
Mary (bis)  
God save you the beautiful altar / save you with all faith  
God save you the Virgin Mary / God save you Saint Joseph  
(bis) (Poel, 2013, 52)*

The verses show the presence of the saints, materialized in sacred images, which then compose the space of the houses: "It is a sacred place. In it, offerings to the deity are presented, and the profane becomes sacred" (Ibid). It is about the externalization of faith expressed in things and images that connect to everyday practices in a space of multiple experiences and meanings: chants, blessings, prayers, requests, thanks.

This intimate connection of cultural-religious things and practices will be addressed here in the light of Cultural Performances and based on the assumption that the notion of agency can be applied both to people and things, and especially to their interaction<sup>1</sup>. Arranged neatly on the altar, things, objects, images, symbols coat a range of performances and rituals as generators, guides, and receivers of gestures, sounds, bodily attitudes that solidify their permanence with groups belonging to popular religious manifestations.

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1. About agency of things, read about in: Garcia (2018), Ingold (2012), Agostini (2011).

## THE ALTAR



**IMAGE 1**  
Altar exposed on Avenida Beira-Rio, in Itumbiara/GO, during the presentation of King Party (Folias de Reis).  
Source: Daniela Santos (2020)

*Morning of January 2020, sunny Sunday, and the uniform already put on for singing. Homage to the three Santos Kings, announced a few days ago, on the main Avenida de Itumbiara – Goiás.*

*CompanhiaTrêsMinistros tunes viola and guitar and stands in a row in front of the altar.*

*And, to decorate, flowers could not be missing.*

*Nossa Senhora Aparecida, São José and Nossa Senhora de Fátima accompany the Reis Magos; on the white tablecloth, a sign that the Star of Bethlehem, which had appeared at Christmas, shines there, too.*

*There are people everywhere: in front of the altar, some cross each other, others kneel.*

*The eyes turn to the three Kings. The flag, already suspended above the altar, is a sign that yes, it can begin: the captain pulls the first verse for the three Three Kings to sing. (Santos, Diário de Campo 2020)*

The altar constitutes an environment, a place prepared for daily religious practices. “A place is the order (whatever it is) according to which elements are distributed in coexistence relations. A place is, therefore,



an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability” (Certeau 1995, 201).

By stating that “space is a practiced place,” Certeau (1995, 202) awakens attention to everything that lies beyond it: a spatiality that goes beyond the physical location. Thus, the field of study aimed at the place comprises more than the space itself, as it is also about looking at gestures, bodies, sounds, and all the performances that involve it.

Turner (1974), reflecting on the symbols used in the Isoma ritual of the Ndembu peoples, clarifies that “almost every object used, every gesture performed, every chant or prayer, every unit of space and time represents, by conviction, something different from yourself. It is more than it appears to be, and often much more” (Ibid. 29). From this indication by Turner, we understand the study of the symbology present in the ritual as essential to reveal the meaning attributed to it.

This way, the altar, in addition to the materiality of things and images, is permeated by a variety of actions, gestures, attitudes, bodies, postures, which, experienced individually or in groups, comprise performances that take place in the place that is situated both in everyday life and in moments of parties and celebrations. Both the material symbols present on the altar (images, branches, objects) as well as the immaterial elements (gestures, sounds) that it generates, guides, and receives, confer meanings and meanings on those who evoke them.

The altar generates guides, receives, and contemplates practices. It is therefore not static. The reflections presented here will make it possible to observe the altar as a performative place, a space from and to where different symbols and meanings emerge.

In popular religiosity, the altar plays a prominent role: in it and from it, chants, prayers, gestures, performances that signify the event itself are revealed. Therefore, it is worth looking at these practices in order to visualize how they are carried out.

### **ALTARS AND CRIBS IN THE PERFORMANCES OF THE KING PARTY (FOLIA DE REIS)**

In popular Catholicism, there are several manifestations that, in a unique way, through gestures, bodies, sounds, make religious practice possible. Among the expressive number of these manifestations existing in Brazil, we highlight Party (Folias de Reis),

(...) popular religious processions that rotate – more often, but not exclusively – from Christmas (the night of December 24th) to Twelfth Night (January 6th), representing the journey of the Kings of the East to Bethlehem to adore the

Child Jesus. From house to house, they ask for donations, in cash or in other forms, to hold a closing party in honor of Santos Reis (Rios and Viana 2015, 27)



**IMAGE 2**  
Group: Three  
Ministers –  
Almerindonópolis/  
GO  
Source:  
AnthonyRabelo  
(2020)

In Itumbiara/GO and neighboring cities, the King Party (Folias de Reis) organize tours in the weeks before Christmas, when Catholics are dedicated to waiting for the Baby Jesus: Advent. Between the last week of December and the sixth of January, the day dedicated to the Holy Kings, the tour takes place, even more intensely, in the countryside.

When the revelers arrive at the houses, a combination is made with the owner: the singing can take place outside or inside the house. In the tours of Companhia Três Ministros, most of the time, the singing takes place inside the houses. Entering the houses, most of the time you can see the altar, either simple, with only one image, or even cribs that light up the waiting for the Infant Jesus.

When there is a crib in the residence, the revelers dedicate a good deal of time to revere it with their own tunes. This rite is called Praise of the Nativity Scene. It always occurs on occasions when there is a crib in the place where the Company is carrying out the ritual. The chantsung, at this stage, is intended to praise the symbols that make up the nativity scene, as well as the Christmas ornaments and images of saints in the Catholic tradition. Furthermore, there is, through the textual content of the verses, the reproduction of the episode of Jesus' birth. The narration of these biblical facts occurs, according to the number of symbols and ornaments that make up the nativity scene (Matos 2019, 161).

Revelers revere the nativity scene with great devotion. It is a time of great conviction and respect. “It is a solemn moment of the King Party (Folias de Reis) when the group ‘sights who wanted’ (Rios e Viana 2015, 39).



**IMAGE 3**  
Revelers kneeling  
at the altar.  
Inhumas/GO.  
Source: Rogério  
Neves, 2014.

In the photographs above, we see two different moments of this ritual. In the photo on the left, we have the crib set up in a decorated space, waiting for the visit of the Companhia de Santos Reis. The photo on the right shows the subsequent moment, when the group of revelers, kneeling around the lady of the house (in a red blouse), sing and pray at the altar. The owner of the house, also on her knees on the ground, holds the flag of the Holy Kings, a sacred symbol for the community of devotees. Kneeling before the figure of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is to recall what the three Magi also did, as reported by the evangelist Matthew: “they honored” (The Jerusalem Bible 2002, 1705).

The verses sung in front of the crib announce the arrival of the Child Jesus and all the details of the story are revealed in their chronological order. Starting with the annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mary, following through the circumstances of the Child’s birth, and ending with the narrative of the visit of the three wise men and their adoration of Jesus. The nativity scene and all the images displayed on the altar are highlighted in the verses of the tune. The event that took place is sung without haste.

As a reference for the poetic and audio creation of the first part of this chant, we bring the *Annunciation* of the Angel Gabriel to Maria, with lyrics and interpretation by Ambassador Luís Carlos and music by João Baianinho (João Reinaldo da Silva), from Inhumas/GO. The verses are adapted from the biblical narrative that tells the fact (Gospel of Luke, I, 26 - 38). Although the theme of the *Annunciation* is all given in the biblical text, it would be impossible to sing a King Party (Folias de Reis) with the verses exactly as they are found in the passage of the Bible. Thus, the theme of the *Annunciation* is transposed into a form that sings of the event that took place. The poetic form, expressed in the meter and rhymes of the song, as well as its melody, harmony, and rhythm, show the particular way that revelers adopt in creating their songs<sup>2</sup>:

In a city in Galilee / by the name of Nazareth / there was a virgin / beautiful and of great faith City of Nazareth / is where she lived / her beauty came from within / and her name was Maria It was already the sixth month / Elizabeth's pregnancy / Mary was visited / by the angel Gabriel The angel then greeted Mary / with a sweet and friendly gesture / save, full of grace / that the Lord is with you Mary did not understand / that noble greeting / and asked Saint Gabriel / and he gave the explanation I am sent from the Lord / to announce your destiny / you are blessed among women / to be the mother of God's child Mary was frightened / for being a virgin and betrothed / and asked Saint Gabriel / how she was going to be conceived The angel then answered / you will be the mother of the Savior / with the Divine Holy Spirit / the Lord prepared you He also warned Mary / of her cousin Elizabeth / who said she was barren / but received graces from heaven Mary then replied / here is the slave of the Lord / make yourself in me your word / and the angel breaks or Filled with the Holy Spirit / that God trusted in you / the word then became flesh / to dwell among us. (Rios and Viana 2015, 168)<sup>3</sup>.

Since this is an obligatory chant before the nativity scene and, in the case of the version by ambassador Luís Carlos presented above, so close to the way the theme is presented in the Bible, there is a tendency to fix the verses. But there is also the possibility that the verses of the song sung for the nativity scene are taken right away.

It is common, during the singing, that the verses are inspired by the materiality of the images displayed on each altar: the figure of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the Three Kings, and other saints of devotion to the residents. On this aspect, the captain of Folia TrêsMinistros, Enthony Rabelo, revealed in an informal conversation: "We don't memorize everything, but the

2. On individual creation in traditional, collective and diffuse manifestations, see Toadas de Santos Reis in Inhumas, Goiás (Rios and Viana 2015). For variations – musical and poetic – on the same theme, see, for example, the "Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel a Maria", by Lourenço Francisco Ferreira. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgJBnBVy\\_pY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgJBnBVy_pY).

3. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tf2ynNafuSc&t=1s>



verses come to mind. It's the story we sing every year. This makes it easier to remember; you have to know the Bible" (Saints 2019).

Singing for the nativity scene or the altar is presented as performances that show the revelers' own making and involve various elements arising from the culture to which these groups belong. Thus, when revelers kneel before a crib, their connection with the sacred is notoriously visualized and performed. The gesture is inserted in a specific context, in a collective action: almost "orchestrated", the revelers, with their instruments in hand, lean forward and revere him.

The manger adorations constitute the most solemn moment of the King Party (Folias de Reis) tour. However, a similar solemnity is still observed even when it comes to altars that do not contain the images of the manger, which may have one or more images of saints, the bible and a rosary and other devotional objects.

In front of the crib, the clown must keep his mask up. But the same prescription applies to other altars, especially when there is the image of Jesus. Source of emanation of good, it cannot be defiled by the clown who has a transit with evil, as we will see below.



**IMAGE 4**  
Group of Santos  
Reis of Inhumas/  
GO.  
Source: Markus  
Garscha 2012.

The photograph above shows the moment when the singing is made for an altar with the presence of the image of the Child Jesus. The clown closest to the altar, on the left side of the photo, has his head bowed and his gaze turned to Jesus in his manger, thus venerating the image. His gesture reveals itself in prayer, and even with his lips pursed, his tender look at the manger says much more than words.



The clowns—also known in the region as watchman, shepherd, and bastion<sup>4</sup>—accompany and guard the flag. A good clown needs to know the prophecy as much as the ambassador and be able to do in verse what the other does by singing.

The clowns are also responsible for more playful parts of the demonstration, with playful dances and verses. They wear a colorful uniform and their face is covered with a mask that looks normally frightening, possibly with leather parts and animal teeth. Its function, origin, and representation are some of the most controversial topics in King Party (Folias de Reis). For some revelers, the origin of their games is associated with the task of delaying and diverting Herod's soldiers when killing the innocents. For others, they would be Herod's soldiers repentant and converted, perhaps in analogy with the episode of Saul's conversion. It is true, however, that, in one case or the other, clowns deal directly with the presence of evil in the King Party (Folias de Reis), and hence some precepts and prohibitions that they must observe before the nativity scene (Rios and Viana, 2015).

A culture is evidenced in the actions it generates. Hence the centrality of the interpretation of these actions for their understanding. In the specific case, it is about identifying the ways of the revelers to behave before the altar, noticing the bows, postures, not only during the chant, but also after it. This is because it is also in front of the crib that, after the singing, the revelers and the owners of the house pray the rosary in the houses that offer lunches and landings.

This practice is quite recurrent in Folias, being a custom that revelers respect and pass on to new generations. Describing the King Party (Folias de Reis) Estrela do Oriente, from the Pedro Ludovico Sector in Goiânia/GO, researcher Edsonina Carvalho (2009) states that, in addition to praying the rosary in front of the nativity scene, at the beginning and at the last mystery the two ambassadors are on their knees (Carvalho 2009, 58).

Geertz (1973) highlights that culture contemplates a pattern of meanings, thus contributing to our understanding of it as a product of the relationships established between different groups and their practices and customs.

When dealing with the concept of culture, Geertz states:

(...) it denotes a pattern of meanings historically transmitted, embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms through which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and activities in relation to life. (Geertz 1973, 67).

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4. The term *marungo*, common in the south of Minas, is not current in Inhumas.

The concept of culture exposed by Geertz is essentially semiotic and carries within itself the understanding of culture associated with a web of meanings constructed by man that needs to be interpreted. This web of meanings involves several aspects of human life— religion among them— and also several elements: actions, speeches and silences, gestures and pauses, songs and prayers, ornamentation and arrangement of objects, etc.

Thus, based on the centrality of setting up the cribs and praying the rosaries in the King Party (Folias de Reis), it would be expected that these events were thematized in his chant. And this is what we can see in the corner below, by ambassador João Cigano of Ciade Santos Reis da Inhumilha, from Itauçu/GO, in which, in the greeting at the altar, reference is made to the prayer of the rosary.

(...) God save you the beautiful altar / and the people who adorned it / Jesus Christ protect you / and you will always be your protector Master of the house / I'll give you my congratulations / your house is compared / with the lapinha of Bethlehem You are a devotee dos Três Reis / you and your family / that's why the Three Kings are asking you / a dinner for the company Give a coat for the flag / and also for the instruments / give permission to the two guards / to take off the uniform All that's left is to pray the rosary / on Mary's rosary / and put your intentions / for you with your family Master of the house / turn the flag over here / with your permission / place it on the altar You take care of the flag / overnight / you are Protected by the Three Kings / we're going to stop singing<sup>5</sup>.

To emphasize the aspects related to religious practices, Durkheim (2009) understands that the religious man is a collective being. Regarding the collectivity, the author reveals that “the group performs, in a regular way, a moral and intellectual uniformity (...)” (Durkheim 2009, 11). The social being does not overlap with the individual, however, Durkheim affirms that religion is an eminently social thing, with religious representations being seen as collective representations. The elements that mark the collective character of a rite are time and space. About time, Durkheim points out its construction throughout history: “the division into days, weeks, months and years corresponds to the periodicity of rites, festivals and public ceremonies” (Ibid. 17).

The Christmas season marks the practices of the King Party (Folias de Reis), since it is the period when the revelers leave their homes and go out for the tour, and several companies, as usual, move to the countryside. In residents' homes, revelers spend the day and night singing and socializing. Also, in this space, they plan and fix what was not good in the singing.

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5. Available at: [https://youtu.be/oNO\\_AwqrRbE](https://youtu.be/oNO_AwqrRbE)

Looking at the altar and its relationship with popular manifestations, especially the King Party (Folias de Reis), consists in considering the whole tangle of practices that arise on it and before it. Therefore, it is necessary to observe what the groups do and observe the performances built during the practices carried out. Bodies, smells, gestures, movement, colors, shapes arise and happen “as an event in itself and as a representation, as a communication, as an aesthetic act, a symbolic act and, mainly, a locus of experience for whoever looks at it and who is looked at” (Camargo 2015, 02).

### ALTARS AND THEIR MEANINGS AND PERMANENCIES

*Cith God I lie, with God I rise, with the grace of God and the Holy Spirit.  
(Evening Prayer, Popular)*

The practices that involve the altar together with the King Party (Folias de Reis) demonstrate a state of permanence of the devotions that, from generation to generation, revelers preserve. Through singing, praying the rosary and praising the crib, the revelers emphasize the presence of this very important space in which faith is presented in the performances performed.

The residents, when preparing the altar, deposit their faith and hope in it and, with great care, dispose of the images and symbols that well represent what they celebrate.



**IMAGE 5**  
Altar in a devotee's house in Inhumas/GO.  
Source: RogérioNeves, 2014.

The altar “tells”. In it, faith is present in its materiality: sacred images of Santa Clara and Nossa Senhora da Abadia, in the oratory, flowers to decorate, the glow of candlelight and a photo of the loved one in memory. The

image of the flag that has already appeared in so many homes, also blesses this home. Therefore, she is given the deserved prominence. Well-placed, the image of the Holy Kings worshipping the Baby Jesus gains momentary prominence during the stay of the flag and the group in that house.

The altar, as we have seen, is worth as much for its materiality as for eliciting gestures and actions incorporated in devotional practices, especially when it comes to popular religiosity. Present in almost all devotees of the Three Kings, it has, however, a presence that goes far beyond the limits of this specific devotion. A place par excellence for individual or collective prayers, altars are practically omnipresent in the various manifestations of popular religiosity; without prejudice to its presence in other social strata as well.

Popular prayers are forms of prayer that are born from the people, from their experiences of faith rooted in life. “For everything there is prayer. Knowing popular prayers is knowing a good part of logic and popular faith” (Poel 2013, 904). And here we are understanding prayer in a broad sense, which goes beyond the words uttered and also involves a whole repertoire of forms of expression that involves gestures, songs, construction and arrangement of objects and images; all of this constituting closely related performances.

In this sense, our gaze in this essay is primarily focused on spaces and contexts —the altars and their rooms—where prayers and singing take place as action. The altars are configured, therefore, as places of the sacred that emphasize the set of synesthetic qualities of the various performances involved in them or before them, including those constituted by its simple materiality and presence.

We used the narrative of Euclides da Cunha, in an excerpt from *Os Sertões*, in order to show how prayers have long been established among the people:

At dusk, the voice of the bell called the faithful to prayer. Work ceased. The people gathered under the trellis covered with foliage. It spilled across the square. He knelt down. The chorus of the first prayer was spread in the air. The night came, about to come, barely foreshadowed by the sertanejo twilight, fugitive and brief as that of the deserts. The bonfires, which were customary to light up along the perimeter of the square, were burning. And their wavering glares framed the scene half drowned in shadows. According to the old practice, or, better, the whim of A. Conselheiro, the crowd was divided, separating the genders, into two detached groups. And in each of them a huge shuffle of contrasts... (Cunha 1984, 87-88)

The profusion of performances presented in the highlighted excerpt reveals that prayers emerge from doing, from revealing actions and from practices

that are established in groups. The actions perceived in the act of “ceasing work” and in the exposed gesture, “they knelt” stand out. And, still, the expression which highlights that the people “spread through the square”, indicating the collective character of the action and already insinuating the capacity of mobilization of the charismatic leader.

Without going into considerations about the nature of messianic movements— which go beyond the scope of this essay—, it is interesting here to characterize the longevity of the action of collective prayers and the centrality of such popular practices, especially when dedicated to the sacred images that culminate, among many expressions existing, on the altars; a characteristic to which a good part of the studies of popular piety linked to Catholicism has already drawn attention.

The use of sacred images is among the cultural manifestations of a private or community character that are strongly established in popular Catholicism. In such a way that it also finds recognition in the formal instances of the Catholic Church:

An expression of great importance in the context of popular piety is the use of sacred images that, according to the canons of culture and the multiplicity of the arts, help the faithful to face the mysteries of the Christian faith (Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy 2003, 25).

The mounting of altars with images, however, raises gestures incorporated in other practices of popular religiosity that do not enjoy the same recognition; on the contrary, they are often regarded with suspicion by the clergy. This is the case, for example, of blessing practices, which are closer to popular festivals such as the King Party (Folias de Reis) and Congado than to the official Catholic liturgy, which does not prevent several healers and healers, revelers and *congadeiros* from being sincere Catholics and assiduous attendees of church rituals.

On blessing, Van der Poel (2013) clarifies that the use of altars in their practices is common. The researcher states that, in the healing rituals he observed/attended, healers usually put on the altar table the name of the patient and his illness, whether spiritual or physical, in order to obtain the response from the one who evokes (Ibid. 53). In the same sense, the faith healers pronounce the names of those to whom they pray for healing.

I, Daniela, remember that it was a family tradition for my mother and grandmother to take me and my brother to the healer; a very close neighbor, who always received us with great attention.

Arriving at his house, we could already smell the rue and other herbs exhaling in the backyard. No doubt the aroma of rue predominated. On



the table, everything was already prepared: a white tablecloth, a candle and some intertwined rue branches; the ritual could already begin. With the branches in hand, she asked that the evil eye, the broken one, the fallen longhorn be expunged... I confess that I did not understand these terms, but just hearing my parents and grandparents talk about them, I was sure that thing good was not. After the conversation with the adults, we left with light soul and body. After a few months, we were there again.

Bringing this memory as a background for a reflection on the performances that the altars produce, we consider that the blessings are also made up of significant practices, in their symbols, words, gestures and smells. And it is interesting to note that this cultural practice, originating from strata and popular religiosity, also comes into contact and dialogue with (or for) mass culture. A good example is the *samba-enredo* of the 2020 carnival by Escola de Samba Renascer, from Jacarépaguá RJ, and its promotional poster.



**IMAGE 6**  
PhotoDisclosure  
Renascer de  
Jacarépaguá  
Samba School  
Source:<https://www.srzd.com/carnaval/rio-de-janeiro/leia-a-sinopse-do-enredo-da-renascer-de-jacarepagua-para-o-carnaval-2020/>

With the motto “I am the one who blesses you, God are the one who cures you”, the samba school’s promotional poster reveals the plurality of symbols that evoke and intertwine with the sacred. It is important to highlight that there is no explicit reference to this or that religion on the poster. However, the ambience of that figure who bridges the gap between believers and the spiritual sphere and the deities is evident in the poster: the healer.

More than the images on the wall (Santo Antônio, the dove of the Divine Espírito Santo, Nossa Senhora da Conceição Aparecida in the waters of the Paraíba do Sul River, Nossa Senhora do Rosário and the rosary), precisely those on the altar refer to this transit which directs the viewer’s gaze and understanding towards popular Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian and Amerindian traditions, expressed in the images of Cosme and Damião — often associated with the Ibejis or Meninos d’Angola —, from São Jorge, do Padre Cícero, in the plan of the sword of São Jorge and in the photo that refers to a figure of a saint’s mother or father or an old black man.

In the samba-enredo of the Escola de Samba Renascer de Jacarepaguá, which rocked the passage through Sapucaí in 2020, the performances that emanate from the altar displayed on the poster thrive in the form of poetry.

*Bring prayers and blessings to ease your physical and heart  
discomforts.*

*I break and disconnect from any and all curses, spells and  
seduction.*

*Smell the herbs, incense and smoker.*

*I'm also a healer, yes sir.*

*I have in my hands symbolic objects such as rue, rosary,  
branches of leaves, crucifixes and candles.*

*I have in my speech, in my gestures, and in my closed eyes,  
the gift of healing my brother.*

*To alleviate the ailments! (Junior; Rocha 2020)*

Set in the first person, the synopsis of the school's plot helps to visualize the practices of the healer. In this, the plot is also performative, as it reveals actions based on the profusion of elements and sensations presented in the poster: smells, objects, gestures, supplications, chants, blessings. Everything settles down in him and with him. Associating the notion of agency of things with the theory of cultural performances to identify different modes of articulation between things and people, we can say that, in the symbology exposed, the altar performs.

The current context of the COVID19 pandemic (Sars-Cov-2) has changed the social and economic scenario and this has a clear impact on the religious field. The conditioning to the deprivations caused by the pandemic allowed the world population to “rethink” their daily practices. Whether in the simplest day-to-day situations, such as going to the supermarket, or in the way of dealing with work—whether in the restrictions and safety measures in face-to-face work or in the tools and platforms of remote work—, the pandemic “rocked” our way of seeing life and living regarding religious practices, most often experienced in groups and in somewhat public spaces—even if it is a room in a house that opens to receive a King Party (Folias de Reis) group—, the scenario has also been changing, especially due to the absence of people in these spaces, as a result of the pandemic.

However, some religious practices resisted the restrictions imposed by the current context. Among them, the devotions that take place around an altar stand out, which, in the impossibility of carrying out a broader and collective rite, also lends itself to individual or family devotion at

home, and can even be extended to a limited circle from relatives, friends and neighbors<sup>6</sup>.



**IMAGE 7**  
Home altar.  
Source: Author

In the photo above, the image of Jesus Christ stands out on the wall and on the altar a children's drawing with a cross, children's books of religious stories are present together with the image of Our Lady of Sorrows, in the oratory. Along with the symbols, the candle lights up the scene. The water prepared for the blessing is company with the branches caught from some evergreen branches. The altar reveals the presence of a child in the house; its imprint on the drawing and personal books, it says: I am here.

### **(IN) CONCLUSION**

In the development of this essay, we tried to think of the altar as materiality and presence that constitutes in and of itself a performance that, in turn, generates, guides, receives other performances; performances by revelers and other adherents of popular religiosity forms, such as healers, who manifest themselves before the altar, performing, from it, kinesthetic actions that elucidate various aspects of this form of religiosity.

Understanding the interweaving of such performances requires a keen eye both for things and their agency and for the details of the actions that unfold before the altar. As in a samba school plot, from and through its images, the performances tell and sing the event, placing all the participants in the same action and bringing out the senses and perceptions

6. Another possibility for (responsible) devotion in these times of pandemic, in addition to the attendance to churches by a limited number of believers or to perform more restricted rituals with some distance, was the broadcast of masses and other religious events on TV or the Internet. And, again, the altar is highlighted in these broadcasts.

of what is venerated in the act. And this is also valid to a great extent for meetings of individuals and family nuclei— more or less extensive— around their altars, in the intimacy of their homes.

Thinking of the altar as a performance agent itself also implies looking at everything that the altar transmits or evokes, whether images, words, bodily gestures, sounds, smells. Everything is part of the event itself, in its moment and context. Around the altar—a space for exchanging knowledge—on the altar and through the altar, religiosity is evidenced in the performances held there; be it for the images and things, for the revelers, for the families that receive the groups, for those who approach them or use them for the purposes of their spiritual and religious practices.

Developing a look at the space in which faith is visualized, that is, the altars, helps us to understand how performances are produced. It is a look that goes beyond what is set, a look that checks the details of things and actions, without haste, savoring the scene and what emanates from it.

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## HISTORY AND RITUAL: POSSIBLE RELATIONS BETWEEN WARS, MISSIONS, AND DEVOTION

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

The missionary work is discussed through the catechetical theater which is based on a ritual of devotion to St. Benedict (Ilhabela, north coast of São Paulo). Starting from the festivities of Colonial Brazil, we seek to understand the links between missionary activity, the wars of West-Central Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the ritual representations. The focus of this reflection is the relationship between historical events and the ways of publicizing missionary activity. It reflects not only on the ritual as an enhancer of a devotional imagery but also on the unfolding of the represented events, their interpretations, and reframing processes.

### KEYWORDS

Ritual; Angolan  
Wars; Congada;  
Catholic Missions;  
Reframing.

### THE BAROQUE AND THE COLONIAL FESTIVALS

The public festivals and celebrations of Colonial Brazil presented specific and peculiar characteristics. Among them, the political centralization of the State, the Baroque aesthetics and the defensive Counter-Reformation can certainly be highlighted. The festivals of popular Catholicism, such as the Festival of St. Benedict, can be understood as expressive forms relative to the Baroque festivals of the colonial period. Such festivals can be perceived as continuities and remnants of certain aspects of the colonial world. The festivals

present specificities related to the performance of colonial power, which implies deep reflection on the processes of resignification and the strategies of subjugated people (Maluf 2001, Araújo 1993, Souza 1994; 2002, Del Priore 1994, Jancsó and Kantor 2001).

Drawing upon the studies of Affonso Ávila (1994) and Luis Roberto Lopes (1981), Marcia Maluf argues that Baroque festivals of the colonial period represent a worldview and a sensibility that constitute the ethos of Brazilian culture. Such an ethos is still present as a kind of continuity in some fields of popular culture, like the so-called popular festivals. These festivals recreate a moral, religious, and poetic ideal, becoming a “privileged index of a mentality and a lifestyle, enabling us to explore the meaning of the Baroque mark” (Maluf 2001, 1).

The Baroque character of the colonial festival brings a specific connotation to the language by which the State and the Church are fused. Such a character is evident in various expressive aspects (Montes 1998). Baroque processions performed the affirmation of Portuguese monarchy. The “kingdom” of Congo, for example, was only one part of the parade where many other meaningful colonial institutions were represented. The colonial world involved the religious fraternities, the offices, the ecclesiastic and civil authorities and, finally, the image of the “mystic body”<sup>1</sup>. The Baroque procession would have been responsible for a transformation of the mystic body, a shift from the sacramental to the juridical. The change happened by means of different processes, being the public parade only one of them. Simultaneously, the juridical sense of the mystic body is transposed to society, being the King the higher representation of unity, harmony, and justice (Monteiro 2001, 78).

The propagation of Christianity and the conversion of pagans is a constitutive element of the Portuguese Absolutist State. Such a messianic project of the State is institutionalized by the “Padroado”, the King’s exclusive right of exerting missionary and religious activity on behalf of Holy See.<sup>2</sup> Faith propagation is the main foundation of the “Just War”. After being widely used in the context of the Crusades between the eleventh and thirteenth

1. *Corpus Mysticum* is the denomination given to the universal church founded by Jesus Christ. Saint Paul used this expression referring to the Church as the Body of Christ, being Christ the head. The devotees become part of the Church and part of the Mystic Body through faith and the sacrament of baptism. Jesus Christ is the invisible sacred head and the Pope the worldly visible head.

2. Padroado was the juridical tool that determined the exclusive right of organization and funding of religious activities in the domains of the Kingdom and discovered lands. It also included the power of nominating priests and bishops that were later endorsed by the Vatican. Portuguese Padroado constituted the religious aspect of the political and administrative structures of the Kingdom (and later the Oversea Padroado encompassed the dioceses in the East, Africa, and Americas). Thus, many activities of the Church, such as the Inquisition, became activities of the State. This subject, as well as the Spanish Padroado and its relations to the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, is explored by Gonçalves (2008, 39, 44-52, 77 and 141).

century, the concept of Just War became the legitimacy of the passage from the condition of free man to slave.<sup>3</sup>

The processions and the Baroque festivals became a form of expressing and publicly performing the practices of the King, the head of the Imperialist mission of the State. The reproduction of the mystic body of the State happens through the parade, where social and supernatural forces are represented by means of material elements such as images and sounds. Such expressive elements are “articulated in terms of traditional topic rhetoric, with a proper syntax. The Baroque festival propagates a concept performing it practically” (Idem, 79).

Marcia Maluf (2001), Maria Lúcia Montes (1998) and Affonso Ávila (1994) emphasize that Baroque aesthetics is deeply rooted in ludic aspects, in the sense of play and the creative force that recombines constantly the elements of diverse places and epochs. The authors show that Baroque aesthetics is strongly influenced by contradiction on ambiguity.

In the visual arts, this taste for profusion, excessive ornament, and the fear of the emptiness – in architecture, sculpture and Church paintings, for example – are the visible, concrete counterpart of this sense of play that, in Literature, becomes metaphor, the indirect discursive order, the precious language, and the verbal volutes that respond to the architectonic forms which scroll upon themselves (...) (Maluf 2001).

The Baroque search for the restauration of an ideal order is produced under the sign of contradiction: on the one hand, the creative feeling of the individual; on the other hand, the archaic feeling of limitation before a world out of control. In the archaic world, the individual was constrained by social and theological knots, which restrained their capacity for expression and experimentation. This is a source of opposition between the archaic and the modern world.

It is worth noticing the reflections of Maluf on the “coincidences and continuities between the popular forms of culture and their remote Baroque ancestry” (idem), as well as her considerations regarding a common history of domination over Indigenous and African peoples. Such aspects

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3. Juridical doctrine created by Cícero in the first century BC, involving a reflection and ethics on the circumstances where the war can be morally acceptable. There are two main aspects: on the one hand, the theory aimed to specify criteria for the State in war to achieve the principle of justice. On the other hand, it postulated the conditions where the war must happen. Coming from Cicero and Ambrosius, passing through Bartolomé de Las Casas, Hugo Grotius, John Locke, Emmanuel Kant and John S. Mill, many authors reflected on the issue. In the specific context analyzed by this article, the arguments of Just War became the justification for many contradictory situations. For a dense and wide reflection on the issue, see Orent, Brian. 2008. *Just War Theory*. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), Fall Edition.

are closely related to the processes of resignification in the expressive forms of popular culture.

The festival of St. Benedict and its congada are rituals of power representation, whose nature is political and theological. The festival is an example of the processes of resignification and production of certain contexts through the constitution of new codes. We draw upon the meaning suggested by Marshall Sahlins (2008), according to whom these processes produce codes through the association of specific parts of the semantic field of certain categories derived from diverse symbolic contexts. This is the kind of symbolic process by which God and Nzambi are associated in the missionary context of West-Central Africa.

Considering the representation of sovereignty of a society conceived as a mystic body, as well as the representations of other subjugated kingdoms in Baroque festivals and processions, the festival of St. Benedict presents an articulation between the messianic project of the State and the missionary activity that produced the legitimacy of the imperialist expansion. This plot presents the action plan of the Portuguese State, which associated ideological justification to collective representation and, at the same token, associated sacred and profane in a spectacular form of power by means of the Baroque language.<sup>4</sup>

The scope of this reflection is the connection between the expressive elements and its relations with historical processes, power relations and forms of propaganda regarding the missionary activity. The devotion is considered the result of the production of codes and processes of resignification and resistance. From this point of view, the Baroque aspects are the foundation for a characteristic ethnoecology of the ritual: numberless expressive elements of African cultures (such as music, musical instruments, and choreographies) are brought side-by-side with the Baroque aesthetics in which the historical events are referenced. This juxtaposition creates a tense relation between the past event [war] and the ethnographic present [devotion].

The reflection will be drawn upon our empirical basis, following the introduction of the ethnographic context. The festivals of popular Catholicism are comprehended in relation to the Baroque processions. The introduction

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4. The codes in the ritual can be highlighted by means of different aspects of expressive elements: 1) the sonorous landscape of the ritual: morphology of marimba and audiovisual inscriptions where sound structures are perceived, therefore being possible to relate them to the African traditional music (Cirino 2012, 261). There is a postulate according to which there is no complete fusion of elements in musical expression, particularly formal and structural elements (Oliveira Pinto 2002); 2) Carolingian literature (see footnote 13): because the text of the plot brings various mentions to the narrative of *The Story of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers of France*; and 3) the Catholic missions in Western Africa: responsible for the propagation of the missionary success in Europe (Cirino 2013; 2016).

enables the contextualization of the old tradition rooted in the narratives of Colonial Brazil. Later, the final act of the devotional ritual of St. Benedict is presented, in order to explore the expressive elements that show the processes of resignification and production of codes. The dramatization associated with the sensorial perception and materiality of the sacred is also explored. After the discussion on the ritual elements, we discuss two meaningful wars in the region of Angola (city of Massangano), the first in 1583 and the second in 1648. They are mentioned in the plot and fundamental to the comprehension of the devotional context. After this long incursion through the Angolan wars, we return to the analysis of the ritual, understanding it as conventional context and processes of resignification.

## RITUAL CONTEXT

Catholic devotion is present throughout the north coast of São Paulo.<sup>5</sup> The evidence of such a devotion is observed by the different religious practices, churches and colonial chapels. The main church of Ilhabela Island is dedicated to Our Lady of D'ajuda and Bom Sucesso. Among important festivals of the religious calendar in the island, the festivals of St. Benedict (someday in May), Our Lady of D'ajuda (February 2<sup>nd</sup>) and Saint Peter (June 29<sup>th</sup>) can be highlighted.<sup>6</sup>

Many inhabitants of the island of Ilhabela are devotees and cultivate a meaningful connection with Catholic saints and various other entities, especially St. Benedict.<sup>7</sup> Many practices are dedicated to his name, and many actions praise him. St. Benedict inspires various activities set into a ritual system, which encompasses dead and alive, places, and objects

5. The empirical material comes from different stages of research. Initially, research was done for the TV documentary *Sobre a Congada de Ilhabela* (Kishimoto TV-USP, 2004-2011), which is composed by 6 parts (26 minutes each) and can be accessed by the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CpCuk441ZCw&t=1239s>. Data was gathered by means of fieldwork out of the scope of the documentary, mainly audio recordings, interviews, and notes between 2009 and 2019. There were useful transcriptions of the plot in the manuscripts of King Benedito Hipólito de Carvalho (Dito de Pilaca), as well as in the texts of Iracema França Lopes Corrêa (1981) and Haydeê Dourado de Faria Cardoso (1982, 1990). This *corpus* regarding the plot of the *congada* were compared to the transcriptions of other similar *congadas*, which were registered by Rossini Tavares de Lima (1949/1981), Alceu Maynard Araújo (1964), João Alfredo Rabaçal (1976), José Loureiro Fernandes (1977).

6. Since 2020, due to the prevention protocols of COVID-19, every activity related to the festival was suspended. As usual, the participation of the public administration is fundamental to the realization of the festival. The suspension of the ceremonies and other cultural events by the city hall and the secretaries of education and culture also affected funding for the festival. The participation of the church has also been determinative.

7. The most common version on the origins of St. Benedict (Benedetto Manasseri) tells that he was born in the city of Messina (Sicily-Italy), in 1525. He was a son of an African enslaved man who was born by Iberic ships. He belonged to the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin at the convent Santa-Maria-di-Gesú, near the city of Palermo (cf. Alencastro 2000: 314). Benedetto lived in this convent working as a humble cook and died in 1589, being acclaimed a saint. His process of canonization began five years after his death. He was beautified in 1743, but only canonized and sanctified on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1807, amid the slavery regime. Fraternity de St. Benedict, first established in Lisbon in 1619 by Moors and converted Africans, was responsible for the diffusion of his cult in Angola.



of devotion. Inhabitants of Ilhabela consider that St. Benedict has meaningful agency. The devotion is expressed in different ways along the year. Nevertheless, the public expression and main rituals of devotion are concentrated on the festival of St. Benedict during three consecutive days. As part of the activities, the processions happen in the beginning and the end of the festival, framing the sequence of the ritual (Schechner 1985; 1988). They are important moments where the interaction between the players and the community out of the scene – out of the *congada* itself – can be observed. The expressions of promise, devotion and affection are intense. The laughter and the cry are simultaneous. Healing and grace, too. These are dimensions of the processions and their final moments in the church. The image of the saint over the *andor* impacts the devotees, adding to the effects of the multiple sensorial elements like prayer, chanting, or the drums and bells of the church, which resonate in a constant, fast rhythm, with a high volume.



**FIGURE 1**  
Procession. Image of St. Benedict arriving at the main church for the Opening Mass (Author's photo 2016).



**FIGURE 2**  
Andor being carried by the devotees, over the andor the Image of St. Benedict, dressed for the festival (Author's photo 2006).

The devotional activities to the saint happen every year in May. They are organized by two groups: the *ucharia* and *congada*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the festival involves other organizational groups. The *congada* is performed as an expression of devotion. It is a kind of prayer, a praise in the form of scenic representation. A performance in the streets with speech, dance, and chanting whose plot is the conflict between two rival groups. On the one hand, the aristocrats of the King of Congo, considered “Christians” who wear blue clothes and occupy the “upper” side of the battlefield. On the other hand, the Congos of the Ambassador of Luanda, considered “Moors”, “pagans”, “unbaptized”, “faithless”, who are dressed in red and occupy the “lower” side of the battlefield.<sup>9</sup> The Ambassador of Luanda is then convinced to become a Christian, becoming a devotee of St. Benedict. The armies occupy a different point, more or less 40 meters from each other, being the battlefield the space between the armies. The performance of the scenes happens in that space, following three acts (called *bailies*) of approximately 40 minutes each.

8. *Ucharia* is the group responsible for funding, organization, preparation, and distribution of food donations dedicated to St. Benedict. *Ucharia* is a form of banquet freely offered to the participants and population during lunch on Saturday and Sunday. It is an extremely important part because it is associated with the circuits of gifts surrounding the name of the saint (Mauss 2003). *Ucharia* is responsible for a major part of the material production involved in the devotional activities. People believe that the saint makes himself present in the *ucharia*, distributing blessings with the grace of what is cooked, offered, shared, and consumed for him. The grace is distributed through the commensality of his devotional food. *Ucharia* presents abundance, excess, grace and collective commensality. For this very reason, *ucharia* presents an important aspect regarding the materialization of the sacred, but it will not be analyzed here.

9. In the King's Army, the main characters are the Prince, the Secretary, and the Cacique. In the Ambassador's Army, only the Cacique.

The performance presents the moment when the Ambassador of Luanda arrives at the city of Congo and sees the festival of St. Benedict. The unfolding of the scenes shows the representation of clashes and steep trials of approximation alongside speech, chanting and dance. Each *baile* presents repeatedly, with a few differences, the history of a war whose aim is the recognition of the Ambassador. The Ambassador is the King's bastard child. In each *baile*, the Ambassador is arrested three times, left before the judgement of the King, who feels guilty after debating his reasons and, finally, professes his conversion. Nevertheless, the last act is specific because it is the *baile* in which the King discovers the truth about the Ambassador, who was raised in another kingdom.

### DEVOTION IN SCENE

Even though the three scenes present recurring elements, the last *baile* is especially different because of its character of finalization and some aspects of its content. The *baile* begins with the dialogue between the King and the Secretary. The contents of this dialogue regard the fact that the King was embracing the cross of Christ, i.e., his conversion. The demonstration of a diligent praise to St. Benedict shows the meaning of the conversion. The Secretary seems particularly interested in praising the saint to cheer the sovereign. After asking the Secretary to call the population, the King talks to his Aristocrats, inviting them to the festival.



**FIGURE 3**  
King and Queen heading the procession, followed by the lines of *congueiros* (Author's photo 2008).





**FIGURE 4**  
Prince pronouncing  
his Embassy  
before the King and  
Queen (Author's  
photo 2010).

When the Secretary is ready, the Aristocrats begin their presentation of the “ambassies”.<sup>10</sup> Later, the instruments are played more intensely. Congos of the Ambassador present choreographies, walking and chanting in two lines around the Aristocrats. With drawn spades put upon their right shoulders, Congos hold their cape while they sing. The “war” begins. The remarkable moment is the formation of lines and circles with choreographies where spades are crash against each other. The Prince and the Secretary “go down” in order to talk with the Ambassador while the Congos yell and chant “*With the tip of arms/We want to win o le le/With tip of arms/We shall die!*”. Such choreographies, which represent the clashes between the two armies, are full of energetic movements, running, and fluid and circular formations. The troops demonstrate their devotional and martial force. The bodies of congueiros crashes, integrating in the choreographies and dislocating through the battlefield. The sounds of spades and marching feet, chanting and rhythm of the drums express the sincere devotion. The public, most of them familiars of the players, are also emotionally affected by the devotion expressed in the performance. The public joins in the physical and corporal participation of the congada.

While the war is happening, the Secretary of the King talks to the Ambassador, threatening and intimidating him. The Congos of the Ambassador crouch or kneel, one by one, and the Caciques remain upright. Then, the Secretary asks if the Ambassador wants to see him dealing the final blow. The Cacique intervenes with a surprising revelation: the kinship between the King and the Ambassador. The discovery of the kinship happens at a controversial moment, when the King would understand the real motive

10. In Ilhabela Island, the ambassies are the speech of the Aristocrats before the King, and their praise of St. Benedict and other saints. Every Aristocrat has an embassy, being allowed to utter more than one embassy, with pompous tone, in the beginning of each *baile*. Often ambassies are repeated. Some verses and speech of the plot are used as ambassies, and emphasis are produced by the repetition of certain verses.

of the Ambassador's invasion. Speaking to the Secretary, the Cacique of the Ambassador reveals: *"You do not know/We are two governors/Of the kingdom of this city/Son of the Father, Your Majesty the King?"*. The Ambassador is revealed as the King's son.

Then, the Secretary scratches the floor with the space, delimitating a "barrier" for the Congos. The Secretary goes before the King whilst the Ambassador follows him, jesting. As soon as the Secretary arrives at the extremity of the battlefield, before the monarch, he asks the King's permission to present his embassy. The King concedes. This is a moment loaded with tension, expectation, and suspense. The devotees know that the King's answer is determinative for the reception of the Secretary's message. The Ambassador does not give a clue on the answer to the revelation.

Later, the Secretary invokes divine presence in the battlefield, regardless of the numerical disadvantage. The Secretary begins his report by saying that the King can rest because the invaders are peaceful. But the King wants to know who it is. So, the Secretary reveals: *"I do not know. They say he is the prince, your dear son, real son of Massangano"*. After the revelation, the marimba begins to play. The Secretary returns dancing and concedes permission for the Ambassador to approach the King.



**FIGURE 5**  
The spades crash while they sing. In the choreography, circles are formed by the two armies for the clash (Author's photo 2010).





**FIGURE 6**  
During the battle, the Ambassador attacks while the Aristocrats defend the King (Author's photo 2009).

In the presence of the King, everybody sings together, cheering the freedom of the Ambassador, who was until then considered an adversary, an enemy, becomes an ally by blood. The Ambassador comes closer, asking the King for his blessings. The King responds: *"Bimbia Zambi in a pongo aquiriri!"* And asks: *"Ambassador, how did you escape from my feet?"* The Ambassador answers objectively: *"Sovereign, the cruel battle of Massangano was the cause"*.

What happened in this battle? Was it a previous battle between the armies? Has the Ambassador been defeated in this battle becoming a subjugated? What was the context of the cruel battle? Important details of this passage – the reference to Zambi as well as the verbalization of the motive of the schism – are the key to comprehend the meaning of the ritual. The Ambassador sits beside his father and explains his motivations.<sup>11</sup>

The King, silent, only listens to the son's complaints. The returning son is strong and has an abundant army. The military power of the Ambassador is very big in comparison to the Aristocrats of the King. During the dialogue, father and son misunderstand each other again. It seems that the Ambassador would be delighted to be the heir of the scepter and the crown. The Ambassador is resentful about his banishment and exile. He says he is unfortunate in the hell and ask for his father's forgiveness. Then, the King orders him to accept the law of Christ, the only way for forgiveness. First, the Ambassador refuses it. But he later accepts and recognizes the

11. Tall and powerful monarch/Who is devotee of Mombique/Whose great magnitude/That goes from pole to pole/When I knew that you/To whom our feet were prostrated/Sent the duke of Cassangue/With force of arm and weapon/You sent me because I am well-known, Sir/Of your obedient servants/Because not being recognized as monarch/Son of your flesh/I determined eagerly/And received eagerly/The glorious Benedict Saint.

monarch. Like the other two *bailes*, the scene where the King offers the spade to the Ambassador is repeated, as well as the dialogue about the “quality” of the soldiers, the flowers of Massangano.

After chanting, the music stops. The King stands up and utters the final verses, framing the *baile*. Like the other *bailes*, he mentions the change that softens his heart, and the seabed, the *Kalunga grande*. Congos are forgiven according to their new Christian names, their baptism name.<sup>12</sup>

In the final moment of the last baile, the *congueiros* commonly express themselves publicly. They thank St. Benedict for another festival, another *congada*. They thank the participation of the population for their commitment with the organization of the *congada* and *ucharia*. Many women of the community, who did not follow the performance because they were working in the kitchen, usually appear. The commotion is evident. The community celebrates enthusiastically. At this moment the next Queen who will celebrate the festival in the next year is “crowned”. This a moment full of care and importance due to the competitiveness and meaning of the role. The major and other authorities, like secretaries and political candidates, appear too. Expression of emotion and devotion, the last baile is also a moment of expression of the rivalry and tensions as well as alliances and affinities.

Like the Catholic missions, Carolingian literature and religious conflict (between protestants, muslims, “pagans” and other religious denomination) are important to understand the *congada* in Ilhabela (Cirino 2013).<sup>13</sup> Thus, the investigation on the “battle of Massangano” is necessary.

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12. Oh sweet congos/voices from the throat/of a strong people/that surprises everybody./ In my strong heart/A change has come/Which made my hear soft/As a thing that dances./ In the seabed enchanted mermaids do not sing/The children go and go with love/ To praise Benedict Saint/Because we expect from him/The most singular prize./ But first before dancing/Come everybody to my feet/I want to award you/I want a swing dance/ And according to your name/You will be forgiven. Abulo!

13. According to Araújo (1952; 1964), the main theme of conversion would have a subtract narrated by the “Chanson de Roland” (book IV, chapter IV), famous collection that resulted in “The Story of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers of France”. Some aspects of the war narratives would have been “wisely used by the catechist” (Idem: 216). “The Story of Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers of France” would have been constituted throughout the eleventh century, setting a kind of model for this kind of literature. Its diffusion in Brazil happens by means of the fragmentation of the content and the creation of different expression, like *cordel*, ballads and folk songs. There are many expressions of Brazilian popular culture in which we find the representation of the expulsion of pagans by a “Christian army”. According to Mario de Andrade in his book “Danças Dramáticas no Brasil” (1982a), this motif would have born in Brazil with the *cavalcadas*, passing to the *marujadas* and, later, becoming part of the *congadas*. The “Chanson de Roland” (or “Song of Roland”) would be the part that describes the death of Roland and the arrival of Charlemagne at the Iberian Peninsula, where he fought the “faithless” Moors. The so-called “Moors” occupied the Iberian Peninsula between 711 a 1492, almost eight centuries. In the “Chanson...”, the narrative supposedly describes the event where Galatão betrays the emperor’s army in the canyon of Roncesvalles.

The revelation of the kinship between the King and the Ambassador unleashes the revelation of rivalry. The motive that led the Ambassador to escape from the King's feet was the cruel battle of Massangano. Considering the possibility of the hypothesis suggested by Mario de Andrade (1982a), according to which the plot refers to events which took place in Africa, we will follow historiographic information on the wars in the region of Massangano. Despite of the numberless hints that point to the war in 1648 as the main reference, there is another battle that took place in 1583. Therefore, I present some information concerning the two battles, emphasizing the context of the Seventeenth century.

### **TWO ANGOLAN WARS: OUR LADY OF CANDLES [1583] AND RESTORATION OF LUANDA [1648]**

In 1583, the Ambundu, led by Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji (seventh king of Ndongo), fought against the Portuguese, led by Paulo Dias Novais. The Portuguese were allies of the Congolese, led by Alvaro II (Christian name of Mpanzi Mini a Lukeni Lua Mbandi, King of Congo between 1574 and 1614). The motivations of the conflict were related to the search for precious metals and the expansion of the Portuguese domain in the West-Central Africa.

The narratives of war in the region of Congo and Angola suggest the kind of atrocities committed in the name of the expansion of Catholic faith. An example is the Battle of Our Lady of Candles [1583]. Baltazar Barreira, Jesuit priest and a chief of the uprising of servants in Angola, wrote a letter to José de Anchieta, who was the provincial of Brazil, in 1585 (Brásio 1952, 323-5 *apud* Alencastro 2000, 173).

Roy Glasgow (1982, 32) and Ralph Delgado (n.d, 305) understand that Paulo Dias Novais was looking after gold and silver in Eastern regions (Cambambe, near the main city of the Kingdom of Ngola). A great conflict seemed unavoidable and the troops clash on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1683. King Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji (father of the Queen Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji) heading the Ambundu armies against a large contingent of Portuguese and their allied *sobas*, headed by Paulo Dias Novais and the *soba* of Songa.

Noticing the move of the Portuguese over the territory, the King of Angola set "the biggest army until then" (Idem, 305). The reference mentioned by Delgado points out that a crowd of "a million and two hundred men" led by the King Ngola Kiluanji crashed with the Portuguese armies. When they saw such a great army, many allies scattered. With effort, the Portuguese defeated the waves of Angolan soldiers.

Regarding these operations against the King of Angola in which Paulo Dias Novais succeeded, priest Barreira mentions the conversion of *sobas*

that became allies. The wars were justified by Barreira, who did not see any problem in The Society of Jesus being served by slaves, even though it should happen through conversion and catechesis. According to Alencastro (2000), Barreira was a powerful auxiliary of Dias Novais. His action operated in the ideological and symbolic field: the bravery of the Portuguese and divine signs, like crosses in the skies, visions of the Virgin, spades of fire and other “miracles” were readily reported whilst the presence of native allied archers was omitted. Evidently, such celestial and divine signals were only a rhetorical resource because “the papal briefing of 1625, which forbade the report of non-recognized miraculous event, did not exist” (Alencastro 2000, 173).

Our aim is not to confuse the historiographic narratives with the instrumentalization of the religion, since there was a clear prominence of the colonial war over the catechesis in Angola, as can be confirmed by the Portuguese provincial document of 1588 (Idem, 175). Conversion means becoming an ally and becoming an ally means sharing the religion of the conqueror. Therefore, alliance and conversion are opposed to rivalry and paganism. Even though Barreira’s position was neither the only one nor the prevailing one within The Society of Jesus, the royal directives supported his position. Ignatian jurists admitted that the ownership prevailed over the rights of the enslaved. This is the reason why Barreira preaches the legitimacy of the slave-trade, despite of his juridical doubts on the matter.

The strategies used by the Portuguese for the conversion of *sobas* are out of the scope of this discussion. However, arguments for the conversion were laid on the promise of alliance against rival segments, bringing the Portuguese in a power play before their presence in Africa. The conversion is an important instrument of expansionist politics: the baptism as a kind of key for the action of Portuguese armies in their task of conquering the Southern lands of Congo. Thus, Jesuits helped to establish a system of action by means of alliances based on the antagonism of diverse ethnic groups, creating the conditions for territorial conquest (cf. Delgado n.d., 307). This system of alliances, fed by the antagonism between ethnic groups, was essentially facilitated by the priests of The Society of Jesus.

This was the first great war in the region of Massangano. According to Delgado (n.d.), Glasgow (1982), and Alencastro (2000), this war between Ambundu and Portuguese derives from the context of colonial expansion and the search for populational contingent as well as the search for gold and silver. Those are important antecedents for understanding colonial expansion, but also the functioning of the production of alliances through the conversion process. Another emphasis is put on the hesitation of Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji in accepting the Christian baptism, abandoning

the pagan, cannibal and polygamic practices. This battle must be the first one that Queen Nzinga, with only one year old, witnessed between the Ambundu (led by her father) and the Portuguese armies (led by Paulo Dias de Novais).

The second meaningful war in the same region probably happened in 1648 when the Dutch were expelled and Luanda was retaken by the Portuguese, led by Salvador Correa de Sá and Benevides. It is known as the Battle for the Restoration of Luanda. In both cases, they are important battles in the political and economic colonial context. The narratives of the battle of 1648 emphasize the relevance of retaking Luanda from the Dutch domain, re-establishing the commercial circuit between the metropolis Lisbon, the oversea kingdoms, Antilles, La Plata basin, Brazil and Central Africa.

Some subsidiary data regarding the period between 1590 and 1648 is important if we aim to understand the importance of this event. Some notes regarding the activities of The Society of Jesus in Africa are worthy, considering the interventionist character of the Jesuitic action and the use of plays and scenes as an instrument for catechization and the propaganda of the catechetic success (Jadin 1955).<sup>14</sup>

In 1594, the decision made by the Fifth General Congregation of The Society of Jesus allowed slavery, but only in 1599 the directive was received by the overseas missions. From this year on, in another juridic context, Ignatian expanded their support to the advance of Portuguese troops over the unexplored regions, like the kingdoms of Matamba and Ndongo.

Another important point is the unification of the Iberic crowns. In 1580, Filipe II of Castela (Filipe I, in Portugal) succeeded D. Henrique, after his death (Delgado n.d., 307). The unification between Portugal and Spain remains until 1640 when, finally, the Brigantine court took the power back. Nevertheless, Madrid and the Vatican (which were under Spanish influence) will only recognize the Brigantine throne in 1668 (Gonçalves [2008] mentions the year of 1670). This delay generated many difficulties for the nomination of bishops around the kingdom, and throughout the colonies (cf. Gonçalves 2008, 43).

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14. Luiz Felipe de Alencastro (2000) quotes Louis Jadin (1955) regarding Queen Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji and the interpretation on the acts performed in congadas. According to Jadin, acts in congadas like the congada of St. Benedict, would have initiated in the Jesuitic school where the conversion of King Afonso I, Mvemba and Nzinga (1506-1543) was performed (Gonçalves, 2008). Thus, in the Jesuitic school of Dinant, in the Netherlands, acts with this same content were represented along the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Jadin 1955, 383 *apud* Alencastro 2000, 281). Theatrical performances at the main events during the kingdom of the great Christian king D. Afonso I were probably performed in the Jesuitic school of Dinant and other places in the second half of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Jadin 1955, 383).



In the seventeenth century, the extension of the Padroado was limited to the subdued territories and the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide<sup>15</sup> begins to send missionaries directly to the “faithless” lands that were not occupied by the European. These controversial directrices generated conflicts between the missionaries protected by Rome and the missionaries protected by Portugal, not only in terms of evangelization methods, but mainly because of the unification of Portugal and Spain.

Furthermore, Belgians and Dutch started to compete for the African slave markets in the first decades of the sixteenth century. The scenario shifts when Dutch activities in Brazil and Africa are intensified through the West-Indische Compagnie (WIC). Founded in 1621, WIC followed the model of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische (VOC), which was created in 1602 to explore the Asian markets. Nevertheless, WIC had broader objectives. Make commerce and war, without the scope and resources of VOC. WIC attracted a few important investors, due to the weak trust, and its capital ended up being completed with public funds.

Some places and dates are meaningful for the observation of the penetration of WIC’s actions in Brazil and Africa in the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1625, WIC invades Bahia and blocks the naval exchange with Luanda and Benguela. In 1630, WIC invades Olinda and Recife and, in 1635, the Forest region of Pernambuco. Then, in 1637-38, WIC establishes trading posts in Loango and Pinda, in the kingdom of Soyo, near Congo. This is the context in which Luanda is subjugated, in 1641. The Dutch understood that Luanda was the main market of slaves, and without it the cultivation of sugarcane in Brazil would be impossible (cf. Alencastro 2000, 213).

The Battle for the Restoration of Luanda [1648] involved the Portuguese headed by Salvador Correia de Sá and Benevides against the alliance of Ambundu led by Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji, Congolese led by Garcia II (known as Kimpako, Nkanga a Lukeni), and the Dutch.<sup>16</sup> The context of the conflict was the recovery of Luanda from the Dutch domain after seven years.

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15. Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide was created in 1622 through the *Bula Incruetabili Divinae* by Pope Gregory XV, whose aim was to provide support and guidelines for the missionary activities (Gonçalves 2008, 45, Alencastro 2000, 288-300, Tavares 2004, 206). It replaced the cardinalial Commission de Propaganda Fide (1572-1621), aiming to intervene in missionary actions with nationalist interests enabled by the Padroados. Therefore, Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide removes catechesis from the regulation of the Portuguese and Spanish Padroados. Practically, the cardinals of Propaganda chose to support the Spanish in detriment of the Portuguese (cf. Gonçalves 2008, 46). Nevertheless, the Portuguese Jesuits, agents of the Padroado and the Inquisition, had different interests in the African lands beyond catechesis.

16. For more information on Salvador Corrêa de Sá, Queen Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji, Kimpako Nganga a Lukeni, and Guilherme II, see Gonçalves (2008), Alencastro (2000), Delgado (n.d.), and Glasgow (1982).

The author of “General History of the Angolan Wars” (1681), Antonio de Oliveira Cadornega, embarked as a soldier towards Angola a year later and became the captain of Vila Vitória in Massangano. The report of Cadornega points out that the king of Congo betrays the Portuguese and sends contingents to support the Dutch. According to Cadornega, after subjugating the kingdom of Matamba, Queen Nzinga incited betrayals between the *sobas*, allies of Portugal, provoking their rebellion and creating new alliances with the Dutch. This narrative emphasizes the Portuguese version according to which an ambush was being articulated.

In 1647, the triple alliance was formed, involving the king of Congo (Dom Garcia II), the queen of Ambundu (territories of Ndongo and Matamba) Nzinga, and the rebel *sobas* with the Dutch. Their commitment was to defeat the Portuguese armies. Among many clashes, the battle of Massangano would have been the final confrontation (Glasgow 1982, 135). On the side of the Ambundu, the battle had different meanings. Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji was the lineage of Queen Nzinga Mbandi Ngola. His father, Ngola Kiluanji, was the seventh king of Ndongo, and her mother, Guenguela Cancombe belonged to the Ambundu lineages (Cavazzi 1687/1965, 424-29). The Ambundu were led by Ngol Kiluanji during the combats with Paulo Dias Novais in the decade of 1580. In 1648, the same year of the conflict, Nzinga dealt with the sequestration of her sister Mocambo and the murder of her sister Quifunji. These events explain, at least partially, why Queen Nzinga enacted a belligerent politics whose aim was to prevent the Portuguese advance over her lands.

The final battle of Massangano would have initiated in the late 1648 when Nzinga led the coalition of the troops from Ndongo, Matamba and Congo with the Dutch, during the attack against the Portuguese. They were successful but were not able to take advantage of the situation because the Portuguese destroyed the boats used to cross the Lucala river. According to Glasgow, the coalition forces exceed five times the Portuguese armies. Even so, the forces of Nzinga faced a violent opposition (cf. Glasgow 1982, 136).

The restoration of Luanda was indeed strategical to guarantee the commercial routes in the South Atlantic. Slave traders, merchandisers, clergy and colonial agents were set around the interests of the Metropolis. Without Luanda, the American colony would disappear. Moreover, many traders consider the Angolan market as a form of reaching Peruvian silver. The War Council supported the necessity of helping Luanda because Brazil could not be sustained without Luanda. Thus, the battles at the two margins of the South Atlantic were the same war (cf. Alencastro 2000, 221 – 223).

The War Council intended to resume the commercial relation between Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, aiming to bring the Peruvian silver to the

Portuguese market again. The Portuguese noticed they needed to recover Luanda in order to solve the problems in La Plata, Brazil and Africa. According to Alencastro, the recovery of Angola in 1648 meant the appropriation of “the biggest African reserve of labour” for two centuries (Idem, 148).

After victory, Salvador de Sá sent two ships to render the army of WIC in Benguela. The agreed conditions were rigorously followed, and the Dutch left on August 24<sup>th</sup> (St. Barthelemy’s day), after precise seven years of invasion. Then, Correia de Sá ordered the Dutch to embark in the very place where the troops of Pieter Jold disembarked, in 1641. He would have said that “the heresy left Angola through the same door it came in” (Correa de Sá *apud* Boxer 1973, 281).

Indeed, the Jesuitic action during the expedition for the restoration of Angola had an important role in the constitution of this “Crusade spirit”. The process through which the recovery of Luanda was considered a decision of God is surprising. The chronist Simão de Vasconcelos considers the recovery of Angola as “an order of Divine will”. These versions and interpretations on the expedition, created by the chronists and Ignatian, reveal a certain mentality and an articulated strategy of the Crown and the Jesuitic action.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, Nzinga Mbandi spent three decades of guerra against all the caste of European predators. Salvador de Sá received many slaves, neither honoring his promise of setting Princess Mocambo free nor ceasing the hostilities against her kingdom (cf. Alencastro 2000, 263, Glasgow 1982, 183).

The protagonists of the historical events are important because they became well-known through the narratives on their lives. The cases regarding the missionary work, propagated by various religious orders, are emblematic. Such cases transform the subjects in characters, remembering them in broader narratives on catechesis. The meaning of the conversions of Kings and Queens are amplified. In Europe, they supported arguments in favor of the imperialist expansion, juridically founded in the actions of the Absolutist State. In the regions of Congo, Ndembo, Ndongo and Matamba, they emitted a message on the alliance and a warning, articulating some aspects of the native mentality and the Christian ideas by means of processes of resignification that gave legitimacy to conversion.

17. Considering the Philippine influence over the Vatican, Portugal seemingly had difficulties in finding safe allies to support the control of the commercial operations in South Atlantic. Brigantine spies gathered information to prevent the entrance of “foreigners” in the Portuguese colonies, aiming to maintain the control of Portuguese Padroado over the Christian missions, particularly in Central Africa. This “Portuguese paranoia” can be understood if we consider that some African missionaries were vassals of the Spanish Crown which subjugated a part of Italy, including the Vatican and the pope, therefore preventing the Holy See from recognizing the Portuguese Crown.

Nzinga Mbandi Ngola Kiluanji and the King of Congo, D. Afonso I (Mvemba a Nzinga), are two emblematic examples of this strategy.

Returning to the plot performed in the ritual, we notice that the King – who represents the Christian that brings the “true message” of devotion to St. Benedict – has affinities with King D. Afonso I. On the other hand, the faithless moor – represented by the Ambassador of Luanda, whose aim is unknown – corresponds to Nzinga Mbandi. Both are emblematic figures that became “characters” in the narratives of successful missionary action. They became central figures in the stories of conversion to Christianity. The King of Congo D. Afonso I converted himself and received the benefits of arms and military support from Portugal. Nzinga Mbandi, first converted in 1621 by the Jesuits, “deconverted” herself, converting again in 1656 by the Neapolitan Capuchin Antonio de Gaeta. Her final conversion was presented as one of the biggest missionary and colonial triumphs of the seventeenth century in Africa.<sup>18</sup>

On the one hand, the conversion of Nzinga Mbandi became an example of well-succeeded catechesis by the Capuchin in contrast with the accusations and denunciation regarding Jesuits being involved with the slave trade. The work of the Society of Jesus becomes the counterexample of catechesis and missionary activity. On the other hand, the history of this African Queen became the example of the barbarism in which oversea pagans survived.

Considering the propaganda of the Capuchin mission, particularly the conversion of Nzinga Mbandi, the Jesuits, in face of severe accusation from other religious orders, tried to promote strategies of divulgation of their own successful missions. The Jesuits acts were an important instrument for catechesis and sentimental education and had a meaningful role in the dissemination of the Christian religion and the propaganda of their work throughout Europe (Kassab 2010, 131).

According to Louis Jadin (1955), if the plot of the congada derives from the Jesuits in Dinant, from their representation of the conversion of African kings, it would be possible to affirm that such representations celebrate Queen Nzinga Mbandi and the most important Catholic king of Congo D. Afonso I. Their presence is recalled in congadas performed in the various regions of Brazil. Nzinga always considered the negative pole, the pagan, the invader warrior while the King of Congo always considered the positive pole, the Christian, the good, the correct. Thus, the Jesuitic project produces the superposition of different meaningful events from the point

18. More information on the conversion processes of Queen Nzinga Mbandi, see Giovanni Antonio Cavazzi da Montecúcolo, 1687, Vol. II: 97-112; as well as priest F. M. Gioia da Napoli, 1669.

of view of propaganda and divulgation of missions in Africa: the great conversion of Afonso and/or Nzinga as well as the “miraculous” battles of the Portuguese were projected upon the narratives of the Carolingian cycle.<sup>19</sup>

There are some ambivalent elements in the interpretation of the wars of Massangano. In the plot, we see aspects of devotion, character, honor, fidelity, but also the war that creates rivalry and schism. The Ambassador escaped from the king’s feet because of war. Therefore, elements of the Christian symbolic system can be found in the semantic field of Massangano and the memories of the battles in this locality. In Brazil and other Portuguese colonies, the plot preserved the meaning of the conversions and the activity of the State. Nevertheless, the meanings upon which lies a part of the Christian semantic field are still present, even if overlaid by the domination and power of the State and Church.

## EPILOGUE

The ritual performed in the festival of St. Benedict regards a battle which took place in Massangano, among other things. The Ambassador of the congada refers to this battle. The battle is presentified in the ritual according to a specific interpretation. And this interpretation presents historical meaning. This article aimed to understand how the historical events and the interaction of different forces and meaning were represented in the plot, rather than characterizing social agents and reframing their own interpretation of the ritual. The historical events were understood as a set of imagery that triggers devotion. The article also explored how the clues of the events are presentified in the ritual by means of a dialectic relation.

This kind of presence is a vestige of the rumor of death. Those aspects of the historical event – despite of their residuality and partiality – persist through time, being presentified in the ritual. Despite this residual character and the “deteriorated” condition, we can see the dead through the chinks of these set of images. The ritual of devotion to St. Benedict evokes aspects regarding the intrinsic relation between the religious character of the ritual and the auric aspect of authenticity of the adored oeuvre (Belting 2010, Benjamin 1994).

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19. Regarding the imaginary of the epoch, miraculous battles and Portuguese messianism, see the work of Ana Paula Torres Megiani (2003) in which messianism is understood by means of three features: the tradition of Joaquim de Fiorde (Calabrian abbot), the literature (through the cavalry narratives and Matter of France) and the royal chronicles. Some expectations on D. Sebastião, last heir of the Joane Dynasty, emerged due to his disappearance during the battle of Alcácer-Quibir (1578). Such expectations led him to claim himself as the connecting link with the king Afonso Henrique (first king of Portuguese who was chosen by God to govern, since his vision of Christ on the cross before the battle against a bigger Muslim army, what became the “Miracle of Ourique”). See Megiani, Ana Paula Torres. 2003. *O Jovem Encantado. Expectativas do Messianismo Régio em Portugal, séculos XIII – XVI*. São Paulo: Hucitec.



Due to the necessity of considering the specific status of different empirical material as well as the mediations for the possible correlations between conjunctures, the article operated with a multisided, transversal and discontinuous position that articulates not only the wars of West-Central Africa, but also the ritual and the content of its plot (Cirino 2012). Such an approach enables understanding the sets of devotional images, and the affection of the subjects by their materiality and sensorial dimension as expressions of resistance, resignifications, persistence, and reappearance.

Historical events are the key for comprehending the motivation of the schism represented in the performance, but also some ways of the subject's strategies before the activity of the State and Church. The analytical perspectives drawn upon the data of Louis Jadin (1955) suggest the investigation of the existence and uses of the acts in the context of missionary work. Ethnography shows that the ritual unveils long-lasting interactions between social agents.

The result can be understood as a kind of conventional and conventionalized context. On the one hand, such a context is used as a mechanism of control in which the missionary craved the conversion by baptism. On the other hand, the different African ethnic groups (and their descendants in Brazil and Ilhabela) search[ed] the creativity of invention and innovation as possibilities of resisting and reinventing, escaping in lines of flight according to their shared expectations (Wagner 2010, 80 e 88). In this context, the conventionally constituted is presented as the condition for the innovative constitution of other conventions and forms of resistance and [re]existence.

The ritual constitutes the conventional and conventionalized context produced by means of multiple processes of resignification. More than specifying certain associations, it is worth identifying the codes used and constituted in the ritual. The original phenomena – the processes of colonial domination and wars – are not the cause of the ritual, being external to it, but also being part of it, framing the ritual and being expressed by it.

At the final expedition, Salvador Correa de Sá dispatched the Dutch, after seven years of their invasion. Considering the work of some historians, it was possible to describe the religious fervor in this battle. Every version reinforces the character of “Crusade” and the idea that the recovery of Luanda was God's decision. The narratives of the chronists and Ignatian priests reveal a mentality and an articulate strategy of expedition agents, the Crown and the action of the Jesuits.

Through the movement of returning to the ritual and its context after our incursion by the Angolan wars, we find meaningful correspondences

between the devotion of St. Benedict and the historical events which supposedly are the referential context for the ritual. The pairs King/Ambassador and D. Afonso/Queen Nzinga are emblematic antipodes that narrate and perform “conversion myths”; the former in the congada as an aesthetic and religious drama, the latter in the social drama of the resistance battles of peoples from West-Central Africa against colonialist action.

The Ignatian acts and their narratives, as rituals for religious and political ends, refer to the re-evaluation of relations between past and present. The expressions of devotions and all their references are not considered a simple possibility of knowing the past. Nevertheless, when we give up on knowing the past “as it really was”, we recognize the vestiges of reality [of the wars] presentified in the ritual, searching in the reality [of the ritual] the fictional tone that the acts cannot grasp. In a sense, it is necessary to give the past another actuality by the images through which the past is understood (Benjamin 1994, 224; 2006, 437).

A social commentary is done. Society reflects on itself (Turner 2005, 138; 2008, 15). Searching for the historical aspects in the residual elements of the ritual, we find a saturated convention in which the expressive aspects and historical processes are presented as representations of power relations. The ritual presents a positive construction of the resistance of Black identity, despite of the trials of domestication, stigmatization and folklorization of Black people, their history and culture. This ritual plays with the “danger”, opposing the status quo and exposing the antinomic nature of this tradition of the oppressed (Aquino 2006, 158).

The ritual and its images constitute a dense and swollen object that potentializes the devotional imagery. According to the historiology of Walter Benjamin, the past holds the capacity of achieving a higher degree of actuality, more than the moment of its existence. It happens because such an actuality derives from the image with which and through which this past can be comprehended (Benjamin 2006, 503). At the end of the day, this object is constituted by every mentioned context: the wars of 1583 and 1648, the Ignatian activities in Angola, the creation of acts within the catechist project, the institution of the act as a ritual performed in the context of devotion, the audiovisual productions, the ethnographies, and so forth. We understand this ritual as a conventional and conventionalized context through which we think it is possible to mention a fact of the past by its clash with the present (Benjamin 2006, 517). In a sense, the ritual is understood as a set of saturated images. The event returns shedding light upon the now and enabling, through recognition, another knowledge (Idem, 504; 1994, 224).

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## TWO BROTHERS: DEVOTION AND BAHIAN IDENTITY IN THE CARURU OF SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIAN

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

Based on the documentary *Two Brothers*, the article discusses the caruru of Saints Cosmas and Damian held by the Valverde family at the Soteropolitano, a Bahian restaurant located in São Paulo. By analyzing the ritual aspects of this celebration, as well as the discourses of those in charge of holding it, I seek to highlight its capacity to affirm a Bahian identity in a context of migration.

**KEYWORDS**  
Religion; Bahia;  
Ritual; Gift;  
Identity.

### A CONSTANT RESIGNIFICATION

Of the manifestations that appeared in the extensive web of the syncretism between Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religiosity – woven through impositions, resistances, adaptations, reinventions, deaths, and rebirths – the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian particularly reveals both the endurance and transformation of a religious archetype. From martyr doctors with the gift of healing, in the first centuries of Christianity;

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1. This article is part of my post-doctoral research *I make my own time: ethnography of intimate music making*, developed at the Department of Anthropology of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). I would like to thank the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) for granting me the scholarship (2019/27545-3) that made this work possible.

through their recognition, especially in Portugal, as the patron saints of the doctors; syncretized, in Brazil, with the orisha Ibeji of the Yoruba Candomblé (the nkisi Vunji, in Bantu Candomblé<sup>2</sup>), a dual child deity who protects children; until acquiring, in turn, the affectionate nickname of “child saints”, here are, roughly, the trajectories of the archetype of the twins until its consolidation as an important religious expression<sup>3</sup>.

Besides a resignification at a macro-historical level, it is worth noting that the vitality of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Brazil resides in the highly diversified character of the celebrations in their honor held throughout the country on September 27<sup>th</sup><sup>4</sup>, both in relation to spaces (churches, Candomblé and Umbanda centers, streets, houses) and formats (handing out candies, caruru<sup>5</sup> offering, drumming, prayer chains etc.). This diversity of engagement with the party can be seen in the articles by Freitas (2019) and Nascimento (2014), who discuss, respectively, Saints Cosmas and Damian’s day in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Cachoeira:

The party may vary [...] depending on who is giving it. Candies are placed in small plastic bags on a table or in small disposable dishes. The candies are purchased or made at home and given to children or adults on the street or at home; in the morning or at night; with or without a card. When the bags of candies are delivered, they can be distributed from the front door of the house or on the street, or even going by car or on foot. For those who love the party mess up, the best choice may be the least planned just shout “candies served!” and wait for the children to come. Others, however, would prefer something a little more organized, and in this case, the card is the best option (Freitas 2019, 4).

There is the Catholic Cosmas and Damian party, that is, the one with prayer and candles; the Catholic person who eats caruru (in this one the Catholic saint eats caruru); the one of Candomblé in which a devotee makes a voodoo offering before making an offering to the saints and children under Catholic prayers. At one point there is the Umbanda party, where the cult is shared with Crispins, Crispinians and other “children” entities”; there is the one who no longer eats caruru, does not get candies and toys, but has a lifetime “light.” Their devotee, who had been responsible for making a caruru for seven consecutive years, make sure of keeping her candle light burning, replacing it once every seven days, among many other possible varieties (Nascimento 2014, 5).

2. For a better understanding of the different Candomblé “nations”, see Lima (1976). For a correlation table of the Catholic saints and the Candomblé deities, see Silva (2005, 94).

3. An excellent discussion of the cult of twin deities in Brazil and Africa is provided by Lima (2005). For an overview of the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Brazil and Portugal, see Dias (2014).

4. The Catholic liturgical calendar (General Roman Calendar), in its last revision, in 1969, assigned September 26 to the saints Cosmas and Damian, while September 27 was assigned to Saint Vincent de Paul. However, the vast majority of the population continues to celebrate the twin saints on their original date.

5. As shown by Oliveira e Casqueiro (2008, 58-59), the word caruru can be understood in several ways: “a religious ritual, a festive meal ritual, an emblematic dish of Bahian cuisine of African origin, food of saints, and the set of meals that, along with caruru, corresponds to the menu of the mentioned rituals.”

In this article, I turn my attention to one of those countless reinterpretations of the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian: the one made by Julio Valverde and Deborah Valverde's family (figure 1) at the Soteropolitano restaurant, in São Paulo. The issues discussed here, which involves from ritual aspects of the party to the affirmation of a Bahian identity, are based on the testimonies shown in the documentary *Two Brothers*, produced by me with the support of the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology (LISA) of the University of São Paulo<sup>6</sup>.



**FIGURA 1**  
Deborah Valverde  
and Julio Valverde  
(Picture by Javam  
Ferreira Alves).

### THE SOTEROPOLITANO RESTAURANT AND THE CARURU

Julio Valverde is a composer and cook who was born in Salvador, Bahia, in 1944 and has been living in São Paulo since 1986. He had a very close contact with music from an early age: his mother and grandmother were pianists, and his father was an opera lover. Besides the classical music repertoire, the *batucadas* [drum circles] made by the street carnival group in the Tororó neighborhood played a significant role in Julio's musical training, since at those times he was able get acquainted with musical genres such as samba, chula and ijexá, which would become the raw material for his future work as a composer.

Julio's mother, Neusa de Góes Valverde, was a neighbor and friend of Mariá de Almeida. Despite the breakup of his parents' marriage during his teen-age years, which resulted in Neusa's move to Rio de Janeiro, Julio stayed in Salvador with his father, Adálio de Lima Valverde. During that time, Julio continued to come to Almeida's family home and developed strong bonds of friendship with Mariá.

6. The film is available at the following link: <https://youtu.be/SZNaGc4kVNg>

In 1968, Julio went to live in Europe, driven by the need of “taking risk.” Back to Brazil in 1971, he enjoyed a period of greater stability: he got married to Deborah, Mariá’s daughter, and had three children (Guilherme, Ricardo, and Juliana). In 1983, he got a degree in Architecture from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) – a mere formality, as he had already been working as a model maker and draftsman in renowned architecture companies such as the ones led by Assis Reis and Yoshiakira Katsuki, in addition to having led the construction project of the scale model of Salvador.

In 1986, after working for two years as the manager of the housing development of Caraíba Metais in the district of Pilar (Jaguarari-BA), he convinced his family to move to São Paulo. About this crucial moment, it is worth noting Julio’s own words, which reveal his restless personality:

I had always been moving. I had always been leaving my comfort zone. For example, when I was working down in Caraíba Metais, I was snuggling into a comfortable position. I had everything, a car, a house, and a very good salary. I spent two years there and had nothing left to do, I had already experienced everything possible. And there came a time when I said: “I gotta go.” I dropped everything and came here [*laughs*]. And my colleagues said: “Are you crazy? Are you going to put it all behind?” And I did (Julio Valverde, interview).

In his first years in the new city, Julio worked as an architect for the São Paulo Metropolitan Planning Company (EMPLASA), for the Environmental Company of the State of São Paulo (CETESB), and for the Environmental Bureau. At about the same period, he got into the habit of organizing gastronomic meetings in his house, in which he prepared traditional dishes of Bahia for the family and friends. From then on, he decided to give up his career as an architect to found his own restaurant, the Soteropolitano, which would represent a turning point in his path:

I always say that I used to be paid quite well as an employee, but I don’t make money with the Soteropolitano. I earn very little. But now I am much happier; in fact, I used to be constantly worried in my workplace. I was earning a lot of money, but I was often sick. I felt so bad on that virtually unhealthy environment. So I thought: “I will begin to suffer from depression and begin to spend money with health problems.” So I made this happen and the Soteropolitano came to be my life. I have to say that I’ve always been breaking off commitments, but I’ve never broken away with the Soteropolitano. I found myself in it (Julio Valverde, interview).

The inauguration of the Soteropolitano, in November 1995, was attended by Mariá de Almeida. Her presence was especially significant, for even though she was suffering a deteriorating cancer, she found the strength to bake a celebratory cake for the occasion. As reported by Deborah, the

events that took place during this period were crucial for the awakening of her and Julio's religiosity:

Julio and I used to tell her that we didn't believe in God. And I said that she had to convince me that God really exists. And she said: "Come on guys, you don't believe in God! I brought these [sculptures of] Saints Cosmas and Damian, the patron saints of our food in the Catholic Church, and the *erês*, who are entities who eat the food of the orishas in Candomblé<sup>7</sup>." In the other restaurant<sup>8</sup> there was a little window that looked like a stained-glass, where she asked us to place the sculptures and light a seven-day candle for each one of them once a week. But we didn't care about it. So she did it by herself and went to Salvador. That was in November. In December her health problem worsened. I remember that I went to Salvador on December 10<sup>th</sup>. I stayed there until the 22<sup>nd</sup> and came back to São Paulo to join my children for the New Year's Eve. All my siblings were there except me. Her health was really impaired and she didn't want to have visitors anymore. She then asked my cousin Zé to send for me. He called me and said that he had bought a plane ticket and that he would pick me up at the airport. When I arrived at the hospital on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, my mother was on IV and lying down, but lucid. When she saw me, she took hold of my hand and said: "daughter, you are here, now it's ready." I said: "Ready for what, Mom?" "You were the only one missing here with me. Didn't you want me to prove that God exists?" "Mom, that's all behind me now, it was my rebellious days." "But I want to tell you that I asked Saints Cosmas and Damian to bring you back, and they brought you back to me. Now you are here with me, and everybody is here with me." The next day she asked the priest who blessed [the sculptures of] Saints Cosmas and Damian to do a mass just for her and her family. She died that same day [...]. And they became our gods. And Julio's too, because he lights this candle and now, he feels closer to them than me. He buys the candle every week and asks for it to be lit [...]. It makes us feel good (Deborah Valverde, interview).

Deborah reports that it was Mariá who suggested the Soteropolitano to give a caruru party in honor of their patron saints. This fact is even more relevant when we take into account that Julio Valverde had never organized a caruru party before:

7. There are many definitions of *erê*: "a trance state different from the orisha state, a state in which unpredictable reactions and behavior of a certain infantile nature predominate" (Luhning 1993, 95); "an infantile quality of the orisha and an interpreter of the saint" (Goldman 1984, 123), necessary for the orisha to speak and the *filho de santo* [Candomblé devotee] to hear; and, still, as it happens in Umbanda, infantile entities that make the connection between the individual and the orisha. It is precisely the infantile aspect of the *erê* state that is responsible for its frequent association with the orisha Ibeji and, consequently, with Saints Cosmas and Damian.

8. From 1995 to 2012, the Soteropolitano operated in Vila Madalena neighborhood. In 2013, the restaurant moved to Vila Romana neighborhood, where it was located until 2020. In 2021, with the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on restaurant operations, Julio Valverde had to break the rental contract with the owner of the space where the restaurant was located and started cooking in his own home, with the logistical support of his family to sell his dishes on the basis of food delivery format.



I didn't use to celebrate this party at home, I had never done that before. I used to go the other people's houses, to eat [laughs]. Of course, I used to organize cooking events in my house, I always did, but not with this objective of celebrating Saints Cosmas and Damian's day. Because I used to join it, somehow, and I never had this interest. And there was always someone close to me taking the lead, and that was enough for me (Julio Valverde, interview).

Therefore, Mariá's generosity and great endeavor, as shown in her gesture of baking a cake for the inauguration of the Soteropolitano; her role in entrusting Saints Cosmas and Damian as the restaurant's protectors; her suggestion of giving a caruru party every September 27<sup>th</sup>; the feeling that the twin saints made it possible the family reunion before her death; and, finally, Julio and Deborah's desire to make a tribute to Mariá and the saints were the fundamental reasons – but not the only ones, as we shall see – for the continuity of the Soteropolitano's caruru party of Saints Cosmas and Damian, which in 2020 reached its 25<sup>th</sup> edition.

## RITUAL

Outside the Candomblé centers, which usually follow strict rules for the preparation of the offerings to Ibeji and other orishas, the caruru in Bahia allows for some variation in the food items offered by the host (one exception is the okra stew which names the party and is a staple). Based on the traditional caruru, Julio Valverde created his own version of the dish, made of twelve items: “the caruru itself, *vatapá*, *xinxim de galinha*, black-eyed peas, *acarajé*, rice, palm oil *farofa*, sugarcane, coconut, popcorn, fried plantains and *rapadura*” (Julio Valverde, interview).

Preparing a caruru for a large number of people is a demanding job in terms of physical, logistical, and financial effort. According to Julio,

It's a real hard work due to the quantity. It's a quantity for 220 people, that's why it's really hard to do it. I have to buy things in advance and get ready to start working the day before. I have to select things; everything has to be duly noted to avoid last-minute surprises and the need to go running off like a madman. Since our caruru has twelve items, I need to have everything well planned. I make a table of the food items and next to it I place a list of all the ingredients that I use. Many ingredients are used in the same items – dried shrimp, for example, is used in with caruru, *vatapá*, *xinxim de galinha*, and black-eyed peas. So I need to buy the correct amount for the servings of each of these items. Sugarcane, rapadura, fried plantains... there are things that must be prepared on the day and others that can be prepared in advance. I also have to provide okra, and cutting 15 kilos of okra is hard, it requires a lot of people. So people come to help us cut the okra, and this is the hardest part. The shrimp and peanuts must be crushed in a blender. To make the *xinxim de*

*galinha*, I must buy the chicken in advance so I can season it. I chop the chicken to make it easier to eat, to avoid using a knife, since the cutlery is just a fork. Everything must be carefully considered. On the day of the party, I make the caruru and the *vatapá* [...]. And there is also the question of money management, because I go to the grocery store to buy the food items depending on the weekend's income. So all of this has to be timed to avoid problems (Julio Valverde, interview).

On the day of the party, Deborah takes the lead in tidying up the restaurant (tables are removed and chairs placed against the walls); buying candies and preparing gifts to be offered to the children; decorating the environment with balloons and ribbons; and preparing an altar to Saints Cosmas and Damian, with candles, flowers, candies, and the caruru dish itself. The caruru party begins as soon as the doors open promptly at 8 p.m., as described by Julio:

We follow a certain ritual: we first serve seven children sitting on a rug, each one of them with their own bowl. In Bahia, the caruru is served in a bowl, and the seven children who pass by on the street are brought into the house and they eat using their own fingers. Here we can't do this, it's another culture, but we perform this ritual with the children and continue serving them with the plates and cutlery. Deborah delivers a talk about the party and after that I serve the adults. Then we make a circle and sing samba. Everybody dances, it's a great party (Julio Valverde, interview).

Julio's mention of the word "ritual" is especially significant. In *The Ritual Process* (1974), Victor Turner sets forth the difference between life-crisis rites, which change the status of an individual upwards in a society, and calendrical rites, often linked to religious parties, such as September 27<sup>th</sup>, as it is highlighted in this article<sup>9</sup>. For Julio Valverde, this date goes beyond the religious aspect, since it is considered, simultaneously, as the founding moment of his restaurant and the renewal of a cycle: "It seems like New Year's Day. For us, the new year begins on September 27<sup>th</sup>" (Julio Valverde, interview).

Another important point about the ritual is the dialectic between *repetition* and *variation*. For Schechner (2003, 27), the very concept of *performance* presupposes repetition, considering that the artistic, ritual or everyday performances are "'restored behaviors', 'twice-behaved behaviors,' performed actions that people train for and rehearse." In that sense, even the *happening*, the art of chance and spontaneity, as well as everyday activities like cooking, getting dressed, taking a walk and talking to a friend, are performances built from previously exercised behaviors. Repetition,

9. Turner (1974, 202) points out that it is common, in calendrical rites, the temporary reversal of social status. As we will see, this statement is in consonance with the role played by children in Ibeji's parties and in Saints Cosmas and Damian's caruru.

therefore, is what allows Julio Valverde to expose so clearly the sequence of events that make up the structure of his caruru (the act of serving the seven children; Deborah's speech; the distribution of dishes to the adults; the samba playing), duly respected in the caruru parties of 2018 and 2019, when I had the opportunity to make the footage that would serve as the basis of *Two Brothers* documentary. Moreover, the idea of repetition make it is possible to establish an identity connection between the caruru of the Soteropolitano and the existing model in Julio Valverde's memory, created from his former experiences as a caruru participant in Bahia.

However, as Roach (1995, 46) points out, "the paradox of the restoration of behavior resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance." Moreover, in his conception of ritual as a search for understanding the world, Jennings (1982, 114) attributes a fundamental role to variation: "if there were no variation in the ritual performance, we would have to conclude that there is here neither search nor discovery but only transmission and illustration of knowledge gained elsewhere and otherwise." Thus, the continuity of the cult of the twin saints as a structure updated in each conjuncture (Sahlins 1990) is found in its capacity to reflect the idiosyncrasies of the locality where it is practiced; to adapt to the countless life's eventualities, which can change drastically from one year to another (in that sense, the year of 2020 is paradigmatic); and to keep being meaningful for the individuals who attend it and, especially, organize it. As Nascimento (2014, 11) points out,

There is not *one* Cosmas and Damian. There is not *one* Ibeji. There is not *one* caruru ritual under rules and certain precepts for the cult of the twin brothers. Manifestations are diverse, the cult is a tangle of many influences, the ritual reinvents itself and remodels itself in multiple ways to fit the reality of each context, of each devotee. Everything is moved by a living faith accompanied by what is presented as a fundamental part: the caruru and the children (*italics mine*).

Although Turner (2012), under the influence of Arnold van Gennep, has at first associated the concept of *liminality* (a period of vulnerability and suspension of the social status of an individual) to the rites of passage, he comes to include, by using the term *liminoid*, the artistic and leisure activities of contemporary societies as examples of *anti-structure*, the momentary suspension of the social roles normally exercised by individuals in their society life. In these liminal or liminoid states, it makes room for the development of a *communitas*, the feeling of solidarity among the members of the group participating in the ritual, which can occur both in a normative way, imposed by the coordinating body

of the ritual, and spontaneously, through the sincere transmission of human warmth (Schechner 2012, 68). The last one appears to be the case with the Soteropolitano's caruru, since this party enables certain people to reach a *flow* state (Csikszentmihalyi 1975), the total involvement with the action performed:

It's a very favorable atmosphere for socializing, for exchange. It's an amazing day. People are open, free, things happen naturally. It's a great party. My feeling of tiredness disappears, because at some point I'm already overwhelmed and, when the party begins, I feel relaxed. It's fantastic for the people who come and for us. It's a happy day (Julio Valverde, interview).

In his classic study on Ibeji ceremonies in Candomblé centers, René Ribeiro (1957) highlights the capacity of these celebrations to transform everyday power relations. Using a center in Recife with an authoritarian leadership as an example, the author provides a very clear illustration of the anti-structural power of the ritual:

The cult of Ibeji party is the only occasion, in the group of authoritarian leadership, in which the operating rigid controls are broken and a reversal of roles [...] helps easing tensions, what otherwise could lead to direct forms of aggression amongst the participants and the complete rupture of the group. Moreover, this is a moment when the group works non-structurally, without the rigid definition or with each of the members playing their usual roles. Then, they all join in a transcendent goal, which is to provide amusement and pleasure to the children, wiping out the former emphatic lines of subordination and ascendancy in the willful confusion then established (Ribeiro 1957, 140-141).

This feature of the Ibeji party, in which the children are "favored, spoiled, and tolerated in their particular ways of conduct" (Ribeiro 1957, 142) is also noticed in the Soteropolitano's caruru. In a very symbolic way, the seven children who open the ceremony are the only ones, besides the saints, to deserve the honor of eating in clay bowls, while the other participants' food is served in disposable plates. Further, the children are the ones who play the protagonists' role in the party:

[They] sing and dance! There are some amazing children, who really come into tune. For example, my granddaughter Bianca, Israel's [Kislansky] daughter, and other friends' children of us get together and make their own party. Mainly on this day, it is their day, the children's day (Julio Valverde, interview).

As previously mentioned by Deborah, the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian celebrated in the Soteropolitano is not restricted to September 27<sup>th</sup>. Before the closing of the restaurant's physical space, the two brothers' sculptures used to be permanently displayed in a prominent place, always accompanied by a pair of seven-day candles and glasses of soda. However, although Saints Cosmas and Damian have never denied

protection to the Soteropolitano – considering the longevity of the restaurant –, having two children as patron saints of a business enterprise stirs certain consequences:

In 2007, Roberto Mendes invited Julio to play in a *trio elétrico* [a vehicle with a stage for music performance] – it was Julio’s dream – because they did some *trios elétricos* in honor of the chula. We stayed in his house in Santo Amaro and I told him that I had never thrown the *búzios* [divinatory shells] [...]. And he took me to his *mãe de santo* [Candomblé priestess]. When she threw the *búzios* she told me that I was Iansã’s daughter and Julio was Xangô’s son. What she said next got me suspicious: “Do you have a business there in São Paulo with Cosmas and Damian as the patron saints?” I said: “Yes, how do you know that?” “Hahaha, that business will never work, because Cosmas and Damian are children, sometimes they give, sometimes they don’t, they play with you all the time. Do you celebrate a party for them?” Then she turned to Julio: “You are a son of Xangô, you have to display the St Jerome.” He is the saint corresponding to Julio, because Julio is Xangô in the syncretism – “display St Jerome next to Cosmas and Damian and things will get better.” And can you believe it? The business started to flourish! [laughs] (Deborah Valverde, interview).

Although the entertainment, even the child one, is not opposed to seriousness – just as the caruru samba is not opposed to the sacredness of ritual (Iyanaga 2010) –, the search for profit required by the capitalist society is not on the child’s horizon of concern (Villegas 2014, 139). In any case, if on the one hand, this childlike nature of the Soteropolitano may cause problems for the business management – “the financial crisis is permanent,” says Julio –, on the other hand it allows a fundamental part of the Saints Cosmas and Damian celebration to be fully performed: the act of giving.

## GIFT

The rhizomatic, polysemic, and multi-faceted character of the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian pointed out by Nascimento (2014) is not seen only in the comparison between different forms of celebration. In a single party, as the one promoted by the Soteropolitano, the motivations, expectations, and meanings of each person attending the event may be tangled in a complex web.

Julio and Deborah cannot say whether Mariá’s request to offer the caruru came from a promise between her and the saints. In popular Catholicism, making a promise is a contract through which the devotee asks his or her patron saint (or one specialized in a specific cause) to resolve an adversity. When presenting the case, the faithful one promises that if he or she obtains the grace a reward will be given to the saint. It can take many forms, such as a physical effort, a cash donation, a party to honor the saint patron, production of former vows, and so on (Gonçalves 2019). In



that sense, we could characterize the Catholic promise as a relationship composed by the acts of *requesting*, *promising*, *receiving* and *giving back*.

A devotee might be making good on that promise for a long time after the grace obtained; In the same way, it is common that the devotion to the saint and the making good on a promise be passed on from parents to children (Jesus 2006). In the case of Julio and Deborah, the continuous celebration of the caruru of Saints Cosmas and Damian can be understood as an *obligation* that must be performed even in exceptional times such as the Covid-19 pandemic; as a *tribute* to Mariá for her efforts in the inaugurating process of the Soteropolitano; and, of course, as a sincere *devotion* to the twin saints.

Following the tradition of the caruru party held in Bahia, in the Soteropolitano restaurant the meal is served free of charge to the guests, including the candies and gifts for the children. This gesture can be understood from the paradigm of the *gift* proposed by Mauss (2003), in which a both voluntary and obligatory relationship of *giving*, *receiving* and *giving back* is established. As explained by Aldeia (2014, 175),

In *praxis*, the moments of gift intermix completely. In giving, I receive. In receiving, I repay. In repaying, I give. This does not mean that interest in itself is the major factor in the gift [...]. Of course, there is an interest, but reducing to it the whole gift is to simplify the point; it is to remove it from the gift in order to place it on the market. To give and receive is not the same as to give *in order to* receive, just as it is not the same as to give in order to receive the satisfaction of giving and to give in order to be repaid in the form of an asset or service.

Thus, the offering of the caruru to saints Cosmas and Damian in the Soteropolitano takes place in a spiral in which the will to give, the fulfillment of Mariá's request, the gratitude for the protection of the divinities, and the expectation of continuing to receive it are superimposed. The party, therefore, does not mark especially a moment of asking for or thanking for; it is a moment of "asking-thanking for" (Menezes 2004).

Although most of the participants in the Soteropolitano's caruru are family members, friends and close customers, the party is open to the public and it is very common to find people who visit the Soteropolitano only on this day. The presence of these occasional participants, and the fact that the party is dedicated especially to the children, demonstrates that there is no expectation of a retribution for the gift in the basis of the principle of equivalence, as it happens in the market economy. It is precisely this gap between the offering of caruru and what is expected of a restaurant (the food business) that raised questions in the mind of some customers not

so used to the playful atmosphere of the Soteropolitano, being gift one of its characteristics. As Julio explains,

There are people who don't believe that I offer free food. "How can you offer free food in a party?" This is an infernal stuff for certain people, they don't accept that. It's impossible [...]. They just can't get it into their heads. Because they only think in terms of business, trade, profit [...]. So they don't admit that, they don't get it (Julio Valverde, interview).

Godbout (1998) points out that, despite the material pressures suffered by individuals in capitalist society, from the struggle for survival to the accumulation of wealth, no one lives only on his salary or profit; in that sense, the gift, by calling into question the excessive importance of the *homo oeconomicus*, is at the root of a new sociological understanding:

Why does someone give something? If we admit the above, the answer is simple: to connect to life and make circulate things in a living system, to break the circle of loneliness, to feel that you are not alone and that you belong to something bigger, particularly humanity, every time you give something to a stranger, a stranger who lives on the other side of the planet, who you will never see [...]. The gift is what circulates in the service of the social bond, what brings it to light, what feeds it. From the gifts-giving family and friends to donating during a major natural disaster, giving to street beggars, the blood donation, it is fundamentally to feel this communication, to break the isolation, to feel your own identity (Godbout 1998, n.p.).

Godbout's mention of identity is especially significant because, in the case of Julio and Deborah, the Saints Cosmas and Damian's party led to new insights of oneself both in the individual (the late discovery of religiosity, for instance) and in the social dimensions.

## BAHIAN IDENTITY

It is well known that the attempt to reconstruct cultural elements of the homeland is one of the most effective ways for the migrant to constitute "a home away from home" (Lara 2005, 14). In the case of the Valverde family, even before the foundation of the Soteropolitano, there had already been a concern of not breaking the bonds with Bahia:

In our first year in São Paulo, Julio decided to hold a St John's feast on our street. It was freezing, the kids had never been to a St John's feast here. We were the only ones celebrating it, nobody else came to the street. Then he decided to go with the kids knocking from door to door to invite the neighbors and tell them that it was a tradition in Bahia, especially in the countryside, but in Salvador it is celebrated too. And this feast was a success, because we played St John's music in the garage. Then every year the neighbors asked him to make this party (Deborah Valverde, interview).

The success of the street party moved Julio, years later, to repeat it at the Soteropolitano. However, the different context (his house is located in a quiet street in the area of Jaguaré neighborhood, while the restaurant's first location was in the busiest part of Vila Madalena) made the idea unsuccessful:

I tried to celebrate St John's feast a few times, but I gave up because this party involves a hard work, and people don't get it very well. In addition, there is also a fundamental thing in a St John's feast: the bonfire. I wasn't allowed to start a fire [in Vila Madalena]. Once I did that, and it was a shitty thing. They complained about the mess on the sidewalk [laughs]. Doing that at home was calmer, I invited the neighbors, and there was no complaint at all [laughs] (Julio Valverde, interview).

In addition to the St John's feast, the Valverde family also organized a washing of the Soteropolitano's stairs, inspired by the traditional Washing of the Bonfim Church held in Salvador. This time, what prevented it from being maintained was an economic issue:

I held it four times in Vila Madalena. There was a parade, the washing of the stairs followed by a party inside the restaurant. I stopped doing that because it was complicated, it was held on Saturdays and I've always worked for a living on weekends. So, holding the washing, I couldn't make money on Saturday, which was a big problem for me (Julio Valverde, interview).

Thus, due to its special significance for the Valverde family, the Saints Cosmas and Damian's caruru was the only celebration from Bahia that continued to be held without a break throughout the past 25 years of the Soteropolitano, even in the years when the date was on a weekend and meant a loss of revenue for the restaurant.

More than a response to feelings of nostalgia (Baily and Collier 2006, 171), the founding of the Soteropolitano, the recreation of Bahia's manifestations and the preservation of the accent were parts of an affirmation process of a Bahian social identity<sup>10</sup> (Techio et al 2015), which was fundamental to overcoming the challenges imposed by the metropolis of São Paulo:

I haven't lost my Bahian identity. I'm still a Bahian, after almost 30 years here. It's the same thing, I'm a native Bahian, a Soteropolitano<sup>11</sup>. And I preserve the origins, the tradition, the Bahian culture. In fact, the Soteropolitano [restaurant] is a result of it. Mainly to preserve this tradition of Bahian cuisine without making any change, without adding, or making anything up. They are the traditional recipes. This is also a way to guarantee this memory, this tradition (Julio Valverde, interview).

10. Based on Henri Tajfel's studies, Techio et al (2015, 80) define social identity as an individual's "self-concept that comes from the knowledge and recognition of their membership of a particular social group or category, with the evaluative and emotional meaning associated with this membership."

11. *Soteropolitano* [Soteropolitan] is the demonym of people born in Salvador.

This issue of roots, of identity, is very strong. I guess it's really part of our culture. It's really strong [...]. So it's a great thing that we have this revenue [with the Soteropolitano] and that we haven't lost our identity. I think this is a defense of mine. I've been living here for over 30 years and I haven't lost my accent. I say that speaking *Bahian*, that is, the Bahian accent, is my defense. At the same time, we don't behave arrogantly. Because there are some people who hold to this question of origins and behave arrogantly, we're not like that. We present our culture as a pleasure, and I guess that the same happens where Julio is. People want to share with him this knowledge we have from Bahia (Deborah Valverde, interview).

In a survey conducted by Techio et al (2015) with college students from Bahia, most of them answered that the basic principle of “being bahian” is a geopolitical matter, that is, having been born or lived in Bahia. However, more subjective aspects, such as happiness, hospitality, tolerance, and resilience, are also mentioned by a significant number of respondents. Taking into account that similar notions are mentioned by Mariano (2019) and Aragão and Arruda (2008), who, respectively, approach Bahia from the point of view of songwriters and students from other Brazilian states<sup>12</sup>, declaring oneself Bahian involves much broader meanings than the territorial one.

As owners of a Bahian restaurant, Julio and Deborah came to be considered by their customers as representatives of their state's culture. However, this social identity was not innate but rather “constructed in a psycho-social process of recognition and self-recognition linked to the sense of belonging” (Techio et al 2015, 85), which required some polishing:

In Bahia there is this matter of the Candomblé with the Church, the syncretism. I just never cared for that [...]. When we opened the restaurant, I realized that I was uninformed about these things, because people questioned me and I knew nothing, because I just lived there. So I began researching. I asked a professor of mine from UFBA to send me articles about the Candomblé. I wanted to understand it right away and then one day, I went into a bookshop downtown and found a book by Carybé called *As sete portas da Bahia* [Carybé 1962]. I found in it everything I wanted about Bahia's culture [...]. It presents Candomblé in such a didactic way that I fell in love with it. It dawned on me at last (Deborah Valverde, interview).

12. It is interesting to note that, in Aragão and Arruda's research, “non-Bahian students address Bahians as *lerdos* [slowpoke], while for the Bahian students, this characteristic has a connotation of tranquility, no stress” (2008, 192). However, in the survey made by Techio et al (2015), Bahian students consider the willingness to work hard one of the main characteristics of Bahian people. Similarly, the prejudicious attitude of associating Bahian people with laziness is vehemently refuted by Deborah: “this label is disrespectful, because they think we aren't productive, that we are always putting off the deadline, and even that we are unable to think.”

Although the fundamental reason for holding the Saints Cosmas and Damian's caruru at the Soteropolitano was the tribute to Mariá and the twin saints, the party progressively became the restaurant's peak moment of exaltation and dissemination of Bahian culture. Julio recognizes the didactic aspect of the Caruru, since it is "a form of bringing some type of manifestation of Bahian culture here in São Paulo" (Julio Valverde, interview).

In discourses on migrant communities, there is still a strong tendency to view them as homogeneous entities, ignoring the fact that the individuals who make them up may present considerable differences with regard to ethnicity, social class, religion, and age group (Baily and Collyer 2006, 171; Lidskog 2016, 3). Similarly, the production of an identity discourse and the reconstitution of elements of the homeland are not a rule among immigrants: as shown in the film *Two Brothers*, Neide Silva, a Soteropolitano staff member, attributes to the restaurant her knowledge of what being a "real Bahian" means, considering that her parents, for the most different reasons, did not tell her what Bahia is – at least not the Soteropolitan Bahia which names the restaurant:

I got to know the real Bahians here [...]. Because my parents are Bahians, they came to São Paulo and I had no contact with Bahia people, their lives, their daily lives. And here, I took in a lot of knowledge (Neide Silva, interview).

However, the Bahian religiosity based on Candomblé, exalted by the restaurant through the caruru party and exhibition of artistic works (sculptures, paintings, and pictures) with representations of the orishas, brought her tense times regarding her evangelical faith:

I was a Pentecostal. Then, when I started working here, I didn't know Mrs. Deborah and Mr. Julio were members of Candomblé<sup>13</sup>. And I had to make a decision. I kept blaming myself, thinking: "how can I work in a place where I, who am totally against drinking, have to prepare *caipirinha* to serve people?" It made me feel terrible. So I talked to the pastor, who said it wasn't right. How will I testify? I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I needed the job, but I also had my faith. And then one day a guy [...] told me that working here was God's will and I shouldn't be like that, I shouldn't be sad, for God knew that I could make it and nothing would change what I really was. They had their religion and I had mine, and there's only one God. So I continued working here up to now. In my first caruru party I saw people receiving orishas and I got terrified<sup>14</sup>. I was puzzled. I went outside to take a breath. Then Neto [Deb-

13. In fact, Julio and Deborah do not consider themselves Candomblé practitioners. In turn, their children Guilherme Valverde and Ricardo Valverde are members of the Kyloatala Candomblé center, located in Embu-Guaçu (SP).

14. As for the demonization of Saints Cosmas and Damian's candies promoted by evangelical Pentecostal churches, especially by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, see Dias' articles (2013; 2015).



orah's brother-in-law] said: "Neide, that's perfectly understandable." That was difficult. After the second caruru, I was more relaxed. And today it doesn't bother me anymore. I have a funny relationship with the sculptures of Cosmas and Damian. Now I light the candle and I serve guarana to them. And one of these days the girls [other employees] asked me: "gee, did you drink Cosmas's guarana!?" "I can, they are my friends, they don't mind if I drink" [laughs] [...]. Now I even chat with them. I get close, light the candle and chat with them. That's OK. We became friends [laughs]. And when I tell this, people look at me and ask: "But, aren't you an evangelic?" And I say: "Yes, but I've learned to respect other people's religion. I respect them and they respect me, and everything is fine" (Neide Silva, interview).

More than tolerating other people's religion, Neide points out that her work in the Soteropolitano made it possible a particular encounter which was responsible for a growth of her own spirituality:

A co-worker and friend of mine named Fabíola, was an Umbanda member. I used to argue with her about it. And one day she asked me: "why don't you come [to the Umbanda center] one of these days?" I went twice. And then I saw that I was wrong. Eventually, I became Spiritist too. There I went for a longer while, because I wanted to delve into that religion. The Evangelical Church with those concepts was the religion of my birth, but Spiritism is the religion of my heart. If I had to choose, I would be a Kardecist. Because this is the religion in which I've delved. I like it, I believe in it. When I arrived at the Kardecist center I had another vision of everything I had learned. I got the answers I was looking for. You can attend a religion for years, and yet, don't find what you are looking for. Because it's not the church you are looking for, but the answers. And in Kardecism I found some things that were inside of me. It's my second choice. I attend the Evangelical Church, but it's my second choice (Neide Silva, interview).

With regard to music, which is the most practiced artistic activity in the Soteropolitano, its power of communicating, thrilling, congregating, and mobilizing, but also demarcating boundaries between social groups (Lidskog 2016), makes it play an essential role in the construction of identities. At the close of the Saints Cosmas and Damian's caruru party, for example, the predominant music genres are *terreiro* music and *samba de roda*, which, for the association with the idea of an ancestral Bahia, reinforce the authority of the Soteropolitano as a qualified space that knows how to celebrate a caruru party.

Rice (2016, 148) points out, however, that identity is always multiple and fragmented, varying according to particular contexts and

specific performances<sup>15</sup>. Thus, Julio Valverde considers the Soteropolitano as a cultural center, since, in addition to promoting, before the Covid-19 pandemic, events such as art exhibitions and book launches, the restaurant organized regular musical gastronomic events for friends and close customers, the so-called *Confraria do Soteropolitano*. Mentioning this event is important due to two aspects: the dishes prepared by Julio at the *Confraria* are not the ones on the restaurant's menu, which allows him to free himself from the duty to preserve the "tradition of Bahian cuisine without changing, adding or inventing anything"<sup>16</sup>; and musical performances, usually by professional musicians under the complete silence of the audience, are performed according to the format that Turino (2008) calls *presentational* (when there is a clear distinction between musicians and audience), unlike the *caruru*, when the performance takes place in *participatory* mode, in which there is not a clear distinction between musicians and audience<sup>17</sup>.

In the same way, although some compositions such as *Saveiro* and *Bumba-meu-boi*<sup>18</sup> reveal a nostalgic Bahia of the 1950s – which may indirectly contribute to his recognition as a "real Bahian" –, Julio is partner with Soteropolitano's client-poets whose writing styles are strongly linked to São Paulo urbanity, such as Fabricio Corsaletti, Alexandre Barbosa e Karmo, which is often reflected in a broadening of the range of musical genres used in their compositions (*samba*, *ijexá*, *lambada*, *baião*, *frevo*, rock, among others). In that sense, even if the idea of *tradition* is strongly present in the discourses about the Soteropolitano, it was necessary that the Valverde family also made a *translation* movement (Hall 2006), the negotiation that people who are scattered far beyond their homeland establish with the new culture in which they live, looking for a balance between the maintenance of their identities and the assimilation of new cultural languages.

Although we cannot deny the participation of writers, musicians, publicists, tourism entrepreneurs, and public authorities in the construction of what has been called *bahianity* (Bezerra and Schvarzman 2010; Mariano 2019), *idea of Bahia* (Pinho 1998), or *Bahian identity* (Techio et al 2015), and that these same notions may find echoes in the discourses of the

15. Here we can draw a parallel with Novaes' concept of *self-image*, which is constructed "from very specific concrete relations that a society or a social group establishes with others" (1993, 27).

16. This does not mean that Julio doesn't have creative freedom in his cooking, as shown in the very particular seasoning of his wonderful *moquecas*, as well as the famous *abadejo no caju*, a dish of his own.

17. Of course, in participatory mode there may be rules of good conduct. In the Soteropolitano's samba performance, for example, the *atabaques* [hand drums] are usually played by members of the Valverde family or by professional level musicians. Likewise, only singers who are very familiar with the repertoire dare to lead the singing of a samba.

18. The videos of *Saveiro* and *Bumba-meu-boi* can be seen, respectively, at the following links: [https://youtu.be/\\_AD5t7hhfwE](https://youtu.be/_AD5t7hhfwE) and <https://youtu.be/U0ffryV74vY>

Bahians themselves, both as a possibility of self-affirmation and as a tool for subsistence in their own land or away from it, it is necessary to emphasize that the Bahia that Julio Valverde sings about in *Saveiro* and *Bumba-meu-boi* is the Bahia he lived in:

Saveiro boats transported goods from the Recôncavo to Salvador and they arrived at the ramp of the Mercado Modelo. And it was a very beautiful scene. The saveiro sails are awesome. I traveled by saveiro a few times to Bom Jesus dos Passos. A neighbor of mine had a house there and he used to take me there when I was a kid. But then the saveiro boats became schooners for tourists and their structure was completely changed [...]. Saveiro boat use to be meaningful to me. Just like the song *Saveiro*, another thing that I made a point of writing was *Bumba-meu-boi*, because I had a dream and I remembered that we used to travel to Itapuã. It was very far away at that time and people who lived in Salvador used to spend summer there. In Itapuã I saw *Bumba-meu-boi* festival and I wrote this song based on that trip [...]. And that moment in Itapuã was a very enjoyable and beautiful experience. It was a modest village, the straw houses, with fresh air, a kind of freedom we don't have today [...]. That was a wonderful thing (Julio Valverde, interview).

This is the Bahia, after all, to which his restaurant pays homage.

## CONCLUSION

In the hall of the Soteropolitano there was a mural, made by Guilherme Valverde, with excerpts from Julio Valverde's songs and phrases he usually says. One of these phrases had an enigmatic nature: "I make my own time." Thus, in the chaos of São Paulo city, Julio championed contemplation, maturation, and enjoyment. With the Covid-19 pandemic, however, the liminality of ritual meetings, which were capable of transporting us to a state of temporary suspension of our daily obligations, gave rise to a very long "non-time."

If the concepts of ritual and gift, linked by the importance of the meeting's moment and by the possibility of establishing ideal human relationships (Small 1998; Godbout 1998)<sup>19</sup> could be summoned to an understanding of the Saints Cosmas and Damian's Caruru, how to explain its being carried out in the atypical year of 2020, when it was only possible to promote an intimate celebration behind closed doors and for the first time, in order to cover the expenses, the dishes had to be sold instead of donated? "I've only fulfilled my obligation," replies Julio Valverde. In memory of Mariá, for the patron saints, and for his restaurant<sup>20</sup>.

19. Although Small (1998, 95) associates only ritual with the idea of exploration, affirmation, and celebration of ideal human relationships, I think it relates particularly well to Godbout's view of gift as "the state of a person who, resisting entropy, transcends the deterministic mechanical experience of loss by connecting to the experience of life, emergence, birth, creation" (1998, n.p.).

20. It should be noted that Julio Valverde only took the decision to sell the caruru dishes after Tata Kilonderu, leader of the Kyloatala Candomblé center, informed him that the

But there is still one last point. When Julio Valverde says with regret, in the final part of the film *Two Brothers*, that despite the hard work in the preparation of the caruru, it wasn't possible to see, but only *imagine* the emotion of the people receiving their dishes, a sparkle of hope is created, since as noted by Appadurai (1996, 181) in a very sensitive way, a *locality* is a "structure of feeling" that needs effort to exist. Whether it be Mariá's inauguration physical effort; the effort of her family in fulfilling, over 25 years, the obligation of keeping the party; or, finally, the effort of reconstitution, in the imagination, of that liminal space where it is possible to exercise the making of our own time.

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## RESISTANCE<sup>1</sup>, RELIGIOSITY AND ETHNICITY AMONG THE TERENA FROM THE BURITI VILLAGE/ MS: NOTES ON THE PROMISE THAT BECAME 'TRADITION'

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

The Terena people of the village Buriti (Dois Irmãos do Buriti/MS), accomplished São Sebastian's Party there is more than ninety years, being this composed by several stages and rituals. They are Sebastian it was

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1. In this article, the idea of resistance expresses the connotation, and usage, of the term given by the *Terena* interlocutors: forms of existence! Concerning to Amazon peoples, Bruce Albert points out that "... several authors have developed a relevant criticism of the ethnographic reductionism of a certain "*resistenciocentrismo*." (Olivier de Sardan, 1995,p.69) which, paradoxically, tends to overshadow, with its rhetoric, the specificity and subtlety of the social actors' own logics and forms of "*agência*"(Kilani,1994,p.55-6; Ortner, 1995; Brown,1996). (ALBERT.2002,p.14). Here the intention is to ethnographically show the "... specificity and subtlety of the logics and forms...", the "action" of the involved social actors, in this case the Terena fromBuriti village (*Dois Irmãos do Buriti / Mato Grosso do Sul*) and the Feast of Saint Sebastian, (co) living in a context that for decades has been rooted in agribusiness, 'weed', and in which they put themselves as agents, protagonists of their own history.

**KEYWORDS**  
Afro-religiosity;  
Candomblé; *Escolas*  
*de samba*, Carnival,  
Ogum

re-signified and considered patron of the village Buriti turning her “traditional” among Terena of Buriti. Being inspired by the concept of “structures performative” of Sahlins (1990) it is possible to think São Sebastian’s Party as element that is already part of that society. That Party was begun starting from the decade of 1920 as a promise accomplished amid an epidemic of yellow fever that the area. Front to this theme, unavoidably comes across “traditionais” / “occidentals” religious aspects, but also with organizations and political that reflect relationships intra and interethics. São Sebastian’s Party contributes to the ethnic reworking of Terena of Buriti, pointing a fertile field to contemplate on their notions as “tradition”, re-signifies and ethnicity.


## INTRODUCTION

This article was inspired and thought by its authors based on the obtained data through field researches which were carried out among the *Terena* people from *T. I. Buriti*, more specifically at *Buriti* village belonging to *Dois Irmãos do Buriti* county, in the state of *Mato Grosso do Sul*. This village is mostly considered as catholic, so that the evangelical churches as a whole are not welcome there.

This village celebrates the feast in honor of Saint Sebastian every year. That was the main issue of this research project, at the master’s level of the author, with its co-author’s scientific guidance, leading to the thesis *Os Terena de Buriti e a Festa de São Sebastião: da promessa à tradição: a Festa de São Sebastião como estratégia de resistência entre os Terena da aldeia Buriti – Mato Grosso do Sul* (The *Terena* from *Buriti* and The Feast of Saint Sebastian: from the promise to the tradition: The Feast of Saint Sebastian as a resistance strategy among the *Terena* from *Buriti* village – South Mato Grosso (2019).

The Feast of Saint Sebastian is celebrated by the *Terena* from the *Buriti* village, and it happens in mid-January every year. The *Terena* celebrate such a feast systematically and meticulously, respecting the various stages and rituals that make up their social organization.

During the process of the research and through many dialogues between the authors and the *Terena* interlocutors (and friends), it’s clear to figure out that Saint Sebastian is engaged in a territorialization process and contributed /contributes to an ethnic redefinition of the group. The territorialization process, according to Oliveira Filho (1998), has been a result of a certain adaptation of the social organization and of the *Terena* culture towards a new historical and political-administrative situation, related to life in an area quite smaller if compared to the 30.000 hectares they have occupied since the beginning of the 20th century; nowadays, with the retaking of the traditional lands, it’s a 17.200-hectare area. FUNAI/



*Campo Grande* has shown the latest population data of *T. I. Buriti* referring to the year of 2010 and stating there are 2.543 inhabitants.

This Feast is one of the most important events of the *Buriti* village; there's another one named *Oheokotí*, a *Terena* traditional ritual in which they celebrate the beginning of a new cosmic cycle, the beginning of the harvests.

Moreover, just as an observation, a necessary one though, it is also important to state that the *Oheokoti* has been the main celebrated ceremony up to now at *Terena* villages in South *Mato Grosso*, and its main character is the *koixomunetí*, the *Terena* shamans, known in Portuguese Language as *purungueiros*, due to some instruments they used, the *purunga* (the maraca) and the emu feather plume; the *Oheokotí* and such instruments are found in this people's mythology; it is worth highlighting the *purangueiros* declare themselves as catholics, unlike the "*koixomunetí*", for instance, known as shamans, who may define themselves as evangelicals and may also be recognized for that (Acçolini, 2018). At *Buriti* village the male and female *koixomunetí purungueiros (as)* actively take part of The Feast of Saint Sebastian as devotees.

The Feast of Saint Sebastian updates the alliances between the *Terena* from *Buriti* and other ethnic groups, including non-indigenous groups. The current status of the *Terena* from *Buriti* and The Feast of Saint Sebastian, as an element that is already part of this society, seems to fit in a certain way to the concept of 'performative structure' by Sahlins (1990).

In short, such structures are defined when related to circumstantial events, the inevitable encounter either with practice, or with empirical risks that are posed to cultural categories. In performatively structured societies, those circumstantial events are valued for the difference with which they present themselves facing the constituted system, while the prescriptively structured ones value such events, based on the similarity facing the existing social arrangement.

In the encounter with practice, the events are interpreted by the community of significance and precisely because of this community they are valued or not, prescriptively or performatively. This interpretation, based on the meanings provided by the cultural order, becomes an event and gains historical significance.

It can be noticed that in this context this "event" wields great power of intra- and inter-ethnic influence / relationships, over decision-making and articulation of the political movement in the *Buriti* Indigenous Land, being responsible for building up alliances and identities. The *Terena* from the *Buriti* village as well as those from the *T. I.* and (indigenous and

non-indigenous) region consider this village as an emblematic one for celebrating the Feast of Saint Sebastian for over 92 years, because of the promise made for the numerous deaths due to the yellow fever epidemic in the 1920s; the Feast is recognized as the “traditional Feast of Saint Sebastian of the *Terena* from *Buriti*”.

Also, in the ways of Sahlins (1990), the event is the relationship between an event and the structure, “...the phenomenon closing in itself as a meaningful value, to which its specific historical effectiveness follows...” (1990, p.5).

Sahlins (1990) continues his argument stressing that, even though culture is understood as an order of meaning, meanings are at risk in the action, “meanings are reassessed when carried out in practice”, with culture being historically ordered, “where historical subjects creatively and dialectically reproduce their culture and history through processes of functional re-evaluation of categories” (1990, p.13).

Like the event, these improvisations, or the functional reassessment of cultural categories in the face of the empirical, do not happen randomly, but are based on the possibilities of meaning given by the cultural order, as observed by Sahlins (1990, p. 11): “it follows then that different cultural orders have their own means of historical production”.


If the *Terena* from *Buriti* recognize Saint Sebastian as the patron saint of the Indigenous Land of *Buriti*, this is possible, because the *Terena* society seems to present itself with a performative structure. The relationship of Saint Sebastian and its symbology among these *Terena* seems to synthesize their view of the world, which values and inserts what is seen as “different” in relation to their social structure:

Meanings are ultimately submitted to subjective risk when people, as they become socially capable, stop being slaves of their concepts to be coming their masters. “The question is” said Alice, “whether you can make one word mean so many different things.” “The question is”, said Humpty Dumpty—, “who will be the master— and only that” (Sahlins 1990, p.11)

In this article, the Feast of Saint Sebastian will be presented based on data, contacts, and interactions that took place in the *Buriti* village between the months of November 2017 and January 2018.

For this purpose, the article will start with reporting the “origin” and the historical aspects of the Feast of Saint Sebastian held in the *Buriti* village, based on the village elders’, as well as young *Terena* researchers’ information, continuing with a brief contextualization of the indigenous





area and the articulation of the Feast with territorialization process and socio-political organization inside and outside the village.

In this sense, some theories, such as those of Marcel Mauss (1950/2013) and particularly Marshall Sahlins (1990, 1997), will be used in order to support field data.

Next, the text will approach the actors involved in the organization of the Feast, like those who play the role of the *festeiros* and the *folieiros*. This organization begins in the month of November with the departure of the Flag of the Saint that will travel along the region near the Indigenous Land, with the aim of mobilizing and collecting donations for the festivities that precede the great Feast in devotion to Saint Sebastian, on January 19.

### **BEGINNINGS OF THE FEAST OF SAINT SEBASTIAN**

In January 2018, the *Terena* elder Juscelino Bernardo Figueiredo, the main *festeiro* of Saint Sebastian at *Buriti* village, explained that, in 1920, many of the *Terena* from *Buriti* were dying due to the yellow fever epidemic; a lot of them, sometimes more than five a day. His father, José Figueiredo, who was a *koixomuneti* / *purungueiro* (*Terena* shaman) and son of Joaquim Figueiredo (one of the first *caciques* of the *T.I. Buriti*) was responsible for making the Feast of Saint Sebastian official. He told us that it was for a dream that his father José started his relationship with Saint Sebastian.

According to Mr. Juscelino, in his father's dream, someone told him that a person would arrive at the village, bringing something, and that he was supposed to do whatever he felt it was supposed to be done. After a few days, a farmer who lived in the region and who had a positive relationship with the *Terena*, and also had spiritual counseling with Mr. José Figueiredo, arrived with the image of Saint Sebastian and gave it to him as a gift.

According to Mr. Juscelino, at that very moment, his father felt deep in his heart that he should make a promise to the saint that he had just met. His promise was that if the deaths stopped, he would make a feast to Saint Sebastian every year and, even after he died, his children and grandchildren would keep on performing it.

The elder Noel Patrocínio, born in the 1930s, remembers hearing from his parents that time was one of the worst times they had ever lived through, because many *Terena* would die every single day and it was for the promise of Mr. Juscelino's father that the deaths stopped. He also explained that at that time no one knew what the yellow fever epidemic was, and people died without knowing the cause of such deaths.

Each Feast of Saint Sebastian of the *Terena* from the *Buriti* village is not an ordinary event. As mentioned, this Feast is an “event” (Sahlins, 1990), because its importance is given by the interpretation of the group.

The *Terena* teacher / researcher and Mr. Juscelino Figueiredo’s granddaughter from the *Buriti* Village, also festeira of Saint Sebastian, discusses the *Terena*’s exchanges with other peoples:

Creating a space for interaction, the *Txané-Guaná* were used to negotiating with other peoples and, thus, they acquired knowledge of these cultures and adapted them to their way of being or to their reality, bringing into the community other knowledges which started to take part of their culture (Farias 2015.p. 24).

We can think that the *Terena* from *Buriti* have had proper ownership of the Feast of Saint Sebastian according to their cultural organization and it is through the way this Feast is held that it has got a historical significance that seems to be preserved to all generations.

Concerning the religious incorporations in *Terena* territories, Acçolini states that:

We want to emphasize with this that we believe it is not possible to classify as inauthentic cultures those that coexist and adapt (adapt and not become) to cultural orders that are different from their own, reconstructing their otherness in the change, even if marking it out, according to the context, with western indigenous signs. For us, the *Terena* demonstrate the liveliness of cultural interactions and exchanges among the peoples, including there their relations with the national society and the incorporation of religions which are now part of their sociocultural system (Acçolini 2015, p. 23/24).

Eder Alcântara Oliveira, a *Terena* teacher and researcher, explained about the influences of different religions in the *Buriti* village and the re-signification of Saint Sebastian, stating that:

We have adopted Saint Sebastian in the *Terena* culture of *Buriti* as the patron saint of the *Buriti* village, there are records of nuns who lived in the *Buriti* village and that here there is a Catholic predominance. Influences of afro religions are also being introduced in the *Buriti* village, in addition to the various evangelical churches throughout T.I. But even so we keep practicing the traditional *Terena* religion. (Caderno de campo 2018).

Still thinking based on Sahlins (1990, p. 192): “all praxis is theoretical. It always starts with the actors’ concepts and their existence objects, in the cultural segmentations and values of an *a priori* system”.

## THE CONTEXT OF *T.I. BURITI*

Overpopulation causes clashes and makes it difficult for village leaders to live together. This is one of the reasons why the *Terena* from the *Buriti* Indigenous Land fight for their old areas, which are necessary for their physical and cultural reproduction. We know that these areas are contested for economic interests. That goes back to the 1920s, the beginning of the intensification of farming establishments in the region.

Studies which were carried out in the 2000s certify that the *Terena* occupation in the territory that today is *Buriti* Indigenous Land, took place quite before the titling of lands in favor of private individuals, what was intensified after the war between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance (Oliveira, Pereira 2012).

Another time cut that is very much highlighted in the statements of the *Terena* from *Buriti* dates back to the period when the Indigenous Protection Service (*SPI*, from the Portuguese name) began to operate the policy of villages and maintained it, causing several violations concerning to indigenous peoples, such as loss of territories, genocide and use of labor in the exploitation and extraction of riches in the region for the benefit of development.

According to Oliveira Filho (1998), the territorialization process has led to an adaptation of the *Terena* social organization and culture to a new historical and political-administrative situation related to life in a much smaller area than the 30,000 hectares they used to occupy until the beginning of the 20th century.

Furthermore, the *Terena* had to face the official indigenist agency members' and the national State expansionist group representatives' attempts of domination and oppression. The State has managed the violence and that triggered a historical plundering process of the Indigenous Lands in Brazil, which still happens at present.

The *Terena* from *Buriti*, throughout the time, from being real victims, they started organizing themselves and creating a permanent resistance, using different strategies and that has given rise to the retaking of traditional lands.

According to Fonseca (2017), three territorialization processes occurred in the *T.I. Buriti*. The first took place during the Paraguay War (1864 to 1870) with intense *Terena* participation; the second happened between the 1910s and 1930s with the implementation of an official settlement policy, being implemented by the *SPI* public agency. It is worth mentioning that during this period the Feast of Saint Sebastian was originated, and the

third moment (and current process) began in the 2000s, and it represents the situation of retaking the traditional territory.

The Feast of Saint Sebastian in the *Buriti* village is important for many reasons, among them, it is a day to remember the yellow fever epidemic, the beginning of a territorialization process, and, according to Oliveira Filho (1998), a change in the *Terena* social and cultural organization to a new historical situation, directly related to hunger due to the steep loss of their traditional territory.

The *Buriti* Indigenous Land is located in the current counties of *Dois Irmãos do Buriti* and *Sidrolândia*. In 2013, the T.I. *Buriti* was divided into eight villages: *Córrego do Meio*, *Água Azul*, *Recanto*, *Oliveira*, *Lagoinha*, *Barreirinho*, *Olho D'Água*, and *Buriti*. After the homologation of the claim for expanding the traditional territory, since 2018, the *Buriti* Indigenous Land has had 15 villages. The process of occupying the full extension of the territory which is in the process of demarcation was a strategy.

The T.I. *Buriti* is mostly inhabited by the *Terena* ethnic group, due to inter-marriages among other ethnic groups, so it has had a small population of *Kadiwéu*, *Kinikinau* and *Purutuye* (*Terena* word for non-indigenous people).

Even if the *Buriti* village celebrates Saint Sebastian, a Christian / Catholic saint in its origin, these *Terena* are aware that such an event does not make them less *Terena*. It's the other way around, the recognition as *Terena* from *Buriti* includes Saint Sebastian in their cultural framework, as a sociocultural and cosmological element. This recognition flows even when observing all the complexity of the national / regional society to which they belong and, as subjects, they also play the leading role in their history by taking the world of the "other", included and including them.

During the *Terena's* Feast of Saint Sebastian in the *Buriti* village the explanation of ethnicity is stressed in each rite, when preparing it and during the feast itself. During the Feast, it is possible to observe the vitality of shamanism even in the face of Catholicism, the distribution of duties between men and women over the food preparation for the saint and the attempts of explaining the histories about their own territory and giving a new meaning to them. From that point, it is possible to notice the *Terena* political long struggle for their traditional territory.

The Feast of Saint Sebastian consists of several steps, marked by devotional rituals. It was possible through this Feast to observe various spheres that make up the life in the *Buriti* village, its social organization, the political articulations and social relations with other indigenous and

non-indigenous people that affirm the ethnic identity, a moment of excitement for the entire *Buriti T.I.*

The Feast of Saint Sebastian of the *Buriti* village is an expression of faith, and it seems that faith without hope does not exist. It is through it that the community of the *T.I. Buriti* preserves its characteristics, ensuring the preservation of symbols, values, and the hope for decent living conditions related to land, health, and education. The Feast turns into a great religious celebration, remaining in the memory of those who were there, reinforcing social ties and the feeling of belonging; it provides spaces for socialization and enables the construction and conservation of the *Terena* identity from *Buriti*.

Upon the concept of “culture” and “tradition”, we also turn to Cunha, when the author argues that:

[...] Thus the construction of ethnic identity extracts from so-called tradition cultural elements which are apparently identical to themselves, hide the essential fact that, outside the context in which they were created, their meaning has changed. In other words, ethnicity turns the tradition into an ideology, when making the other pose as the same; and it turns the tradition into a myth while the cultural elements that have become “others” by the rearrangement and simplification to which they were submitted, precisely to become diacritical, are for this very reason overloaded with meaning. (Cunha 2009, p. 239).

The *Terena* from *Buriti*, throughout time, have organized themselves and created a permanent resistance through strategies, and the Feast can be thought of as one of them. Therefore, it seems possible to think of the concept of “agency” along Terence Turner’s lines, the indigenous peoples’ ability for historical action:


Terence Turner defended an instrumental and historical view of culture, against current conceptions that would make it a self-determining symbolic order, disconnected from its genesis in social action and human intentionality. For Turner, culture is precisely “the system of meaningful forms of social action,” thus, “it must be understood essentially as the way by which people define and produce themselves as a social entity concerning its historical situation in transformation...” (Turner 1987 apud Sahlins 1997, p. 122)

## THE PROMISE THAT BECAME ‘TRADITION’

Here we will outline the actors that are part of the Feast and its steps, which begin in the month of November and have its apex on January 19th, the day of Saint Sebastian, in the village of *Buriti*.

In the 1920s and 1930s, when the process of “villages” and the indigenous people’s withdrawal from their traditional territories began, the *Terena* from the *Buriti* Indigenous Land were impacted by the process of





interaction with the National State: deaths, caused by the yellow fever epidemic, hunger caused by the dramatic loss of the traditional territory and the advent of capitalist exploitation related to the pressure of production systems on their territory (speculation on indigenous lands) and intensification of the use of indigenous workforce.

The “modern” presented itself in such a cruel way that those negatively impacted have managed new strategies (action) and the promise to Saint Sebastian can be thought of as one of those, besides being noticed as a generational marker.

The Feast of Saint Sebastian is one of these moments of celebration, but also of political articulation. Many people organize themselves in convoys from other villages in the state of MS (South Mato Grosso), with many non-Indigenous as well. The Feast is made up of several stages, defined by devotional rituals where people look for blessings and keep their promises.

One of the actors involved in the celebration is the *festeiro*. *Festeiro*, as an emic category, is the person responsible for the feast days that precede the main feast that occurs on January 19; each day of the feast is held by a family called *festeira*. The *festeiros* are people who do not go on the pilgrimage that starts in November, getting donations for the annual celebrations.

The current *festeiro* Juscelino Figueiredo (born in 1941) explained that the Feast of Saint Sebastian in the *Buriti* village first started between the 1920s and 1930s due to many deaths caused by the yellow fever epidemic. He said that the Feast of Saint Sebastian was the answer of a promise that his father made to the saint. At that time there was no doctor, no medicine, only roots and *benzeção* (blessing prayers). His father didn't dealt too much with the medicines made with roots, but he had a chapel and believed in his power with God.

On the day of the dead, November 2, a set of rituals and a pilgrimage begins, with the aim of getting donations for the Feast, and is marked by a Mass.

Also on November 1, 2017, they joined efforts to help with cleaning up the village and the cemetery in the *Buriti* village. At eight o'clock p.m. on that same day, a rosary was recited in the chapel of Saint Sebastian, which was built next to Mr. Juscelino Bernardo Figueiredo's house, where there is also the collective kitchen built “by” the Saint and “for” the Saint. During this rosary saying, several elders from the *Buriti* village gathered in, and the devotees of Saint Sebastian would make requests to God and thanks to God would come out with each “Our Father” prayer.

Reciting the rosary means the intention of remembering the dead, driving the evil spirits away and blessing the *folieiros* in their sacrifices, aiming the collection of gifts in order to have a rich Feast of the Saint. During the rosary saying there is the presence of the *folieiros* and, consequently, they remember the yellow fever epidemic, and many *Terena* who died. Afterwards a dinner was served in the collective kitchen, which was built in the village for the donations in tribute to Saint Sebastian; that kitchen was built next to the shed both used for the feasts and for big meetings and that kitchen was also built next to the chapel of Saint Sebastian; it is mainly used during the Feast of the Saint.



**FIGURE 1**  
Reciting the rosary  
on November 1,  
2017. Beginning  
of the *folieiros*  
pilgrimage.  
Source: Personal  
File, 2017.

On November 2, 2017, at eight o'clock in the morning, a large gathering was held in the chapel; among the devotees of Saint Sebastian that gathering is the beginning of the pilgrimage of the Saint Sebastian's *folieiros*.

The fireworks signal the departure of the image and the flag of Saint Sebastian. This flag has a very strong symbolism for the *Terena* from *Buriti*, because it has been with the Figueiredos' family since the beginning of the Feast of the Saint in 1920, from time to time it is restored by the *Terena* from *Buriti* very carefully. This is a very touching moment, when all present people's emotions surface through cries, prayers, promises and songs. The hymn of Saint Sebastian is the most important one:

Na sua casa chegou  
Na sua casa chegou  
A Bandeira de São Sebastião  
que ele vem trazer alegria saúde e felicidade.

Senhor e dona de casa,  
Senhor e dona de casa  
Dá licença pra chegar  
Quem despos tiver na casa  
Quero lhe cumprimentar

E também tirando a esmola  
E também tirando a esmola  
No dia do seu festejo  
No dia do seu festejo  
19 de janeiro

This task, the pilgrimage, is carried out by the *folieiros*, another emic category, which generally consists of people who have made some promise. Their role is to walk a specific path outside the village, passing through the region's farms, with the flag of Saint Sebastian, singing, playing and praying in each house, such a task is called *pouso* by them, and that is for collecting donations for the saint's festivities.

The *folieiros* receive several different donations such as pasta, rice, cassava, vegetables, even whole cows, money; each donor offers what he can afford. The mobilization during this first step goes beyond the *Buriti* Indigenous Land; we can notice the great number of people who are involved with the feast and who contribute to it. This event can be characterized as a 'total' social phenomenon (Mauss 1950/2013), because in the first place it is not a simple exchange of goods among individuals, but a collective exchange. Despite having a voluntary characteristic at first, deep down it is strictly mandatory. About the clans, tribes, families, Mauss states that:

Furthermore, what they exchange is not exclusively goods and riches, assets and property, economically useful things. What they exchange is, above all, kindnesses, banquets, rites, military services, women, children, dances, feasts, fairs... In short, these benefits and considerations are established in a mostly voluntary way, as delights, gifts, although they are strictly mandatory, under penalty of private or public war (Mauss 1950/2013, p.191).

Thus, we can notice how important the role of the "*olieiros*, who are also devotees, is, they play a key role as historical agents; the pilgrimage enables young people to learn about the past of their territory and their ancestors, they also learn about the region's flora and fauna, and that is a complement to the teaching- learning process of the *Terena* knowledge itself.

When outlining that the *folieiros* of the Feast of Saint Sebastian can be considered historical agents, that is explained by their interaction with

the history of the *Buriti* village. They influence the younger generations through their speeches and their developed action, which makes them historical figures of the Saint Sebastian Feast.

The number of the *folieiros* isn't the same, it varies every year. They go to each house carrying the Flag and singing three songs. The first song announces their arrival, and that's when the dweller in the house makes a request to receive the Flag. The dweller receives the Flag with the image of Saint Sebastian and in a short period of time he takes the Flag to all the rooms of the house. Besides that, the dweller says a prayer to Saint Sebastian for protection, happiness, and health.

When the second songs tarts, it announces the farewell time. At this moment, the dweller goes back to the room where the *folieiros* are, usually in the living room if there is no porch, and he brings the Flag back to them. That is also the moment when the dweller formalizes the donation in front of everybody, so that he can cooperate with making the Feast happen.

Right after the second song the third one starts, it is specifically sung to the house family that is being visited and the dweller, who had received the Flag, kneels and saves the last prayers.

After that ritual, the *folieiros* go to the other houses and keep on with the same ritual. They go on pilgrimage until January 19, when the Flag returns to the *Buriti* village, then the beginning of the Feast and Saint Sebastian's day are announced.

It is possible to observe that it is not only the moment of the Feast in which the intra and interethnic alliances are kept; the pilgrimage is a complex moment that revitalizes pre-existing relationships. It is a gift to receive the Flag and the grace of Saint Sebastian at home. It's a prestigious moment among the devotees and a donation is intended as a fair return for the Saint's Feast. We can think of reciprocity, the act of giving, receiving, and reciprocating compared by Mauss (1950/2013):

[...] two essential elements of the potlatch itself are clearly attested: one of the honors, of the prestige, of the "*mana*" given by wealth, and another of the absolute obligation to reciprocate the gifts under penalty of losing this "*mana*", this power, this magic charm, and this source of wealth which is the authority itself (Mauss 1950/ 2013, p.195).

At first, the donations of the previous year are reciprocated with the grace of the saint and the visit of the *folieiros* in the current year; the current donations will be reciprocated in the coming year, this way the alliance is maintained and is also renewed every year, a period of time is required to reciprocate; the saint does not receive as a debt, but as a credit.

The comparison made by Mauss (1950/2013) has to do with the given and reciprocated gifts along with the purchase and sale system. The gift system is complex for him, despite taking into consideration the religious, it's a system of an extra and highly developed home economics. The gift implies the idea of credit and interest. "Time" is required to perform any consideration. It is a system of law and economics in which considerable wealth is constantly consumed and transferred.

There is a promise to make bigger donations to the saint in the coming year if the requested graces are achieved and this new gift is paid in the following year, which will already be the fair return of the saint's old gifts and the hope of getting new ones. As Mauss (1950/2013, p. 193) states: "the most important of these spiritual mechanisms is clearly what obliges one to repay the received gift".

Going back to the *festeiros* and their role as fundamental as *the folieiros*, the latter are the greatest hosts on the return of the Flag of Saint Sebastian to the *Buriti* village. The *Festeiros* are in charge of the celebrations, the feasts that precede January 19, the day dedicated to the saint and when the whole cycle of the Flag's journey through the region and its return to the chapel ends.

The fireworks and the hymn of Saint Sebastian singing congratulate the arrival of the Flag. The Feast changes the scenery of the *Buriti* village and the routine of its dwellers too; the yards are cleaned, the houses get decorated, and there is always some food or drink the owners of the house serve to the devotees who take part of the pilgrimage. The flag represents the connection between heaven and earth, creating a bridge-building between the *Terena* from *Buriti* and their devotees along with the patron saint, Saint Sebastian.

As Mr. Figueiredo declared: "the Feast of Saint Sebastian is not three days, three years, it is 94 years of Feast. From November to January the *Buriti* Indigenous Land celebrates these moments of faith". (2018)

## **THE FEASTS AND THE FEAST OF SAINT SEBASTIAN**

The 94th Feast of Saint Sebastian in the village of *Buriti* started on January 15, 2018. The feast of Saint Sebastian can be thought of as "an asset" of the *Terena* from *Buriti*; the idea of assets is associated with the idea of markers of a social process as a whole.

The assets are used to mark, in the sense of classification categories, they are endowed with values by the others' agreement and by the community. The Feast is a moment of physical and psychic experience, the food and the beverage give support to the physical body, the prayer, the songs,



the wailings, the mass, and the pilgrimage give the spiritual support. According to Douglas, all assets are meaningful, but none of the more meaningful by themselves:

This movement breaks up the Cartesian dichotomy between physical and psychic experience. The assets that serve physical needs - food or drink - are no less meaningful than dance and poetry. We have put an end to the well-known and mistaken distinction among the assets that maintain life and health and others that serve the mind and heart - the spiritual goods... just as a word used in a poem, in another context, has no poetry, so a physical object has no meaning in itself, it doesn't even make sense to ask why it is valued. The meaning is in the relations among all assets, just as music is in the relations that are marked by sounds and it is not in any musical note alone. (Douglas, 2006, p.121).


Due to the emotions and exchanges, excitements, donations not only in the *Buriti* Indigenous Land, but in the entire region, the Feast of Saint Sebastian seems to be a moment of mixes. The large number of involved people who contribute with donations (mainly food) and other duties for holding this Feast is not an ordinary event since it can be characterized as an event that provides a "total" social phenomenon. First, it is not a simple exchange of goods among individuals but among families, making the dinner to Saint Sebastian possible, an event to which everyone is invited.

As a matter of fact, it's all about mixing. Souls are mixed into things -things are mixed into souls. Lives are mixed, and thus people and mixed things leave their own sphere one by one and mix together: which is precisely contract and exchange (Mauss 1950/2013, p.212).

Saint Sebastian has no meaning by itself, and it doesn't even make sense to ask why it is valued. Previously mentioned, the meaning lies in the relationship of the *Terena* from *Buriti* with Saint Sebastian that had begun due to a difficult epidemic period; the Feast of Saint Sebastian of the *Buriti* village is so important in the region that it is included in the official calendar of the city of *Dois Irmãos do Buriti*.

Talking to some political, religious, and educational leaders, they mentioned a wish of registering the Feast of Saint Sebastian in the *Buriti* village as a cultural heritage of the *Buriti* Indigenous Land. About the listing of a cultural heritage, Oliveira claims the need for the group's awareness regarding the asset.

Therefore, before determining that an asset is a cultural heritage of a place and a society, we should check up on how the social group, which owns the asset, sees it. Only after analyzing that the asset represents the culture of its social core, full of meaning and values, we'll be able to identify it as those people's cultural heritage (Oliveira 2015, p.30).



The feast seems to meet all the aforementioned requirements, and, mainly, it represents the cultural identity of the *Terena* from the *Buriti* village. The *Terena* identity of the *Buriti* village is involved in the valuing that the group granted to the Feast of Saint Sebastian, which is looked upon as a cultural asset among the *Terena* from *Buriti*.

The 94th Feast, previously mentioned, began on January 15, 2018, with the Gabriel family as its hosts. The *festeiros* Mr. Angelino and Mrs. Estelfina Gabriel were in charge of that day.

The procession began at 4:00 p.m., then the Flag of Saint Sebastian went past six houses, the relatives' who live near the *festeiro*, responsible for the day's festivities. After the procession and the prayer, dinner was served: barbecue, rice, cassava, noodles, cabbage and tomato salad. The dance started around 9:00p.m, with Thauanne Castro's and Danilo harmonica and band's entertainments. The dance went on until dawn. It is important to emphasize that during the days before the week of the saint, there's a glut of food and devotee gatherings in the *Buriti* village.

Mr. Naldenir Pinto Alves and Mrs. Diva were the hosts of the Feast on January 16, 2018, when the Flag left Mr. Argelino's house in procession to Mr. Naldenir's.

While getting there, the Flag went past the houses of this family nucleus; in each house the *folieiros* sang and prayed, doing the whole ritual of the saint. Right after the prayer, dinner was served: barbecue, rice, manioc, salad, and pasta. Afterwards, the dance began with Zíngaro band and Mistureira band's performances.

On January 17, 2018, the Flag was welcomed at Mr. Abadio Batista (*in memorian*) and Mrs. Senhorinha's old house (the *purungueira*, she's considered the most powerful shaman that the *Buriti* village has ever had, she is always remembered, and her prestige lasts until the present time).

Upon the Flag's arrival at the host's house, the hymns were sung and there was a rosary reciting. After the rosary saying, dinner was served; the menu was rice, salads, barbecue, cassava, and pasta. Around 9:00 p.m. the dance began, with the Mistureira Pantaneira band. An auction was held in the middle of the dance: calves, chickens, oxen, and bottles of whiskey were auctioned.

The auction was about an hour and afterwards the dance restarted and went on until dawn. It is important to point out that each family is responsible for the dance and the dinner, and on that very day, it's up to the host family rather or not having an auction and receiving the donations; the

funds raised at these auctions are often used to pay the cost of the dance and the dinner.

In the heart of the *Buriti* village, the Isabel family has also built a chapel, this family is in charge of the Feast on January 18th. Mrs. Filomena and Mr. Gregório are the elders in this family. Their daughters / sons and grandsons / granddaughters are responsible for organizing the dinner and the feast.

The Isabel Family and the Figueiredo Family live next door. The Figueiredo Family's house is the last one to receive the Flag before it's brought back to Mr. Juscelino, the main *festeiro*, and then taken to the chapel; the *recolhida*.

On that day it rained heavily in the afternoon, so the procession began a little later, around 6:00p.m. After the rosary was said, dinner was served, with rice, manioc, barbecue, salads, and lasagna. The lasagna was made by *Terena* Carol, a member of the Isabel Family, and it was the sensation of that dinner. That was a very important year for the members of the Isabel family, because it was the opening of the new hall that they had built, working really hard, so that the Feast of the saint could be held in their house.

The Isabel Family came up with another new thing and that was the renovation of their chapel and bar. The chapel of the Isabel family is right next to the bar of the Feast, referring to the idea that certain spaces can be used for both the sacred and the profane. On each day of the Feast, each host family is also responsible for running its bar so that it is a way of raising some money.

At this time, Laço de Ouro band livened up the Feast. The auction was held and heifers, chickens, calves, bottles of whiskey were sold.

Mr. Juscelino's niece and nephew, Viviane Alcântara, and her husband, so-called Gordo, warned that there was some food on the wood burning stove in the collective kitchen of the village, also built with donations in honor of the saint and located in the Figueiredo family's land lot, the food was for those who wanted to eat in the early hours or at sunrise. At dawn in the *Buriti* village, especially next to Mr. Juscelino Figueiredo's house, there was a huge movement of people, they had already lit the fire for the great barbecue on the main day, January 19.



**FIGURE 2**  
Advertising the 94th Feast of Saint Sebastian on Facebook by the Terena from the Buriti village. Source: Personal file, 2018.

Mr. Juscelino Bernardo Figueiredo, the great *festeiro* at present, offers his house on Saint Sebastian's day, January 19, the main feast which is dedicated to the saint with the return of the Flag, the day breaks quite busy, the women were going along the *trieiros* of the Figueiredo family's house ("trieiros" are narrow paths opened by passages through the undergrowth), they were carrying bowls full of manioc, vegetables, and greens.

The preparation of the food had already begun the day before. The women made a big circle to peel the manioc with the younger children around them. This is the time to update information and, of course, to gossip about what happened in the feasts of the previous days. Specifically for this day 12 cows were donated; they cut up 8 for the barbecue and 4 were auctioned. The 2-meter-high bamboo skewers for roasting the meat had already been made several days ago.



At 11:00 a.m. the lunch dance began. In a *bailão* (a big dance) rhythm, many couples were in the hall. At 1:00 p.m. lunch was served; the menu was rice, cassava, noodles, chicken, *farofa* (a side dish, made of Brazilian seasoned toasted manioc flour), salads, sausages, and roasted meats. As people finished their lunch, the hall would be crowded again with couples who kept on dancing. At 4:00 p.m. the lunch dance was over, because it was time for the procession to begin.

Some interlocutors have explained that the returning moment of the Flag to the chapel and when it is received by the Figueiredo family is called *recolhida*. That's such an emotional moment for the devotees of Saint Sebastian.

After 79 days, taking the Flag to many houses in the region, the *folieiros* end their mission up. At this moment, it seemed that there was no more room for so many faithful people in the chapel, the *folieiros* took Saint Sebastian's image and the flag outside the chapel, they walked around it three times, carrying the image, and one of the *folieiros* handed it over to the Figueiredo Family. Mr. Juscelino's wife, Mrs. Celina Figueiredo, received it deeply touched, and her husband thanked the *folieiros* and the *festeiros* who were present.



**FIGURE 3**  
Saint Sebastian  
procession, in *Buriti*  
village on January  
19.  
Source: personal  
file, 2018.

On that day, the procession gathered many devotees. There were wheel-chair users, barefoot people, people carrying Saint Sebastian images and candles. The procession was cherished by Catholic songs and rosary prayers. This is a very exciting moment of feeling and devotion. Everyone walked around the whole *Buriti* village, going back to the chapel of Saint Sebastian. Afterwards the mass began; at about 5:00 p.m., a priest from *Dois Irmãos do Buriti* celebrated it.





**FIGURE 4**  
Moment when the priest begins the communion.  
Source: Personal file, 2018.

The dance began at 9:00 p.m. on the 19th; that was the day with the largest audience ever, as long as it was the day of the saint and also because it was Friday night. Two musical bands performed during the dance, one of them was the Pantaneiro band, and there were also performances by singers and musicians from the *Buriti* village. An auction was held during the performance breaks. Cows, calves, heifers, chickens, and whiskey were auctioned.

One of the *festeiros*, teacher Antônio Bernardo Figueiredo, said that the money they raised at the auctions is also turned into improvements for the *Buriti* village, such as renovations in each *festeira* family's halls and chapels. But most of the money is used for the expenses of the event, such as the concerts, security guards, light and sound equipment, gas for people transportation vehicles and donations. That money is firstly used for the logistics of the feast, and the surplus is for the improvements that were mentioned above.

On January 20, 2018 the *Buriti* village remained busy, but the only dance took place in the evening; the one responsible for thrilling it was: Mr. Juscelino Bernardo Figueiredo's great-grandson, Patrick of the harmonica, a 12-year-old *Terena* from *Buriti*, who is a big hit at the village and in the region.

After so much fun during the Feast of the Saint, at the dance on the 20th, Mr. Juscelino Bernardo Figueiredo was asked the reason why walking around the house or the chapel three times when the Flag arrives, and he answered: "*Commitment to the saint*". He didn't want to say what that commitment was; he said it was a secret.

Even though Victor W. Turner (1974/2008) has observed rituals in other contexts, he seems to contribute to this article when he says that rituals are dramas that are acted out. According to Turner (2008), rituals can arise in times of social dramas as a form of reparatory action, which can be observed in the rituals of the Feast of Saint Sebastian. The flag of the saint is the reparation for possible conflicts that may happen in the community. The rites seem to have the intention of carrying out a reconciliation between visible and invisible parts.

So then rituals show values at their deepest level, as Wilson reports:

[...] men express in ritual what touches them most intensely, the form of expression is conventional and obligatory, the values of the group are revealed. I see in the study of rites, the key to understanding the essential formation of human societies (Wilson 1954 apud Turner 1974/2013, p.23).

## IN CONCLUSION

In this article, the proposal was to present the Feast of Saint Sebastian, which has taken place for over 90 years in the *Buriti / T.I.* The Feast of Saint Sebastian has become a tradition and it has grown out of a promise for the yellow fever epidemic, which had devastated the region.

We have tried to present the main stages that make up the Feast, aiming to explain it as a socio-cultural element which is part of the current *Terena* identity field, not only in the village itself, but also in the entire *T.I.* and region, showing the ethnic and religious spirit that involve the event of the feast.

The relationship that exists between the village's patron saint and the remembrance of the traditional territory was also briefly mentioned, especially through the *folieiros* pilgrimage along the region.

Thinking of the *Terena* as a performative structure (Sahlins, 1990) it is believed that religion should be seen as a set of ideas, through which the indigenous peoples can express a particular cultural vision of their own history, manipulating and controlling their representations. This way, Saint Sebastian can be made out as an "endogenous" element, which is appropriated and re-signified by the *Terena* culture.

The entry of Christianity among indigenous peoples is part of the "civilizing" process which had been carried out by the West. But, knowing the *Terena* historical and cultural context, it is possible to think that the appropriation of other religious manifestations has a leading role in this culture, that's why it suggests a pattern of relationship of this culture with other cultures which the *Terena* historical and cultural context

emphasizes and values, re-symbolizing the differences that are presented to it from its cosmological framework.

Thinking particularly of the *Terena*'s case, despite the imposing and violent nature of these "religious encounters", what should be highlighted are the possibilities of cosmogonic, cosmological, eschatological creations and re-elaborations, even the latter ones that are the subject of an interesting commentary by Lawrence Sullivan:

There is no reason to doubt that South American religions and eschatologies had been the products of complex and pluralistic histories long before the introduction of Christianity. It is undeniable that the encounter with Christianity was matched by devastation... But South Americans had already been supplied to recognize the signs of radical cultural change and the end of the symbolic world. They had already had their own eschatologies. The tragic and destructive imagery, or the very image of a golden age, coming from their own mythical traditions, helped us to face the change and renewal creatively. The ways in which native religious paradigms have absorbed and transformed Christian eschatologies are the unpredictable result of their creative history of engagement with the sacred (Sullivan apud Wright 1999, p. 10).

Similarly, manifestations of religiosity express new formulations creatively, ethnogenesis (WRIGHT, 1999; 2004) that can come out in a framework that is sometimes pluri-ethnic and in permanent contact with the non-indigenous society.

The context experienced by the *Terena*, especially in the *Buriti* village, the relationship in the same space with other ethnic traditions and also with elements of the national society, such as Christian religions, seems to fit what Wright (1999) calls "interreligious fields of identity", in other words, the ways in which indigenous peoples shape/create Christianity, as well as shamanism itself, which in the village is present and strongly represented by the *purungueiros* (either males or females), people who recognize themselves as Catholics and devotees of Saint Sebastian.

Following Terence Turner and the concept of "agency" (apud Sahlins. 1997), the Feast has the objective of never forgetting the yellow fever epidemic that occurred in 1920 and the beginning of the process of the traditional territory loss; it brings together characteristics of sociability, integrality, and pluralism. It is considered "traditional" by the *Terena* from the village and *T. I. Buriti*, and it's also recognized like that by the non-indigenous regionals, showing itself flexible enough to answer to the modifications that inevitably occurred in the community facing a "colonial" process, and being able to carry an idea of ethnic persistence and revival.

Concluding, and considering that the Feast of Saint Sebastian is the result of a promise which became “tradition” due to an epidemic, the authors would like to register here that, due to the COVID19 pandemic (Coronavirus/2020), it has not been possible to go/stay in the village for a year; the *Terena* themselves have closed the *T.I.* to people who do not live there. But all the same, they get in touch via WhatsApp, Facebook, so they keep and strengthen friendship relations that go beyond “field researches”.

In January 2021, even in the time of the pandemic which devastated the world, some *Terena* friends from *Buriti* informed us that the Feast of Saint Sebastian would be held more discreetly and closely; because of the restrictive measures, the participants would only be residents of the *T.I. Buriti*. Viviane Alcântara explained that, since this Feast is a promise, it must be held.

Knowing it is not “a common practice”, the authors dedicate this article to Mrs. Celina Figueiredo (*in memoriam*), Mr. Juscelino Figueiredo’s wife, who, next to him, has been the main *festeira* of Saint Sebastian, and who passed away in December 2020.

**TRANSLATION**  
Valéria Assoline  
Dias da Silva.

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## EPISTEMOLOGY OF ESHU AND AUDIOVISIBILITY IN THE 2020 PANDEMIC: WRITEXPERIENCE AND GESTURES IN IMAGES ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

Starting from writexperience<sup>1</sup>, from Conceição Evaristo and the Epistemology of Eshu, proposed by Reis Neto, we analyzed two audiovisual productions connected to Afro-descendant religions: “Negras Vozes: Tempos of Alakan”, directed by Beto Brant and “AmarElo: É tudo pra ontem”, directed by Fred Ouro Preto. Both 2020 productions emerged amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The article aims to reflect on the possibilities of aesthetic fruition sprouted in the face of the impossibility of face-to-face contact. The video came across images and sounds, and the communities appropriated this

1. Writexperience - Free translation of the term “escrevivência”, conceived by Conceição Evaristo which refers to writing connected to the experience.

**KEYWORDS**  
Writexperience;  
Epistemology  
of Eshu;  
Audiovisibilities;  
Pandemy; Digital  
Ethnography.

movement. This proposal of digital ethnography in creative liminalities experimented with different forms of sharing the sensitive.

*Kenguelê, Kenguelê, Xangô  
He is the son of Cobra Coral  
Look, the black man is working  
And the white man is just looking*

*(Unknown author)*

## **INTRODUCTION: COMMUNICATION OF ESHU ON SCREENS**

When entering a “terreiro”, a field, a house, a center, or a tent of an African-based religion, the first thing to do is to revere the orisha or entity Eshu. Eshu is the orisha of communication; he is the one who mediates men and other orishas. Eshu is the orisha of strength, virility, work, and also joy. African-based religions remain and survive through orality (Verger, 2019). The customs and learnings are spread from generation to generation, and teachings by text are scarce. Knowledge happens through the voice that echoes from the elderly and finds the younger ones, those who will continue this culture permeated by orality.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the encounters in which the ancestral knowledge of African-based religions used to take place were initially interrupted. And other ways of making a presence were being created, among the spaces of axé, faith, and platforms with audiovisual images and social networks. It emerged, then, the possibility of sharing and connecting through technology, applications, and screens. Among them, platforms such as Youtube, Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram, and others, as the ones related to film festivals that needed to migrate to immateriality and mediations, were (re)invented. In these networks used to exchange videos, messages, and images, other communities have been conforming to new ways of sharing the sensitive (Rancière, 2005). For instance, the movie “Incluindo Deus” (Including God), by Maurílio Martins relates the loneliness of his mother at the kitchen table at the house concerning the mass of 92,000 profiles who attend a consecration service by the Christian Congregation of Brazil, bring religiosity to the audiovisual agenda in the 21st century.

In this text, we turn our gaze to films that are in spaces of religious practice produced in the performance of carnival and at a show and its backstage. The first documentary is “Negras Vozes: Tempos de Alakan” (Black Voices: Times of Alakan), directed by Beto Brant with the Ilú Obá de Min Carnival Block, a film showed at an online film festival, [forumdoc.bh.2020](http://forumdoc.bh.2020), Festival do Filme Documentário e Etnográfico de Belo Horizonte (Festival of the Documentary and Ethnographic Film of Belo Horizonte). The second

film is the documentary produced from the performance of a Emicida Rapper's show, at Theatro Municipal de São Paulo; "AmarElo: É tudo para ontem" (AmarElo: It's all for yesterday), by Fred Ouro Preto and produced by Netflix, a commercial streaming video platform. The films follow the political path of remembrance, in gestures, images, speeches, and stories of the occupation of the Municipal's stairs by MNU, the Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial (Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination), in the 1970s, during the military dictatorship. We will turn our analytical intent in this text to this and other crossroads.

The perspective of knowledge that we evoke here is digital ethnography in creative liminalities (Migliano, 2020), searching for writexperiences in some gestures shown in these films. Digital ethnography is constituted as a field of work from the emergence of universal access, or almost, social networks that are multi-territorially situated and that, in this way, come to compose a subjective, cultural, and community body.

Facing digital social networks from the idea of creative liminalities is to believe in the power of humanity in relation and action in the world, considering that it is important to overcome the situation of a detention zone that can become experiences lived between spatial/symbolic zones. The creative liminality of the spaces between life in bodily co-presence and the simultaneity of messages exchanged via the internet is a condition that retains characteristics of both corporeal and social realities. As it is a containment or detention area, it enhances invention through references and exchanges of/with the diversity provided by encounters that were not facilitated before. In digital ethnography, facing the situations that occur in this creative liminality, between material life and that which circulates as bytes through telematic networks, is to recognize that the time of a flash (Didi-Huberman, 2011) can constitute a narrative fragment that expresses disputes over social meanings. The communication of these disputes and their outcomes make up the contemporary social reality (Migliano, 2021, 4).

In this sense, we will try to identify, in the creative liminalities in which we find ourselves, the writexperiences (Evaristo 2014) of black lives that perform their resistance in cultural and communicative practices that overcome colonial imaginary barriers. Reading their writexperiences released to the world we entered the realm of a dispute of meanings. Writexperiences that expand the audiovisibility space (Rocha 2019) in the current time. Writexperience is a term coined by Conceição Evaristo (2017), used to legitimize writing that is intertwined with experience, with its memories, and with the memories of its roots, its people, and its ancestry. We are using the term audiovisibility as the power of legitimacy/legitimation of audiovisual products in the consolidation of a

place of speech for bodies that have been suffering, for some time, from invisibility, silencing, and objectification operated by a system of scientific production based on modernity. Rocha states that:

To this evocation, we will propose an inflection, suggesting that bodies considered inferior have achieved important places of speech, constituting what I understand as an audiovisibility policy articulated to the occupation of technological means and audiovisual languages. This means that bodies that sing, dance, and publicly perform their combative and dissident existences face in a plastic way the silencing. This does not mean that this plasticity of resisting, making heard, and being able to speak is free from contradictions or conflicts (Rocha 2019, 55).

Modernity and the project of a Western world are the stages on which racist, male chauvinist, sexist, and xenophobic practices of violence and submission find a way to take place. Audiovisibilities go in the direction of transforming and overcoming these oppressions, presenting resistance and re-existence of bodies, imaginaries, and ways of seeing and facing the world.

### **EPISTEMICIDE, NECROPOLITICS AND APPARITION**

Since the processes of world consolidation oriented by European westernization, racism has established itself as a social practice. Enslavement, diaspora, violation, and epistemicide, cruelly determined on the African continent and its descendants, have, in the graduation of melanin, the indicator to the naked eye of inequality. In the documentary “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem”, a film that premiered in 2020, in its introductory excerpt we hear Emicida’s voice narrating the text transcribed below:

And, somehow, my dreams and my fights started long before my arrival, but for this to make sense, I have to contextualize some things. First: I’m talking about the last country on the American continent to abolish slavery. Second: from a city [Campo Redondo, BA] whose wealth is based on the golden era of the coffee cycle, which had the same slavery as its labor force. Third: this abolition leaves millions of blacks to their fate and is followed by whitening policies through the encouragement of European immigration, the demonization of African and indigenous cultures, and the total erasure, not only of the memory of slavery but of all non-white contributions to the development of that country. [1’16”-2’].

This critique dialogues with what Mbembe exposes in his work “Necropolitics”, from 2018, about the colonization process. According to him,

contemporary social, political, and geographic organizations were built from necropolitics:

“Colonial occupation” itself was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area—of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations. The writing of new spatial relations (“territorialization”) was, ultimately, tantamount to the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the classification of people according to different categories; resource extraction; and, finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries. These imaginaries gave meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space; in brief, the exercise of sovereignty (2003, 25-26).

Also according to the author:

(...) contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror. [...] In our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjugated to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead. [...] Under conditions of necropower, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred (2003, 39-40).

The necropower thematized by Mbembe compose the creative liminalities in which we are immersed at this beginning of the 21st century. The multiple dimensions of the writexperiences are constituted as a cultural force and life impulse in confronting the necropower.

At the opening conference of the colloquium “For an anti-racist communication: epistemologies, methodologies and cultural practices” of the Research Group Estéticas, Políticas do Corpo e Gênero (Aesthetics, Body and Gender Policies) of Intercom 2020, Liv Sovik (UFRJ) delivered the speech entitled “Reviewing the history of the culture of mass in Brazil: theory and contestation of the black stereotype”, broadcast live on YouTube on the UFRB TV channel and at the research group’s Facebook page. Sovik points out how the consolidation of racist imagery is established in mass entertainment communication from the realization of the Great World Exhibitions at the beginning of the 20th century. Among its attractions, seen by millions of people around the world, black people were in environments designed to simulate wildlife in Africa, in a situation of disrespect for human rights and native peoples, even after the processes of the abolition of slavery in the world. Currently, in 2021, even if, in certain circumstances, in a veiled way, the entertainment industry agrees with



this fact of the last century, establishing a pact with violence and oppression against black people, as we can follow in sensationalist journalism programs on TV.

The mass media dwells on and perpetuates an ethic of domination and violence because our image makers have more intimate knowledge of these realities than they have with the realities of love. We all know what violence looks like. All scholarship in the field of cultural studies focusing on a critical analysis of the mass media, whether pro or con, indicates that images of violence, particularly those that involve action and gore, capture the attention of viewers more than still, peaceful images. The small groups of people who produce most of the images we see in this culture have heretofore shown no interest in learning how to represent images of love in ways that will capture and stir our cultural imagination and hold our attention. (Hooks 2000, 95)

Written in 2000 and published only 21 years later in Brazil, the excerpt from the book “All about love: new visions”, by bell hooks, highlights the emphasis on production that disqualifies and diminishes bodies concerning those who have power and domination over others. Nevertheless, today we see the beginning of a change in the interests in the production of images and audiovisualities, as we present among the films we propose to analyze. It is worth noting that there was a path opening, or paths that were dug with a lot of sweat and fight, and that projected a perspective of resistance in this field.

People from South America who have African ancestry were and still are seen as inferior, as possible servants of the western white man, lacking in knowledge, says Santos (2015):

(...) people [...] were and continue to be considered as inferior, religiously regarded as soulless, intellectually regarded as less capable, aesthetically regarded as ugly, sexually regarded as objects of pleasure, socially regarded as without customs, and culturally regarded as wild (Santos 2015, 20-21).

In the whitening process that came to dominate social and cultural life, a culturally-rooted prejudice was established concerning communities belonging to Afro-descendant religions, practices, and political gestures of resistance to violence and physical and symbolic oppression of black people. As Mbembe said before about the “colonial occupation”.

In a western and colonized society, it is necessary to perceive and analyze the demarcations regarding the place of knowledge. This place is occupied by white and western men. As Grosfoguel says:

The inferiorization of knowledge produced by men and women across the planet (including Western women) has

endowed Western men with the epistemic privilege of defining what is true, what is reality, and what is best for others. This legitimacy and this monopoly of knowledge of Western men have generated structures and institutions that produce epistemic racism/sexism, disqualifying other knowledge and other critical voices against the imperial/colonial/patriarchal projects that govern the world-system (Grosfoguel 2016, 25).

It is worth noting that, because of findings like this, knowledge coming from places other than the white academy, and from people who are not part of the model mentioned above, are displaced to the margins, peripheral areas and are often even excluded and canceled. Also, according to Grosfoguel (2016), in addition to the genocide of the native peoples of America and Asia:

Three historical processes are constitutive of the knowledge structures of the world-system: the conquest of Al-Andalus, the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, and the murder of millions of women burned alive in Europe, accused of witchcraft (Grosfoguel 2016, 26).

In a project to decolonize epistemic models, the author (2016) emphasizes that science should not be static or determined only by the logic of rationality, but guided by social life that transforms practices and lives, with bodies and for bodies involved in it. These bodies are located in African territory and produce knowledge and perform stories from ancestral pasts. But, today, for the science of knowledge, what is extra-scientific and extra-academic is not considered true or real, which expresses how the colonial dimension of power determines a geopolitical concentration of knowledge.

Let's look at our audiovisuability spaces, [forumdoc.bh](http://forumdoc.bh), Vimeo and Netflix. In the 21st century, we have, in these movie-sharing platforms, substantial differences in the number of movie views on each of them. While the free online documentary film festival financed by the Brazilian State had about 40,000 viewers in ten days of programming, Netflix once had 40 million views of a movie in one week. The Vimeo audiovisuabilities sharing platform has two usage possibilities, paid and unpaid. This platform strives for a display quality similar to that of previous sharing platforms. Faced with this type of opportunity, the Vimeo platform (which articulates communities and forums) is considered a great space to allow universal access to films. The film remains available for free on this platform indefinitely. A different situation occurs with [forumdoc.bh](http://forumdoc.bh) as well as Netflix. Both have a set period to show movies. In Netflix's case, this time limit, sometimes not revealed, is due to established commercial agreements, restraining ancestral oralities. Let's continue in the tracks of the crossroads woven by the writexperiences in these possible creative liminalities.

The writexperiences proposed by Conceição Evaristo seek liberation from the bonds of colonial knowledge that restrict the academy to look at other types of knowledge. An example of this type of knowledge comes from ancestry, orality, experience, memory. It is necessary to open the paths; let's open the paths. Among one of these possibilities of decolonial epistemology, Reis Neto proposes the pedagogy of Eshu:

We ask Eshu to see us with good eyes and to give us a calm journey in these writings whose main objective is to reflect on the particular ways of educating in *axé* (in the “terreiros”) and on the proposition of another pedagogy, which we have been calling *pedagogy of Eshu* as a way of (r)existing regarding what has historically tried to dehumanize us (Reis Neto 2009, 09).

Eshu's way of drawing with his body the opening of paths, dancing among the incense's smoke, confronting the whitening project and the political force of the crossroads make up the writexperiences we seek.

Eshu is invoked to open and allow all rituals to take place. Dynamic, neutral, and intangible, chants, poems, sculptures, symbolisms, greetings, rituals, and myths allow us to approach their becoming. An individual and collective dynamic principle, Eshu carries and wears the symbolism of white, red and black. (Santos 2014, p. 6)

The assertive look that Eshu sends us as a way of teaching and learning is present in the relationship of acting for the first time, breaking down barriers, obstacles, “encostos”, and, therefore, liberating. In the next topic, we will consider the appearance of these gestures of Eshu's pedagogy in the scenes of the cultural and audiovisual products that we proposed to analyze.

These gestures appear inscribed in the performances of bodies that are emotional when narrating through images and moving images the emotions that their ancestors and predecessors experienced, as in the films and creations that we present in this text when they illuminated for the first time an area of darkness, even with only flashes, but flashes that reveal where to go in overcoming pain. Didi-Huberman, in “Quelle émotion ! Quelle émotion ?” (2016) he says that the images bring us pieces of memories composed in the bodies: “These gestures are like moving fossils. They have a very long history - and very unconscious.” Fossils from other times that, when updated in pandemic contemporaneity, transform and are transformed with those who are willing to read, get in contact and produce relationships of meanings, delivered to the movements of affections and emotions as in every opening gesture.

### **“WRIXPERIENCES”, RITUALITIES AND POLITICAL MOVEMENT**

It's carnival. The parade of Bloco Ilú Obá de Min is shown in the film “Negras Vozes - Tempos de Alakan”; the street sequence begins with the

#### KEYWORDS

Mangueira; religion and performance; religion and carnival; samba schools; religious materialities.

bodies on stilts carrying smokers and lit incense, perfuming and smoking the bodies. Experiencing these images and sensations communicated from the party thrills us as white women, intellectually involved with these bodies, songs, and imaginaries. The analysis of the scene seeks to generate a feeling of sharing those present with that specific moment.

“Smoke with Jurema herbs, Smoke with herb grace and guiné, Smoke with Jurema herbs, Smoke with herb grace and guiné, Benjoim, Rosemary and Lavender, Let’s smoke children of faith” (Author Unknown). This chanting *ponto* is manifested during the smoking ritual at the beginning of the *gira* or *xirê*. Smoking is of great importance in the ritual, the moving smoke, which comes from herbs on fire in the smoker, has cleansing and purifying power. This information is not written in any text that validates African-based religions, it is simply transmitted from generation to generation, between mothers and fathers in the saint and sons/daughters, sisters/brothers of faith.



**IMAGE 1**  
Frame from the documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

That’s why orality in these cultures is so important. The first writexperience, practice, gesture, teaching, ritual, episteme of Eshu is perceived. At the intersection with the film *Amarelo*, the smoke that opens the path in the epistemology of Eshu is in the dry ice that slightly smokes the beams of light, at the opening of the Municipal stage, the beginning of the show.

Regarding the particular way of teaching and learning in the *terreiros*, we highlight the place of orality, since it is the main medium for transmitting knowledge and *axé* (vital force) in the *terreiros*. [...] Orality goes beyond the classical notion of dialogue interaction when it brings to the scene the ancestors, the immemorial times. It is the dialogue embodied in the subjects living their space-time experience collectively, in/through alterity. Furthermore, the coexistence with other languages, such as graphics, plastic, is part of the production of the worldview and ways of life of Afro-Amerindian peoples. [...] Orality as a sign of Afro-Brazilian thought, as a constituent of the African and, later, Afro-Brazilian cosmovision is also reaffirmed by Hampaté

Bâ (2010) when he announces that man is his own word and is based on it a testimony of what he is (Reis Neto 2019, 5).

The knowledge present in the *terreiros* of African-based religions is seen as if it does not exist. This happens because this knowledge is related to blackness, which, in turn, is marginalized in scientific knowledge-producing environments, as mentioned above. In this scenario, it is important to understand that the school is not the only field of learning where educational processes take place, non-school spaces also play this role. The *terreiro* are crucial spaces for learning and also contribute to combating the colonial ideal of knowledge, considering that the school is constructed from a Western model and hence “violates other ways of being/living/educating the adepts of African-based religions” (Reis Neto 2019, 07). Still dealing with the place of the school as well as education and learning, Rufino complements Reis Neto’s reflection:

Education, for me, is the foundation of Eshu, as it is an event that operates in instances of unpredictability and possibility, it is dialogic and unfinished, intertwines the self with the other, and gives us the condition to weave our life as a responsible response to be given for those who challenge us. Education is an invention, world change, Eshu’s mischief practiced in the bars of time; it is an effect generated by those who pulse and claim a way of thinking and constituting their existence in the attempts to communicate and weave the most different possibilities of existence. In this way, education takes place playing in the street, becoming an animal, scribbling on the wall, feeling pain, desire, and joy, at the party, in the noise, in the difference. Education has various purposes, but not everything considered “education” can be guaranteed as something committed to the struggles for cognitive, social justice, and democracy (2019, 02).

The intrinsic culture in the African-based religions extrapolates and breaks with the Cartesian and binary logic and the moral and individualistic axiology of the West. For that, it is also valid to explore the feminine figure in the *terreiros*. In African-based religions, women gain strength, unique and exclusive enchantments. On the other hand, the woman seen by the Western discourse is submissive and obedient to the patriarchy and the sovereignty of the white man. Under this reasoning, Rufino reflects:

Colonialism is a project of death. In this system, oblivion, the scarcity of experiences, monorationalism, framing in a single possibility of being, the interdiction of ancestral knowledge, surveillance over communication, the imprisonment of bodies kill in many ways. We are taught to live in a world model that produces the disbelief/invisibility of diversity, this tone of subjectivation of dominant references makes us not even realize that it can be different (2019, 03).

The experience of the carnival parade at Bloco Ilú Obá de Min puts us in front of a situation driven by women, black women, artists, music, performances, and poets. The parade, guided by them, leaves from the



center of São Paulo, specifically from Praça da República, covering places and non-places, and ends at Largo do Paissandú, always on Carnival Fridays. This celebration of the Bloco Ilú Obá de Min is already part of the tradition of the São Paulo carnival, and it starts the holiday's parties and celebrations, on the local agenda.

In 2019, a film team, which had been following the Bloco for years, assembled a film that introduces spectators to the rituals of its carnival, associated with the opening of the *terreiros*. Another ritual of the Ilu Obá de Min is to pay tribute to the fundamental black women in Brazilian culture, who in that year were Marielle Franco and Conceição Evaristo, the latter bodily implicated in the summit of the 2019 parade. Conceição Evaristo wrote experienced the reading of the letter delivered by the MNU (Unified Black Movement against Racial Discrimination) to the Brazilian military dictatorship, a delivery that paves the way for political recognition of the importance of black lives and cultures in the country's fabulation, respect for them and for the bodies that make them exist.



**IMAGE 2**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")



**IMAGE 3**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

The body that personified Eshu at the beginning of the parade, and which stars in the scene after reading the letter, enlarged by stilts, when arriving in front of the Municipal Theater, transitions to the female body of Anastacia, a black woman enslaved and murdered by this condition of immeasurable oppression of Humanity. Grada Kilomba, in his book *Memórias da Plantação* (*Plantation Memories*), narrates the portrait of the "Slave Anastasia".

This penetrating image reaches the spectator, conveying the horrors of slavery suffered by generations of enslaved Africans. With no official history, some say that Anastácia was the daughter of a Kimbundo royal family, born in Angola, kidnapped and taken to Bahia, and enslaved by a Portuguese family. After this family returned to Portugal, she would have been sold to a sugarcane plantation owner. Others claim that she would have been a Nagô/Yorubá princess before she was captured by European human traffickers and brought to Brazil in the condition of a slave. Others, on the other hand, defend that she was born in Bahia. Her African name is unknown. Anastasia was the name given to her during slavery. All reports say that she was forced to wear a very heavy iron collar, in addition to the face mask that prevented her from speaking. The reasons given for this punishment vary: some report her political activism in aiding escapes from "others enslaved; others say that she had resisted the sexual proposals from the white "master". Another version turns the blame to the jealousy of a lady who feared Anastasia's beauty. It is also said that she possessed immense healing powers and that she had performed miracles. Anastasia was seen as a saint among enslaved Africans. After a long period of suffering, she dies of tetanus caused by the iron necklace around her neck. Anastácia's portrait was made by a 27-year-old Frenchman named Jacque Arago, who joined a "scientific expedition" through Brazil as a drawer between December 1817 and January 1818. There are other drawings about masks covering the entire face of enslaved women, with only two holes for

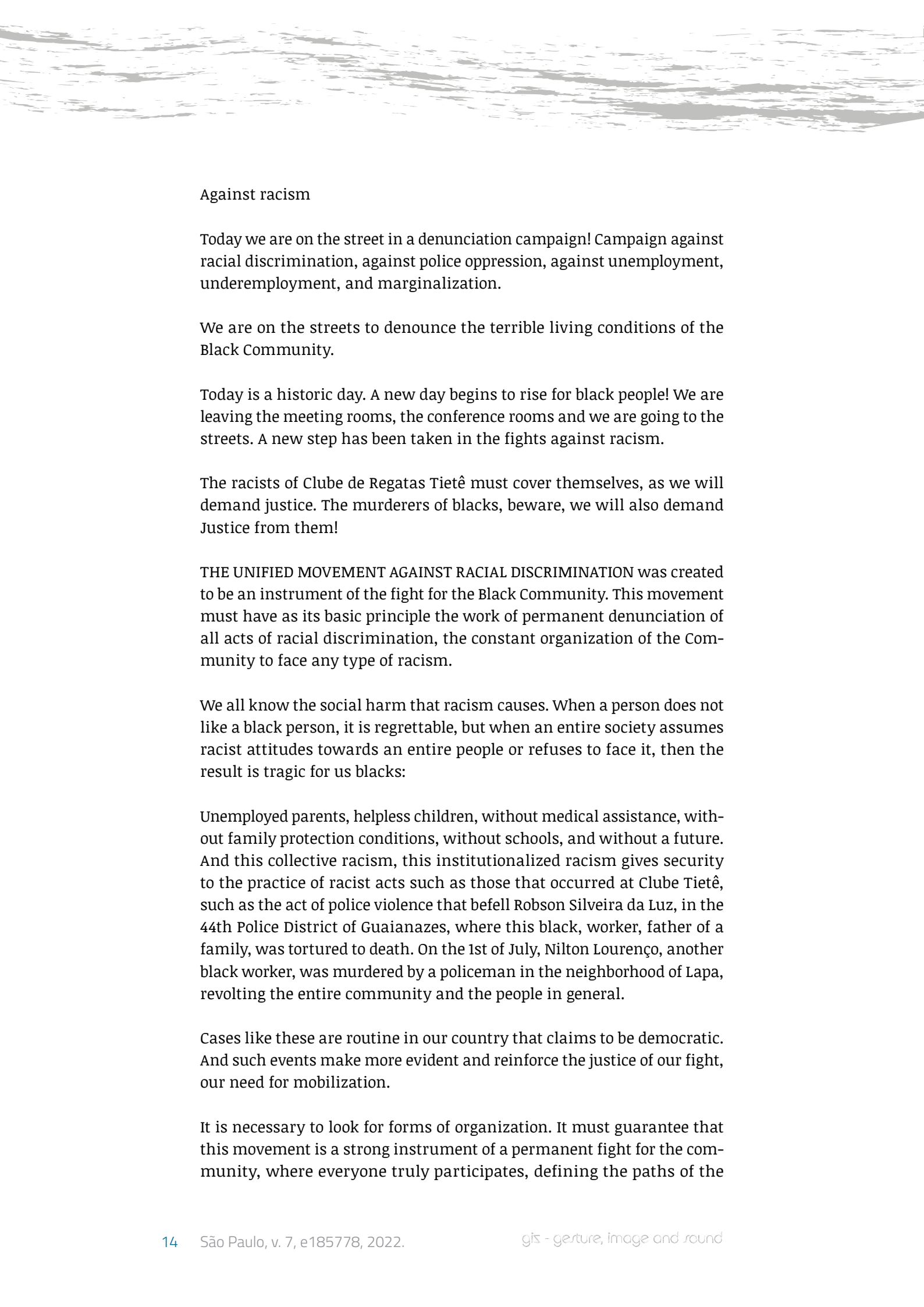
the eyes; these were used to prevent the act of eating land, a common practice among enslaved Africans to commit suicide. In the second half of the 20th century, the figure of Anastasia began to become a symbol of the brutality of slavery and its continuing legacy of racism. She became a political and religious figure around the African and Aphrodispora world, representing the historical resistance of these peoples. The first large-scale veneration was in 1967 when the curator of the Museu do Negro in Rio de Janeiro organized an exhibition to honor the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Anastasia is also commonly seen as a saint of the Pretos Velhos, directly related to the Orisha Oshala or Obatalá - orisha of peace, serenity, and wisdom - and he is an object of devotion in Candomblé and Umbanda (Handler and Hayes, 2009). (Kilomba 2019, 35)

Eshu became Anastacia, who is endorsed as Oshala, in a gesture of undressing in front of everyone in front of the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. In a gesture, the entire tour of the parade of greetings to all Orishas, from Eshu to Oshala, was updated, opening the paths for this/that now. Oshala is the orisha that rules Friday, suggesting the use of white for all those who practice Candomblé, Umbanda, and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Dressing in white is a cultural practice also performed by the majority of revelers and revelers who come to accompany the parade in the film. At this moment, the parade and the film stop in front of the Theatro, producing a deliberate and circumstantial pause.



**IMAGE 4**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

During this pause in the parade, at the intersections of the stairs of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, Conceição Evaristo, dressed in white, begins to read the letter sent to the military government in 1978:



Against racism

Today we are on the street in a denunciation campaign! Campaign against racial discrimination, against police oppression, against unemployment, underemployment, and marginalization.

We are on the streets to denounce the terrible living conditions of the Black Community.

Today is a historic day. A new day begins to rise for black people! We are leaving the meeting rooms, the conference rooms and we are going to the streets. A new step has been taken in the fights against racism.

The racists of Clube de Regatas Tietê must cover themselves, as we will demand justice. The murderers of blacks, beware, we will also demand Justice from them!

THE UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION was created to be an instrument of the fight for the Black Community. This movement must have as its basic principle the work of permanent denunciation of all acts of racial discrimination, the constant organization of the Community to face any type of racism.

We all know the social harm that racism causes. When a person does not like a black person, it is regrettable, but when an entire society assumes racist attitudes towards an entire people or refuses to face it, then the result is tragic for us blacks:

Unemployed parents, helpless children, without medical assistance, without family protection conditions, without schools, and without a future. And this collective racism, this institutionalized racism gives security to the practice of racist acts such as those that occurred at Clube Tietê, such as the act of police violence that befell Robson Silveira da Luz, in the 44th Police District of Guaianazes, where this black, worker, father of a family, was tortured to death. On the 1st of July, Nilton Lourenço, another black worker, was murdered by a policeman in the neighborhood of Lapa, revolting the entire community and the people in general.

Cases like these are routine in our country that claims to be democratic. And such events make more evident and reinforce the justice of our fight, our need for mobilization.

It is necessary to look for forms of organization. It must guarantee that this movement is a strong instrument of a permanent fight for the community, where everyone truly participates, defining the paths of the

movement. That's why we call everyone to join the UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

Therefore, we propose the creation of FIGHT CENTERS OF THE UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, in neighborhoods, villages, prisons, *candomblé terreiros*, *umbanda terreiros*, workplaces, samba schools, churches, in every place where black people live; FIGHT CENTERS that promote debate, information, awareness, and organization of the black community, making us a strong, active and combatant movement, leading black people to participate in all sectors of Brazilian society.

We invite the democratic sectors of society (to) support us, creating the necessary conditions to create a true racial democracy. AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

AGAINST POLICE OPPRESSION

FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE MOVEMENT

FOR AN AUTHENTIC RACIAL DEMOCRACY

("Open letter from the MNU In GONZALEZ, Lélia; HASENBALG, Carlos. 1982, pp. 43-44").



**IMAGE 5**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes –  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices –  
Times of Alakan")

The letter quoted is the appeal to the black people for the public act against racism in 1978. In this act, they delivered another letter to the military government, the letter read by Conceição Evaristo in the carnival procession. In the image, the remembrance of the occupation of the stairs is in a banner, and in the gestures of the bodies that accompany the reading of the letter in performance, act in presence. The parade of the Block Ilú



Obá de Min, in 2018, makes visible in the media the mark of 40 years of fighting against racism in Brazil.

Another film that makes audio-visible the event promoted by the MNU in 1978 is “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem” (AmarElo – it’s all for yesterday) a narrative starring Emicida, produced by Laboratório Ghost and by Netflix, as mentioned. The film is made from the production of the show for the release of the album AmarElo, at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. The film’s writexperience of Eshu comes from the idea of the show: it was the first time that black artists starred on the stage of the Municipal Theater, promenading and opening the paths of legitimizing their art and culture. Many of the artists and technicians involved in the project were getting in touch with that environment for the first time in their lives. And the emotions of these encounters and presences were captured by moving images, revering the achievement of that crossroads that transforms the paths to be taken from there.

In images from archives that refer to the day of delivery of the MNU letter, the film “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem” reminds us of the historical importance of this event. The photographs of the reading of the letter in 1978, which are in *Negras Vozes* and *AmarElo*, refer to three moments, three experiences, three writexperiences that involve epistemology of Eshu and make reference to a place of extreme representation for whiteness: the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. It is a place that dissipates in many non-places and thus perpetuates embodied images around resistance, politics, aesthetics, and audio-visibility of blackness and the fight against racism: the apparition.

But there is another movement to update the writexperience of Eshu in Emicida’s film. From the stage, the rapper says that he needs to revere the elders, who had taken the first step in the fight that made possible the realization of that show. Then Emicida asks the four members of the MNU (who were at the delivery of the letter in 1978) to introduce themselves, and they stand together, hand in hand, from the middle of the main audience. In the show and in the film, the writexperience of opening paths is revered and reinvented, as it was the first time that the MNU was honored there, introducing the ritual of black memory in orality at the Municipal Theater. The epistemology of Eshu, which we recognize updated in this inaugural performance at the show, guarantees a new possibility of creating knowledge about the history of the anti-racist fight in Brazil: through voices, gestures, and bodies, as in a *terreiro*. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, “AmarElo: É tudo pra ontem” had great repercussions on digital social networks. Receiving criticisms and acclamations it made visible in writexperiences this and other stories silenced by racial discrimination and consequent social and cultural invisibility.

The Ilú Obá de Min Block was the first women's carnival block in São Paulo created in 2006. In the history of this block, its guidance, as well as its purpose, has always been carried out by women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this nonprofit association had to reinvent itself. Its presentations, without an in-person audience, were broadcast on social networks, co-creating other kinds of ties than the hand in hand performed in previous processions. Without the public in person, its presentations started to be broadcast through social networks, co-creating other types of ties in addition to the proximity of the bodies performed in processions before Covid-19. The block Ilú Obá de Min is also part of the writexperience that brings to light ancestral memories and traditional roots. Today, towards a lot of fight and resistance, these memories can be seen through the screens; memories that have been documented, recorded, and exposed in a film broadcast remotely and online.

Ancestry and tradition meet technology, and, through screens, meet the youth. The occupation of social networks by Bloco Ilu Obá de Min is a new form of positioning. Women, black women, artists, music, performances, and poets find a way of placing themselves and not being silent in front of others. Through the image, through the voice, through the resistance. As bell hooks considers: “Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects.” (1994, 148).



**IMAGE 6**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

### **WOMEN, WRITEXPERIENCE, RESISTANCE**

“Get out, man, the woman is coming, get out, man, the woman is coming, she is the Pomba Gira, queen of candomblé” (“Author Unknown”). This sung

*ponto* identifies the Pomba Gira – an entity extremely present in the *terreiros* of African-based religions. In this *ponto*, the passage “the queen of candomblé” can be sung as the “queen of cabaret”. The Pomba Gira is an extremely important entity in African-based religions. She is a warrior, undoes spells, and works with love, but, in the discourse from the West, her figure was associated to pejorative adjectives:

This was considered by well-thinking Brazilian society as the carrier of all the most negative characteristics that can be attributed to women: libertine, diabolic, perverse, she belonged to the group of witches, pythonesses, prostitutes, hysterics, crazies, she-devils, and others inhabitants of the nefarious realm of females persecuted throughout history (Dravet 2016, 99).

The Pomba Gira archetype from the original discourse of the *terreiros* articulated the relationship with women’s freedom, with their own sexual, love, and work choices, also bringing to itself the issue of female emancipation.

In what we can consider as a strategy to affirm the right of women to their bodily autonomy, in both sensuality and sexuality, as well as in the freedom to enjoy it, Pomba Gira assumed the image of the prostitute for herself before men and women, and explored the discourse of the woman’s of free life: sexual and sensual, without ceasing to be also maternal and caring. She became a counselor on matters of love and relationships, sexuality, the exercise of freedom. But she has also become the protector of prostitutes, transvestites, and all those who explicitly experience her feminine strength (Dravet 2016, 99).

The Pomba Gira brings with itself new possibilities of episteme about the body in which the female, the woman, acts. She makes shine the strength around the woman who goes beyond patriarchy, colonization, and the West. As Dravet states, the Pomba Gira considers the feminine in another way and questions what lies behind the woman’s tag recounted by the West. It brings the possibility of questioning the epistemology: “and lead us to a science that acquires another consciousness and asks for another way of looking at itself. Other. This word is openness, potential, creativity” (2016, 113).

In an interview given in 2017, when reflecting on writexperience, Conceição Evaristo brings up the writing and knowledge potential of black women, which dialogues with the mentioned archetype of the Pomba Gira and the freedom related to the resistance of women of all times:

It comes from the following: when I’m writing and when other black women are writing, hum... it comes to my memory the role of African women within enslaved Big Houses, the role these women had to storytelling to make sleep the ones from the Big House, right... the progeny were asleep with the black mothers storytelling. So, they were bedtime stories. And when I say that our texts, hum..., he tries to blur this image, we don’t write to put those in the

Big House to sleep, on the opposite, to wake them from their unfair sleep. And this writexperience, it will leave, it takes precisely the experience as a motto of creation. Or the experience from a personal point of view, or the experience from the collective point of view. (Evaristo In Remanche and Sippel 2019, 43).

Walter Benjamin (1996), when enunciating the power of documents in narrating experiences, inspired us to ethnograph the films in search of the epistemology of Eshu. Conceição Evaristo reminds us of the importance of giving ancestral body and voice to what is declared; this knowledge goes beyond the epistemologies that are still in force as protagonists in the academic and hegemonically media space. These paths were opened to compose passages to an anti-racist world. Our thoughts and bodies were awakened by emotions brought through the gestures and moving images from these films, which were launched in the context of new sociability: confinement and social isolation as a facing against the pandemic.

Would these manifestations be in front of the one who inhabits the memory, a way of having the African continent with us? This would be a possibility of episteme to be embraced by the fields of knowledge and by epistemology, a possibility of accessing the real through mythical narratives. It would be an epistemology of resistance, ancestry, orality, and, above all, decolonial.

[...] when we try to make culture an undisturbed space of harmony and agreement where social relations exist within cultural forms of uninterrupted accords, we subscribe to a form of social amnesia in which we forget that all knowledge is forged in histories that are played out in the field of social antagonisms. (McLaren 1992 apud hooks 1994, 31).

And since everything is not an end or a final point, we can give new meaning to it within the opening of paths, which must be constantly and vehemently opened, as if in a continuous act, as we are talking here about resistance and black memory. Emicida's first guest on stage in the film *Amarelo* was MC Tha. Here we borrow the lyrics from her song, *Rito de Passá*:

Open the paths  
Open the paths  
It opens the paths  
I shot the arrow  
Where did it fall, I cried out  
Lightning in the sky  
The rain will come  
My body went to the ground  
In the straw to heal

I washed my soul and then  
I rebuilt myself in the mud, I saw rocks rolling  
I danced with the current, I left myself to the sea  
I rebuilt myself in the mud, I saw rocks rolling  
I danced with the current, I left myself to the sea  
Singing and dancing to greet  
The time to come, which was, which is  
Touching to leave a mark  
The passing ritual <sup>2</sup>  
The passing ritual

(“Mc Tha, 2019”).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In front of the screens, between the screens, through the screens, we are attentive to the movements of contemporary culture articulated with the processes of social mediatization of Afro-descendant religiosity, articulations between technicalities, institutionalities, socialities, and ritualities. We saw ancestry being revered, memories being rescued through the films discussed here, the experiences lived on digital platforms; in these times when we were hit by a viral pandemic.

We saw decolonization in motion; as Rufino (1987) states, this decolonization must emerge not only through academic veins but also through the veins and sweat of the body, in the constant practice of transformation. Decolonization is a revolutionary act. We saw a search for culture as a vector of protection, care, and love. It is a certain reverence for nature, the community, and the times that interlace: future, past, and present.

Between the Times of Alakan and the demand for everything to be done yesterday, we conclude here with the Yoruba saying mentioned by Emicida in the film: “Eshu threw a stone today that hit a bird yesterday.”

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2. Translation of: “O rito de passá”.



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## THE ALREADY SEEN METHOD OF STUDYING RELIGION IN ANTHROPOLOGY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

This article reflects on classic anthropological approaches on the topic of religion making a counterpoint to other lines of research that more recently they privilege the role of the media in forming religious communities. Based on the work of anthropologist Birgit Meyer the proposal is to refute the reinforcement traditionally granted to the speeches of religious actors and to the meaning of symbols for ethnographic writing, starting to emphasize sensations that are shared depending on an aesthetic formation process.

### KEYWORDS

Religion;  
Anthropology;  
Media; Aesthetic.

## INTRODUCTION

Religion is present in many places but most of the anthropologists who research this subject traditionally favor either the symbolic dimension of rituals or the literature that to some extent encodes mythical narratives, both oral and written, or more recently in the case of Brazil the speeches of political representatives who are part of the “religious bench” in Congress and dispute the power in the public sphere of human rights. Without detracting from the importance of innumerable research presented by renowned social scientists over decades, my provocation in this article is to argue that the view of intellectuals tends to be eroded when the subject is religion due both to the materials and sources that serve as a foundation for investigations and to the treatment dedicated to the topic.

I work with the hypothesis that the approach to religion in the field of anthropology follows the assumptions of a classic methodology that, by overestimating the discourses of religious actors and mainly the meanings they attribute to symbols, less attention is given to the aesthetic dimension that goes through the practices themselves. In other words, to the extent that the scope of the analysis is limited to what the actors say, the scholars who research the topic tend to obliterate the many places where the religious issue gains a public presence. In this sense, the notion of “place” as I am proposing here comprises the various media that materialize what we usually classify as religion.

In order to substantiate the hypothesis presented, I privilege the Brazilian context to point out some means that gave a public presence to different religious practices. Then, I analyze the case of the Universal do Reino de Deus Church – IURD – which since its foundation has appropriated a set of media but, despite being one of the Brazilian Christian institutions most investigated by a considerable range of anthropologists – which I will talk about in the next item –, these media are either not contemplated or are incipiently managed in research.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, it is possible to recognize that since the colonial period some media have given public presence to religion in the Brazilian context, mainly to the practices of Christian matrix, as we can observe, for example, in the architecture of the Igreja da Sé built in the city of Salvador in the 16th century, the sculptures by Aleijadinho dating from the 18th century, the paintings by Victor Meirelles from the 19th century, etc. Subsequently, other media such as the cinema also played an important role in the visibility of the religious issue. According to Monte-Mór (2005) the theme of popular religiosity appeared in a more experimental phase

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1. Rare exceptions have recently started to emerge, such as the research developed by Teixeira (2014) in which the anthropologist analyzes the social medias of the IURD in order to discuss gender issues.

of the cinema when, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Italian brothers Paschoal and Affonso Segretto recorded the construction of churches, funeral rituals and religious festivals in Rio de Janeiro in images (Monte-Mór 2005, 135).

In the same period other productions, such as the films *Procissão de Nossa Senhora dos Navegantes* – directed by Diomedes Gramacho in Salvador – and *Milagres de Santo Antonio* – directed by Antonio Serra in Rio de Janeiro – both from 1912, started the religious thematic in the cinema. Thus in the 20th century this theme was addressed in the Brazilian cinema at different times and under different styles. In the 1930s for example the documentary cinema flourished with the contributions of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and his wife Dina who directed films such as *Festa do Divino Espírito Santo*, *Festejos Populares de Mogy das Cruzes*, etc. (Monte-Mór 2005, 136). In later decades some documentaries and commercial films also contemplated the subject, bringing to the fore, in addition to Christian practices, religions of African origin, shamanic rituals, kardecism, etc.

Still concerning the media, in the 1940s the Adventista do Sétimo Dia Church began its forays into radio stations and in 1962 that institution launched the first evangelical program shown on television: *Fé para Hoje*, presented by the pastor Alcides Campolongo (Fonteles 2007). Through radio and television many evangelical denominations have occupied a prominent place in the public scene such as the IURD which, in addition to these media, has been investing heavily in social media, also in films produced for the cinema, and for some time it has become one of the most researched institutions in academia. So, despite the abundance of academic work on IURD, how to justify the lack of interest from researchers with the media apparatus of the church? Before answering the question, I will briefly return to Universal's foundation history.

Classified by the academic literature as one of the main exponents of the so-called “neopentecostal churches”, the IURD was founded by the pastor Edir Macedo in 1977 in the neighborhood of Abolição – at Rio de Janeiro city. Currently, Universal has around 6000 temples throughout Brazil, besides branches located in countries in Europe, Africa and Asia. In addition, the church owns some media such as the radio channel *Rede Aleluia*, the newspaper *Folha Universal*, the television station *Rede Record*, a website, a page on the social media Facebook, an account on the social media Twitter, etc.<sup>2</sup> In this way, over four decades the IURD has achieved significant public recognition, becoming a phenomenon in terms of its ability to consolidate a large audience worldwide.

2. <https://www.universal.org/a-universal/home/>. Accessed May 20, 2020.



Unlike most of the anthropologists who researched the trajectory of the IURD and justified the institution's reach based on the messages of salvation and prosperity – propagated by Edir Macedo and other pastors to churchgoers –, in my view Universal's success is indebted to media marketing built around the figure of its founder. In other words, IURD's media promoted Edir Macedo's visibility on the public scene and the effects of this publicity were effective as his image was materialized according to the specificities of each medium – I will return to this point later.

In this sense, a comprehension of Universal's trajectory that takes into account the media, not exclusively the “prophetic” messages, makes it possible to formulate consistent interpretations about the dimension of this institution. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond the scope of the meanings attributed by the scholars to the iurdian symbols and start looking at the aesthetic dimension immanent to the media. However, as I will show below, this way of analyzing the religious question based on materialities opposes an already consolidated tradition of studies.

### **THE IURD APPROACH IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL LITERATURE**

Many scholars who research the so-called “neo-Pentecostalism” in Brazil investigated the trajectory and projects of the IURD (Almeida 2009, Suede 2020, Gutierrez 2015, Mariano 1999, Oro 2003, Soares 1993). Among other issues, these intellectuals call into question why the church has achieved such visibility, bringing together a very large number of connoisseurs and regulars both inside and outside the country. In addition, they investigate the incisive performance of the iurdian leaders in the public space, especially that of Edir Macedo. Keeping in mind the specifics of each research, the justification presented by the mentioned authors is anchored in the discursive dimension. In their view, both the IURD's proselytizing tactics and its alliances made within the framework of institutional policy would be, roughly speaking, the main strategies that guarantee success for the church's projects. In other words, the pillars of Universal's undeniable reach would be indebted to the preachings that make up a “prosperity theology”, to the incessant articulations that aim at the power and the attacks of the IURD to other religious groups.

If we take as an example a recent article written by Camurça (2020), it is clear how this analytical formula was consolidated in academia. Based on data about the 2018 election campaign, through which it appears that among the 22 parliamentarians elected by the Partido Republicano Brasileiro (PRB) 19 associated the name of the IURD with their respective campaigns, the background of the Camurça's text is the following controversy: on the one hand Universal gained such power due to its onslaught in an expansionist offensive for public space and politics, on the other hand the church adopts a posture of victimization when managing the

notion of “minority” in its marketing strategies. The argument developed by this author is in line with that reiterated by other scholars according to which the public visibility of the IURD would result from the large number of undertakings that give multinational dimensions to the church added to moments of accusations and condemnations, such as the arrest of Edir Macedo in 1992,<sup>3</sup> from retaliation to the episode known as “kick in the saint”<sup>4</sup>, among others. Also, according to the scholars, the agency of the notion of “minority”, as a translation of the idea of “persecuted church”, would be the result of the IURD’s artifice in putting in its favor the controversial content of some episodes thus guaranteeing the maintaining its visibility.

From the point of view of the iurdian leaderships, Camurça’s considerations are partly pertinent. Since Universal has greatly expanded its ventures and Edir Macedo bought an open television station – Rede Record –, it is clear that the church responds to the demands of the capitalist system by playing the market game that presupposes, among other things, competition strategies and state control. In the meantime, a series of disputes has surfaced: in the media, the rivalry between Rede Globo – the most important television station in Brazil – and Record; in the religious field, the constant offensives against other Christian denominations, Afro-Brazilian religions, etc. However a large part of these scholars, who carried out ethnographies on the IURD, is unanimous in noting that the support base of the church or the mass of regulars and followers of the iurdian projects are people who live in precarious situations and mostly live in peripherals contexts. Thus, supposing that the constitution of this base, without which the IURD would not have had the scope it did, is solely indebted to logical-discursive schemes is an argument that supplants the understanding of Universal’s consolidation dynamics.

In my point of view the different media appropriated by IURD and how the church, through these media, built Edir Macedo’s image attracted numerous followers as this image was being adapted to the aesthetic specificities of each media – radio, television, cinema, social media – and ended up materializing the figure of a pastor who performs at the same time the role of a “suffering” man, as a result of public persecution and retaliation, and that of a “sanctified” man, with a view to his “prophetic” gift and his expansionist vocation. Thus, Universal’s media apparatus has been attracting an audience to the extent that these media bring

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3. Edir Macedo started to gain wide public notoriety when the press covered his prison and, mainly, the vigils held at the prison door by IURD goers. Without detailing the case, roughly speaking, he had been arrested as a result of a felony charge.

4. Episode that occurred in 1995 when one of the pastors of the IURD when appearing on a TV program on Rede Record kicked an image of Nossa Senhora de Aparecida – one of the icons of Catholicism – during the program’s exhibition.

Edir Macedo's image closer to that of a biblical character, arousing shared feelings of commiseration and adoration among this audience.

The notion of shared sensation – a subject to be discussed in the next item – is a central element to analyze the materialities present in a religious practice, but this notion ends up being neglected by anthropologists who conceive of religion as an exclusive question of the order of meaning. The overvaluation of meaning however is not unreasonable since the place that the IURD occupies in the academy meets the literary canon responsible for the foundation of the field of social sciences on the European continent whose texts, classics published between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, brought up the religious issue. It would not be appropriate to carry out a complete bibliographic review but to point out some lines of research more or less common to these publications and their reverberations in the consolidation of anthropology as an academic discipline based on questions and methods systematized by authors such as B. Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

In the second half of the 19th century, a period in which the European intelligentsia chose science as the legitimate and authentic discourse to guide the functioning of the institutions that made up modern European states, authors such as Sir James Frazer (1976) and Edward B. Tylor (2016), in an evolutionary perspective, built arguments to affirm what would be universal in all human societies: a recurring topic among thinkers of the time which echoed in the formation of the field of social sciences. In terms of classification dynamics, both authors established distinctions between the categories of religion, magic and science, living up to one of the obsessions of the XIX, the case of narratives about the origins of man capable of explaining, among other issues, the birth of religion (Ortiz 2012). In collecting records about peoples who would have preceded the others on a supposed “evolutionary” scale of humanity, roughly speaking, Frazer and Tylor defended the thesis that religious and magical principles would be indebted to a period when “wild” thought did not distinguish the natural from the supernatural yet.

The ethnocentric view contained in the explanations of these mentioned authors, although opposed in some aspects, was taken up at the beginning of the 20th century when the intellectuals of the so-called French school approached the theme of religion in their works. Thus, Émile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1989) argued that in the constitution of societies organized in clans, religion would be par excellence the elementary form of social cohesion. To substantiate his point of view, the author chose the Australian totemic system as the model to contain this structural elementality, universal and previous to all other forms. By calling attention to the presence of totems within indigenous groups,

which result from mythical-ritual relationships between human beings and material forms – be they animals or plants –, Durkheim concluded that through religious thought a group “sacralizes” determined form, creating a collective representation capable of perpetuating society itself.

Therefore, instead of the contrast between natural and supernatural, it was the conceptions of “sacred” and “profane” that permeated Durkheim’s analyzes. According to the author, totemic sacredness would result from a set of ritual operations that associate totems with meanings that do not exist in the uniqueness of banal objects or profane things. Still in the European context, scholars like Rudolf Otto (2007) explored the theme of religion also contemplating the notion of the sacred. However, differently from the Durkheimian sociological perspective, Otto approached the issue from a phenomenological point of view. In other words, sacredness would not be the result of a representation since the sacred, in the author’s view, is a category that does not derive from something being made up of both rational concepts and unspeakable elements, both given a priori and immanent to the “human spirit”, a fact that would make them independent of psychic mediation.

Still in this context, another important legacy to the field of social sciences was the work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Max Weber. The first edition of this text dates from 1904 and Weber proposed a thesis on the relationship between capitalism and Protestantism based on the doctrinal corpus formulated by Lutheranism and Calvinism/Puritanism. In his view, the “spirit of capitalism” should not be confused with the mode of production itself, but taken as a mentality or conduct that is indebted to these Christian doctrines which associated with the notion of professional “success” and consequent prosperity associated with the idea of election or divine choice (Weber 2004).

Other authors could be mentioned, but, as stated earlier, my intention is not to exhaust a bibliographic review. The greatest interest is to highlight the argument that permeates the works quoted: in the view of these intellectuals, religion is a category associated with the order of the mentality, the idea, the meaning. Such a way of approaching the theme influenced the consolidation of anthropology as an academic discipline, even though starting with Malinowski fieldwork and face-to-face contact between researchers and natives re-proposed previous research methods limited mainly to reading and analyzing manuscripts, doctrinal texts, etc.

Malinowski (1978), when analyzing the role of magic in the daily life of Trobriandesa society, wrote one of the most canonical texts for anthropological studies: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Undoubtedly, the highlight of the work is the discussion made by the author about the

presence of magic in the different sectors of life of the natives in the Trobriand Islands, ranging from the exchange of objects – *Kula* –, through agriculture to funeral rituals. However, even though he observed the non-separation between everyday practices and “magical” ceremonial aspects, Malinowski defined the relationship between the Trobriandese and magic in terms of a psychological operation, discarding the agency of material forms in this process. Thus says the author: “The strength of magic does not lie in things” (Malinowski 1978, 299).

Radcliffe-Brown (2013), on the other hand, opposed Malinowski’s functionalist view paying attention to the question of symbols according to the notion of effectiveness. Criticizing a tradition of studies that since Frazer established conceptual differences between magic and religion, Radcliffe-Brown considered praxis as the only possible dividing line between both spheres and argued that religion builds dependency relations since success in everyday life would be linked to the rituals of worshipping ancestry. In this sense the author proposes that ritual practices should be studied not for their purpose but for the meaning they carry.

In turn, Evans-Pritchard (2005) analyzed what he calls magic or witchcraft practiced among the Azande – people of Sudan – and, like Malinowski, also drew attention to the presence of Zande magic in the various dimensions of native life. In the anthropologist’s view, witchcraft is a psychic act and should not be taken in the sense of “primitive mentality”. On the contrary, Evans-Pritchard states that, through witchcraft, the Azande express behavior and a way of thinking about the world that is consistent with their code of morality.

In short, even though methodological aspects were innovated by this first generation of anthropologists, their proposals for the analysis of religious and/or magical practices, whose emphasis fell on the thinking or the meaning of things, were perpetuated for generations to come following the example of Geertz (1981). In my view, even though they have focused attention on practices in different contexts, what was observed by the researchers ended up being described based on one of the components of the empirical universe: the native discourse.

In this sense, when native speeches absolutize the ethnography analytical potentialities are simplified because, when questioned by the anthropologist, what the native says does not result purely and simply from a mental operation nor it is restricted to offering a meaning as if it were a product ready and packed for dissemination. In addition, reducing discursive constructions to the scope of the meaning of things ends up supplanting the materialization of things themselves in images, sounds, smells and bodies all of them also present in empiricism. The question



that arises is: how to make these materialities ethnographic without, after all, reducing everything to discourse analysis?

## OTHER APPROACHES

Returning to the sentence that starts the article, religion is present in many places and, just as it appears in temples or “sacred” books, it is not restricted to these media since it can also be seen in photographs, music, bodies, architectures, food, parties, radio, television and, more recently, on the internet on whose social medias many audiovisual productions on religion are posted daily. As I stated earlier, even though religious practices are constituted by material forms or media I note that this materiality is still little used as an object of research by those who investigate the subject.

More recently, some new trends in the field of anthropology have started to propose this classic methodology. A group of anthropologists who created the Religious Matters in an Entangled World<sup>5</sup> research project – started in 2016 at the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands – has been criticizing the academic tradition that has devoted itself to the religious issue. By valuing a method that prioritizes a material approach to religion, these scientists understand religion itself as a media that acquires presence on the public scene through the constitutive materiality of its practices: image, object, food, body, sound, smell, architecture, etc. (Janeja 2016, Meyer 2019, Schlatmann 2017, Svasek & Meyer 2016, van de Port 2012).

According to Birgit Meyer (2019), one of the project’s coordinators, the proposed study method contradicts the already established theories of communication, expanding the notion of media beyond the technological scope of photography, cinema, radio and television. It also breaks with the “mentalist” tradition based on which the field of the humanities, relying on semantic and indebted approaches to the Enlightenment, emphasized the content and meaning of things, criticizing religion according to the notions of “fictitious illusion” and “false conscience” given the theoretical embarrassment produced by scholars such as Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

Still in the view of Utrecht researchers, this tradition established contrasts between belief and meaning which supposedly cover the immateriality of “spirit” on the one hand and issues involving power, practices and materiality on the other, reifying the secularist idea through which religion was designed for the realm of interiorization and the private. On the contrary to this perspective, Religious Matters in an Entangled World propose to exercise criticism from an “inside” point of view using

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5. <https://religiousmatters.nl/>

a methodology that shows the agency of bodies, shared sensations and emotions in the construction of worlds.

The sedimentation of the material approach resulted from the concerns of scholars who, when researching post-colonial contexts and religious diversity, found a presence of religion in public life and, to describe and analyze this presence, brought the notion of media closer to the religious field from the perception of a process they call “aesthetic formation”. To arrive at this formulation, anthropologists started from their respective fields of research. Meyer, for example, realized a proliferation of pentecostal and charismatic churches in southern Ghana from the 1990s onwards.

According to the anthropologist, these churches were the result of the formation of “mediatized religious communities” whose participants, when incorporating audiovisual mass media in their practices, achieved visibility on the public scene. The notion of media, according to Meyer, instead of being restricted to the already known electronic means, should be expanded to understand the place of the material dimension in the field of religious experience, a place that consists of authorized forms of visibility of religion according to historically and contextually constructed political arrangements. It is in this line of reasoning that the author considers religion itself as a practice of mediation.

One of the advantages of understanding religion as a practice of mediation is that it no longer takes the practices, objects and other forms through which it manifests itself in the world as secondary to beliefs, meanings and values, but as forms necessary for through which the “beyond” becomes accessible or the “invisible” becomes “apparent” (Meyer 2019, 209-210).

The background to the debate proposed by Meyer is the criticism of tradition, mentioned earlier, that conceived the notion of materiality in opposition to everything that would come to be identified as religion. As a historically situated concept, materiality arose in opposition to the God of Christian theology. Furthermore, a field of ideas built around iconoclasm, when Catholics and Protestants clashed in the wake of the disputes that culminated in the Protestant Reformation movement, not only dematerialized the study of religion but also bequeathed a set of categories to the social sciences – totem, idol and fetish – from which intellectuality, in the name of reason, promoted a separation between people and things.

The defense of materiality indicates the need to pay urgent attention to a world of real and material objects and to a texture of lived and embodied experience (Meyer 2019, 88).

In short, for Utrecht researchers, the lived and embodied experience stems from materialities that form an aesthetic. Unlike the Kantian notion of beauty the sense of aesthetics they alluded to goes back to Aristotle who conceives aesthetics from a sensory point of view or as a sensation. In this analytical key taking up the case of the IURD, as stated earlier, the media materialized the image of Edir Macedo promoting a mediation between the figure of the pastor and the audience of Universal through the sensory effects that the image itself produces. In other words, more than a concept this image is best translated as a sensation manufactured and shared by material forms that together agreed on an iurdian style.

## CONCLUSION

Given all that has been discussed, it is worth asking how to approach the religious question from material or media forms. As there is no ready answer, several paths could be pointed out remembering that from an anthropological point of view and taking into account the proposals of researchers that intersect religion, media and the formation of communities, as in the case of Birgit Meyer, ethnography is still the device through which the exercise of describing and analyzing a set of relationships can lead us to dismantle already seen methods when the researched topic concerns religion.

As discussed, the speeches of the religious actors as well as the meanings that they give to the practices should not be the guiding thread of the ethnography. The media themselves come to occupy the prominent place when from the media images, sounds, gestures, flavors and smell they produce feelings shared by the actors who are part of a certain religious community. Thus, the symbolic sphere should not be considered as data but as the result of a manufacturing process – a metaphor constantly mentioned by Meyer – because, according to the anthropologist, what has come to be called sacred or supernatural or spiritual is a dimension manufactured by things that, in turn, touch the sensory field of those who relate to such dimension within an aesthetic formation process.

In short, media are useful materials to build hypotheses or even turn more ethnographic the process of formation of the community that gathers in a set of “sacred temples” – the IURD – as well as the possible relationships established between the religious actors and Edir Macedo. Universal’s media apparatus reveals how marketing around the pastor’s presence impacts the way churchgoers exhibit their own trajectories for example in some commercials on Rede Record television: the sober way of dressing, the modulation in speaking, the exhibition of material conquests from a tragic situation reversed by a “divine grace”, etc. Therefore, not only the figure of leadership does matter; the performance of his followers also becomes a rich material for investigation.

There are many challenges to be faced when opting for a material approach to religion since the interlocutors, if they research the topic from a phenomenological or conceptual perspective, will certainly question the arguments for an “after all, what does it mean?”. If possible responses to this type of provocation are not able to justify that processes of meaning, belief or imagination – as proposed by Benedict Andersen (2008) – under no circumstances are sufficient for the formation of a religious community, certainly the material dimension will fall overland. However, if instead of ideas shared sensations are valued then the materialities that manufacture such sensations will start to matter.

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## **"BE PREPARED TO PERFORM WHAT I ASK"—INVASIONS OF AFFECTIVE PIETY IN THE COMEDIC ACTIVITY OF *THE SECOND SHEPHERDS' PLAY* AND *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT***

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### **ABSTRACT**

Beginning with an investigation into forms of aurality used in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Middle English devotional literature, this article breaks down journeys of affective piety in both the courtly romance and urban cycle plays. Traditional understandings of genre divisions are super-ceded in the Middle English period by performative spirituality and invocations to the audience/ reader to a contemplative posture. The Wakefield Master and the *Gawain* poet developed their work aware of the Lollard critiques of church excesses and invested in personal expressions of inward devotions which had been popularized in the work of Nicholas Love and other Carthusian texts dealing in popular piety. Both *The Second Shepherd's Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* develop landscapes of upheaval and redemption around their characters, drawing the reader into individual reflection on well-known sacraments and intervals of the church year.

### **KEYWORDS**

Affective piety;  
Cycle dramas;  
Romance;  
Devotion;  
performance.

## INTRODUCTION

A new investigation into the prevalence of imaginative devotion and its effects, not only on spiritual output written for elite readers, but also on the creative performance of all medieval English culture, demands new connections be drawn between subjects and genres previously classified as isolated phenomena in the latter part of the English Middle Ages. This paper pays respect to the diversity of materials that were used in the Middle English world as both meditative and dramatic texts in marrying a study of the performative and devotional strains contained in *The Second Shepherd's Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Jessica Brantley, in her groundbreaking work on the Carthusian Miscellany MS Additional 37049, examines medieval reading culture within a religious setting where the main performative act was meant to take place through “the readerly process of understanding” (Brantley 2007). Manuscripts of all variety, through the process of imaginative devotion, take on a transformative quality that links them to both the broad understanding of pageantry and the repetitive, often semi-public medieval reading culture.<sup>1</sup>

The lines the contemporary reader typically imagines between disparate genres have no meaning when encountering the reality of how manuscripts were collected, shared, and read for both a lay and spiritual audience. Dialogue contained in the written text was at various times performed in individual engagement, read aloud in aural transmission, or presented in a conventionally dramatic fashion within a set scene. In the same way, the modernist divide between works that are meant to be examined in a purely spiritual context and those created for “secular” preoccupations is meaningless in the vernacular of 14<sup>th</sup> century England. Whether the medieval reader chose to lean more into the “imaginative” or “devotional”, the reading experience nevertheless creates a theatrical opportunity both of spectacle and what Brantley examines as the “influence of drama on rhetoric” where the varied opinions and positions of the characters are performed inside the act of reading (Brantley 2007). Drama as a rhetorical tool is obvious in the varied judgments on Gawain’s “crime and “pardon” that end his romance. So too with the performance of the “false nativity” in *The Second Shepherds' Play* as a spectacle to be judged against the staging of the Incarnation.

An examination of the pageantry and pedagogical dialogues of *Gawain* alongside the more conventionally “theatrical” works of the Wakefield Master respects a readership which was trained to encounter “monastic reading and civic spectacle, individual meditation, and communal worship, lyric and dramatic poetry” all together as a means of imaginative

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1. See Brantley’s chapter, “The Performance of Reading” in her *Reading the Wilderness* for a thorough investigation into the “vibrant means of spiritual making” (Brantley) evident throughout vernacular reading culture in this period.

and spiritual development (Brantley 2007). More than a comparison of a Courtly or “high” example of vernacular literature which explores devotional themes to a more Popular or “low” example demonstrated in civic drama, this paper shows how to lay participation in and exploration of personal and civic piety infused all creative modes of medieval English output. The unifying threads of vernacular affective piety, as expressed in *The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyfe of Jesus Christ (Mirror)* by the Carthusian brother Nicolas Love, and the conventions and possibilities outlined by examining these texts through Performance Theory, make these connections explicit. Not only the characters but the reader, viewer, and hearer of these vernacular texts perform a journey towards understanding through the scenes and disputes presented to them. What is created is not only a reimagined space but a performed interiority. The play-acting in both works condenses space, shifting quotidian journeys into mental and spiritual transformations. It recasts time to fit with the cyclical patterns of the church calendar and upends conventional patterns of power and injustice to allow for the absurd and transformative invasion of redemption.

#### **NICHOLAS LOVE AND THE THEATER OF IMAGINATIVE DEVOTION:**

The Carthusian religious house at Mount Grace was established in the political turmoil at the beginning of the fifteenth century, during the last years of Richard II’s reign and his overthrow and succession by Henry IV (Tuck 1984). It was in this house that Nicholas Love wrote what he considered a translation of St. Bonaventure’s *Speculum Vita Christi*. His work, more interpretation and commentary on Bonaventure than what would now be accepted as a translation, includes a definition for an incredible outpouring of creative approaches to Christian devotion occurring contemporaneously. Coming at the same time as the Lollard heresy, and meant to satisfy a lay devotional system which placed an increased emphasis on the Word of Christ as central to approaching the mysteries and sacraments, Love’s *Mirror* uses both scripture and the prayers common to Middle English catholic<sup>2</sup> practice to demonstrate ways in which the devout lay reader can keep Christ’s words and salvific actions close.

The turn of the fifteenth century represented a period of intense religious and political turmoil that affected the lives and religious practices of the common people. Lollardy not only attracted a large following of the middling and lower classes of both genders, but also addressed many of the critiques routinely expounded upon, and often censored, in a wide variety of vernacular texts. Love reflects on the gospels to address the controversy of lay readership of the scriptures for his lay audience. He presents Christ’s activity on earth, his manhood, as a gift to the Christian community

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2. I intentionally use lower-case c catholic throughout my discussion to direct readers towards the denotation of universal or standard in Christian practice rather than the post-Reformation designation of the specific Catholic denomination.

through the recording of “þe precious drinke of his / holi gospel, with þe which aftur he confortet alle holi chirch & aʒeynus þe venyme of diuerse heretiks”<sup>3</sup> (Love 149). Love responds to a growing need of the lay population to engage with scripture and devotional practice beyond their attendance at mass. His *Mirror* was not divorced from the same spiritual desires that initially crafted the tenets of the Lollard heresy.<sup>4</sup> As Ian Levy explains, John Wyclif, the theologian from whom many of the beliefs central to what has been traditionally considered Lollardy originated, developed his theology of consubstantiation from a sincere desire to re-engage with the Word as he saw contained in the scriptures. However, he wrote his treatise at a time when the boundaries of orthodoxy were being pushed to a historically narrow parameter. What Wyclif viewed as his conservative pushback against more fringe interpretations of scripture was branded a heretical theology shortly after his death (Levy 2003). In this climate, the variety of vernacular poetry reflecting specifically on devotional themes offers a fascinating portrait of how pious culture was received and performed in late fourteenth-century Middle English.

As Gail Gibson illustrates in her examination of East Anglian material culture, affective piety, the act of devotion that involved direct engagement with the story of the gospels to approach an understanding of the enormity of God, perforated all ranks of society at the end of the fourteenth century. In response to a “growing English self-consciousness—national civic and personal” (Gibson 1989), more works meant for private devotion such as Love’s *Mirror* were circulated in the vernacular. Love’s work divides scenes from the life and narratives exemplifying the character of Christ into days of the week as a pattern for believers to divide their spiritual practice “as in liknes & onlich as a manere of parable & deuoute ymaginacion, stiryng man to loue god souerely for his grete mercy to man & hus endless gudnes”<sup>5</sup> (Love 9). Devout imagination permeated much of Christian practice at this time. Simultaneously, changing urban centers became the annual sites of a variety of creative takes on the Biblical narrative in the form of the mystery cycle dramas. Several of these cycles have been preserved and demonstrate creative, broad, and often subversive handlings of spiritual materials. The Wakefield Master’s work illustrates brilliant handling of social realities and provides a creative

3. “The precious drink of his holy Gospel, with which he comforted the whole of his hoy Church afterwards and with which he protected it against the venom of various heretics” (All translations into Modern English are my own with the aid of *The Middle English Compendium* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>)

4. The most obvious example of how the practice of affective piety could be conflated with or perceived as Lollardy, lies in the life of Margery Kempe and the frequent accusations of “preaching” that dogged her penitential piety. A study on the uniquely feminine experience of ever-shifting line separating contemplative piety from heresy has been a fruitful line of engagement from imaginative devotion.

5. “As in a likeness and solely in the form of parable and devout imagination, stirring men to love God chiefly for His great mercy to humankind and His endless goodness.”

interpretation of how the power manifest the life of Christ could intrude into and transform lived experience.

Nicholas Love, when discussing Christ's fast in the wilderness, urges his followers into contemplative exercises away from the crowds and press of society. He says that to be spiritually positioned to see God, the pious reader should "go in to solitary place, & in als miche as þou maist, sauynge þin astate, fle þe cumpanye of fleshly men... Fil not þin eyen and þin eres with veyn fantasies"<sup>6</sup> (Love 72). Love's *Mirror* calls its readers to participate in the action of the gospel beginning with associations to contemporary life. The fantasies and contrived comedic scenarios that begin the *Second Shepherds' Play* might look like a distraction in the context of spiritual growth, but the comedy speaks to the very heart of the imaginative devotional practice. The bawdy appraisal of contemporary issues imagines a landscape onto which the miracles of the incarnation and nativity of Christ make a profound invasion.

The popular appeal of imaginative devotion was not confined only to civic, cycle dramas. While the mystery cycles were meant to be consumed by a general and mostly illiterate audience, the courtly gestures of the romance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* imagine a different readership. The *Gawain* poet demonstrates comfort with court life and a fascination with ornamentation that has been traced back to a close connection to Richard II's court. However, the comedic arc of both the play and the romance, and both works' engagement with physical and spiritual spaces, demonstrate the use of "liminal states brought about by some kinds of rituals" (Suydam 1999). The liminality of both works allows the pious to engage these works on a creative as well as devotional level. For this reason, the romance of *Sir Gawain* and the Wakefield Master's work is worth examining in communication with one another.

While similarities exist between the creative interpretations of biblical texts Love makes in *Mirror* and the broader interpretations provided in the Wakefield Master's work, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a romance that is preoccupied with questions about the sacraments, is first a courtly text. The *Gawain* poet is well versed in the world of feasting, hunting, and chivalric conduct, a busy, "fleshly" world where Gawain undergoes a quest that begins in the space of courtly romance and ends in a spiritual argument. Christine Chism makes a compelling case that the main thrust of much of Gawain's actions illustrates the potential pitfalls of the increased centralization of the Ricardian court. However, the sudden comedic turn on the serious topics of sin and penance are not merely in service of a happy ending. The connections between the two works

6. "Go into a solitary place, and in as much as you may, considering your condition, flee the company of men... Do not fill your eyes and ears with vain (useless) fantasies."



become more obvious if they are moved out of the context of genre and into a study of the performative aspects embodied in each text.

### **MODELING PROPER DEVOTION IN OUTWARD SHOW AND INWARD PERFORMANCE:**

Performing effective piety and mystical expression should not be confused with insincerity in worship or belief. Performance studies provide a key to handling the critique that worship that is performed “connotes an illusion or a show one which raises suspicions (not admirations) in the audience” (Pitches 2011). There is nothing innately artificial about performing or acting out spiritual tenets or beliefs. Performing acts of imaginative devotion can create a natural space through which the believer imagines themselves moving from the actions confining the reality of lived experience which is best illustrated by the straits of the weather and poverty in *Second Shepherds’* or the chivalric codes and conventions of the romance genre seen in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, into a fuller understanding of the salvific actions of the gospel.

The Wakefield Master is as engaged in his short play with the interactions between inward piety and outward performance. As they are debating the duplicity of their sheep-stealing companion Mak, the shepherds in the Wakefield Master’s play make a compelling observation about the appearance deceptions can take. Mak is distinguished by his wolf-skin coat. Coll remarks such a dress is common these days as “so are many hapt, Now namely within” (*Second Shepherds’* 532-533). Mak’s outer dress, his ad-dress, allows the audience of *Second Shepherds’* a brief yet complete introduction to his inner life. His wolfskin, inner and outer, forms a cue to the audience that his intentions will always stand in contrast with the false performances he tries to pass off, first as a “sond from a greatt lordying”<sup>7</sup> (*Second Shepherds’* 294), and then as a pious friend of the shepherds rattling off pseudo-Latin. Edminster’s examination of the subversive, anti-clerical strains in the Wakefield Master’s work, highlights the appearance of Mak’s wolfskin and the shepherd’s commentary on it as an example “common among the Lollards... audiences would have understood pastoral themes as a metaphor for commenting on the clergy” (Edminster 2005). The performance Mak makes of faking his benign intention adds meaning to his wolfskin trappings and suggests a larger question of what it means to embody bad clerical practices. In discussing his body while in the act of performance, Guevara explains that he cannot think of himself just as single selfhood but must imagine “an undeniable tension between the ideological inscription of the body and the body as a lived entity” (Guevara 2011). Mak embodies both his personal and symbolic corruption in a way that points to redemption for both aspects of his character.

7. “a great lord’s minister”

The gifts presented to the Christ child in the *Second Shepherds'* might seem odd, as does the shepherd's shift into an understanding of the gravity of what has been revealed to them. After all, they change from complaining about how "sore" and out of joint they are after beating up Mak the sheep thief to the postures common to anyone who has ever seen a shepherd on a greeting card or in a front lawn nativity set in an absurdly short window of dramatic time. Their reaction to seeing the Christ child is a complete reversal from the anti-child, anti-family language that has dominated the farcical first half of the play. In his examination of the subversive nature of the *Second Shepherds'*, Edminster looks at its view of marriage and childbirth, key elements to the story of Christ's incarnation, as ultimately oppressive before the tension of the drama is broken by the farce. Edminster sees Coll's oppression under the new aristocratic practices of the enclosure as comparable to Daw and Mak's plight as a husband "forced from the sexual embrace of his wife and made to tend children" (Edminster 2005). Daw's complaint includes a warning about the end of his will being his own, presumably because he is now subject to making decisions in consideration for his family. He warns young men "of wowyng, / For God that you boght, / Be well war of wedyng"<sup>8</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 131-133). Mak pushes this complaint to absurdity when he announces his pitiful situation comes mostly from a wife who "ilk yere that commys to man/ She bryngys furth a lakan, /And som yeres two"<sup>9</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 349-351). Babies are a weight on Mak, one that drives him into the act of staging his parody of the incarnation in the first place. In Rick Bowers' reading, Mak's role is as a figure of misrule and carnival. His coming into contact with the mystery of the nativity has him inadvertently acting "within a parodic economy of sacred theft and sacred restitution... beyond the physically immediate to the transcendent" (Bowers 2002). The shepherds' contending with Mak announces to the play's audience that the status quo introduced in the opening complaints is about to be upended and renegotiated.

The first shepherd, Coll, demonstrates a mastery of the complex mystery in front of him in his address to the infant Jesus. He greets the baby with an acknowledgment that he is the Godhead who "has waryd, I weyne, / The warlo so wylde;/ The fals gyler of teyn"<sup>10</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 1028-1030). He then easily balances this solemn, joyful pronouncement of Christ's incredible majesty with simple sympathetic delight in seeing a happy baby, remarking "[l]o, he laghys, my swetyng"<sup>11</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 1035). The shifts and balances within *The Second Shepherds'* are remarkable, even within the genre of the mystery play. Liam Purdon remarks on how "[*Second Shepherds'*] suggests... that the qualitative metaphysical condition

8. Beware (stand well clear) of a wedding

9. "Every year that passes she bears another baby and some years, two."

10. I know has battled, the wild warlock (Satan), who beguiles men"

11. "Look, he laughs, my sweetheart"

of the pastoral mind—that is the condition of mind of the local everyman figure—must first encompass if it is to appreciate fully the experience of God in the Nativity by being cognitively “priestlike” (Purdon 2003). This reading suggests the depth with which the playwright was willing to engage with the performances of imaginative devotion. The active, working shepherds find their mundane and difficult reality displaced by the birth of Christ and demonstrate what the proper response to this shift must be. By recognizing the majesty and the humanity in the baby Jesus, the shepherds adopt the proper posture to address the mystery of the incarnation: a model that can be imitated in the regular devotion of other “everymen”.

Leprow, in her case for the defensive orthodoxy of the northern mystery cycles, argues that the Wakefield Master sets up the action of the play so that “[the shepherds] are also potentially clerical pastors” (Leprow 1990). However, their actions and posture emphasize more the “pastoral” or leadership potential of these dramatic models than a strict “clerical” role in the way that Leprow suggests. The shepherds try and fail to imitate the song given to them by the angelic messenger. Their role, their audience’s role, is not to stand in place of the spiritual marvels that have been imitated on the stage. Instead, the shepherds urge each other and all their audience to go quickly and seek out the marvel. The shepherds remain grounded in their human nature. Therefore, their acts can be imitated. Those interacting with the performance of *Second Shepherds’* need not be priest-like themselves to experience the intersection of God with mundane space and linear time.

Redeeming the lay life as a place inspiring imaginative devotion is as much the work of the *Gawain* poet’s romance as it is the farce in *The Second Shepherd’s Play*. Gawain’s role as a chivalric knight in an Arthurian legend introduces us to a model given in the *Mirror of the Blessed Lyfe* on how the active layperson could enhance their devotional practice. Rather than distinguishing the active and contemplative vocations as separate callings in the manner repeated in several vernacular mystic texts of the time,<sup>12</sup> Love speaks to the possibility of the active life leading into, even intermingling with, the contemplative experience. He imagines his vernacular audience, “lewde men & women & hem that bene of symple undirstondyng”<sup>13</sup> (Love 10), as people capable of engaging with the mysteries of the gospel by keeping the narrative themes close to themselves through guided instruction.<sup>14</sup> In his examination of Mary and Martha as models

12. See the *Cloud of Unknowing* for a description of the contemplative vocation as one set apart from not only the active life, but a push away from the imaginative devotional tools employed by Love and towards an emptying of self to all stimuli but the presence of God.

13. “Lewd (common or unlearned) men and women and those that are of simple understanding”

14. Love’s first invocation, borrowed from Bonaventure, is to St. Cecilia who is said to have kept the gospel close to her breast: an evocative image considering the inward facing

for the contemplative and active lives, Love points to the active life as a process that must begin with the longing spirit to practice “wipdrawing fro vices & profetyng in vertues”<sup>15</sup> (Love 120). The Gawain we meet at the beginning of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* seems to provide an excellent model for a knight who has taken the first steps in moving through a pious, active life towards more contemplative considerations.

The model for the virtuous active life presented in *Sir Gawain* seems to be that of the virtuous courtier. The *Gawain* poet describes his protagonist as an ideal hero, first by illustrating his willingness to undertake service for his king, beseeching the embarrassed Arthur that “this melly might be myne”<sup>16</sup> (SGGK 342). Christine Chism especially argues for Gawain’s role as a representation of the changing role of the nobility under Richard II. As the Ricardian court was becoming more of a centralized entity, Gawain’s position as “a courtier who draws his power directly and solely from the king’s generosity” (Chism 2002) takes on significance to the poet’s courtly readership. The importance of personal piety in Richard II’s court has been documented by the rise of Carthusian houses and the recorded practices of personal piety. In “Lollard Knights and Carthusian Monks”, Tuck concludes, contrary to the suspicion that the Ricardian court was a hotbed of heretical practice, the features the knights of the court took from the Lollard movement were more in line with the same personal piety trend reflected in Love’s *Mirror* and other works of vernacular devotion focused on the individual’s posture in contemplating the divine. The trend that Tuck sees in Richard’s court was a moment towards “the pietistic and moralistic attitudes of early Lollards rather than to the more specifically anti-sacramental, anti-hierarchical and pacifist teachings...” (Tuck 1984). Using this model, Gawain acts as a perfect stand-in for the pietistic courtier that held sway in the Ricardian court.

The role of performed piety inside the narrative of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* becomes complicated when combined with the *Gawain* poet’s conception performed and perceived knighthood. Gawain delineates himself by his modeling moral and chivalric virtues. His knightly behavior is presented as originating with the religious values illustrated by outward signs of popular devotion. The reader is told how Gawain’s five-pointed fidelity and service to his monarch is predicated on “alle his afyaunce upon folde was in the/ fyve wonundes/ that Cryst kaght on the croys, as the crede tells”<sup>17</sup> (SGGK 642-644). The reader is drawn towards the sign, prepared for the question of how Gawain’s outward symbols correspond to his inward soul. This gradual exploration of a symbol is comparable to

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portraits kept close by Sir Gawain.

15. “Withdrawing from vices and prospering in virtues”

16. “this be my engagement”

17. “All his thoughts in this earth were on the five wounds that Christ received on the cross as the Creed (the Gospel) says”

how Love would choose to break down a narrative theme from his chosen portion of the Bible into comparative elements.<sup>18</sup> Like Love, the Gawain poet deals with scripture in a creative, adaptive manner that is meant to be read not as strict interpretation, but guidance through distinct spiritual themes. In discussing how the Gawain poet uses his theology, particularly in *Pearl* and his treatises on Patience and Cleanliness, Richard Newhauser notices his similarities to Nicholas Love in the way in which he “compressed text where necessary or rearranged passages to create themes and narrative” (Newhauser 1962). Gawain will take on the project Love sets out for how to move through the active life towards Christ.

The decorative shade of the romance drama becomes penetrable as the *Gawain* poet explores his desired themes. The abbreviated quest which Gawain undertakes is not littered with a series of magical adventures, but takes the knight “into Northe Wales/ alle the iles of Anglessay on lyft he holdes”<sup>19</sup> (SGGK 696-698), crossing over a landscape familiar to the original readers of the poem as a wild place at the center of a contemporary conflict in which “local gentry were at a crossfire when it came to expanding royal influence” (Chism 2002). In this realistic setting, Gawain is not at fault for the outward way that he chooses to act throughout his stay with Bertilak. When his game with Bertilak’s lady begins to have greater temptations and more stakes, Gawain shifts the game with Bertilak into a return of given kisses; his hurry to fulfill part of the agreed bargain serves to “indicate Gawain’s guilty conscience” (Haines 1982). As long as he can obey the strictures of the game’s rules, Gawain can put off taking any action either towards an affair with his hostess or to put a stop to her advances. His performance as a guest also allows him to put off any serious examination of what his interactions with Bertilak’s lady mean for his inward feeling or essence as a model Christian knight.

As DS Brewer explains in his introduction to the *Companion to the Gawain Poet*, the middle English literary landscape does not allow for distinguishing between the religious and the secular. The *Gawain* poet demonstrates Gawain’s character as an illustration of how the outward trappings of knighthood can be the beginning of a journey towards contemplative positions. His outward appearance suggests a desire for inward perfection. We are told that his outward-facing shield demonstrating the pentangle protects an inner image of “hende heven quene... that quen he blusched therto his belde never payred”<sup>20</sup> (SGGK 647 & 650). Gawain takes this image to heart. In his abbreviated quest through familiar wildernesses, he prays

18. For example, Love’s chapter on the Annunciation includes a breakdown of each line of the Hail Mary prayer into a meditation on how each aspect of the address signals the mystery of Christ becoming man through Mary, what is entailed through blessedness, and the power of intercessory prayer.

19. “Into Northern Wales, keeping the isles of Anglesey on his left”

20. The fair queen of heaven... since he regarded that queen, his courage never failed”



in his confusion to Christ “and Mary, that is myldest moder so dere, / of sum herber ther heghly I myght here masse”<sup>21</sup> (SGGK 754-755). While Gawain believes himself merely to be imitating the models given to him by proper spiritual practice, and illustrates his beliefs on his insignia, the performance he is embodying makes him a model for the knights and courtiers who read his romance. In her study on the penitential themes in lesser-known romances, Hopkins illustrates how “[p]iety and devotion are constantly encountered and referred to as essential qualities for a knight” (Hopkins 1990). The body Gawain inhabits is one which the courtly literate audience can identify with, but his transition describes a nuanced movement into the acts of devotional performance.

If Arthur’s authority is meant to serve as a mirror to Richard II, it is important to see what consequences a penitential story might have on a court audience. Arthur’s “sumquat childgered”<sup>22</sup> behavior—demanding the adventure that summoned the Green Knight to propose his perilous game, flying into a rage when mildly taunted so that he has to be checked by the service of one of his knights—has overarching consequences for everyone. As Haines explains, Arthur being called and responding to a quest that ultimately has a penitential mission “makes it difficult for individual members of the court, as we have seen to avoid being drawn into guilt” (Haines 1982). As much as Gawain represents a “surrogate reader of the Poem” under the strains of affective piety (Cooper 1999), he is immediately surrogate brought in to represent the court of Camelot in the wild spaces of the romance quest. The reader brought along on this journey through reading the romance would understand the weight of representation Gawain carries with him inside a courtly romance; he can never just be one knight on a personal quest. Gawain’s steps as a penitential knight become essential to see what will happen for the imagined court of Camelot and the aristocratic romance readers inside Richard’s court.

The tension in the romance of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is revealed in Gawain’s movement through the active forms of piety into a real understanding of the Godhead. Gawain’s body, his described comely features, his meaning-laden armor, and the speeches he makes all are meant to be ideals of these essential qualities, and still he has not obtained the directives of his mission. Gawain’s meaning is revealed with his movement into Hautdesert and performance at a new court under the strictures of penance. The *Gawain* poet lets us know the spiritual journey which Gawain will be undertaking when Bertilak’s court informs him “this penance now ye take/ and eft hit schal amend”<sup>23</sup> (SGGK 897-898). Gawain struggles with

21. And Mary that is the dearest and mildest mother, I might here have a measure of your heavenly help”

22. Playful with a sense of childishness

23. “You undertake this penance now, and it will serve afterwards”

his role as performing the role of a penitent so that the poet might illustrate how his readership can best embody the same position. As Guevara describes, the flattening of outer and inner reality is essential to effective performance. Lived experiences and embodied positions in society “are part of a continuity inside my body... and they all occupy some similar process” (Guevara 2011). Gawain’s embodied movement in his romance is towards reconciling his outer performance with an inner reality of pious devotion. If he is still acting as a courtier, then Gawain’s presence in Hautdesert, and his subsequent dive into the narrative’s dialogue on penitential actions, have everything to do with the court he represents. As Chism argues in her examination of the political realities that inspired the Gawain poet, the struggle over the identity of Camelot and its neighbors in light of a consolidating court means Gawain is “reduced to an errand boy” (Chism 2002). If viewed through the lens of affective piety, however, Gawain’s role as a go-between is far more significant. He acts as a representative of all those made to embody the posture of penance.

#### **TRAVERSING SPACE AND TIME ON THE SPIRITUAL STAGE:**

The most important element of the imaginative devotion as outlined in Love’s treatise is the ability of the pious to place themselves in the mind of the devotional material with which they are working. The goal of a creative, affective posture is to experience a reveling in the presence of God outside the bounds of linear, anthro-centric time. Love’s *Mirror* lays the scenes of his daily meditations on the life of Christ so that his readers feel connected to the spiritual mysteries presented in the mundane activities they share with the human figures of Jesus and his family. Human conceptions of time are laid aside in favor of a cyclical, spatial narrative arc with God’s salvation of mankind as a central theme presented and represented throughout the Christian year. Both the *Second Shepherd’s Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are set around the Christmas season. The barren, dead season of the natural calendar is also a season heavy with the mystery of the Incarnation in the Christian devotional cycle and a season of penance that leads into the feasts signaling a “New Year” and an opportunity for transformation. Characters drawn into this medieval setting of Christmastime are playing within a multilayered symbolic landscape and naturally face journeys that lead them towards the divine mystery.

In her groundbreaking collection of essays on the late medieval performance practices of mysticism and devotion, Suydam points to the liturgical traditions of the medieval mass as providing a key to how “the three elements of religious ritual—space-time and story—found their most prominent expression” (Suydam 1999). The space which the *Second Shepherds’* action occupies creates a flattening of experience, where the action of the farce with the stolen sheep occurs in the same place where

Christ is born. The play also manipulates historical time, compressing the performance of the biblical past and the acknowledgment of the medieval present into the cyclical and redemptive time scale of the Christian story. The space provided inside the conventions of late medieval drama creates a fruitful space for spiritual questions posed at its audience.

The Wakefield Master uses similar methods of identification to the actions and events of the Nativity which Love's *Mirror* employs to help the audience of *Second Shepherds'* draw closer to the significance of the depicted events. The shepherds each begin their complaints on the condition of life as hired men with a pronouncement about a landscape and climate well known to an audience in the north of England at Christmastime. Their dialogue creates a landscape onto which their audience easily can transpose their imaginations. The winds and rains on the plain of Bethlehem "ar spytus... and the frostys so hydus"<sup>24</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 83-85) reflecting a similar landscape to what Love points out in his description of the nativity.<sup>25</sup> Christ has chosen to be born at "þe tyme þat was most noyus and hard, as þe cold wyntour"<sup>26</sup> (Love 38) as a gesture towards the wrongs of the world which must be done penance for. Indeed, the cold weather in the *Second Shepherds'* acts a prelude to a list of fractured social relationships which would be identifiable immediately to their audiences. The shepherds make oaths by "oure Ladye" and worry that the contemporaneous enclosure acts have made them "nerehandys/ oute of the doore"<sup>27</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 16-17). The cold of the winter in Bethlehem and the inhospitable working conditions the shepherds face signal the audience they are walking in familiar territory as the comedy pushes towards Bethlehem.

The winter landscape that vexes the characters of the *Second Shepherds'* also creates a powerful metaphor of Christ's birth as a reality-altering invasion into lived time. Rick Bowers notices that the cold the shepherds complain demonstrates the coldness in their relationships with one another and their community. The staged portions of the shepherds' experience, according to Bowers, illustrate "a world desperate for an intervention of cosmic grace" (Bowers 2002). As Liam Purdon notes in his examination of the area around Townley where the Wakefield Master presented his plays, understandings about the spiritual value of work, a "psychic dignity to labor as well as to the things used to facilitate work" were elevated by the common people hoping to undertake spiritual practice in their lived experience (Purdon 2003). This is a similar trend to that which Nicholas Love illustrates throughout the *Mirror* by his preoccupation

24. "Are spiteful... and the frosts so hideous"

25. There used as an illustration of the humble circumstances into which the Godhead chose to become a man and to invoke pity for Jesus and his mother.

26. "The time that was the most harmful and hard, as the cold of winter."

27. "Nearly out of doors (homeless)"

with the labor and active lives principally of Christ and Mary, but also in his framing of Martha the sister of Lazarus as a dignified model of incorporating devotion into an active experience. Modern understandings of how theater is staged and structured help to illustrate how the spiritual and economic tensions in *Second Shepherds'* are introduced, subverted, and then redeemed. Presenting lived injustice into a shifting and open theatrical space allows the players in the Wakefield Master's work "to combat not only the rigidity of built environments but also the powers that shape them" (Hannah 2011). The *Second Shepherds'* use of the cold and barren space of contemporary work where spiritual dignity is under threat by the consolidation of lands and abuse of the labor by the local aristocracy, allows its audience to see the miracle of the incarnation as invading into their lived reality.

The progression of characters and narrative reflected in both *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *the Second Shepherds' Play* begins with a physical displacement. The action only shifts into a spiritual transformation after a transition through the emotional lens through which the characters experience their situation. The shifts in the brief *Second Shepherds'* are perhaps more noticeable than in the constant referral to comedy and festivity throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, the separate works are similar in the way they reflect the actions of the sacraments as a redemptive comedy. In discussing the creation of theatrical space, performance studies allow for a conceptualized space that has to be negotiated as "between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the subtle and the spectacular, the banal and the epic" (Hannah 56). The real world, in both *The Second Shepherds'* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is represented alongside deep concerns, even protests of a status quo in the social, political, and spiritual realities that occupied the turn of the fifteenth century.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* makes similar moves to the Wakefield Master's work at the beginning of its narrative. The readers are given points of identification both through the use of romance tropes and contemporaneous allusion. The *Gawain* poet introduces the mythical history of Britain before inviting his readers to listen as he spins them "an outrage aventure of Athures wonderes/ if ye wyl listen this laye bot on little quile"<sup>28</sup> (SGGK 29-30). What the *Gawain* poet does in this gesture is invite his readers to engage interactively as a person who listens to tales. Their reward for engaging is the "wonderes" that transcend the bounds of a simple adventure story. In performance studies, the interactive nature of narrative is innate. Even in a distanced format of storytelling like the relating of a romance where "an audience's side of the interaction is

28. "An extravagant adventure concerning Arthur's extraordinary deeds, if you would listen carefully to this story for just a little while"

largely silent, there is still an integral reciprocity... an exchange is implicit" (O'Grady 2011). The interactive and contemporaneous nature of both the *Second Shepherds' Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* create a space viable for the performance of affective piety.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* plays with elements of space and time to cue an alert pious audience of the Ricardian court that a deeper journey is at play than one contained by romance conventions. The *Gawain* poet demonstrates his fascination with journeys at once imaginative and spiritual in his consolation of theology, *Pearl*. The grieving narrator of this poem begins his journey through grief with an acknowledgment that he knows what he should do as a practicing Christian, "thagh kynde of Kyrst me comfort kenned"<sup>29</sup>, but cannot bring himself to do so: "my wreched wylle in wo ay wraughte"<sup>30</sup> (*Pearl* 55-56). The narrator's journey begins with a logical understanding of God's redemption, but the journey to consolation must be realized through a practice of interiority. The narrator moves in imaginative and spiritual spaces through his dialogues with the Pearl maiden. He claims how "fro spot my spyryt ther sprang in space;/ my body on balke ther bode in sweven. / My goste is gon in Godes grace/ in adventure ther mervayles meven"<sup>31</sup> (*Pearl* 61-64). This creation of spiritual space through imaginative landscapes is a dominant theme in the *Gawain* poet's work. Like the narrator of *Pearl*, Gawain too must undergo a movement from rational understanding of his practice as the Knight of the Pentangle to a deep engagement with Christ's redemptive action in the lives of sinful individuals. His acting out the role of a knight leads him eventually through a journey within his spiritual understanding.

Before he goes out to face his death, Gawain goes and makes a confession which according to Aers "is presented as valid and the priest's absolution as being in accord with the church's teaching on the saving power of the sacrament" (Aers 1999). The problem for Gawain, as for the narrator of the *Gawain* poet's *Pearl*, is that Gawain's performance of piety does not indicate an understanding of Christ's charity and grace. As Blenker describes, the journey of the narrator's soul in *Pearl* "correspond to the Augustinian division of the rational soul into three faculties—memory, understanding and will—ascend to Christ" (Blenkner 1970). At the point where *Pearl*'s narrator is given a glimpse of the truth of the Pearl maiden's consolation, he is unable to describe what he is experiencing. He says of Paradise "anunder mone so great merwayle/ no fleschly hert ne might endeure"<sup>32</sup> (*Pearl* 1081-1083). The reader is moved towards the ineffable at the heart of mystic texts meant only for the contemplative soul. The

29. "Though he knew the kindness of Christ"

30. "My wretched will is forged in woe"

31. "From that spot into space my spirit quickly sprang, my body remained on the mound. My spirit went by the grace of God to go on a marvelous adventure"

32. "So great a marvel that no earthly heart might be able to endure it"



*Gawain* poet remains dedicated to his imaginative exercise which permits him only to state there are matters so profound they cannot be stated.

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* deals with a journey towards the heart of Christ, not, as in *Pearl*, in an imagined spiritual landscape, but inside the heart of one questing individual. The final failure to adequately understand the impact of grace affects both the speaker of *Pearl* and Sir Gawain. The poetry of *Pearl* cannot adequately depict the beauty of Paradise. The narrator can only rush madly towards it only to be expelled from the object of his desire knowing that the only return is through the daily and common devotion found in the Eucharist where “in the forme of bred and wyn/ The preste uus schewes uch a daye/ He gef uus to be His homly hyne”<sup>33</sup> (*Pearl* 1209-1211). Gawain too is left grasping at a fully realized ascent to Christ which would make the question of his performance as a courtier and knight meaningless. He is led to repeat his story back to the court, where his journey of penitence is given a new lens in recounting, and Gawain is judged an excellent player. It is only through repetition of his performance as a penitent can he begin to approach the full meaning of his soul’s journey.

#### COMEDIC UPHEAVAL AND THE FESTIVITIES OF REDEMPTION:

The setting of Christmas in both *The Second Shepherd’s Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* allows for a space for expansive “play” that might be alien to a reader not accustomed to the creative landscape of Middle English religious literature. Mystery plays were a space to freely criticize the social order as well as invert the expectations of the normal hierarchy as much as they were meant to bring the community together.<sup>34</sup> Figures on the periphery of the most serious of Biblical mysteries frequently swear, inveigh scatologically, argue, and bemoan the difficulties of their existence. Into this proto-realist setting, often played for laughs and showing humanity at its basest, comes the grandeur and joy of the Christian redemption arc.<sup>35</sup> Mak’s farcical performance of the false nativity and his frequent donning and shifting of disguises makes for an obvious parallel to the “playacting” that sows the ground for the salvific comedy to germinate, but examples of distortion and overturning litter both works. Gawain is surrounded in all his endeavors by lightness and frivolity that allows him to enter perils to his life and soul without paralyzing trepidation. He might be playing the role of the dutiful knight, but everyone around him, including the Green Knight and King Arthur are set up to play roles

33. “in the form of bread and wine the priest shows us each day the form [God] gives us as his homely (recognizable or comfortable) presence on earth”

34. The Massacre of the Innocents in the Townley Cycle for instance has the mothers not only weeping for the children killed on Herod’s orders but fighting back in what could become a raucous melee as the women accuse the authorities of having “stolen” their children from them.

35. The classical understanding of comedy, as defined in *Poetics* (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1974/1974-h/1974-h.htm>) is supplanted by the Comedy of Salvation more familiar to readers of Dante and spread throughout the late medieval Christian landscape.

in what turns out to be a great game of absolution. The courtiers who see Gawain off with cheer and festivity make a game of his heroic return to the point that his feelings of unworthiness begin to make him look like a poor sport. In both the comedic bumbblings of the shepherds and the reckless festival air of Arthur's court, a theatrical space is opened which allows the realities of existence to be overturned. In these disruptions, the delighted audience is meant to witness a glimpse of the radical repositioning offered by the Salvation Narrative.

The games and "playing" which occupy both *The Second Shepherds'* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, both signal and enact profound moments of spiritual grace with community-wide implications. The staging of the pageant wagon requires that the physical space where the farce has taken place to transform into the stable where the shepherds meet the Holy Family, an act which is only possible in a performative reading of the play if "the punishment and overthrow of the false Mak, leads sequentially and causally to the birth of the Christ-child" (Edminster 2005). This sequencing seems counterintuitive and only can be made sense of in the process of a spiritual journey such as the ones undertaken by both the shepherds and Sir Gawain. When discussing the penitential language that infuses a large portion of spiritual writing at the turn of the fifteenth century, both orthodox and less so, David Aers sees a theme of spiritual wholeness in an individual must involve a "a transformation of relations in the community and the demands may certainly be radical" (Aers 1999). The safe distance of games and playacting create an invitation to engage with some of the more radical demands of spiritual and communal transformation.

The characters that occupy *Second Shepherds'* dramatic space are not only the victims of a broken system, they help perpetuate its injustices. Coll curses the slights committed against working men like himself, but there is no place in his or Daw's conception of injustice to extend compassion to their junior assistant Gib. The boy's overworked, terrified demeanor has him labelled a "ledyr hyne" (*Second Shepherds'* 214) whose ravings make him more trouble than he is helpful. The bullied Gib then is the first to turn on Mak, calling him a devil and warning the others to "take hede to his thing" (*Second Shepherds'* 290). Of course, Mak is a thief, a deceiver who at least appears to try and use witchcraft to steal from neighbors just as poor as he is. In the lived reality of those who saw the *Second Shepherds'* in its original staging, and for whom life could be "often brutal humiliating and short" (Edminster 2005), the warning Gyll gives to her husband that his crime has made him "lyke for to hyng"<sup>36</sup> (*Second Shepherds'* 446) is no exaggeration. The threat that Mak should and will hang for his theft was a grounded reality many in the audience

36. Likely to hang

would embrace as easily as the senior shepherds embrace taking their frustrations out on Gib. The festive nature of the subversion in the *Second Shepherds'* is a tremendous overturning of injustice for "men whose desperate need for Christ is apparent in their weariness with life and life's processes" (Helterman 1999). The shepherds take the first step of breaking out of the weariness and brutality of their lived experience and perform a radical disruption of mundane cruelty. Mak is not hanged for his crimes. As Bowers points out, "Mak never knows when to stop playing" (Bowers 2002), but fortunate for him, the playful inversion of parody allows for him to be shown charity that begins to appear divine. As Helterman explains, the cosmic setup of the first half of the play requires that "[o]nly by casting out the Mak in themselves can the shepherds expel the spiritual winter" (Helterman 1999). The rough pardon the shepherds give to Mak serves not only to redeem the comic character but the entire space which all the players who witness the nativity occupy.

Where the *Second Shepherds'* handles the spiritual joy of the nativity through shifts into what Bowers and Helterman call the carnivalesque in the false incarnation of the sheep theft plot, the comedy of *Sir Gawain* is distilled throughout the romance conventions it either transforms or rejects. The comedy of Gawain's ultimate redemption and pardon seems almost lost on the protagonist and leaves room for the courtly audience to negotiate whether or not Gawain is still in need of doing a penance for trying to save his own life. This dialogue creates a tremendous potential for the readers of the romance to negotiate issues in their devotional performance. What is created by the lingering questions is a theatrical, performative space where creative examples can be representative of larger issues. The issue of penance in romance becomes a cycle of interactive dramas. The several penances throughout the narrative serve a similar purpose as situations set up inside the conventions of interactive theater where "audience members are invited to understand the factors involved in creating the problem and to assist the protagonist and others in finding positive ways forward" (Sommars 2011). Placing the audience into the plights of the characters in both the *Second Shepherds* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are key to how their poets draw their readers into interactions with devotional themes.

In his examination of the theology employed by the *Gawain* poet, Nicholas Watson begins his examination by looking at the piety and restorative justice laid out in *Piers Plowman* as an example of symbolic, imaginative engagement with the same question that occupies *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: what must society do to be saved? But unlike Langland's language or even the more standard mystical language employed by Julian of Norwich or Nicholas Love, Watson argues that "the *Gawain* poet's dialectical and stylistic choices point in an opposite direction towards establishing

close contact with a lay audience able to understand (perhaps even constituted around their ability to understand) an ornate and regionally-specific vocabulary” (Watson 1999). This choice of language, tied intrinsically to the regional and socio-political space common to its intended readership, is key to how imaginative devotion functions in romance. Sir Gawain experiences a spiritual transformation through the complicated engagement with his duties as a knight and the alien world of death games he has chosen to inhabit. Christine Chism sees a significance in the variety of quest, host, and love games being performed throughout the romance to the court of Richard II. Richard, especially in his juvenilia, demonstrated his affiliation to the “childegered” Arthur through his fascination with ludic pastimes and mummary as a symbolic gesture of rulership (Chism 2002). In this model, it is difficult to say when Gawain’s moves are meant to become serious. His dangerous game with his hostess is described at first as “dere dalyaunce ... with clene cortays carp closed fro fylthe”<sup>37</sup> (SGGK 1012-1013). Like Mak in the *Second Shepherds’*, characters in *Gawain*, do not create a clear boundary where the “play-acting” should come to an end, until Gawain is forced to face his mortality at the Green Chapel.

The journey undertaken in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* pulls the knight “out of this secure realm of courtly diversion and implicate him in a world where life is lived vividly” (Chism 2002) as much through the challenges laid on Gawain’s virtue as in the spiritual journey that Gawain finds himself trying to negotiate at the end of the romance. It is not until the very end of the romance that Gawain begins to understand his “failure to comprehend more than the external trappings of his quest while ignoring its fundamental insistence on a consistent moral commitment to one’s professed ideals” (Hark 1962). Gawain feels compelled to restore himself into the community before Bertilak even has the space to condemn him. Feeling the incongruity of his role as the Pentangle Knight with an act that he frames as greedy and cowardly, Gawain tells Bertilak he feels himself to be “fawty and falce, and ferde haf been ever”<sup>38</sup> (SGGK 2382). For a crime much smaller than the trick perpetrated by Mak and under none of the same threat, Gawain makes a similar appeal for mercy. Unfortunately, he does not comprehend when mercy is handed to him. Although he performs the acts that should absolve any guilt lingering over the court from the adventure, Gawain struggles to accept his pardon. When Gawain “shares the knowledge of his guilt first with The Green Knight... and finally with Arthur and his court and he does public penance for it” (Barrow 1999), the pious reader of the romance is left to fill in how complete or even necessary the pardon of Pentangle Knight is meant to be.

37. “A gentle pastime with clean, courteous talk free of filth”

38. “Wicked, dishonest and cowardly have always been”

The key that the *Gawain* poet gives to his readers is the return to the now redeemed joy of the court to which Gawain makes his safe return. Gawain's contention with his faults, his transition through active affective piety becomes a symbol in Arthur's court which "was accorded the renown of the Rounde Table"<sup>39</sup> (SGGK 2519). It is the court's reaction and not Gawain's self-loathing stature as "blind to comic mercy... the butt of the divine joke" (Haines 1982) which is given the last word in the romance. This suggests that the community sees the arc of Gawain's journey as ultimately salvific and worthy to be remembered as a model of chivalric and pious action. Having gone through supernatural disruption and been forced into the world of treacherous playing, Arthur's court can redefine itself through the posture of penance and the language of forgiveness.

### CONCLUSION: AGAYNST FALS HERETIKS?

The tension central to much of the pious output from the 1380's into the first quarter of the fifteenth century has to do with how much the text chooses to be aware of, or even sympathetic to the critiques of the church establishment offered by the Lollard heresy. Nicholas Love deliberately distinguishes his work meant to guard against heretical belief, while Julian of Norwich is forced to take several "authorizing" steps within her text to properly situate some of her more radical theology well within orthodox parameters. Imaginative, pious practice contends with these issues in a much freer and potentially more complicated way than those offered in a work delineated as "devotional". On the one hand, both the *Second Shepherds' Play* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* demonstrate creative ways in which "it becomes possible for mediators to be spiritually transformed, even drawn into an ecstatic unitive experience with the divine" (Suydam 1999), but it is not as clear how these experiences fit within the contested parameters of the orthodoxy of their time.

Lauren Leprow makes an argument for cycle plays as a northern reaction to the incursions of the Lollard heresy. In Leprow's view, the fact that the cycles are set around the feast of Corpus Christi as a sign that the plays were performed to strengthen orthodox sacraments and "would be antithesis of the Lollard spirituality and would be singularly abhorrent to the followers of Wyclif" (Leprow 1990). However much the reflection on the incarnation in the *Second Shepherd Play* seems to fall in line with orthodox belief, there is something to be said concerning the ways in which the shepherds contend with the Word of Christ over false practice. Edminster challenges Leprow's reading and explains how subversive elements of the play suggest "[The Wakefield Master] certainly shares many of [the Lollard] concerns about the orthodox Catholic church (Edminster 2005). Mak's deception aligns enough with the "false shepherd" parables to suggest he plays a role as a model of the sort of bad cleric Lollard critiques

39. "Became renown around the Round Table"



see as unfit to carry out the sacraments. It is not a coincidence that in Mak's pastoral hands, the "lamb of God" becomes an object of comedy. The suggestion that Gyll swears by her willingness to "ete this chylde"<sup>40</sup> in a parody of receiving the Eucharist in order to reinforce the lie she is telling suggests the Wakefield Master's primary purpose is not to prop up orthodox veneration of all the sacraments. The shepherds' however end their encounter with the great charity of Christ in a state of grace that suggests that the wrongs of the false clerics have been redeemed and the world has been renewed to a state they have not before witnessed.

The model provided in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* leaves a more complicated question of whether the sacraments offered by the orthodox church speak to the spiritual needs of the pious lay person. Gawain has struggled throughout his romance with putting on and off the armaments of his spiritual practice and knightly duties. Much of his spiritual journey is his transition into a subject on which the sacrament of penance is examined. Gawain's struggle and therefore the reader's dilemma with understanding the beginnings and endings of a proper penance begins with the fact that it is not Gawain's confession to the priest that the reader sees. We see Gawain instead ready to perform his duty as a chivalric hero, then his confession to and absolution by the mercurial Green Knight "of the poynt of [his] egge"<sup>41</sup> whereby Gawain is said to be "pured as clene as thou hades never forfeget"<sup>42</sup> (SGGK 2392-2394). The wild nature-figure of the Christmas feast, not the priest, provides Gawain with the penance of a manly blow and tells him he is clear of his sins in part due to his courage. The performance of penance has been placed into a purely knightly context for the questing Gawain to interpret.

If he is absolved of his every sin, Gawain's continued performance of his penitent stance veers into the connotation of dramatic which Pitches thinks audiences consider somehow too exaggerated to be sincere. However, more than the sacrament of penance, Gawain receives a confirmation from the Green Knight that his work engaging with the tenets of his belief are aimed in the right direction. By engaging in affective piety, Gawain can move his spirit much in the same way as the Bethlehem shepherds towards an understanding of his transcendent connection with the divine.

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40. "Eat this child"

41. "The blade of his weapon"

42. "Washed as clean as if you had never sinned"

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## THE GYPSY AND THE UNIVERSITY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES, AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

To problematize how knowledge can be transmitted through orality, body, and experience, inside and outside ritual spaces, this article starts from the case of a medium from Umbanda in the state of São Paulo (Brazil). At 53 years old, she works as an independent salesperson in spaces like those of a public university, is known as “Gypsy”. After passing through some terreiros (it’s the temple where the Umbanda ceremony, “gira”, is held) in search of knowledge about her spiritual experiences since adolescence, she started to develop mediumship in the terreiro where this case was observed. In this space, she experiences various orientations through her body, initially occupying the position of cambona (caregiver) and dialoguing with the knowledge transmitted by the community, especially by the Pai-de-Santo (priest). From the addresses of the case, it is discussed, analogously, how the transmission of oral knowledge and deep support in and through the body are eminently separated from the training offered at the University.

### KEYWORDS

Mediumship;  
Umbanda; Religion;  
Ethnopsychology;  
University.

In this day and age, it is good to be protected.

(*A cartomante*, Ivan Lins)

In 2012, I started to attend a terreiro located in a peripheral region in the city of Ribeirão Preto, in the state of São Paulo, to learn more about Umbanda and to get started in a new field of research. The terreiro was known for regularly receiving researchers interested in Umbanda, especially psychologists from the University of São Paulo. At the time, I was finishing my doctoral degree in Psychology with a study on the repercussions of parental conjugality on their children's romantic relationships. As I finished my doctoral degree, I felt more and more attracted to researching African-oriented religions, especially Umbanda. I was directly influenced by the studies carried out in the Ethnopsychology Laboratory at the Ribeirão Preto School of Philosophy, Sciences, and Languages of the University of São Paulo, coordinated since its inception by José Francisco Miguel Henriques Bairrão, Ph.D. Studying the religious field became not a rupture in my education, but rather a continuity or even a rescue of expressions, influences, and ancestry that had been faded away by a pretended need of being neutral and keeping distance from the things and people under research. The understanding of health and disease processes has an important interface with religiosities/spiritualities/ancestral ties (Koenig 2012; Laplantine 2010), vertices that currently make up my line of research.

With the doctoral degree, I felt invited to explore new ways of being a researcher and also to learn about other research contexts and their methods. Rescuing my interest in the religious universe was also a way to connect with a researcher who, until then, had little or no intimacy with fieldwork and with the activities in this new scenario permeated by rituals, consultations, and a whole universe of health promotion in the community. Opening myself to the possibility of being affected in the field (Favret-Saada 2005) became essential in my construction as a researcher and psychotherapist. My Habilitation Thesis (Scorsolini-Comin 2020) discussed a part of this trajectory and its crossings in detail.

To problematize how knowledge can be transmitted through orality, body, and experience, inside and outside ritual spaces, this study is based on the case of a Umbanda medium I interviewed during the beginning of my fieldwork in this community. In methodological terms, in this study I will make use of three data sources: an in-depth interview I conducted with the medium, fictitiously called Soraya, in August 2012, audio-recorded and transcribed in full, which makes up a database on a study conducted on mediumship in Kardecist spiritist, Umbanda, and

Candomblé communities<sup>1</sup>; information contained in a field diary I built on the research occasion, containing memories not only of the contact with this medium but with the entire community and the field in scope, as well as this activity's resonances in my experience as a researcher; observations I made during the fieldwork involving the researcher's presence in the religious rituals and also in the terreiro's socializing spaces outside the days dedicated to attending the public, opportunities in which it was possible not only to observe the institution's daily life but also various characters that were part of that context but were not necessarily present in the ritual spaces.

All observations and records contained herein were guided, theoretically and methodologically, by the Brazilian ethnopsychology (Bairrão and Godoy 2018; Macedo 2015; Scorsolini-Comin 2015; Scorsolini-Comin, Bairrão and Santos 2017). However, because ethnopsychology is an ethnotheory that allows different readings and approaches, it is important to consider that this field experience is not meant to provide any possible itinerary to new researchers, but rather to problematize the subjects' and fields' positions.

My writing commitment, narrated in the first person, aims to allow the researcher fruition in the field and to discuss this field's resonance in the researcher's training. It is in this sense that I recover the concept of ethnobiography. According to Gonçalves (2013), social sciences have been giving little space to the biographical approach as knowledge production. Still, according to this author, ethnobiography makes it possible to understand individual experiences at the same time as they reveal aspects beyond the personal universe, that is, it can unveil cultural realities that are also relevant to the work in the social sciences field. When we work with ethnobiography, we should not stick to the justification of the relevance a life story can have, but assume, *a priori*, that every life story has relevance and meaning from individual and cultural markers. Here in this study, this ethnobiography is written from a polyphonic listening that allows us to apprehend not necessarily what is hidden, in a perspective that questions the "ethnobiographed" or its narrator, but of joint production, shared, with mutual implications.

Inspired by Gonçalves (2013), I am primarily interested in the power of the encounter between the anthropologist and the native, or this case on display, the researcher and the gypsy. In this sense, I emphasize that

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1. Research Project entitled "Trajectories of life, development, and health and illness processes in mediums: an ethnopsychological investigation from mediumship", approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing (CAAE 88314618.9.0000.5393) from the National Health Council Resolution No. 510, of 04/17/2016, which deals with the research specificities in the humanities and social sciences areas.



the gypsy's individual experience meets, in this account, the narrator's experience, building intelligibility that allows, in fact, the life story. This life story should not be a portrait or appear fixed, but rather in motion, which leads us to think about performance. Ethnobiography is, in short, the product of an encounter, a dialogue, an inside-outside *continuum*. Having made these initial clarifications, I will now narrate my experience *in and with the field*.

### **LEARNING TO TREAD SLOWLY: FIELD TIME**

One of the Umbanda chants is the one that goes: “*tread on Umbanda, tread slowly*”. Beyond the teachings for those who want to get to know Umbanda, I recognize in this and other chants some guidelines also for the researcher who wishes to approach this context and get to know it in depth: it is necessary to go slowly to get to know it. This means, among other things, that the times of the research, the researcher, and the field are different, so that, in the field, one must listen to its time and be guided by the time it presents to us. It is for this reason that, from the beginning of my contact with Umbanda as a researcher, I started trying to guide myself not by my deadlines and my timetables that responded to my own and the University's logic, but to the time narrated by the characters in my field and by the field itself. Therefore, listening to the chants' wisdom would not have to be just something cosmetic that many researchers employ to illustrate their studies: these precepts had to be embodied by the researcher. Thus, the experience narrated here reveals this attempt, as described by Silva (2015) in his work as an anthropologist.

In January 2012 I arrived at the popularly known Terreiro do Pai Toninho, in the city of Ribeirão Preto. It was a well-known terreiro in the city, founded more than 20 years ago. With little schooling and retired from his job as a lathe operator, Toninho is a white, widowed Pai de Santo. He is about 70 years old. With services open to the public on Mondays and Fridays, there were about 30 mediums in this terreiro in 2012 when this study began (Macedo 2015; Scorsolini-Comin 2020).

From the beginning, I was well received in the community. But I did not arrive at this space alone: I was accompanied by today's Prof. Dra. Alice Costa Macedo, professor at the Federal University of the Recôncavo da Bahia. At the time, Alice was collecting data for her doctoral degree in this terreiro and weekly attended all the giras (ceremonies or works) for her fieldwork. Pai Toninho's terreiro was well known by Umbanda researchers in Ribeirão Preto since it had already been visited and researched by different interlocutors, especially those linked to the Ethnopsychology Laboratory, as was Alice's case. I was accepted by Pai Toninho as a researcher from the very first moment, and on the second visit, I was invited to be a cambono as a way to understand Umbanda from another

position: from the inside. Until then this position, as a researcher, was unheard of in my experience.

Cambonos are mediums' helpers during public ceremonies. They have many functions, such as making sure that the medium does not lack anything during the works (smoke, water, wine, coffee, drink, and candles, depending on the services and the guides incorporated in the ceremony), as well as actively participating in the mediumistic consultations, helping the consultants understand what the entities say and recommend, and taking note of the prescriptions and procedures dictated by the entities to each person in search of help (Macedo 2015).

In this community, most of the cambonos are in the process of mediumistic development. In this terreiro's hierarchy the first way to "initiate"<sup>2</sup> is to act as cambono. As soon as the believer is accepted into the community, he or she becomes the cambono of a specific medium or helps all those in need during the ceremonies and incorporations. This same itinerary was recommended to the researcher by the pai de Santo, as we will discuss below.


### **LEARNING TO BE A MEDIUM, LEARNING TO BE A RESEARCHER**

Joining as a cambono usually takes place due to a demand related to mediumship: by going through a consultation, the subject recognizes his/her mediumship and the need to develop it, going through a learning process within the community. This can happen when the so-called "flourishing mediumship" is identified, or even when this mediumship is "out-of-control", generating uneasiness in the consultant and bringing damage to his/her life in several dimensions. On this path, in this terreiro, the subject occupies the position of cambono - if he/she wishes to be further developed - considered a learning function.

Always on Fridays, these cambonos can go through the mediumistic development process, that is, an opening is given so that the cambonos can incorporate their entities. In this process, they are assisted by the mediums who are already active in the terreiro. In other words, there is an inversion of roles: if in the public service giras the cambonos assist

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2. I employ here the term initiation which, however, should not be confused with the initiation that occurs in Candomblé, known as the *feitura de santo* (Camargo, Scorsolini-Comin, and Santos 2018; Scorsolini-Comin, Godoy, and Gaia 2020). Initiation into Umbanda can occur in different ways, depending on the way each House (terreiro) structures itself and its references. In the terreiro where this field study was conducted, initiation corresponded to the process of becoming a medium and being able to serve the consultants in public ceremonies. To do so, the person had to go through an itinerary that involved acting as a cambono and participating in the development giras. Once ready to act as a medium, which was guided by the entities, also with the pai de santo's mediation, the person would go through a "crowning" ceremony that represented, to the whole group, the beginning of their performance as a medium in that space and the "authorization" to attend the community.



the mediums during the works, at the development moment it is the mediums who help these cambonos, guiding the entities and offering the necessary support, such as taking care that the cambono does not become unbalanced during incorporation or even providing drink, smoke, and candle to the cambonos who are already in a more advanced development process and who receive spirits that request this materiality in the incorporation process. This development *gira* includes the participation of all mediums and cambono members active in the community, and there are cambono members at different stages of mediumistic development.

In my case and Alice's, we acted as cambonos, but we were not in the mediumistic development process. Thus, the invitation to become cambonos was part of Toninho's grammar: to learn about Umbanda it was necessary to observe, to be close, to help. According to him, learning should take place in practice and not just from what he might tell us or from what we might read in books. The experience of getting to know Umbanda should take place in the field, with the researcher also being the one who is willing to act as a cambono. This invitation was not extended to all the researchers who visited there, but the possibility always existed. Being a cambono, therefore, proved to be a necessary learning stage for mediums and researchers alike.

As time went by, I started to invite mediums and cambonos to participate in my research, which consisted in listening to their life stories and how mediumship was an element that could also narrate their lives and experiences. It was on one of these occasions that I talked to a medium who was at the beginning of her activities in the terreiro. Although at the time, she was identified as a cambona by the community because she occupied this function in the ritual, I refer to her as a medium because her experiences in this field go back to the transition period from childhood to adolescence. To portray this character I will use a fictitious name: Soraya.

Her life story will be narrated from this point on with attention to the continuities in her development and her narrative, especially from her body. As Rabelo (2014) highlights, even the ruptures observed in the *candomblé* devotees' narratives can be seen as a continuity of the same religious experience. Inspired by this author, her life story - or her *ethnobiography* - will be understood as a trajectory, as a total drama, "itself animated and animating the drama of a life" (Rabelo 2014, p. 65).

## **WHERE DOES THE GYPSY LIVE?**

The first time I saw Soraya at the terreiro was in January 2012, just as I started visiting the community. But I had not met her in that space. I had met her at the University. Since the beginning of my Psychology degree, in 2002, Soraya was a frequent character in that space: always carrying heavy

bags, she was the saleswoman that wandered through the department corridors, the social center, the restaurant, and the employees' rest areas. Soraya was a brown-skinned person, with long curly black hair, with a body very prominent in its curves, and always wearing colorful clothes, with necklines, short blouses, flowing skirts, or very tight pants. She was a frequent figure at the University and well recognized by the whole community. Shee always seemed to walk the halls, in an informal trade that stitched together laboratories, classrooms, students, professors, and other employees. But her customers were unequivocally female employees. Soraya sold all sorts of products such as clothes, creams, cosmetics, perfumes, and lingerie. The one who drove her to the University and accompanied her from afar was her husband, with whom she has been united for more than 30 years.

When I saw her in the terreiro I was immediately reminded of the image of that woman at the University: sometimes a little “out-of-place” by the way she dressed and walked through that space, being recognized an “outsider”. On the other hand, she was someone who was so well integrated into that scenario that she could “move around” with great ease, being accepted, recognized, well-liked, and also, in a way - hidden when her activities became too noticeable in those spaces dedicated to teaching and research. What I want to point out is that her trade was also maintained by the alliances made in that context and by the people who were often her clients and friends. Their support network made their work activity<sup>3</sup> - read as “informal” or not expected within that space - fully integrated with those from the University. In this sense, she could also be understood as an “inside” figure.

Soraya also remembered me, she said she had seen me many times around the University. And she added: “Everyone knows me there, I am the gypsy from USP”:

*Fabio: Yeah. I remember you very much, during college, I used to see you at USP, you know? So, the first time, when, when I saw you here, I already, I already knew you.*

*Soraya: Yes. If you ask there: “Gypsy”. I started in 1983 when I got married in 1983 and started selling there. I carried heavy bags on my back for years. This, with no Sunday, no Saturday, was rare for me to rest.*

She worked as a saleswoman for many years, even inside the terreiro itself, selling perfumes and also white ritual clothes (pants and skirts), especially to people who started to attend the community. Several times

3. It is important to note that such trade activity within the University has been increasingly rare. Thus, these salespeople no longer transit in this space, although they may keep their customers from the University through other contact channels. The memories I have of Soraya at the University are from the period between 2002 and 2006.

I could observe her arrival in the community - she was always one of the first, carrying heavy bags with products that she offered to mediums and cambonos. She accepted orders and also saw in that space a possibility to sell her products. This profession had a direct influence from her parents:

My mother was in sales and my father was a traveler. But, well, I was raised watching my mother work with products too, which my mother always liked a lot. I think I ended up well identified with this type of, of, of profession. Yes, I have worked in some stores, but nothing better than working and having your schedule, right?

In the terreiro, the positions seemed important to narrate. At the University she seemed to be an “outsider”, although she was integrated into that space’s daily life. In the terreiro the external element was me, sometimes displaced and trying to understand and experience, in fact, that field. If at the university I was a student and could walk through those spaces without identifying myself and without needing support networks to perform my duties, in the terreiro, all the time, I was asking what the elements meant, what I could do, what I should do, if and how especially in my beginning in the field. I always tried to make sure I was not doing anything wrong or breaking any rules or protocols. Hence, the metaphor that sews this study is that of learning, of the transmission of knowledge, and of how both contexts - terreiro and University - work as spaces that promote these processes. In the same way, the positions occupied by Soraya and me - the researcher’s role and the medium’s role in the terreiro, the student’s and the saleswoman’s role in the University, in search of complementarity, as announced in the ethnobiography (Gonçalves 2013) - are tensed up.

Previously knowing Soraya was fundamental in our approaching process within the terreiro. I recognized in Soraya a person closer to me than the other mediums because we already knew each other. Although everyone knew that I was a researcher, perhaps it was Soraya who knew best what it was like to be a researcher, since she was at the University almost every day. Even though her way of reading and interpreting that space and the researcher’s work might be different from the way I saw her interpretation, it was a matter of considering that Soraya did not present herself as an outsider to the University, on the contrary. By her daily attendance, she was almost a registered employee - to find her was easy - just go to the University. She also presented herself, as said before, as someone from inside the University, the USP Gypsy.

Soraya was a much-loved person at the University and recognized by all, students, staff, and faculty alike. Her sales took place in an almost domestic setting, especially during the employees’ break times, when she



could display her products with greater ease. Her customers became loyal consumers not only because of the products she offered but also because she created special payment conditions and also got close to them as a friend, tightening her bonds in that place. In this informal and almost home-based space, Soraya was a figure who also knew the University as few people do, both in terms of the physical space as well as the sociabilities and customs. A character, then, from within. The University was also her field.

### **GYPSY IS THE BLOOD THAT FLOWS**

Retracing her religious background, she told me about her childhood and the first experiences regarding mediumship when she was a teenager, the first visions and premonitions. These premonitions have always been seen as natural by her family of origin, and are even a mark of her gypsy ancestry:

(...) but we are gypsy races, Spanish, my grandmothers were gypsies, right? (...) My mother, always said to me: “Hija, at last one, came out like me in this family”, right? Because all my sisters, don’t have the same gift I do, so, I had many premonitions, I have, like, visions, I dream, sometimes, many times, things happen. So, my mother had a lot of this mystical side, you know? My grandmothers were like that, my aunts. They all had this side, so to speak, of clairvoyance. Because the gypsy race, as much as the Indigenous race, have this gift, you know, of clairvoyance, it is a very mystical side, you know? They are people, like, that stir a lot the mysticism side, right? So, since we were little, we always heard a lot of cases that my mother used to tell us about getting things right, about the clairvoyance they had, you know? And I was scared, when I was a little girl, when I was 14, I went to bed and my twin sister was next to me, and I put my head against the pillow and it was such a strange thing because I had never seen it like that, you know? My mother hadn’t told me, like, in details, I laid my head on the pillow and suddenly several scenes came to me, in a fraction of a second, like a camera, you know, several flashes, like this, you know, all followed by each other, fast. And I saw several scenes. And I got scared, I started to cry. My mother ran into the room, “What is it?”, “I don’t know, Mom”. She lay down, my mother commented, you know, and then I started to explain: “Mom, a lot of things came to my mind. What is it? I don’t understand”. Then she calmed me down, and said: “No, daughter, all your aunts had this, your grandmothers had this, and so did I, it is called premonition”. And it is a very scary thing. Because, for the first time, when I felt it, I was very afraid, I thought I would fall.


In this first episode regarding mediumship, the vision Soraya had while lying down was interpreted as the first manifestation of clairvoyance, of a premonition. The mother calms her daughter not only because she has an interpretation for the event, but also because the event had a close relationship with the family’s history: the transmission of the

clairvoyance, of the premonition gift. Thus, Soraya is interpreted as a person who legitimately belongs to the family because she has the same gift as her aunts, mother, and grandmothers. This episode and the others that followed and that were narrated in the interview would reassure Soraya of her place as a gypsy, as an heir to the gypsy wisdom linked to clairvoyance and the contact with the supernatural world.

In the terreiro, in which the interview was conducted, there is no gypsy or Eastern line cult. Although they are recognized entities in Umbanda and occupy an interstice place between the so-called right (comprised of entities such as caboclos, baianos, and pretos-velhos, for example) and left (comprised of exus and pombagiras), they are still little investigated within this pantheon (Brumana and Martinez 1991; Macedo 2014). The gypsy's female figure also appears represented in some pombagiras, as highlighted by Bairrão (2019). Still for this author, the gypsy people are represented in Umbanda in parallel with other ethnicities considered to be ancestral in the Brazilian people's formation, and it is important to point out that the gypsies do not have this origin. In any case, the gypsy people's representation is always associated with signifiers such as freedom, love of nature, and sorcery, being also on the margins of society, and being sacralized in the Umbanda universe, just like other populations. The gypsy representation also has a great popularity, especially for the sorceries, the clairvoyance faculty:

*For example, because I am the daughter of gypsies before I came here, I always had strong intuitions, I know that a person talks to me, I have a gypsy that talks to me, I always since I was a little girl, all the Centers (temples) I go to, they say: "you have an Indian and a gypsy on your side". Everyone I go to sees it. And I feel a lot of, like, both of their presences. And I feel them talking to me. I already know that there are many things in my life, I have predicted many things that have happened. There are many people, both at USP and in Jardim Paulista [the neighborhood where the first terreiro she attended was located], who have witnessed all the things that I used to say, and it worked, it worked, and it still works. Why? I say: "people, it is not me, I have these strong intuitions because I have the entities on my side, I feel them", do you understand? And it comes as something so natural as if I was feeling a, an example, coffee being made there, do you understand? It is very natural.*

This process of communicating her visions to others ends up promoting public recognition of both her mediumship and her gypsy heritage. Mediumship, in her case, is interpreted as a natural characteristic, in such a way that she coexists with this element, not separating herself from it, that is, not refusing this condition's sense of inheritance. By allowing herself a natural experience regarding her visions, Soraya positions herself



in a way that integrates what had been transmitted to her in her family and her socialization, recognizing and accepting her gypsy condition.

At the University, her foresight is one of how she is being included in that community, in addition to her work activity. It is in this space that she becomes, in a way, an advisor to her clients, also explaining her mediumistic work and communicating her knowledge on Umbanda and Spiritism, knowledge acquired both from her religious experiences and from the various readings she has done over time. Thus Soraya not only occupied a position as a saleswoman but also as a person who was recognized for making predictions and carrying out certain spiritual orientations.

Returning to her trajectory, in the transition to adolescence, upon recognizing Soraya's mediumistic manifestation as something close to her intelligibility and ancestry, her mother intervened so that her daughter would not be frightened and impressed by the first visions. It was a matter of allowing the gypsy tradition to emerge and to enable her, over time, to deal with this phenomenon in a more relaxed and controlled way. As discussed by Rabelo (2014) when analyzing the trajectories of candomblé devotees, "the discovery and consolidation of ties with sacred entities often preceded the establishment of formal ties with a terreiro, occurring in the context of domestic or almost-domestic religious enterprises and even within the family space" (p. 64). This process also takes place in Soraya's trajectory, this domestic and family universe being before her engagement in terreiros and spiritist centers.

In this domestic and family universe of contact with religiosity/spirituality, her mother warns her that these mediumistic experiences and contact with entities would occur other times. It is for this reason that, almost at the same time, Soraya seeks help in a Umbanda terreiro in another peripheral neighborhood in Ribeirão Preto, described by her as "Center". There she experienced her first incorporations, but, according to her account, she did not receive any guidance, a fact that contrasts with the teachings she had been receiving in the terreiro where the interview took place:

But, this is a place where you arrive and it is as if you were learning to read and write, from the first steps, you learn everything. You have a follow-up. Not there. I didn't have what you have here. A whole follow-up that they have, it is, it is like you are learning the first year, let's put it this way. And there, where I was, I had no idea how to act, I didn't know who my head guides (*guias de cabeça*) were. So it was, it was a different thing. So, I never got it right.

Thus, one of the first meanings about the Umbanda terreiro that emerge in the interview with Soraya is how these spaces can be welcoming,

promoting understanding and tranquility, but, at the same time, also confusion and suffering. These possible ruptures or discontinuities, however, are part of the same religious experience, which is continuous and total, as Rabelo (2014) points out. In the terreiro she started attending as a teenager she didn't have the information that, according to her, was very important to develop her mediumship. She exemplifies this with the knowledge she got regarding her "head guides" only when she started attending her current terreiro. These head guides can be understood as her protecting orixás (deities), the orixás that take care of her head, promoting well-being, guidance, and also tranquility so that she can develop mediumship.

This recognition of the orixás and guides is one of the first processes that take place in this terreiro. To have access to them, the consultant must get in touch with one of the guides received by the pai de Santo, usually, the caboclo Ogum da Mata or, more often, the preto velho Pai Benedito do Cruzeiro das Almas. When the consultant is in front of these guides, there is a process of identification of the protecting orixás based on a "protocol" described in other studies (Macedo 2015; Scorsolini-Comin 2020) and recalled here: the guide asks the cambono who is assisting him/her to copy the complete name of the consultant on a line and, below that, his/her birth date. After that, the guide asks the cambono to count how many letters there are in the whole name. After this process, the guide passes the flame of a candle under the paper. The flame will produce on the paper some sketches and smudges. By looking at the smudges on the light, the guide reveals who are the orixás that protect the consultant. In Soraya's case, her orixás were Oxaguiã, Ogum, and Oya (Iansã):

I have three head guides, who they say is very strong, which are Oxalá Guiã [Oxaguiã], who is a boy, and Ogum and Iansã, Oya, who is Iansã, right? There are three head guides. Some people have two. (...) And they say they are very strong, very quarrelsome, very firm, right? Because Ogum is a warrior, right? Yeah, St. George, right, in the St. George line. So, it is, it is a very strong and very beautiful thing. My father [Pai de Santo Toninho] said something very interesting, it is like going back to that subject I told you about: each person has an affinity with the entities. If you have such attitudes, such a personality, the one that fits your style comes along. So, we are, if you look at it, by nature, we are warriors (...) firm in what we want. We are hard workers, aren't we?

The explanation offered by the pai de Santo does not take place only in the sense that Soraya, from this socialization, starts to recognize who her "head guides" are. Knowing her head guides can mean access to a very specific interpretation, even attributing meaning to other intelligibility, for example, that narrate her guides' nature: warriors and fighters, justifying the fact that they "come" (are incorporated) with a lot of strength, even

with some violence, as we will discuss further below. Thus, these guides reveal to Soraya - and also to the community - a bit of what she is like, a bit of who she is, which sticks in her ethnobiography. Here we realize that the identification of who the medium is and who his/her entities are does not occur in a dissociated way, but intimately integrated, just like a double, as suggested by Augras (1983), just like halves of the same self, as pointed out by Godoy and Bairrão (2014), in a trajectory of religious experience continuity (Rabelo 2014).

This intelligibility provides Soraya a place of comfort, belonging, and integration of her mediumship into her life experience. Mediumship is no longer a characteristic described as something uncomfortable that must be controlled, but a dimension that says something about the subject, about his or her character, about the possibility of being someone trustworthy, being able to develop and work in the future in the terreiro.

In her mediumistic development process in the terreiro, Soraya was developing *for* Ogum as the front orixá, considered the main one in her “crown”. This same itinerary was followed by the pai de Santo in his initiation process (*feitura*) in *candomblé*<sup>4</sup> - although he was a son of Oxaguiã, Toninho had first initiated to Ogum by a choice of his babalorixá (priest), at the time. In a “second *feitura*” he was developed for Oxaguiã, already with another babalorixá. However, many of the entities incorporated by Toninho are of the Ogum line, such as the caboclo Ogum da Mata’s spirit, who usually presides over the mediumistic development works on Fridays at the terreiro (Macedo, 2015).

To develop *for a* particular orixá, in Umbanda, was to recognize that it protected and cared for your head. For this reason, in the development rituals in this terreiro, always held on Fridays, before the services to the public, the *cambonos* were called to incorporate following a orixás hierarchy. When the pai de Santo summoned the “sons of Ogum”, all the *cambonos* that developed for this orixá would approach to begin the incorporation. This development *giras* moment was much awaited by all the *cambonos*, not only for being able to lead the ritual, but also for having a space to receive the entities’ energy, receive guidance, and learn about their mediumship.

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4. Although he is an Umbanda pai de santo, Toninho was “initiated” into *candomblé*. His initiation process, however, did not take place exactly like that of a traditional “*feitura de santo*”, with all the recommended recollection and procedures. But, in this text, we will not make this distinction, mainly due to the fact that Toninho emphasizes in interviews that he was “*feito*” in *candomblé*. From an ethnopsychological perspective, listening to his story is more representative than, in fact, distinguishing or explaining the similarities and differences between the initiation and *feitura* processes or the parallels between *candomblé* and umbanda.



In Pai Toninho's terreiro there was a series of processes that the cambonos had to go through for their initiation as mediums. This learning is highly valued in this space, being a necessary path both for the evolution within the community and also for the control of her spiritual faculties - Soraya had experienced what could happen in her body without these teachings, without this important knowledge process. In addition to acting as cambonos in the public ceremonies, as previously reported, they regularly went through some processes such as the *amací*, which is a herbal bath directed to the developing medium's head, responsible for opening paths and preparing the medium's head for the entities' manifestation, favoring the incorporation process.

Also in this terreiro, at the end of the public services, it was common for the cambonos to become consultants and be assisted by the mediums they had accompanied until then. The cambono, who had spent most of the ceremony assisting the public consultations, then occupied that same position, consulting on various aspects of their lives. On these occasions, it was also common for the cambonos to ask about their mediumship, their mediumistic development, and their path within the terreiro. Thus, this space in which the cambono became a consultant was also interpreted as a process related to mediumship - even being valued as an important moment for the future medium's orientation and also for interaction, so that the cambono would occupy the position of consultant and also of a learner.

Addressing the learning process and knowledge transmission in Umbanda terreiros are explored, for example, in the studies by Katrib and Santos (2020) and Macedo, Maia, and Santos (2019). This study's terreiro is always open and is attended by cambonos on days other than the giras, or even on the days of services in the period before the works are prepared or after the services. In these moments there is a frequent exchange of information and knowledge between the cambonos and the mediums. Mediums tend to explain some procedures and even answer questions, especially those of cambonos, who have less experience regarding Umbanda, the terreiro's functioning, and even regarding mediumship.

In this transmission process from the more experienced to the cambonos, important figures in the community stand out, such as the older mediums, those who have already become the terreiro's *pais pequenos* (beginner priests), and by an interlocutor who takes care of the entrance of people into the terreiro. Although it is not a medium, this character also acts as cambono at some moments, but it is responsible for the organization of all the institution's bureaucratic processes, from the bills to the process of guiding people to specific rituals that should take place outside of the terreiro or even rituals considered stronger, such as the burning of

gunpowder, performed when the person was interpreted by the medium as having received a “demand” from another entity.

This knowledge transmission takes place largely mediated by the pai de Santo. He occupies a central role in this process because he is requested all the time - by mediums and cambonoes alike. The pai de Santo’s speech occupies a prominent role in the community because of the position he holds, but also because of the way he usually approaches people, always talking, explaining, and showing himself open to bringing explanations and guidance. Thus, this is a pai de Santo who is open and interested in transmitting knowledge on Umbanda. It is through these conversations and oral transmission that much of this knowledge is shared and reaches, for example, the cambonos. One of these teachings was mentioned by Soraya:

I don’t know how to explain it right, it is, as they say, you know, Paizinho [Pai de Santo Toninho] says that we have a great affinity, both the guides and the mediums, we are like, it is a fit. I think that everywhere you go, regardless of religion, you have to feel good. It is just like you wear a type of shoe that fits you well, everything. It is like, it is an affinity, so to speak.

The “fitting” that the pai de Santo refers to can be understood in different ways. One of them is from the corporeality notion developed by Csordas (2008), which allows us to consider that the medium’s body does not function as a receptacle for the sacred’s body, represented by the entity, but involves an integration so that this body we can observe in the trance of possession or incorporation, the latter term more present in Umbanda is a single complete-dimension that can be read from the experience that brings together perception and also practice. Thus, the subject is, at the same time, the body that perceives (in this case, the entity’s manifestation) and the body that acts (in its role as a medium, as the mediator of the relationship between entity and consultant), and it is not possible to fragment this experience.

This “fitting” mentioned by the pai de Santo also refers to the way each cambono and each medium approaches the community and feels a sense of belonging to it. The transit between terreiros and spiritist centers is common among African-oriented religions devotees (Rabelo, 2014), which can be observed in Soraya’s own story:

So it was, it was a different thing. So, I never got it right. And often I felt bad, why? My entity, that I received from the Indian, was always a very beautiful and strong entity, as they all are, of course. But she hurt me so hard, that she would come and hit, you know, several times on my shoulder, hurt me and jump high like that. So, it was wearing

me down. And I, at that time, was selling clothes, carrying heavy bags. So, for me, it was torture. Every time I went to the Center, to try to improve myself, to be able to do charity, I would come back detonated, because the next day I had to carry the weight.

At this point in the story, Soraya highlights a kind of “disciplinarization” of the dyad formed by the medium and the entity she incorporated. This is not an attempt to “discipline” the entity, as if it needed to be “tamed”, but to recognize this entity’s characteristics in the incorporation process and also the medium’s characteristics, promoting synthesis of two biographies that, at the consultation moment, were integrated. An example of this is that in this terreiro when the cards are distributed for the services before the giras begin, people from the community can choose which mediums they can consult<sup>5</sup>with. The choice is not necessarily made by the entity, but by the medium, which is why the cards have the mediums’ names as identification.

In Soraya’s case, she reports a lot of suffering regarding her incorporation process by the bodily resonances after the possession trance is over. The muscle pains resulting from incorporation are interpreted by Soraya as a response to the absence of teachings and a properly conducted development process by the first terreiro. Without this development, the “fitting” process was compromised, and negative repercussions were almost always felt by the medium, who sought to understand this process.

This interpretation was also shared orally by the people from Pai Toninho’s terreiro - at these moments Toninho reaffirmed the importance of proper mediumship development, with guidance, by serious people committed to Umbanda and charity. With the absence of answers for this suffering, the mediumistic activity’s interruption and the transit through other terreiros worked as a strategy over time, until she felt she belonged to the current community.

In her story, the negative experience in the first terreiro promoted not only her transit to other institutions but also her intermittence regarding her mediumship’s development. It generated important gaps, so much that her first experiences began during adolescence and had a welcome place in her adult life, at the age of 53, when she started attending the current terreiro. In this period, although she was a medium, she could not develop herself due to the absence of a space in which she could be understood,

5. For example, at each gira five to eight cards are distributed for each medium to serve. Some mediums are considered to be more “crowded”, so their cards run out quickly. When it is a first consultation, usually the consultant who does not know the community asks for suggestions from the person who distributes the mediums cards with whom he/she can consult with. Although the people who attend the community may make this choice based on certain entities, this does not occur separately from the medium’s figure, which is why we consider the intertwining of these two biographies at the consultation moment.

oriented, and also welcomed in her questions and in her suffering resulting from the fact that she could not control her mediumship expression.

The gypsy, in her mystical wandering, was seeking guidance. But this whole trajectory was her religious experience, it was her total drama, as Rabelo (2014) highlights. This transit is discussed by the author with candomblé devotees, evoking the need for us not to interpret the ruptures as religious experience discontinuities. The experience would be precisely the continuity that takes place in this transit and that is not exclusively due to the subject, but to a series of alliances, exchanges, and disputes that involve “her family, neighbors, and religious leaderships, but also the entities themselves; not only the house and the terreiro but the neighborhood and the street” (p. 65).

In this current space, the teachings and the follow-up promoted by the other mediums and, above all, by the pai de Santo, have contributed to a greater process of understanding the trance, the entities, and this “fitting” process that must take place between the entity and the medium. This learning, in practice, unequivocally goes through the body and this expression. It is the body that expresses the uneasiness since medium and entity are not aligned or connected. It is the body that expresses the complete harmony between entity and medium, felt after the mediumistic development process. Learning through the body allows Soraya to orient herself again, anchoring herself in this terreiro.

This does not at all mean that repercussions that are considered negative or painful, at the bodily level, cannot occur. During the observations I made during Soraya’s mediumistic process, I could see how the entities she incorporated sometimes intensely presented themselves, promoting jumps, big bumps, and even exposing the then cambona to possible falls. The teachings transmitted by the terreiro, however, attest that this process has to improve over time, in other words, that this “fit” should be achieved if there is a correct development of the medium and entity dyad. Recovering Csordas (2008), this “fitting” would only be possible when the experience is fully integrated into what is understood as corporeality, not fragmenting what is of the physical body’s order, the medium’s body or the entity’s body, but a total, complex corporeal experience.

When I observed Soraya later, when she was already working as a medium and attending consultants in the terreiro after her coronation, I noticed less intense bodily manifestations and less exposure of the medium to possible falls or injuries from the incorporation process. Thus, it can be understood that the mediumistic development process involves learning that does not take place only through speech and listening - through the teachings that one hears - but, above all, through the body. It is as if

these teachings, the orientations, and the close follow-up - since the *pai de Santo* is always present in the *cambonos'* development *giras* - should be understood and internalized by the medium's body, in a corporeality experience close to what is proposed by Csordas (2008). This learning could be seen in her body.


The "fitting", in this sense, is a process that must take place between an entity that wishes to manifest itself and a body that needs to be able to receive the energy produced by incorporation. This "fitting", also read as integration through corporeality, is the result of a complex process that involves, among other things, the emergence of learning *in* and *from the* body. To carry out this process, therefore, the *terreiro's* figure is fundamental. The way learning is experienced in this space is also essential in this journey - who teaches, who can teach, how it is taught, how it is followed-up, who learns, who can learn, who can follow-up. In this sense, also the wandering socially associated with the Gypsy people is not reinforced by a sense of disorientation, but precisely of integration between emotion and perception, as punctuated by Bairrão (2019), that is, a sense of "fitting".

Still following the "fitting" metaphor, at the University this process had also occurred with Soraya, since she became, over time, an increasingly frequent character in that space, increasingly "from within". This is not only related to a kind of "custom" due to her attendance at the University, but the fruit of a performance capable of recognizing the gypsy as an University figure. Her transit and her wandering were also observed in the way she related to the University, in her coming and going with bags, with orders, with news, with the delivery of products, with the collection processes. She did not need to be someone else to be read as a character at the University: there she could be the gypsy, she was welcomed, respected, and valued in her ancestry, in her corporeality, marked by colors, by shapes, by the sound of her bracelets hitting each other, in her fluency. The University was a place where the gypsy could manifest her foresight, practice her trade as a saleswoman, circulate - come and go and never, in fact, stay. A space of transit and experience true to her ancestry, her ethnobiography.

### **THE TERREIRO AND THE UNIVERSITY: WANDERING BETWEEN WORLDS AND WALLS**

The learning process described in this study has important resonances when we bring it closer to the academic universe, in an interpretative parallel mobilized by Soraya's case. Somehow, in the *terreiro*, the whole process of thinking about services to the public, what is called charity, health promotion, and even mediumistic development focused on the well-being of the person who manifests this faculty involves an intense teaching and





learning process. In the terreiro where this case was observed, several times a more literate culture was presented as a possibility to know more about Umbanda (Scorsolini-Comin and Macedo 2021).

There are many examples in this regard. When I talked to some of the mediums, many offered me books that they had read about Umbanda, some of them even emailed to all the collaborators by the collaborator who looked after the entrance to the community. Some of these books also circulated in physical media - on one occasion, Soraya lent me a spiritist book that talked about incorporation, bringing, according to her, a view that was considered scientific. Soraya always highlighted her interest in reading, especially literature she identified as “spiritist,” also involving the so-called spiritist novels psychographed by mediums. She was an avid reader. Even the presence of researchers in that space was understood by many as an attempt to ‘scientificize’ the phenomena experienced there - subjecting those experiences to external standards that many were not even aware of.

The pai de Santo’s enthusiasm with this research sometimes had this sense - I remember, at the beginning of the fieldwork, that Toninho commented on neuroscience research that proved, according to him, the phenomena that they could experience, such as incorporation - he referred to these studies as those that put “apparatuses” (electrodes) on the mediums’ heads. As a researcher, although I welcomed these manifestations from the whole community, I also struggled to say that my interest did not lie in these methods or in the need to “prove it” - without moral or reality judgments, as ethnopsychology teaches us. It was up to the researcher, in the field, to listen and feel this field, these characters, their stories, and their paths.

At a certain moment of the research, I could see that part of the community was starting to get together to set up a study group so that everyone could deepen their Umbanda knowledge. At the time, between 2012 and 2017, when I was more intensely in the field in this community, I remember that the few meetings that were scheduled had a great impasse: on one side, the mediums who wanted to read, to have access to a more literate knowledge, and on the other side, the pai de Santo figure, who wanted to teach through his experience, sharing what he knew and what he had learned in over 40 years in Umbanda. These moments became emblematic of how learning ended up dividing the community - although Toninho’s experience was considered important, they also showed the desire to access other sources and to eventually challenge him. In a culture built mainly by oral transmission, the pai de Santo’s audience was a very important moment for learning that would not always be written in books, but inscribed in his body, in his memory, and especially in his biography.

Many mediums, in this sense, began to understand that these were distinct processes and, even though they read these books on Umbanda, they still valued Toninho's words as a power for learning. Similar to what Gonçalves (2013) highlights regarding the reduced importance that biography has occupied in the social sciences, also in the transmission of these teachings, in this community, Toninho's biography is not always valued as a piece of knowledge, as a possibility to access an entire culture regarding Umbanda.

Although the University mentioned in the interview with Soraya was a way to bring our biographies closer, building a relationship that took place because of the common places we occupied, I understand that this element - the University, constitutes a powerful metaphor for the ethno-biography that sews this study. It is interpreted as a field in which what is scientific and academic is mostly overlapped to what can be translated as life knowledge, often transmitted orally and through experiences, through the body, through biography, it operates an erasure of this corporeality and of all the knowledge that inhabits this body. In the attempt to recognize and glimpse a certain - read "scientific" - intelligibility, one ends up fading out other world descriptions and, in this sense, other worlds inhabited by others that are excluded, marginalized, and woven around a knowledge considered better, more adequate, more valued. This erasure also takes place regarding the importance of Soraya's biography.

Little by little Soraya's attendance at the University was reduced by the various movements that curbed this informal trade. But her presence and her trajectory have always had a place in the University. The challenge, in this study, is precisely to highlight Soraya's biography so that we can problematize not only social processes but also the individual elements of her life story. To know and, above all, to recognize the USP Gypsy is also to be able to tell a little about this campus' history and, specifically, of the School of Philosophy, Sciences, and Languages - where these many transits could be observed by the researcher. Here an inversion operates, as proposed by Gonçalves (2013): it is the biography that tells us about something greater than the subject.

But what had the University brought to Soraya's trajectory? What is the University's place in Soraya's ethnobiography? Soraya was very comfortable at the University, as a field of her own, trodden on slowly at first, but over which she also narrated - and narrates - her biography. Although the interview with her was initially focused on the spaces considered religious - among them her domestic universe and the terreiros - the University also occupies this space. This space is possibly similar to what Rabelo (2014) presents as being that of the street, that of circulation, that of crossed narratives, where experiences are entwined.

At the University, Soraya can also demonstrate her knowledge from her experience and her biography. She brings to the University the products she considers new, represented by the fashion trends with which she dresses and dresses her clients. She occupies the position of counselor, of the medium who works in a terreiro, and who can explain religiosity/spirituality, who can make predictions, who can teach with what she narrates *through* her body which is the expression of her history - visible and invisible, written, spoken, or felt.

The gypsy, upon coming to the University to work selling her products, had to camouflage herself among other characters, sometimes unnoticed, sometimes known - and accepted - by everyone. The gypsy seems to be from another universe, but she is not - she belongs to that space, she works, produces, coexists, socializes, experiences, she "is" with her clients, with the academics. She even presents herself with the nickname that bears the name of the University: *the USP gypsy*. Likewise, even though literate knowledge, often produced outside Umbanda, can be received as important learning experiences by its devotees, the experience of being a medium, of stepping into the terreiro, of knowing by observation, by experience, and by corporeality, occupy an unquestionable role in the Umbanda composition.

Thus, one of this study's possible addressing refers to a greater appreciation of this learning through the body, through experience, an aspect taught by Umbanda and by oral tradition, in the example discussed from Soraya's case, which should find a greater anchorage at the University. This is a recommendation that is also supported by other studies, such as those of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010), Costa and Pereira (2016), and Bairrão (2019), who understand the postcolonial body as a place of experience and, consequently, of learning. This knowledge can and should be evoked and valued in the narratives of students, teachers, patients/clients/users assisted in university extension actions, for example, inhabiting the training of professionals more porous to what, in fact, paradoxically, the University cannot teach.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

At the end of this journey, I conclude that learning through the body and experience continue to occupy a prominent space in Umbanda and its transmission inside and outside the terreiros. Likewise, the University can and should be more porous to this knowledge, not only to promote these religiosities/spiritualities/ancestral ties assimilation in the academic space or even by the recovery of these dimensions in health care, but as a metaphor for a more humanized education, more open to oral, ancestral knowledge that is transmitted beyond books, through its characters, stories, and plots that continue to make up the University.

As stated by Gonçalves (2013), it is important to overcome the view that the individual would be only an expression of a collective representation, opening space for discussion of individual processes that can manifest themselves, for example, through narratives that are not neutral, but that can add new meanings while transforming the ethnographical narrative. Narration must be taken beyond a representational function. Ethnobiography understands the experience wholeness that is revealed not only in the subject's history, but also in his or her language, gestures, and body. What matters in this process is the way the individual experiences the world, which happens, phenomenologically, *from* and *through* his/her body (Csordas, 2008).

The University concept that emerges from this dialogue must be committed to these characters who, classically, have always been excluded from this space, which has been gaining substance, more recently, through affirmative action policies for admission into higher education, for example. Finally, I recall an image that takes me at the end of this article: once, during a consultation in a terreiro, a pombagira told me that for me to calm down during a presentation that I would give a few days later at the University where I was teaching, I should “call” the “sea gypsy”. Almost ten years after this experience, perhaps this recommendation remains current and not properly embodied, which compels me, here, to revisit it.

I conclude that the gypsy metaphor, aware of the challenges arising from the vulnerabilities she experiences in her daily life, can and should occupy other spaces in the University we intend to build. She must be able to share her experiences, her biography, recognize her ancestry, and put herself at the service of the education of students, professionals, and citizens who are capable not only of looking forward as those who seek innovation (and, in this metaphor, also the sorcery, the to-be, and beyond the walls), but also looking back (our ancestry, our history) and, fundamentally, inward.


**TRANSLATION**  
Cia das Traduções.

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## PSALM 4: BIBLE HEBREW POETRY AND RELIGIOSITY

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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### ABSTRACT

The Hebrew-biblical poetry is full of liturgical and doxological elements that reflect the religiosity of worshipers. The present work seeks to explore the themes and meanings recorded in Psalm 4, based on the “Total Analysis Method” and the “Synchronic Intertextuality”, developed from Weiss (1984) and Bakhtin (2006), and worked on by Buber (1994) and Kristeva (1969), respectively. Preliminarily, a synthetic bibliographic review is made, where the general perception of the Psalm is presented. Next, the analysis is made from three sections: analysis of the poetic-literary aspects present in the text, macro-structural analysis, and dialogical synthesis. In short, it is noted that the Psalm establishes a dialogue between three cosmic figures. The stanzas are delimited based on the inflected use of such persons in the discourse, and elements from different contexts (legal, covenant, etc.) are evoked using specific vocabulary, establishing an expression of religiosity common to the book.

### KEYWORDS

Psalms;  
Religiousness;  
Form and Content;  
Intertextuality.

### INTRODUCTORY ASPECTS

The biblical psalter is divided into five books, probably delimited by doxological choruses that arise at the end of each unit. From this division, other units are commonly identified. The first two psalms are perceived

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by some as a prelude to the canonical psalms, and the last four as the climax of the closing of praise, for example (Wardlaw Jr 2015).

Another unit sometimes identified is a supposed messianic inclusion in the psalter (psalms 2-89), since psalms of the type begin and close the section. In addition, much of these psalms are also seen as a celebration of faith in YHWH<sup>2</sup>, by the alliance maintained in the reigns of David and Shelomoh. In this sense, such psalms would present the requests of the Davidic king and his people for the deliverance from YHWH, before the nations and the wicked (Wardlaw Jr 2015).

To defend his thesis, Wardlaw Jr (2015) points to another possible division<sup>3</sup>. He states that psalms 3-41 can be perceived as a prelude to the Elohist psalter, composed of 42-83. His argument is that, although the use of יהוה (YHWH) is prevalent throughout 3-41, there is a marked use of מֵהֵלָא (‘elohim – god/gods) within the section.

The author in question makes use of Psalm 4 to build his proposal. In this sense, it is argued that the non-occurrence of the term here indicates that it is not governed from a fixed set of composition rules but appears as a “semantic prompt” to draw the attention of the audience, or the reader (Wardlaw Jr 2015). This argumentative use, however, is not sustained; since מֵהֵלָא (‘elohim – god/gods) actually appears in the poem, although it must be emphasized, suffixed with possessive pronoun in verse 2 (יְהוֹהִי – ‘elohei – my god/gods).

A similar use of the Psalm, aiming at the defense of a specific thesis, is made by Croft (1987, 151), systematizing the role of the individual in the psalms. In this sense, it is argued that of the 93 psalms that refer to an individual character, 41 are composed as prayers of royal proclamation and another 18 for the use of a common Israelite. Croft (1987, 151) still argues that of the 93, about 33 psalms present such individuals as ministers of Israeli worship, which can be noted as cultic prophets and wisdom instructors or Temple musicians and psalm singers. In this line, he considers the individual of Psalm 4 as an instructor of wisdom<sup>4</sup>.

2. Proper noun that designates the Israelites. Its common registration and transliteration are based solely on the writing of consonants (יהוה), since his sound was lost over the centuries of record, due to the extremely reverent posture of devotees who did not pronounce the name of their god. Later, when Hebrew was vocalized, for not knowing the sound of the term, the vowels of “Adonai” were employed, and since then the term is commonly transliterated in this way, and read as “Adonai” or “Lord”.

3. The author argues that the use of מֵהֵלָא (‘elohim – god/gods) in the psalms is related as Israeli traditions of creation. In this sense, the use intends to evoke a relationship between the divine creative power and its intention to eliminate chaos (Wardlaw Jr 2015).

4. The end to defend such thesis Croft (1987, 160) Claims that: “This identification of wisdom psalms has been made on the ground of forms used, vocabulary and thematic content.”

His considerations to the Psalm, however, are not closed in this way. Croft (1987, 161) further states that Psalm 4 is one of those who are didactic, containing instructions and/or testimonies, where, generally, the instructor appears testifying, rather than presenting instructional texts. In this sense, this Psalm contains a testimony of the grace of YHWH (v. 2) in response to the instructor's request. Consequently, it is argued that the Psalm is better described as a sermon of wisdom directed by a temple musician than it would be in any other way (Croft 1987, 164-165).

This notion, which defends Psalm 4 as an individual prayer, is apparent consensus among scholars. Mays (1994, 55), for example, argues that this Psalm is an individual prayer for help. Gerstenberger (1988, 54,56), similarly, states that Psalm 4 has characteristics of an individual complaint, according to Psalm 3. This notion is shared, with possible peripheral distinctions, by others such as Terrien (2003, 95-96), Mandolfo (2002, 30-35), Hengstenberg (1869, 54-71), Feuer (2004, 81), Kraus (1993, 144-150), etc.

In addition to these, Brueggemann (2014, 87) follows Croft's considerations closely, arguing that Psalm 4 is a complaint, based on petitions to YHWH. This author constructs the argument from what he calls a basic characteristic of this type of psalm, the use of the imperative when asking questions to YHWH, so that He observes and intervenes in the situation of what he prays. In this sense, the poet knows that YHWH can move and act, and that He will do so.

Brueggemann (2014, 88-91) clarifies that it is necessary to keep in mind, however, that these requests are not limited to casual or trivial situations. On the contrary, such situations are related to tensions between life and death, which can be social and physical or based on the Israeli's sense of law before YHWH, due to alliance. This prayer is intense, dangerous, and urgent; being, in final analysis, acts of hope. In this sense, the author says that:

These speakers expect God to modify such circumstances and believe that they are entitled to such a change [...] Thus, prayers culminate in exuberant affirmations and praises, because Israel's bold prayers provoked God's life-giving power. (Brueggemann 2014, 92)

The analysis of the Psalm performed by Mays (1994, 55-56) seems to corroborate Brueggemann's considerations. He argues that the specific occasion of Psalm 4 is that of a problem caused by falsehood (therefore, of a social nature), and that the honor of what is now hurt by lies.

In this sense, the dominant aspect of prayer, what gives it strength, is trust. In this trust the speaker asks YHWH to listen to him and help him

(v. 1), rebuke those who have caused him humiliation (v. 2-5) and declare confidence in the Eternal. Thus, Mays (1994, 55-56) considers that the religious and theological meaning of the Psalm is that YHWH is the last base of honor and faith<sup>5</sup>.

A second aspect advocated by Mays (1994, 55-56)—and considered by others—is that the language of the Psalm suggests a situation in which the psalmist had previously appealed to YHWH, and the deity had answered it<sup>6</sup>; perhaps in sacred procedures. In this sense, the speaker concludes the psalm with a statement that the psalmist has again experienced the grace of YHWH (v. 6-8).

In addition to the aspect of prior salvation, Mays (1994, 55-56) also defends the idea that verse eight of Psalm 4 suggests that the Psalm is built as a prayer or hymn of the night; idea also supported by others such as Terrien (2003, 95-96) and Craigie (2004, 77-83), and built by Weiser (1998, 119) from the analysis of continuity as opposed to Psalm 3, a morning hymn. Others, however, such as Kraus (1993, 144-150), deny this argument, contrasting the idea that psalms 3 and 4 form a textual unit.

In addition to this aspect, Weiser (1998, 120) apparently agrees with Mays (1994, 55-56), in stating that the text of Psalm 4 primarily expressed this idea of recognition of the actions already practiced by YHWH. Still, the author argues that the text was probably amended later to adapt it to a future liturgy, which would be used as a supplication<sup>7</sup>.

Weiser (1998, 120), in turn, states that the psalmist is based on divine grace and his strong support in the face of all kinds of affliction. The poet wants to open the eyes of those who put him to test and accuse him in an unfounded way, showing that YHWH is always at his side.

In a different analysis, Gerstenberger (1988, 54) sees Psalm 4 as a cry for mercy, having as a typical characteristic of this type of cry: the request for attention and divine response, present in the text. In this sense, the Psalm would also be a challenge of adversaries, a rhetorical form of this challenge, whether legal, sapiential, or cultic.

5. Craigie (2004, 77-83) expresses an idea that represents a good union of the perceptions mentioned below. He argues that the Psalm in fact is a complaint, although it also stated that, in addition, this is a reliable psalm, where the poet trusts in YHWH front an any situation.

6. Weiser (1998, 120) closely follows the perception of Mays by affirming that the prophet's certainty comes from past experiences, where YHWH by his grace he helped and saved him, having answered his prayers; thus, the religious experience of the poet is what forms the background of the Psalm. In this sense, it is this understanding that proves the chance for a true understanding of your message. Equally Gerstenberger (1988, 54) and Kraus (1993, 144-150) state that the psalm contains references to prior salvation.

7. Terrien (2003, 95-96) agrees, while Craigie (2004, 77-83) strongly disagrees with the amendment of the text. Nevertheless, the latter also argues that the Psalm it later became a formal and regular part of the cult, even if written in the first person.



According to this author, in addition to the notion of challenge, some elements also reveal a social struggle in the Psalm. In this sense, there is an emphasis on legal connotations, since, in his conception, the recipient of the poet, the *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* (benei 'ish—sons of man), is communicated by a descriptor who can mean noble men<sup>8</sup>. In this way, his prayer is to convince his enemies, of the upper class, of his mistakes (Gerstenberger 1988, 55).

In his thinking, this social struggle portrayed by the challenge to opponents (v. 3-6) can be rhetorical, aimed at the members of his own group. In any case, the author is emphatic in stating that this is not part of a judicial process, but of a service of worship, given its connections with the Sanctuary, in a ritualistic context<sup>9</sup>. In this sense, the liturgy is intended to promote the rehabilitation of the poor, the despised and probably socially suspicious people, in the face of serious pressure (Gerstenberger, 1988, 57).

In addition to the elements already addressed, Gerstenberger (1988, 57) draws attention to the musicality of the Psalm. He states that prayer makes use of musical sounds (v. 9) to confirm his confidence in divine help. This notion is shared by Terrien (2003, 95-96), who states that this vowel melody was accompanied by lyres and harps; probably played in mute tones.

Taking these themes as the basis, Gerstenberger (1988, 57) thus assumes the following structure for the Psalm:

- I - Header (v. 1)
- II - Initial invocation and request (v. 2)
- III - Opponents' Challenge (v. 3-6)
- IV - Complaint (v. 7)
- V - Affirmation of trust, petition (v. 8-9)

Terrien (2003, 95-96) states that, although it shares the notion that the Psalm contains elements of individual complaint, even if emerging as a “collage” of discrepant elements, proposes a possible distinct structure. In their perception, the metric is irregular, and the structure of the stanzas reveal three clear levels:

- I - Invocation (v. 2-4 - two tricolons + one bicolon)
- II - Exhortation (v. 5-6 - one tricolon + one bicolon)
- III - Act of praise (v. 7-9 - three bicolons)

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8. The idea is shared by Terrien (2003, 97), Craigie (2004, 77-83) and Kraus (1993, 144-150).  
9. Kraus (1993, 144-150), in turn, argues that the psalm, in addition to possessing a cultic context, also evokes a judicial context, since the psalm is constructed with a standard for the one that attacks a divine verdict in a judicial process in the temple.

In this way, the orator may be a cultic prophet-musician, possibly from northern Israel, admitted as a Levite of the Temple of Jerusalem after the reformation of Josiah (621 BC) (Terrien 2003, 96). In this Psalm, this temple employee may be attacked by protesters (v. 3-4), and now the YHWH, so that he justifies his actions (Terrien 2003, 96).

Terrien (2003, 100-102) further states that three themes dominate the theology of presence, existing in the Psalm. The first is a resource for visible evidence of a divine nature that hides an attraction to the almost metaphysical “nothingness”. The second is the theme of silence (v.5). And the third is the relationship between night prayer sleep and the emergence of YHWH light. In this way, the Psalm ends with a splendid example of “I still have faith”.

Another common consideration to the Psalm is the position advocated by Dahood (2008, 22-27). He regards the Psalm as a prayer for rain, due to a drought caused by the sins of the people. In this sense, the poet asks YHWH to spill, while YHWH accuses men of consulting idols in search of rain.

This argument is deconstructed by Craigie (2004, 77-83). He resumes the notion that the psalmist is wrongly accused and seeks the YHWH for justice, asserting himself as loyal and presenting that those who accuse him should know that the Eternal considers him so. Consequently, at the end of the Psalm, all the anguish that surrounded the psalmist initially, disappears. Your trust in YHWH makes you rest safely.

Craigie (2004, 77-83) still argues that the Psalm does not offer theoretical answers to problems such as false accusations, falsehood, or deception. In this sense, the Psalm teaches, in a practical way, a kind of therapy: prayer. It's just divine perception that really matters. Thus, the attitude of the accusers does not change during the Psalm, but rather the inner man.

Regarding the structure, the author argues that, although the Psalm does not have a regular metric, the repetition of terms has a remarkable effect. The use of *selah* apparently evokes its musical form, and not necessarily the structure of meaning progression (Craigie 2004, 77-83). The author thus declares that a structure is difficult to be established, as Kraus also argues (1993, 144-150).

Mandolfo (2002, 30-35) presents a slightly different approach. She points out that the Psalm is defined by an existing dialogue between YHWH and men. In this sense, at the end of the dialogue, which requires help in verse 2, responds with joy to the grace of YHWH.

The author defends two discourses in the poem: a vertical, towards YHWH, and a horizontal one, with instructional interjections. Thus, the initial application is made using legal terms, and YHWH is presented implicitly as a judge in the Psalm. The judgment is then exposed in the second dialogue (Mandolfo 2002, 30-35).

With such ideas in mind, Mandolfo (2002, 30-35) proposes the following structure for the Poem:

Verse	Nature of speech	Emitter	Addressee
2	Invocation and petitioner	Divinity	(2ms)
3	Challenge for opponents	Petitioner or YHWH	Humans (2mp)
4th	Description of YHWH	Human didactic voice	Divinity (3ms)
4b	Affirmation of trust	Petitioner	Human
5-6	Exhortation	Human didactic voice	(mp imp)
7	Petition	Indeterminate	Divinity
8-9	Thanksgiving	Petitioner (1cs)	Divinity (2ms)

**Figure 1**  
Structure of Psalm 4  
Source: Adapted  
from Mandolfo,  
2002.

An even more isolated approach than that of Mandolfo and without many general parallels is that of Feuer (2004, 81). In his analysis, highly based on Jewish tradition, the author argues that David composed the Psalm while fleeing his son. A similar position is previously defended and argued by Hengstenberg (1869, 54-71).

In this sense, Feuer (2004, 81) sees the Psalm as addressed to David's enemies, aiming to teach them to improve their morals and ethics. Thus, in verse 5, David seeks to teach his adversaries that the inclination to evil is the real enemy, not him; already in verses 6 and 7, David acts, removing the false masks of Absalom's followers. In this sense, David, knowing all this reality, implores in Psalm 4 to save themselves from calamity through repentance.

After describing such approaches, it is noted that some aspects worked on in the analysis of the Psalm echoes a remarkable consensus among scholars. Still, it is noticeable that most of the content is, as minimal, slightly discordant. Apparently, the object that is put under analysis, resulting in such interpretations, is what subject's reality to such diversity, since, on several occasions, the attention of such authors is not focused solely on the text, but on the most varied and distinct sources.

Seeking to extract more concrete elements from the Psalm, the present work proposes to perform another possible analysis of the text, using, at that moment, the method of total analysis, as exposed by Weiss (1984)

and worked by Buber & Rosenzweig (1994). Thus, the analysis is done by narrowly reading the contents of the Psalm, in its final form. However, to situate the reader unfamiliar with the biblical language, a classic provisional translation will be offered after the Hebrew text in this first section. Such translation, however, will not be considered throughout the analysis, serving only to situate the reader.

After that, the translation will also be used by elements of the theory of textual analysis called Synchronous Intertextuality or Synchronous Dialogism, as extracted from Bakhtin's studies (2006), and worked by Kristeva (1969). At that moment, the biblical text, as a total construction, will be put into dialogue to expand the understanding of the Psalm in question.

All biblical references mentioned, when in the original, are taken from the Masoretic text, as exposed by the *Hebrew Bible Stuttgartensia*; Schokel (1997) dictionary is used in translations. Throughout the text, small excerpts translated freely from the original Hebrew are displayed, while a complete authorial version is exposed in the last section of this paper. When translation is not done, free/simplified transliteration is proposed. Texts that allude to other translations to English were taken from the King James Version (2004), indicated from the acronym "KJV", posted after the textual reference (e.g., Ps. 4:1a, KJV).

Once these aspects are introduced, the study of the Psalm in question begins.

## POETIC-LITERARY ASPECTS

תוֹנִיגָנְבִּי תַּצְנֵמָל  
דָּוִדֵּל רַנְמִזְמֵ

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David. (Ps 4:1a, KJV)

The introduction of the Psalm 4, present in the first verse of the current construction, can be divided into two lines: division demarcated by the presence of prepositioned subject (verb. part. and sub. prop.) + complement.

The Psalm is intended for what it directs in the songs<sup>10</sup>, through the use of the preposition "ל" (le – to, for). The same preposition is used for authorship designation, crediting its composition to David.

It is described as a (mizmor), a psalm. The designation תַּצְנֵמָל תוֹנִיגָנְבִּי (lamnatseah binginot— to the leader of songs) suggests the idea that this Psalm should be sung.

10. Feuer (2004: 82), based on Radak, argues that this designation refers to the Levite responsible for directing the entire temple orchestra.

יִגַּע יְאֲרֹקֵב  
 יִקְדַּצַּ יְהוָה  
 יִלְתַּכְחֲרֵה רַצָּב  
 יִתְלַפֵּת עַמְּשׁוֹ יִנָּח

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me [when I was] in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. (Ps. 4:1b, KJV)

After introduction, the body of the Psalm is started with a tetracolon, conceived from two lines of two terms and two lines of three terms. The lines are marked by simple alliteration, formed from the pronominal suffix of the first singular common person.

The first and last lines are composed of two verbs each; verbs that introduce a dialogue between the poet of the Psalm and יְהוָה ('elohei – my God). When addressing YHWH directly, the imperative is made; a textual mark that will permeate the entire structure.

In this verse there is the beginning of a general dialogue, which is interspersed by the centerlines with nominal complements. These complements present, qualitatively, the subject (line 2) and the actions already practiced by him (line 3); actions that serve as the basis for orders made in the initial and final line of the Psalm.

A term that requires attention is the verb “beauty” or “favor” (Botterweck et al 1986, 22). The verb constructed from this root is used in the Hebrew Bible almost exclusively in the sense derived from “show favor/piety/mercy”, although occurrences in the aesthetic sense still exist (Botterweck et al 1986, 22). In this sense, he who sings makes use of the imperative to ask YHWH to listen to his supplication and answer him, based on his grace and mercy, and not the deserving of the poet.

הַמְלִיכִי יִדּוּבֶכֶּה מִדָּע שִׂיֵּא יִנָּב  
 בָּזֶכֶּה קִיר וְשִׁקְבֶּה  
 הֵלֵס:

O ye sons of men, how long [will ye turn] my glory into shame?  
 [how long] will ye love vanity, [and] seek after leasing? Selah. (Ps. 4:2, KJV)

The third verse of the Psalm is constructed from a bicolon, although a last line is formed solely by the isolation of the marking “selah”. In this division, each line is composed of a verb in the second person, in active and incomplete action, accompanied by a nominal complement composed



of two nouns in the singular, in addition to subject and interrogative particle in line 1.

The lines of the verse in question represent a sudden break from the common syntax of Biblical Hebrew, constructed from, sequentially: verb, subject and complement. In the first line of this verse, it is noted that six terms precede the verb. In sequence, a nominal ellipse in the second line adds the meaning of four other terms preceding the verb present in the construct in question.

The verse in question is a sequence of dialogue initiated in verse 2. After being directed a request in an imperative voice to YHWH, by the poet, YHWH participates in the dialogue. The pronouncement is made in the second person. It is not clear whether the speech is directly attributed to the YHWH articulation, or if the poet articulates it in His place. In any case, in two colons, YHWH addresses בְּנֵי יִשָּׁא (benei 'ish – sons of man).

The line boils down to a question. The interrogative construction of הַמֵּדַע ('ad-meh –how long?) is used rhetorically by YHWH. “How long will you dishonor me, acting with false intent?”, the man is questioned.

The second colon implicitly carries the introduction of the first, evoking in ellipse the subject and the interrogative construction that composes it (בְּנֵי יִשָּׁא הַמֵּדַע שִׂיא יִגְבֵּי benei 'ish 'ad-meh – sons of man, how long?). Thus, the second colon functions as an intensification of the idea presented beforehand, although a distinct construction is used in this second moment.

The *selah*<sup>11</sup> marking particle appears at the end of the verse, indicating the end of the first YHWH speech.

אֵל דִּי־סֵחַ הָיָה הַלְפָה־יָכֹ וְעָדוֹ  
וַיֵּלֶא יִאֲקָרֵב עַל־מִשְׁלֵי הָיָה

But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. (Ps. 4:3, KJV)

Following the sequence of bicolons initiated in the previous verse, verse 4 is constructed from two lines formed by two verbs and use of the tetragram. In addition, both are finalized by preposition suffixed with personal pronoun of singular male third person.

The previous speech, pronounced by YHWH, is now continued by the voice of the one who pronounced the initial request of the Psalm. The use of

11. Feuer (2004, 85) argues that such a term may mean “forever” or a musical instruction, such as pause.

imperative is resumed, although now no longer with sense of request, but as an intensified order. Unlike the previous verse, the use of a third singular person in the poet's speech predominates.

The term *בִּעָרֶי* (beqare'i – in what I call it) reappears, connecting the verse in question to verse 2, to the moment of the initial request that builds the psalm. Apparently, the poet clarifies that the censorship of the previous verse does not apply to the *חָסִיד* (hasid – loyal); to this YHWH he will hear and respond, through his *חֵן* (hen – grace).

וְאַטְחָת־לֹאן וְזָגַר  
וּמִדּוֹ מִכְּבֹכְשִׁמ־לֵעַ מִכְּבֹבֶלֶב וְרָמָא  
הֵלֵס:

Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. *Selah*. (Ps. 4:4, KJV)

The bicolon of verse 5 resumes the use of imperative, present in three of its four verbs. The use of a second person is predominant, indicating a speech uttered (or attributed) by YHWH, according to verse 3. The colons are initiated and terminated with verbs; the two pairs being connected with connective *vav* use (although there is a complement interpolation in the second colon).

After the poet's interpolated speech in the previous verse, YHWH continues the previously initiated dialogue. The subject is not explicitly exposed again, being only resumed from verse 3. The verse, in their colons, is based on actions guided by YHWH. YHWH orders form of conduct, which will consequently generate other actions. In this sense, the imperative *וְזָגַר* (rigzu – fear), if practiced, will produce a loyal life, without a sin/stumble. The *וְרָמָא* ('imru – speak) will generate the *וּמִדּוֹ* (domu – shut up).

In addition, in the second colon comes the *מִכְּבֹכְשִׁמ* (mishkavrrem – your beds). This theme of sleep and rest, introduced in this verse, is resumed later, from the use of terms of the same semantic field.

Again, the verse ends with the *selah* marker, indicating the end of the second and final YHWH speech, according to verse 3.

קִדְּצִי־חֲבֹז וְחֲבֹז  
חֲוִי־לֹא וְחֲטָבֹ:

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD. (Ps. 4:5, KJV)

The verse is formed by bicolon, in which each colon is composed by verb in the plural male imperative, followed by complementary construction of two nouns connected by *maqfef*. The division of the colon is clearly established by the use of connective *vav*.

The construction of this verse is distinct from all the other since there is no clear designation of the person of the discourse to whom the speech is addressed. The use of the plural, however, suggests that this recipient is the *בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל* (*benei 'ish* – sons of man). Thus, verse 6 would be a second interpolation of the poet, right after YHWH speech; verses 3 and 4.

At the beginning of the first colon is made use of word play (*זִיחָהּ זִיחֵהּ* – *zivhu zivhei*), composed of verb derived from the root *זח* (*zavah*). This root, found in all Semitic languages, always refers to priestly services from sacrifices to deities (Botterweck, Bergman, Ringgren, Lang 1980, 8).

The verb occurs in Hebrew Bible about 113 times in *qal*. 25 of these occurrences occur in legal contexts and 88 in legal contexts. The ritualistic notion of the term is corroborated by the use of *אָרַק* (*qara'*) in the previous verses (v. 2 and 4), and both terms are part of the semantic field of the sanctuary and the alliance (Botterweck, Bergman, Ringgren, Lang 1980, 8).

The noun that succeeds the verb in the word play is given similar meaning. In a way, the noun appears in Hebrew Bible as a demonstration of particular worship to YHWH; as much as a specific ritual (Botterweck, Bergman, Ringgren, Lang 1980, 8-9,14).

בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִמְּסִימָהּ מִיָּבֶר  
הַקֹּהֲלִי רִיָּץ רֹא וְנִלְעֵהֶם

[There be] many that say, Who will shew us [any] good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. (Ps. 4:6, KJV)

The division of this bicolon occurs mainly from the organization of verbs into different prayers. Of the four verbs, one appears in the *qal* participle (*מִיָּמָה* – *omerim*), necessarily as an invocation of the subject of the first colon. The action of the verb in incomplete *hifil* *וְיַאֲרֵנוּ* (*iar'enu* – will make us look) is necessarily perceived as a complement of the subject already mentioned. The other colon points to a similar structure. The request granted again in the imperative, which requires the anthropomorphic actions of *הִסֵּה* (*nesah* – raise) and *רֹא* ('*or* – shine) the face, can only be attributed to the subject indicated at the end of the second colon, *הוּא* (YHWH). In addition, both the first and second colon are constructed in the third person, indicating the poet's speech, not YHWH's.

Two terms require greater attention in verse seven. The root רמא ('amar) appears for the second time in the Psalm, drawing a connective line from the verse with verse 5; site of its first occurrence. Apparently, verse 7 becomes a complement to the previously crafted idea.

This notion is corroborated from the analysis of the term הָסֵחַ (nesah – arise). The term in question is part of the semantic field of the מִשְׁכַּבְּךָ (mishkavrrem – your beds), present in the second line of verse 5.

According to Botterweck, Freedman and Willoughby (1999, 24), הָסֵחַ (nesah – arise) carries the common idea of getting up, carrying, or taking something or someone. In its essence, it has a physical character; its meaning, however, was expanded in the Hebrew Bible to the sense of forgiveness of sins. In this sense, forgiveness would be to lift or take away guilt, sin, and punishment. Moreover, the term also carries the legal sense of a king who rises from his throne, to judge.

יָבֵלֵב הַחֲמֹשׁ הַתֵּינָן  
וְזֶכֶר תְּשׁוּרֵיתוֹ תִּגְדֹּל תִּעֲמֹד

Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time [that]  
their corn and their wine increased. (Ps. 4:7, KJV)

Verse eight is the penultimate of the sequence of bicolons that make up the Psalm 4. There are two occurrences of verbs on the back, both in the incomplete *qal*, initiating the first colon and enclosing the second. In addition, a prepositioned singular noun is placed at the end of the first colon and another at the beginning of the second. The remaining terms serve as a complement to the verb, since the subject is implicit, demarcated solely by the person inflected in the terms.

The first colon is characterized by the use of second singular person. As previously presented, this use is perceived in the Psalm both in the poet's speech to YHWH, and in YHWH's speech for the יְבֵנֵי שִׂיָּא (benei 'ish – sons of man). Still, it is clear the occurrence of the first option at that time, since a contrary application is logically inconceivable, in view of the content of the line.

The second colon, in turn, is in the third person. As the Psalm is constructed, this time one notices a speech of the poet in reference to the subject already mentioned in the first line. Still, although the colon deals with the יְבֵנֵי שִׂיָּא (benei 'ish – sons of man). in a way, it is a continuation of the previous line; a speech of the poet addressed to YHWH.

It is also noted, in the second colon, the existence of a play of words (מְשׁוּרֵיתוֹ מִגִּדְדָּ – *deganam vetirosham*), expressing a totality of agricultural harvest. This is made clearer by the use of the plural in the terms that make up the word play, complicating a concrete and unitary understanding of such terms.

נְשִׂיאוֹ הַבְּקָשָׁא נִדְחִי מִנְלִשְׁבִּי  
יִגְבְּיָשׁוּת חֲטָבִל דְּדָבָל הוּאִי הַתֵּא־יָכִי

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makes me dwell in safety. (Ps. 4:8, KJV)

The last verse of the Psalm closes the sequence of six bicolons of total construction. Its distribution is apparently confusing, although the particle כִּי (*ki* – because) plays a clear line-breaking function. The verbs present in both colons are in an active trunk, in complete; although two of these retract simple actions, while the last of them echoes a causative action.

The verbs of the first line portray, for the first time in the Psalm, a self-declaration of actions by the poet. In this is made the unprecedented use of first singular person in verbs. In addition, it is noted that, again, the semantic field mentioned in verse five is evoked through the play of הַבְּקָשָׁא וְנִשְׂיָא (*eshekvah veishan* – I will lie down and fall asleep), establishing a connection between verses five and nine.

The final term of the Psalm is worthy of attention. The root בָּשַׁי (*iashav*) occurs as יִגְבְּיָשׁוּת (*toshiveni* – you will make me sit), clearly in dialogue between the poet and YHWH, as attest to the use of second person.

The root carries the basic meaning of sitting, settling. It has, however, other decisive uses, steeped in legal and legal connotations (as it is located at the city gate) and the idea of inhabiting or staying in a certain place. In addition, it has the meaning of royal enthronement, giving the idea of a king who, when named so, receives the automatic right to sit on a throne (Botterweck, Ringgren, Görg 1990, 23-25).

This term is used in the verse in question in the *hyfil*, an active trunk that indicates the subject as the cause of the action. In this sense, the poet recognizes that YHWH is the one who makes him settle; whose action can be understood in the sense of permanence and habitation, or in the sense of real enthronement.

At the end of the analysis of the last verse of the Psalm, it is necessary to be in mind that the elements explored in this section are responsible both for the construction of the verses and for the structuring of the psalm



itself. The functions of cohesion and disjunction (in moments data) performed by the explored elements, build the dynamics responsible for the image through which the poem is portrayed. Thus, a broader analysis, aiming at a structure based on the linguistic/poetic elements analyzed here, can be given, as exposed in the following section.

## MACROSTRUCTURE

The poetic-literary analysis already exposed suggests a dialogical psalm<sup>12</sup>. Such dialogue is given between three figures: YHWH, the poet and the *בְּנֵי אִישׁ* (benei 'ish – sons of man). Apparently, the poet seeks to place himself as someone other than the *בְּנֵי אִישׁ* (benei 'ish – sons of man), as can be noticed by opposition from verses three and four:

הַמְלִיכָל יְדוּבֹכַ הַמִּדָּע שִׂיאַ יִנְבֹּ  
בְּזָכַ קִירִי וְשִׁקְבָת  
הֵלֶס:

Children of men, even when my honor to shame, will you love?  
[Sons of men, how long] in vain will they pursue falsehood?

אֵל דִּינֶסַח הוֹרִי הַתְּלִפְהִיכִי וְעָדוֹ  
וְיִלְא יֶאֱרָקֵב עֲמֹשׁ הוֹרִי

And know that YHWH distinguishes the loyal to Him  
YHWH will hear in my call to Him

In this sense, the poet places himself as a representative of those who are loyal, as opposed *בְּנֵי אִישׁ* (benei 'ish – sons of man). In other words, he “builds” himself as a third figure, distinct from the unfaithful man.

The dialogue between these figures is motivated by the question given at the beginning of the Psalm, in verse 2. The use of the imperative is excessive. The two possibilities of meaning of the trunk (insistent request and order) are explored to connect all the speeches to the initial question.

The stanzas are apparently delimited from the people of the discourse, flexed in terms. When prayer is built on the second person, its referent is YHWH (when pronounced by the poet – v. 2, 8, 9b) or *בְּנֵי אִישׁ* (benei 'ish – sons of man – when the speech is of YHWH – v. 3, 5). When the construction is given in the third person, the poet addresses the *בְּנֵי אִישׁ* (benei 'ish – sons of man – v. 4, 7).

12. Mandolf (2002, 30-35) works on this idea in an exemplary way, although the analysis set out here presents contrasting or more detailed, compared to his work.

The first stanza is summed up only to verse two, being a speech of the poet in reference to YHWH. This speech is characterized by an insistent request for response and action to the Eternal, in the face of the poet's call and prayer. As already said, this stanza is marked by the use of imperative and second person. It acts as an initial basis for dialogue.

The second stanza, composed of verses 3 to 6, is entirely directed to **שִׂיבָנִי** (benei 'ish – sons of man). The main mark of cohesion is the use of a third person by YHWH and a plural second person by the poet. YHWH's use of the imperative relates to the question previously addressed to him. The stanza is constructed from two YHWH lines (v. 3 and 5), interpolated by two speeches of the poet (v. 4 and 6). Apparently, the poet feels free to "assist" YHWH in transmitting his will/guidance.

At the end of verses 3 and 5, the *selah* marking particle appears, indicating the end of the only two YHWH lines in the Psalm and corroborating the stanza unit. The use of the term **יִאֲרָקֶיךָ** (beqare'i – in what I call) in verse 4 establishes a strong connection between this stanza and the first. Apparently, there is a progression in the answer to the question that governs dialogue.

The third and final stanza is characterized by a resumption of the poet's speech towards YHWH. This is observed through the predominant use of the second person, although references to the first and third person are also made. Still, it should be in mind that such references do not indicate the fate of speech, but only third-party citations in its construction.

Apparently, the poet understands in this stanza the answer to his question; although there is no explicit effort on the part of YHWH to respond to it. Thinking of verse 2 as a rhetorical question at this point may also be an option. In any case, there is a progression in the understanding of the response, already initiated previously. The use of the root **אָמַר** ('amar), which appears in verse 5, is repeated in verse 7. In addition, the semantic context of rest, which is shared in both verses, receives a final greeting in verse 9.

In short, the three stanzas that make up the Psalm are cohesive mainly with regard to the people of speech inflected in verbs and relate from a progressive development in the construction of an answer to the question asked at the beginning, which can very well be taken as rhetoric. In this way, the Psalm 4 can be structured as follows.

Introduction (v. 1)

A. - The YHWH (v. 2)

B. - To Men (v. 3-6)

### C. - The YHWH (v. 7-9)

where, as set out above, B could be subdivided into four parts:

- I. YHWH speech to men (v. 3)
- II. Speaks of the poet to men (v. 4)
- I'. YHWH speaks to men (v. 5)
- I-I-I.' The poet speaks to men (v. 6)

In view of the information presented in this section and in the preceding section, a synthesis is necessary for a better understanding of the content. This synthesis, given in the section below, will clarify how poetic-literary and structural analyses contribute, or even determine, the understanding and translation of this Psalm.

### SYNTHESIS AND TRANSLATION

In summary, the Psalm 4 is a dialogical composition between two participating entities: YHWH and יְבִנֵּי שֵׂיָא (benei 'ish – sons of man). This last construction has a peculiar character, since it appears in this way only in about 5 other occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.

Of the 5 occurrences, two refer to the twelve patriarchs as sons of one man (Gn 42:11 and 13). In addition, it is noted that, in two other occurrences, the construction is put in parallel with the expression יְבִנֵּי אָדָם (benei 'adam – sons of the Earth – Ps. 49:3, 62:10). Thus, apparently, the expression used in the Psalm represents a character more restricted to the people of Israel, as descendants of the יְבִנֵּי שֵׂיָא (benei 'ish – sons of man) of Genesis (cf. Feuer 2004, 83).

In addition to the entities mentioned, which are involved in dialogue, it is evident in the Psalm the participation of a third figure that derives from the second receiving chain, called a “poet” throughout the present work.

The poet plays a peculiar role in the Psalm. His prayer given in verse 2 is what initiates and bases dialogue. Moreover, it is noted that the poet apparently insists on putting himself apart from the men to whom YHWH is addressed. He considers himself a representative of a faithful portion of humanity, to whom YHWH hears and responds (v. 4: 7). In this way, he feels free to complement the only two YHWH lines in the Psalm (v. 3 and 5), interpolating his own lines intended for the יְבִנֵּי שֵׂיָא (benei 'ish – sons of man) in verses 4 and 6.

The role of the poet is fundamental in the total construction, since he is the only representative of the human receiving chain that actively participates in dialogue. His lines, by the way, make up six of the eight

verses of the poem. In this sense, the “remainder” of the so-called “sons of man” only participate in dialogue passively.

In its full form, the Psalm is composed of a tetracolon followed by a sequence of six bicolons, divided into three stanzas, delimited by the flexion of the people of the speech, that is, of the receptor. The *selah* marking indicates the endings of YHWH speeches directed at men.

The dialogue begins with the poet addressing YHWH. In this first stanza (v. 2), the request boils down to two actions, the *אָנֵנִי* (*‘aneni* – responder) and the *וּשְׁמָע* (*ushema* – listen). Both actions are in the imperative, demonstrating insistent request on the part of the applicant.

It should be considered that the prayer performed in this stanza has a very well understood basis. The poet acknowledges the actions practiced beforehand by YHWH for his benefit (line 3) and declares that his request is not based on his merit, but on the *חַנּוּן* (*hanan* – grace) of YHWH (line 4).

The prayer of verse 2 conceives the next stanza. In the second verse, the two verses marked with *selah* (3 and 5) present Oracles of YHWH aimed at men, where, in verse 3, YHWH draws attention to the reality of the sons of man, and in verse 5 declares an oracle aiming at change of actions. The direct transmitter of these oracles, however, is unclear.

Apparently, there are two options to understand such a transmitter. If understood as a direct speech of YHWH, He seeks to include the “poet” in the “sons of man”, in general, since his oracles do not distinguish him, and the message of verse 5, with strong emphasis on the semantic field of speaking, can refer to the initial request made in verse 2. Opting for this reading, however, it is necessary to understand the poet’s speeches in verses 4 and 6 as an intentional pretense, while he places himself as ignorant of his insertion in the recipient of YHWH’s speech and positions himself apart from this group.

One can also understand YHWH’s speech as a reproduction of the oracle from the poet’s voice. Since in several sections of the Hebrew Bible the prophet’s speech and YHWH’s speech is confused at the time of the oracles’ pronunciation, and a clear differentiation as to the direct transmitter is complicated, this option is feasible. Thus, verses 3 to 6 would be delivered through the poet’s mouth, although 3 and 5 are described as being by YHWH lines and 4 and 6 as direct interpolations of the poet.

This stanza carries important elements for understanding the content of the Psalm, in addition to those already mentioned. The second line in verse 4 represents a central idea. The poet seeks to clarify that YHWH,





It is important to note that the stanza, and consequently the Psalm, is closed by speech indicating a satisfactory answer to the question asked in verse 2. It is curious, however, that clear evidence of such answers is not found in the YHWH statements of verses 3 and 5. Still, at the end of the Psalm, the poet declares that peace comes to him, and that peace is possible for him, for YHWH will make him בַּשִּׁי (iashav – to sit). Thus, the Psalm is closed with an indication of a real context of enthronement, already announced by the use of the הִסֵּן (nesah – to arise) in verse 7.

By closing this synthesis, the translation of the poem takes place.

Bearing in mind the broadly polysemic character of the Hebrew language terms, it is known that when a translation is made, one of many terms must be chosen to transmit the intended content. The translation proposed here seeks to present a choice of terms and associations that portray the internal logic already exposed, seeking as much as possible an adaptation to the dynamics of the text and its internal structure, maintaining, whenever possible, the opening of syntagma. Such translation, in authorial version, accompanied by explanatory translator notes, can be given as follows.

#### INTRODUCTION<sup>14</sup>

For the one who leads the songs<sup>15</sup>  
Psalm of David

תוֹנִיגִּיב חֲצִנְמֵל  
דָּדָל רִנְמָזֵמ

*Stanza I* Whatever I call, answer  
God of my justice!  
In danger you turned<sup>16</sup> to me,  
Have mercy<sup>17</sup> and hear my supplication!

יִגְבֵּעַ יֵאָקֶב  
יִקְדָּצַ יְהוֹלָא  
יִלֵּ: תִבְחָרָה הָצֵב  
יִתְלַפֵּת עֲמָשׁוֹ יִנָּח

#### Stanza II

Sons of man, even when you will “love” my  
glory as an insult?  
[Sons of man, even when]<sup>18</sup> you will you

הַמְלִיכִל יְדוּבֹכִי הִמְדַּע שִׁיֵּא יִגֵּב  
בְּזֶכַּ קִירִי וְשִׁקְבֵּת  
הֵלֵס

14. It should be in mind that such an introduction is not part of the body of the original text. Still, its insertion goes back a rather old period, preserving a tradition that very well can be taken as reliable.

15. The translation of תוֹנִיגִּיב (binginot) it is usually made at Almeida as a need for accompanying string instruments in the reproduction of the psalm. This is due an information of tradition, which considers the term as an indication of a particular group of instruments used in the temple (Cf. Feuer 2004, 82). In this translation, it was taken a option of the simplest designation of the term, “in the songs”.

16. The term תִּבְחָרָה (Hirhavta) can be translated by “turned”, “widened”, “aggrandized”. His appearance in the absolute apparently carries the sense of care, protection, and divine interest in “facilitating” the ways of the poet. Terrien (2003, 97) argues that the term “it may have been the nomadic metaphor the symbol of freedom before wide horizons”.

17. The term יִנָּח (Haneni), coming from the root נָח (Hanan), can be understood as “grace”, “beauty”, “mercy”, “favor”.

18. Nominal ellipsis.

pursue falsehood in vain?

Know that YHWH highlighted the loyal to himself;

YHWH will hear my call.

Fear and don't sin!

Speak in your hearts, by your beds, and shut up!

Sacrifice sacrifices of justice!

And trust YHWH!

גַּל דִּי־סַח הוּאִי תִלְפֶה־יְיָ וְעַדוֹ  
וַיֵּלֶא יֶאֱרֹקֵב עַמּוֹשׁ הוּאִי

וְאַטְחֹת־לֵאן וְזָגֵר

וּמִדּוֹ סִבְכָּשֶׁמ־לֵע סִבְכָּבֶלֶב וְרֵמָא  
הֵלֶס:

קִדְצִי־חֶבֶז וְחֶבֶז

הוּאִי־לֵא וְחֻטְבָּא

### Stanza III

Many are the ones who speak: who will make us see what is good?

Raise on us the brightness of Your face, YHWH.

בְּט וְנֶאֱרִי־יִמ־סִירְמָא מִיֵּבֶר  
הוּאִי־רִיגֵפ רֹא וְיִלְע־הֶסֶן

You put joy in my heart,  
For, at the [given] time, their wheat and wine multiplied<sup>19</sup>.

יִבְלֵב הַחֲמֹשׁ הַתֵּתֵנִי  
וְזֶבֶר קִשּׁוּרֵיתוֹ תִּגְדֵּד תֵּעַמ

In peace, together, I will lie down and fall asleep;

For only you, YHWH, make me settle down<sup>20</sup> in safety.

נִשְׁיֵאֵן הִבְכָּשָׂא וְדָחִי סוֹלֶשֶׁב

יִבְשׁוּת חֻטְבָּל דְּדָבֵל הוּאִי תֵת־יְיָ

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Seeking to distance itself from a subjectivity of inferences in the extraction of meanings, the methods applied here aim to favor an interpretation that arose from a reflection that considers, solely, the content of the text in its final form, using the form of its writing to obtain its meaning and the intertextual relations that the text preserves.

From the application of these methods, reiterating the reflections already enunciated throughout the text, it is noted that Psalm 4 presents a dialogical character among three cosmic figures, the third being a possible derivation of another one. The stanzas are delimited from the inflected use of such people of discourse, and relationships with legal, pacifist, cultic, ritualistic, and real contexts are raised through the use of specific vocabulary.

19. A segunda linha do verso em questão é de difícil tradução (Cf. Gerstenberger 1997, 54). Na presente proposta, foi feita escolha pela opção mais simples de tradução; buscando manter maior proximidade do original.

20. O termo יִבְשׁוּת (toshiveni) provém da raiz בָּשָׁ (iashav), que pode ser traduzida por “sentar”, “entronizar”, “repousar”, “estabelecer”.

Therefore, it is possible to conceive, in this text, the presence in Hebrew-Biblical poetry of an integral religious expression that relates the most diverse facets of human life; expression that can be objectively understood through in-depth analysis of the text, in its final form, considering the modes of its construction to establish its meaning.

This research, therefore, sought to present, in depth, the elements that make up the text and the meanings present there, based on the aspects already mentioned. Thus, there was no intention here to elaborate, in a more in-depth and contextual way, the religious or cultural elements present. This work will be up to the interests of Theologians who, when they deem this material relevant, may make their considerations.

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## UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND ITS “MEDIAS”: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ABOUT RELIGION, MEDIA AND SECULARISM

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the reconfiguration of Brazilian secularism, marked by Pentecostal evangelical activism in the public sphere and the consequent decline of the hegemony of the Catholic Church in the country. From a critical review of the literature about religion, media and secularism, we consider Universal Church of the Kingdom of God's (IURD) greatest center, Solomon's Temple, as the privileged object of this analysis. Observing the media visibility of some scenes and narratives about the Solomon's Temple, we sustain that the incorporation of new media into the IURD's religious repertoire has transformed the practices of religious mediation in the country. Our objective is to demonstrate that the publicity dynamics of aesthetic formation—inspired by a mythical conception of Israel and materialized in a diversity of objects, such as buildings, ceremonies, gestures, performances and

### KEYWORDS

Religion;  
Pentecostalism;  
Media; Solomon's  
Temple; Universal  
Church of the  
Kingdom of God.

1. This article presents the results of the Scientific Initiation research The televised sacred: the Solomon's Temple in perspective [originally: “O sagrado televisionado: perspectivas sobre o Templo de Salomão”] (2019-2020), which is linked to the thematic project “Rights, Religion and Secularism: the reconfiguration of the civic repertoire in Contemporary Brazil [Direito, Religião e Secularismo: a reconfiguração do repertório cívico do Brasil Contemporâneo]” and financed by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP) (Process number: 18/21726-3)



symbols, by Pentecostal churches— became an important factor for the emergence of Pentecostalism as a public religion.

## INTRODUCTION

The visit of president Jair Bolsonaro to Solomon's Temple, São Paulo, in September 2019, made the headlines in *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday), of Record television channel, which belongs to Edir Macedo: "Jair Bolsonaro visits the Solomon's Temple and is received by Edir Macedo"<sup>2</sup>. Catarina Hong, the journalist in charge of the story, narrated Bolsonaro's visit to the Temple, explaining minutely the meaning of each of his words and acts. The report emphasizes the friendly atmosphere of the meeting between the two public authorities, one religious and the other political. A scene highlights the bishop's gesture of courtesy, to offer a bible as a gift to Jair Bolsonaro, saying that "the word of God... Is the best present I could give you". Then, another scene is exhibited: both authorities walk through the Temple, and the president is guided to the *Jardim Bíblico* (Biblical Garden), a religious tourism spot, which educational purpose is to instruct visitors about the Jews sacred stories. However, one of the scenes of greatest coverage, not only on the report itself, but in the other channels and in the public opinion in general, was the religious ceremony in the Templo de Salomão, crowded with its maximum capacity (10.000 people), in which Jair Bolsonaro is *blessed* by Edir Macedo.



**IMAGE 1**  
Picture from  
"Bolsonaro vai ao  
Templo de Salomão  
e é abençoado  
por Edir Macedo"  
(Bolsonaro goes  
to Solomon's  
Temple), published  
by O Globo—one  
of Brazil's largest  
newspapers —  
September 2019.<sup>3</sup>

The report of *Domingo Espetacular* shows the moment of blessing, highlighting the speeches in which the bishop refers to Bolsonaro "as

2. The report is available on the YouTube platform at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA1uU5jn4hM>. Access date: July 19, 2021.

3. Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/bolsonaro-vai-ao-templo-de-salomao-e-abençoado-por-edir-macedo-23920121>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

chosen by God to govern the nation”. But some of its most polemic moments, that reverberated in the majority media, which occurred just after the blessing, seem to have been left out. After the president came down from the pulpit, Edir Macedo addresses to the crowd: “He is going to rock...We shall remain praying for our president. The entire media is against him and I know how that feels, because we’ve experienced the media’s hell, its violence, once it’s the “gray” (partial) media, but today I stand here...”.

As seen in the bishop’s speech, the “media” is in the center of the contemporary political disputes about the visibility production of narratives and discourses in the Brazilian public sphere. This scene, briefly reconstructed above, of Bolsonaro’s visit to the Solomon’s Temple, seems to be significant to show how the visibility of certain discourses and performative gestures can be read as religious controversies that become the object of public debate. It is not recent that the Universal Church (IURD)—the leader of the Neo Pentecostal movement in Brazil, according to Ricardo Mariano (2004)—has been acting prominently in the production of controversies that challenge the secular legal order through its activism in the most varied public arenas. According to Ronaldo de Almeida, the group led by Edir Macedo is a religious-mediatic-political group, and is representative of the new conservative movement in Brazil (2019). Thus, thinking about how these arenas are articulated, it becomes necessary to reconsider the role that religions have been playing in the Brazilian public sphere in the latest decades.

This article aims to explore some of the concepts and theoretical perspectives towards “media and religion”, and to articulate them to the studies about “public religions”. In this analysis, we observe the public visibility of Solomon’s Temple as the object of this reflection. From a critical review of the literature about media, religion and secularism, we reflect about Solomon’s Temple in the light of the Brazilian secularism reconfiguration and its relations with larger changes in religious mediation that occurred in the country’s public arena.

According to Paula Montero (2015), the Pentecostal evangelical expansion has suspended the main founding principles of the “laicity pact”, which has been effective since the Republic was established, and has put it under dispute. Montero suggests that it demonstrates a reconfiguration of religious pluralism. Therefore, it seems that the reformulation of the classic conception of religion, derivative of catholic normative referential, has gone through a new configuration since the growing influence of Pentecostalism, especially of the Neo Pentecostal strand. In that way, the present article tries to sustain the hypothesis that the Solomon’s Temple can be thought of as a result of the Pentecostal emergency as a public

religion, since its specific form of producing its own visibility affects, at the same time, what we understand as “religion” and also as “public space”.

As Paula Montero states: “Placing the issue of public religion in terms of its publicity dynamics implies asking ourselves about the public whose attention is intended to capture” (2016, 142). The author takes the concept of public religions as it was formulated by José Casanova (1994), that is to think of the concept of religion as ways of making a public. For Casanova, a religion becomes public when it begins to act in three different arenas: “when it enters the state apparatus, when it penetrates the political system and when it becomes a mobilizing political force at the level of civil society.” (Montero 2018, 28). In this way, according to Machado and Burity, Pentecostalism became a public religion through the “adoption of a corporate model of political representation through the launch of official candidates by the IURD” (606).

In this article, we intend to think about public religions as forces that mobilize the invention and affirmation of civil society. We assume a critical perspective towards the idea in which religion means to suppose the incorporation of a collectivity of believers in a community base centered on the Church. Different authors defend the perspective that such concept would no longer be able to encompass the intense circulation of actors through the most varied arenas that act in the name of religion and the ways in which religions are presented in public space (Montero, Silva e Sales 2018; Teixeira 2019; Ciochetti 2020). Thus, the authors argue that, given the new understandings of what it means to make religion, it is insufficient to think about religion based on the relationship between the church and the faithful.

From this perspective, we assume that the incorporation of different media and its articulation with the religious and political arenas re-dimensioned the visibility of Pentecostalism in the Brazilian public sphere. As Jacqueline Teixeira argues, the different types of media “are fundamental in the exercise of the appearance of bodies and in the production of a subject who emerges from the action of his performativity with the public.” (2019, 71). Therefore, we take media as a central factor on the production of visibility of certain religious performative scenes that gain wide circulation in the public domain. As Birgit Meyer suggests, the adoption of new media in the religious repertoire involves constant negotiations (2019, 63). In this sense, we understand that the incorporation of new media by Pentecostal churches becomes an element in the transformation of religious mediation. We believe, then, that the articulation of the concept of media with the publicity dynamics of religion can be productive insofar as the media make it possible to increase the visibility of certain performative scenes, action repertoires and sensory forms that actors use to make it public.

Initially, considering media as a fundamental factor in the production of public visibility, we seek to explore the double meaning that the concept encompasses: both mediatization processes and forms of mediation of religion, highlighting some media that the IURD has incorporated into its repertoire which is considered relevant to socio-anthropological literature. From this, we seek to articulate a theoretical perspective on media and religion with the concept of public religions through the analysis of publicity dynamics and religious mediation made by the IURD on the Solomon's Temple. Finally, we analyze how this aesthetic formation spreads in the Pentecostal environment and becomes a fundamental factor on how this religious segment has presented itself in the Brazilian public sphere.

### **MEDIATIZATION, MEDIATION AND THE “MEDIAS” OF UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

Focusing on the concept of media to explore its theoretical and analytical potential, we examine some theories to think about the relationship between “religion and media”. In this field of studies, two concepts are relevant to our discussion: mediatization and mediation. In the perspective assumed by this analysis, exploring the potential of these concepts can be useful to critically access some theoretical propositions raised in the literature on the Solomon's Temple. We shall start from mediatization.

According to Livia de Silva Souza (2014), Stig Hjarvard is considered one of the main exponents of the concept of mediatization. Hjarvard argues that the concept of mediatization opened a new theoretical field that focuses on the influence of the media, in a broad sense, on society and culture (2012). In general, the author understands the mediatization of society as the process by which “... society, to an increasing degree, is subjected to or becomes dependent on the media and its logic.” (idem, 64). The author also highlights that the concept of mediatization is not to be confused with that of mediation, in which the first appears as a new theoretical perspective in relation to studies on mediations:

Mediation describes the concrete act of communication by means of a medium in a specific social context. By contrast, mediatization refers to a more long-lasting process, whereby social and cultural institutions and modes of interaction are changed as a consequence of the growth of the media's influence. (Hjarvard 2008, 144)

To talk about the mediatization of religion, the author analyzes how the media operates as an agent of change and religious transformation. In this sense, through mediatization processes, the author argues that “religion is increasingly being subsumed under the logic of the media, in terms of institutional regulation, symbolic content and individual practices” (2008, 4).

Hjarvard also discusses the public visibility of religions in the contemporary world, arguing that a fundamental factor of such visibility lies precisely in the mediatization of religion. This perspective, according to the author, has been used to “claim a resurgence of religious belief in general and to denounce the idea of secularization in particular.” (2016, 2). However, opposing these perspectives, the author defends the position that it is possible to observe “a slow and gradual decline in religious beliefs and practices” (idem, 8). In this way, it would be possible to attest to the validity of the secularization thesis, in which religion would not simply disappear, but argues “modernity, including its mediatized conditions, influences the forms of religious imaginaries and practices that will prevail.” (idem).

Based on a critical perspective of the mediatization, Luís Sá Martino (2019) proposes a concept of mediatization as an *articulation* between media and social practices. Thinking about mediatization processes from the notion of articulation, suggested by the author, is opposed to the ideas of “influence” or “effects”, proposed by Hjarvard, which assume a “media-centric” perspective, attributing a disproportionate value to the power of media when thinking about its “effects” (2019, 22). In this sense, Martino argues that the term mediatization has the potential to overcome old dichotomies that treat media and society as watertight categories that operate under reciprocal influence. Thus, instead of thinking about “media and religion”, mediatization proposes a new look, as “media with” or “media in” religion, reinforcing the processual character of intertwining and transforming social practices.

Once more, in opposition to Hjarvard, Martino does not abandon the concept of mediation, since:

... the technological media element produces ways of understanding reality that go beyond the borders of the media field, moving towards mediations. They are articulated with other instances of human life, such as people’s sensitivity, their ways of perceiving the world and understanding reality from what Gomes (2006) called an ‘ecology’ of communicational practices (2012a, 224)

In relation to the processes of mediatization of religion, the author states that they have been “asserting themselves as a preponderant characteristic of several churches and religious groups, changing religious practices that are reconfigured and rethought in the context of an equally mediatized society” (idem, 220). In this case, he highlights the mediatization processes of the Universal Church:

In the Universal Church, led by Edir Macedo, mediatization was from the beginning one of the main points of the denomination, accompanied by intensively mediatic elements— derived from what Campos (1997) calls ‘theatrical’—in various aspects of its practices (Kramer, 2005) (idem, 229)



The author also emphasizes that the capital contribution of the church in the purchase of Record television channel would have changed the economic dynamics of the media field (idem, 232). Martino, therefore, concludes that the mediatization process would be a phenomenon of multiple variables, highlighting the articulation between the specific characteristics of a religious movement and the political economy of the media. In this aspect, he indicates a transformation factor, as “mediatization includes new actors in the field, contributing to new dynamics and mediations” (idem, 238).

Martino also proposes to think about how the mediatization process has allowed religion to redefine its presence on the borders between public and private, exploring some dimensions of the mediatization of religion, which is “a prominent factor for its performance in the public space as an actor of relevant influence on decision-making in a secular political system.” (2012b, 122). The author raises the hypothesis that the mediatization process helps churches not only to publicize their beliefs in the public space, but to convert their presence into decision-making.

In this sense, he argues that the mediatization of religious institutions allowed the resumption of their participation in a sphere of media visibility, converging to a new form of participation in public affairs. Martino emphasizes that “the counterpart of the articulation between these two logics is the visibility that religious institutions receive in the public sphere.” (idem, 115). Under the perspective of thinking about the visibility of religion in the public space, the communicational theories have the potential to re-dimension the debate on secularization “in which the issue of the presence/absence of religion in the public space can be discussed in terms of its media visibility/invisibility in the public sphere” (idem, 116).

Under the Habermasian conception of the public sphere, the author argues that the participation and engagement of actors in public affairs involve adapting their performance to the rules of the game on an equal footing with other participants in a deliberative democracy. According to this reasoning, the “properly religious” discourse loses validation as an argument, which requires a rationalization of its presence so that the principles defended in the public sphere cannot be based on an argumentation of a metaphysical character:

(...) in the face of other reasonings for the debate in the Public Sphere, religion must base its arguments on rationalities that, by definition, are not religious, which creates a kind of contradiction in terms and seems to reinforce, in this way, the diminution of its sphere of influence. It should be noted that a strong part of the religious discourse that populates the public space has its origins in highly mediatized religious institutions. (idem, 118)

In contrast to the mediatization perspective, the contributions of Birgit Meyer (2019) also present theoretical possibilities about how religions become public and how they assert their presence in the public sphere through the transformation of religious mediation. Meyer argues that thinking of religion as a practice of mediation makes it possible to broaden the notion of media beyond the technologies of the modern era, also including substances such as “incense or herbs, sacrificed animals, icons, sacred books, stones and sacred rivers, finally, the human body that surrenders to be possessed by a spirit.” (idem, 61). According to the author, a re-articulation of religion in the way it presents itself publicly implies some kind of transformation “through the incorporation of new media and through new forms of mobilization and connection with people.” (idem, 44). From a critical approach to mediatization studies, she proposes her line of research:

Rather than basing our analysis on an essentialist view of community or religion as things at risk of corruption - by the forces of mediatization, entertainment and market logic - it is more productive to explore how the use of electronic and digital media effectively shape transformation... both of the communities and of the religion of our time. (idem, 63)

Therefore, the author proposes to shift the perspective of “religion and media”—centered on the spectacular use of new media as a “huge rupture”—, suggesting an approach that questions how the new media interacts with previous ones that have long characterized a religious practice. Based on the understanding that the religious message is always mediated (and have always been), the ways in which people negotiate and eventually adopt new media are raised as a problem to be investigated (idem, 63).

Meyer also defends a perspective on the study of religion based on a material approach “in order to apprehend how religion and the media materialize and generate tangible forms and formations in social life” (idem, 45). Meyer calls these formations *aesthetic formations*, seeking to overcome the limitations of the notion of “imagined communities” proposed by Benedict Anderson (1991 [2008]). Problematizing the idea of community “as a fixed, delimited social group” (idem, 53), she states that it would be necessary to go beyond that approach. In this regard, the author opts for the to understand the process of constitution of a community from a broader perspective:

the term ‘aesthetic formations’ captures very well the formative impact of a shared aesthetic through which they are forged by the modulation of their senses, the induction of experiences, the molding of their bodies and the production of meanings; an aesthetic that materializes in things. (idem, 54)

The notion of aesthetics, the author explains, would not be limited to a conception of “beauty”, limited to the sphere of the arts and its disinterested observer. She follows Aristotle’s concept of aesthesis, which in short consists of engagement with the world through the human senses. Assuming that the adoption of a shared aesthetic is central to the processes of subjectivation, the author argues that the public presence of religions can be analyzed with specific religious repertoires—or *sensory forms*—that are used to mobilize people. Thus, the “imaginaries” would not be mere by-products of mental representations, but materialize and are experienced as real. Imaginaries would, therefore, be producers of sensory forms, understood as evoking and reproducing experiences, emotions and affections that are shared by *common sense* (idem, 53-54)

In this way, Meyer defines the notion of sensory forms as “relatively fixed, authorized ways of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental, thus creating and maintaining connections between people in the context of specific religious structures of power” (idem, 64). We do not seek to question the ways of accessing the “transcendental”, considering that it does not seem to be a relevant approach for this analysis. However, it is interesting to think about the question that the author raises: “how these new media impact the established sensory forms and, therefore, the aesthetic styles that form subjects and communities” (idem, 65). This approach also allows us to observe the forms of mediation of religion in the public space, establishing visibilities and modes of circulation of material and symbolic goods through which its aesthetic formation is made public—that is, what acquires relevance and public attention.

Articulating the ideas of religious mediation, in its way of producing sensibilities, with its modes of circulation and global sharing provided by the media, Jeremy Stolow (2014) argues that this line of inquiry also provides considerable contributions to the critique of the theory of secularization. In this sense, Stolow asserts that there is no insurmountable barrier that would segregate the action repertoires of religious actors from the modern secularized state apparatus, on the contrary:

even the most overtly secular institutions seem incapable of disentangling themselves from the discursive structures and performative repertoires that originate within those very religious communities that modern institutions claim to have transcended. (2014, 154)

Instead of suggesting that forms of religious manifestations would be invading a field of action that would not be proper to its social sphere, the author stands from a critical perspective of secularization theories that attribute to religion a normative role in relation to its social practices and to the place it occupies in society. In this sense, repertoires, sensory forms and forms of social action considered as “religious” or “secular”

surpasses each other and are reconfigured depending on the context in which religions and their forms of mediation become visible.

It is noted that both concepts, mediatization and mediation, provide us with analytical tools that make it possible to observe the forms of production of visibility of religions in the public space. However, although the concept of mediatization is significant for understanding the process of insertion of religions in the media, it is clear that such an approach generally assigns religion a normative role, making it insufficient to develop a critical perspective in relation to theories of secularization. Thus, such theories do not take into account the historical relevance of the role of religion in the construction and management of public space, or that its forms of action would be capable of reconfiguring the secular order itself. From the perspective of mediatization, religion would be subsumed to the logic of the media and under the influence of changes brought about by modernity, as stated by Hjarvard, or it would be unable to impose its religious values on a secular political system, demanding the adequacy of its discourse to the rules of the game of deliberative democracy, as defended by Martino.

In this sense, studies that propose to think about the Solomon's Temple under the concept of mediatization seem to assume the same presuppositions, without also taking into account a critical perspective in relation to the concept of religion. Furthermore, the approaches are restricted to a perspective that, in general, interprets religions under the metaphor of market relations, in which churches offer "symbolic goods" as a commodity to their consumers/faithful and, acting as "enterprise", are in constant dispute for the adhesion of more faithful in a competitive model.

In this way, Roberto Bazanini et al. affirm that the Solomon's Temple promotes the spectacularization of religious services so that "religion is no longer guided by the sacred..., but by the governing laws of the market" (2016, 123). Alexandre Bandeira, in turn, states that the Universal Church practices symbolic cannibalism as a way to consume the signs of Jewish traditions that are present in the Temple, defining it as "a process by which one symbol is devoured by the other" (2018, 7). In summary, the author states that the practice of cannibalism would be a survival strategy "in an increasingly disputed religious market" (idem, 18) and also as a response "to the dwindling supply of new believers in the neo-Pentecostal market" (idem, 7). Bandeira also argues that the Solomon's Temple serves various communicational and media interpretations, concluding that the Temple would be a "great communicational complex, dedicated to those who are already mediatized and inserted in the practices of coexistence through the media and the spectacle" (idem, 9).

Finally, Leticia Storto and Marcelo Figueiredo, based on the studies of argumentation and communication, investigate the meaning effects caused by the architecture and mediatization of the Solomon's Temple. The authors argue that the Temple would be constituted as a luxurious and pompous setting, providing a new persuasive symbolic capital for the adhesion of more faithful, using media resources to promote the Temple. Thus, the authors conclude, from the materials produced by the TV news program *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday) about the Temple, that "the interference of religion in the production of the material is evident. The analysis of the two reports makes it clear that, more than informing, *Domingo Espetacular* acts as a promotional vehicle for the headquarters of the religious institution". (2015, 272).

However, as Paula Montero (2009) argues, when conceiving the public sphere in terms of market, such perspectives assume the supposed implicit normative that religion is "out of its place". Thereby, religion would be "invading the public sphere that should be autonomous in relation to beliefs and, as a result, is itself becoming a commodity, assuming a logic proper to the profane spaces of mass consumption" (idem, 8).

Furthermore, when conceiving Solomon's Temple under the categories "faithful" and "church", such approaches seem to go against the discourse that the IURD seeks to give visibility to the religious monument: "a house of prayer open to all peoples, regardless of personal beliefs." Thus, it is believed that, more than denouncing the "interference of religion" in the dissemination of its symbolic goods in the media, it becomes more significant to think about how the church mobilizes the category "recognition" to talk about the Solomon's Temple.

As Jacqueline Teixeira states, during the construction of the Temple, the recognition category was mobilized in countless ways:

(...) The population of the city of São Paulo needed to "recognize" the Solomon's Temple as a gift, a space for everyone, and not a space for the Universal Church, at the same time that, when they looked at it, they should "recognize" the identity of the Universal Church." (2019, 61)

Mediation studies, therefore, seem to be more promising, as Jeremy Stolow argues, "to review our own understanding of religion and its place in human social life" (2014, 155). Extending the concept of media beyond the use of the communication media, that is, as forms of mediation of religion in public space, it should be noted that the construction of large religious temples in the urban space meant a paradigm shift in the way the IURD was recognized publicly throughout the 1990s by the press.



According to Edlaine Gomes (2011), until the late 1990s, most church headquarters were in rented properties. The author argues that this situation has given rise to controversies about what would be “culture spaces” and “cult spaces”, considering that part of the occupied properties would be former cinemas and theaters. According to Gomes, with the construction of its own Cathedrals, the church began to promote new notions of culture and tradition in its religious repertoire. It incorporated elements of Jewish culture and symbolism in its collective memory, adopting an aesthetic conception inspired by the biblical narratives of the Old Testament in the architecture of its Cathedrals, which the author calls Mythical Israel. This dynamic is interpreted by Gomes as a product of a policy of authenticity, in which the church seeks to be recognized in the urban space as an authentic form of religion.

In this direction, Emerson Giumbelli (2014) argues that the construction of cathedrals and temples in urban space has enabled the formation of an evangelical visual culture that would compete with the main consecrated icons of the Catholic Church in the country, such as Christ the Redeemer. The importance of religious temples for the visibility and public recognition of the IURD, therefore, would not be fortuitous, since “the initiative to build religious mega-temples had the effect of producing a dynamic of legitimacy for the IURD as a ‘religion’ in the Brazilian public sphere” (Ciochetti 2020, 5).

Considering the theoretical perspectives presented, I will devote myself, in the following pages, to the analysis of the forms of production of visibility given by the television channels to the Solomon’s Temple. Three channels stand out in particular, *TV Record*, *Rede TV* and *SBT*, which mostly presented the monument in their news programs or auditorium programs. I seek to analyze the mediatization processes in what seems to be the most relevant, that is, in relation to their ability to add more actors to the production of religious publicity dynamics. Thus, I investigate the way in which “religious content” is performed in public television, questioning how it is presented, by which actors, what they say and how they talk about the Temple. In this aspect, we think about how visibility is articulated with the religious-media-political arenas in the production of scenes of recognition, in which the actors are constantly legitimizing the Temple as a “sacred space”, but which is “beyond religion”.

At the same time, I also highlight the forms of religious mediation mobilized by the Temple, its ways of articulating the notions of religion, culture and tradition in its Jewish aesthetic formation, widely shared by the media. In this sense, we observe how the articulation between the arenas is related to the forms of visibility, circulation and sharing in the public space of certain specific objects, taking the Ark of the Covenant,

which is situated at the Temple, as an example. For this analysis, videos published on YouTube by the Universal Church are also used.

## THE SOLOMON'S TEMPLE: RELIGIOUS MEDIATION AND PUBLICITY DYNAMICS

In the TV news program *Domingo Espetacular*, on TV Record channel, two reports of extensive duration about the Solomon's Temple stand out: the first, in 2010 (19:33 min)<sup>4</sup>, when the construction of the Temple was announced, and the second, in 2014 (29:22 min)<sup>5</sup>, one week after its opening.

The reports tell the smallest details regarding the work from interviews with architects, engineers, designers, political representatives, representatives of the Jewish religion, with the leader of IURD himself (Bishop Macedo) and also with part of the report produced in Israel. In the speeches of these different actors, the Temple is seen as a work that impresses in all its numbers, being portrayed at all times in the report as something unprecedented in history. "A project of this nature is a challenge, as it is unique, singular, there is no other and there won't be others in the world", said Vitor Stefaneli, the engineer responsible for the project. I highlight below some lines that are presented in the reports:

The project is a good idea, as one of the characteristics of the country is that it is multicultural and multi-religious.  
**[Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Celso Amorim]**

If there is a possibility for people to learn and understand the culture, tradition, ethics, history that the Jewish people brought to the world, the one that brought the idea of monotheism to the world and that is now part of Western culture, it will be very positive **[David Gorodovits, director of the Jewish Culture Center]**

The Temple will be a milestone of importance for the Jewish people, because it has to do with identity, history and alliance with God. **[Rafael Rodrigues da Silva, professor of theology at PUC University in São Paulo.]**

A work of great impact, but one that could be seen in these two, three years of the project's progress, with every care being adopted by the Universal Church. It will be one of the great temples in the city of São Paulo. It will be an equipment with important cultural characteristics, won't it? It will be a milestone! **[Gilberto Kassab, mayor of São Paulo at the time]**

Note how these actors recognize the Temple based on two important characteristics that are highlighted in their speeches. The first, expressed more clearly in the speeches of political actors Celso Amorim and Gilberto Kassab concerns its importance as a "cultural apparatus". The second, which also encompasses the first aspect, consists of its link with Jewish

4. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK-qh0XB9gg>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

5. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq7dMxi6uLA>. Accessed on: July 20, 2021.

culture and tradition, recognized in the speeches as “positive” and “a milestone of importance” insofar as it also contributes, as David Gorodovits points out, to learning of Jewish culture.

Although its recognition as a cultural apparatus stands out in the speeches presented, it can be seen how its cultural and religious expressions are based in the same place: in the incorporation of a mythical conception of Israel. Thus, by aggregating the speech of different actors who would not be members or leaders of the church, the IURD seeks to produce a dynamic of publicity for the religious monument through the media visibility of the link established with Jewish culture, history and tradition. In summary, this articulation can be understood in the slogan widely spread by the church: “Solomon’s Temple, a piece of the Holy Land in Brazil.”<sup>6</sup>

In another four reports analyzed, we see how TV program presenters from different stations become central actors in the forms of publicity for the Temple. The first, also produced by *Domingo Espetacular*<sup>7</sup>, presents the visit made by the presenter and owner of SBT, Silvio Santos, a year after the inauguration of the Temple, in 2015. The report portrays a “historic meeting” between Edir Macedo (who’s also the owner of TV Record channel) and Silvio Santos, 17 years after their last meeting. Macedo and Silvio, competitors in the dispute for the television audience, are presented in a friendly meeting in which the report highlights the common qualities they both have: the two, born of humble origins, had to struggle and face several challenges to become men of success. At various times, the Jewish origin of Silvio Santos is highlighted, being related to the objects and artifacts of the Temple.

Among the symbols of Judaism, Sílvia Santos remembers his spiritual roots. Silvio, in fact, is called Senor Abravanel, the name given by the family of Jewish origin. (...) In the Upper Room, Silvio finds some of the main symbols of the forced migration of the people of Israel from Egypt. One of them is the Manna, which represents the food that God provided to the Jews during their journey through the desert. As a good host, Bishop Macedo helps to bring out every detail. And as a good visitor, Sílvia Santos takes a camera from his pocket.

6. Slogan posted on the Temple of Solomon website. Available at: <https://www.otemplo-desalomao.com/>. Accessed on: July 22, 2021.

7. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubjW7siLC74&list=PLMaIqfllcInIXEMX-j-LCUM6nMCzjoZIQZ&index=100>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021.



**IMAGE 2**

Silvio Santos, Edir Macedo and his wife, Esther, in the Solomon's Temple. Source: Revista Veja (Veja Magazine)

In three other reports that gave visibility to Solomon's Temple, different auditorium programs coordinated by renowned Brazilian artists in the television sector stand out, such as the *Programa do Gugu* (Gugu TV show)<sup>8</sup>, by *Rede Record* channel, TV show *Superpop*, by presenter Luciana Gimenez<sup>9</sup>, by *RedeTV!* channel, and the Raul Gil Program, by *SBT* TV channel<sup>10</sup>.

These reports are similar in two aspects. In relation to the first, it is noted that there is an emphasis on presenting the details of the Temple that associate it with the idea of a Mythic Israel from the replicas of the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the Garden of Olives, the stones brought from Israel and the Upper Room. These replicas, objects and spaces compose what would be a place of "religious tourism" in which visitors can learn about "the history of the Jewish people" through a themed tour guided by a church minister, dressed in the character of an ancient priest, that pedagogically explains the meaning of each artifact and object. In this regard, it is clear how this religious tourism spot is central in the way the Temple presents itself as a space for cultural diffusion.

The second consists in the fact that these publicly known personalities in the media legitimize their recognition as both a "sacred space" and a space "open to all peoples", as we can see in the fragments below:

It is impossible to walk around here and not be amazed by the beauty of the finish in each part of the sanctuary. It feels like I've gone back in time and I'm in ancient Jerusalem [presenter Gugu]

It doesn't matter which religion you're from, what really matters is love, peace, and that you can connect with something better within yourself and with God, and bring the best of you, to your family, loved ones, society, your friends. Congratulations for the work. I think that doesn't matter what form [religion has], what matters is that it reaches ev-

8. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofSM-ZGpuU8>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

9. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChpBCxqHPxo>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

10. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L--McKp4dj4>. Accessed on: March 2, 2021

everyone in the heart, it unites people. I leave here differently from when I came in. **[actress Luciana Gimenez]**

Solomon's temple is a wonderful place. A sacred place even those who don't know it will get to know it! You, who are from another state, when you go to São Paulo, have to know you have never seen anything like it, I'm sure, unless it's in Israel, but it's a very serious thing. Congratulations, once again, to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, to Bishop Macedo and to all the bishops and ministers. **[presenter Raul Gil]**

These highlighted speeches, broadcast in these different television programs, are significant for understanding how the discursive production made in the name of the Solomon's Temple gains wide circulation in the social world. The monument is mentioned as a place outside and beyond religion, while at the same time incorporates a form of expression of the sacred, inspired by this mythical imagery of Israel and performed in public television by different public personalities—artists, political authorities, professionals from different segments and members of other religions.

Among the material expressions of the sacred that gained greater visibility in the various reports, the Ark of the Covenant stands out. It has great importance in the biblical narrative of the Old Testament, as it would be the place where the tablets of the 10 commandments of Moses were kept. It is also noteworthy that the construction of the first Temple, built by King Solomon, would have been intended exclusively to house the Ark of the Covenant. The location of the true Ark of the Covenant is unknown and it is subject of intense debate to this day.

The forms of materialization of the sacred expressed in the replica of the Ark of the Covenant could be considered marginal if we do not observe the wide publicity that the IURD seeks to make of this object in the most diverse ceremonies carried out by the church. At the inauguration of the Temple, as Paula Montero states, the Ark became “the central and apothotic element in the sacralization of the enormous building located in the district of Brás, in the city of São Paulo” (Montero, Silva, Sales 2018, 137). According to Montero, the recognition of this religious expression by the public was exercised in articulation with the political and media arena. As she argues, the entrance of the Ark into the Solomon's Temple was carried out through a ritual performance, staged in front of a large audience composed of the highest authorities in the state—with several representatives of the executive, legislative and judiciary powers—, artists from *TV Record*, representatives of the Jewish community, media entrepreneurs and religious leaders of the church.





**IMAGE 3**  
Image of the Ark of the Covenant in Solomon's Temple. Source: Folha de São Paulo newspaper.

Besides being the central element in the opening ceremony of the Solomon's Temple, the Ark circulated through different temples of the IURD in Brazil and other countries, such as Mozambique and Angola, in Africa, Mexico (Mexico City) and the United States (California and Los Angeles). Wherever it passed, the Ark became the object of a great spectacle of religious staging, gathering crowds around the ceremonies held in many temples and cathedrals.

On its arrival in each city, the Ark was transported from the airport to the churches in a fire engine, along with priests dressed in character. In the churches, the ceremonies were prepared, with a red carpet laid out and a large crowd awaiting its triumphant entry.

In a video available on the Universal Church's Youtube channel, it is possible to see, in Mozambique, the most assiduous of the faithful following the fire truck on the city's streets. The spectacle was not only inside the churches. In Angola, it is possible to observe, in another available video, the presence of the Israeli Ambassador performing the opening of this ceremony.



**IMAGE 4**  
Arrival and entry  
of the Ark of  
the Covenant in  
Mozambique,  
photo taken from  
the video available  
on YouTube.<sup>11</sup>



**IMAGE 5**  
Arrival and entry  
of the Ark of  
the Covenant in  
Mozambique,  
photo taken from  
the video available  
on YouTube.<sup>11</sup>

The return of the Ark of the Covenant to Solomon's Temple was carried out on the monument's fourth anniversary, in 2018. Accompanied by a ritual ceremony similar to the ones done in the places where it passed—transport in fire engines, with a large crowd waiting for it—this event was the subject of intense publicity by the Universal Church. In addition to institutional channels directly linked to the church, the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the Solomon's Temple was widely publicized in journalistic reports on several TV Record channel programs: on *Domingo Espetacular* (Spectacular Sunday)<sup>13</sup>, *Fala Brasil* (Speak Brasil)<sup>14</sup>, *Balanço Geral* (General balance)<sup>15</sup> and *Cidade Alerta* (City Alert)<sup>16</sup>. The newspaper *Domingo Espetacular* produced an extensive report, about 13 minutes long, which I highlight a brief fragment below:

Since its inauguration, Solomon's Temple has had a replica of the Ark of the Covenant, an object that represents the union between God and men. In this year, 2018, the Ark traveled all over Brazil. It passed, for example, in Brasília, Curitiba, São Luís. In all these places, the entrance of the Ark in the Temples of the Universal Church attracted thousands of people. The same happened in Rondônia, Ceará. Piauí, Rio de Janeiro, Bahia. (...) The Ark also crossed the borders of Brazil. It arrived in Africa, passed through Mozambique and Angola. Now, it's time for the Ark to return home.

11. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfHQO\\_N-nik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfHQO_N-nik). Accessed on: March 4, 2021

12. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbl2fbwT7Y4>. Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

13. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKkxTibyJFo&t=8s>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

14. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg475YG4azo>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

15. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEa1gAUnZkI>. Accessed on: July 15, 2019

16. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8WO\\_7\\_DkQs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8WO_7_DkQs). Accessed on: July 15, 2019.

As it can be seen, the church expanded its ceremonies, events and religious beliefs to “outside the church”, circulating its objects in its most different temples and giving visibility in the television media. In this regard, the modes of circulation and exposure of these objects suggest a transformation of Pentecostalism’s religious mediation in the public space, as it produces new sensory forms of devotion and engagement inspired by Jewish aesthetic formation in conjunction with religious-media-political arenas.

Such aspects of the media visibility become fundamental in the production of a publicity dynamic, which seeks to bring together the speech of these different actors—through journalistic and entertainment languages—which recognize the value of the Temple as a legitimate religious expression. Their forms of recognition and publicity for their religious expression, in turn, are specifically linked to their political engagement by capitalizing on the presence of Jewish authorities and national political authorities in the religious ceremonies.

#### **AESTHETIC FORMATIONS AND THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS: THE MYTHICAL ISRAEL AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL**

As for the presence of Jewish agents, it is possible to observe the protagonism of political authorities directly linked to the State of Israel in other rites and ceremonies performed by the Church, which emphasizes the diplomatic figure of the “ambassador”. In addition to the centrality of the Israeli ambassador in the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant in Angola, two videos available in the official channel of the Solomon’s Temple on YouTube channel show us the presence of the Israeli ambassador in Brazil, Yossi Shelley. In the video *Israeli Ambassador at the Solomon Temple*<sup>17</sup>, Shelley is interviewed by a reporter from the Temple’s team. Being guided by the questions asked, the ambassador not only praises the monument, but highlights its importance to the people of Israel:

Now I’m thinking that all the leadership of Israel, as ministers, should come here to see the magnificent work that is done for the Jews and for Israel as well... Israel has a great fight against anti-Semitism. Most people don’t know what Israel is (...) it’s an opportunity for people to see Israel in Brazil.

In Shelley’s speech, it is curious how he links the Temple with the fight against anti-Semitism. The Temple is recognized as a space whose social function is to spread the tradition, history and culture of the people of Israel. In the second video, entitled *Bishop Macedo and the Ambassador of Israel - Prayer for Jerusalem*<sup>18</sup>, the ambassador is invited to a religious service in a special tribute to the people of Israel, led by Bishop Edir Macedo. Standing next to the bishop, Shelley speech emphasizes the importance

17. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiYe87lg\\_3E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiYe87lg_3E). Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

18. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij-m78oKSTY>. Accessed on: March 4, 2021.

of the Solomon's Temple and the work of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God for the people of Israel, while the bishop reinforces his message, as highlighted below:

Yossi Shelley: (...) I want to thank you (Edir Macedo) on the part of the State of Israel, for what you do for our country and for peace all over the world, not only in Brazil. Thank you!

Edir Macedo: When we pray for Israel, we are praying for the people chosen by God, of which we are also inserted. Amen, guys? Whoever prays for the peace of Jerusalem has God's guarantee: they will prosper.



**IMAGE 6**

On the left, photo taken from the YouTube video *Israel Ambassador at the Solomon Temple*. On the right, photo taken from the YouTube video *Bishop Macedo and the Israeli Ambassador - Prayer for Jerusalem*.

The visibility of Yossi Shelley's presence and his speeches become paradigmatic, as they articulate politics and religion in the sensory forms produced by Pentecostalism as a public religion. In this sense, the aesthetic formation inspired by the mythical conception of Israel has been a fundamental factor in the transformation of Pentecostal religious mediation in the Brazilian public space, so that not only a new religious repertoire is incorporated, but it is produced with the legitimization and recognition of political authorities, nationally and internationally.

### **BEYOND SOLOMON'S TEMPLE: PENTECOSTAL PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SPACE**

The production of mythical Israeli aesthetics as a form of religious expression was not restricted to the religious monuments of the IURD. This form has gained wide expression in the Pentecostal milieu in the last two decades—materialized in different objects, images, symbols, styles, soap operas and rituals—and has become one of the main forms of production of public visibility in this segment, marking a difference in relation to the Catholic imaginary and recognition by state authorities.

The current president of Brazil, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, knew very well how to capitalize the sympathy of this segment, despite claiming to be a Catholic. This political shift to the right, which was present in much of the Pentecostal field, has been diagnosed as the phenomenon of the



new conservative wave in Brazil (Ronaldo 2017), electing Bolsonaro as the “representative of the evangelicals” for the presidency.

As Ronaldo de Almeida explains, when Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment was being discussed by the Senate, in 2016, Bolsonaro was in the Jordan River, in Israel, being baptized by Pastor Everaldo, member of the Assembly of God and current president of the Christian Social Party (PSC). Since then, Bolsonaro’s presence and visibility in the Pentecostal milieu has increased. During his campaign, in 2018, he invested in an alliance with Pentecostal political and religious leaders, reinforcing his conservative discourse in defense of the family, Christian moral values and the anti-PT<sup>19</sup> (Labor Party) sentiment present in public opinion.

But their alliance, however, was not limited to the plan of rhetorical defense of Christian values. Bolsonaro has participated in various rites, events and ceremonies of different Pentecostal denominations, which have been widely publicized. At the *baptism* in the River Jordan; in the *prayer* received at the Congress of Gideons; in the *prayer* performed by Magno Malta, alongside Bolsonaro, after he won the 2018 election; in the *consecration* received by Edir Macedo in the Temple of Solomon in 2019, in the *prayer* offered by several evangelical leaders in the Planalto Palace “in favor of Brazil” in 2020 and in the *fasting* campaign carried out by the president against Coronavirus, Bolsonaro demonstrated that he was not just one spectator of religious events, but an actor engaged in the public performance of the rites and corporal practices of Pentecostalism.



**IMAGE 7**  
Bolsonaro being baptized in the Jordan River in Israel.<sup>20</sup>

19. PT (Workers Party) is one of the main parties in the Brazilian Political arena and had governed the country for 13 years, before Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment in 2016. The legitimacy of the impeachment is still the object of great debates and controversies in the country.  
20. From: Extra Globo. Available at: <https://extra.globo.com/noticias/brasil/enquanto-votacao-do-impeachment-acontecia-bolsonaro-era-batizado-em-israel-19287802.html>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.





**IMAGE 8**  
Bolsonaro received  
a prayer at the  
Congress of  
Gideons.<sup>21</sup>



**IMAGE 9**  
Bolsonaro praying  
after his electoral  
victory.<sup>22</sup>

21. From: JM News. Available at: <https://www.jmnoticia.com.br/2018/09/10/durante-participacao-no-congresso-gideos-missionarios-jair-bolsonaro-recebeu-oracao-na-regiao-do-estomago-watch/>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.

22. From Folha de São Paulo newspaper. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/12/bolsonaro-diz-que-perfil-de-magno-malta-nao-se-enquadrou-em-ministerios.shtml>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.



**IMAGE 10**  
Bolsonaro receiving the blessing of Edir Macedo, in the Solomon's Temple<sup>23</sup>.



**IMAGE 11**  
With the presence of different evangelical leaders at the Planalto's Palace (the president's official residence), Bolsonaro prays in favor of Brazil. Foto: Isac Nóbrega/PR<sup>24</sup>.

23. From: O Estado de São Paulo newspaper. Available at: <https://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,bolsonaro-recebe-uncao-de-edir-macedo-e-bispo-diz-que-president-vai-arrebentar,70002992132>. Accessed on: February 29, 2020.

24. Photo published on the page: <https://fotospublicas.com/encontro-com-pastor-silas-ma-lafaia-president-do-conselho-interdenominacional-de-ministers-evangelicos-do-brasil-cimeb/> Accessed on: July 20 of 2021.



**IMAGE 12**  
Fast for Brazil Campaign. Image taken from the video: líderes evangélicos apregoando o jejum pelo Brasil com o presidente Bolsonaro (evangelical leaders preaching fast for Brazil with president) Bolsonaro. From Pastor Silas Malafaia's Youtube channel<sup>25</sup>.

Bolsonaro was also the first president of the republic to participate in the March for Jesus in 2019, an event that takes place every year since 1993 and makes up the official calendar in Brazil since 2009. The March is an international event, being held first in London, in 1987, and brought to Brazil by the church *Renascer em Cristo* (Reborn in Christ) and is currently organized along with other Neo Pentecostal evangelical denominations. In this event, different forms of sociability are performed, making it a mixture of a religious manifestation, a political rally and a carnival celebration. Lorries playing music (*trios elétricos*), concerts with artists recognized in the Pentecostal evangelical milieu, presence of millions of people, t-shirts, flags and personalized ornaments, political authorities and religious leaders compose the stage of the March.

In 2019, in São Paulo, the religious event also served as a political platform not only for Bolsonaro, but also for Mayor Bruno Covas (PSDB), Governor João Dória (PSDB) and Senator Major Olímpio (PSL). But Bolsonaro became the main figure at the event and delivered a speech alongside its leader, the apostle Estevam Hernandes and bishop Sonia Hernandes—founders of the church *Renascer em Cristo*—, and the ambassador of Israel in Brazil, Yossi Shelley. The Israeli flag became the main icon of the March, a religious and political expression of the event, carried by several people from the audience, including Bolsonaro, at the time of his speech. In the two Marches he attended, held in São Paulo and Brasília, Bolsonaro sought to praise Israel.

[São Paulo] I always quote Israel when I have the opportunity to speak. I usually say: look what Israel doesn't have and see what they are. Now here for us: see what Brazil has and what we are not.

[Brasília]. Our origins, our tradition, our culture is Judeo-Christian. (...) Israel only exists because its people have faith in God. It is an example for all of us.

25. Video available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhtRIh\\_v9uo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhtRIh_v9uo). Accessed on: July 20, 2021.





**IMAGE 13**  
Image taken from  
YouTube<sup>26</sup>.

Such speeches, besides revealing Bolsonaro's appreciation of Israel, demonstrate a new way of representing the Brazilian national identity based on Judeo-Christian culture. This narrative also took place in Bolsonaro's inaugural presidential speech, when he presented his "government plan": "We shall value the family, respect religions and our Judeo-Christian tradition, fight against gender ideology and preserve our values".

In this regard, the sacredness attributed to the people of Israel converges with its social and political importance, promoting new forms of engagement and devotion in the public space. In addition to religious events, the Israeli flag also became a symbol of the anti-democratic acts promoted by Bolsonaro at the *Palácio do Planalto*, alongside the flags of Brazil and the United States.

26. Image source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GoxGBFrJuac>. Accessed on March 4, 2021.



**IMAGEM 10**  
Image taken from  
the article by Guga  
Chacra published  
in the newspaper  
O Globo, on May 4,  
2020.<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

We began this article with a discussion about the role that the media play in contemporary political disputes, highlighting the activism of the Universal Church in the production of controversies in the Brazilian public sphere. Exploring the different theoretical perspectives on “media and religion”, we sought to relate this literature to the ways that Neo Pentecostalism—taking the IURD as a representative of this religious movement—has been presented in the public space and tensioning the configuration of the secular legal order established in the post-re-democratization of the country.

Thus, we point out how the reconfiguration of Brazilian secularism is marked by the emergence of Pentecostalism as a public religion, analyzing the importance of incorporating new media into the IURD’s religious repertoire as a factor which transformed religious mediation practices. This way, we seek to analyze the practices of religious mediation and the dynamics of publicity carried out by the church in relation to the Solomon’s Temple. In this aspect, we analyzed the publicity of the presence and circulation of actors from different arenas, the forms of recognition of them in relation to the Temple and also the specific way that media visibility allows the presentation of the religious monument through the languages of journalism and entertainment.

As noted, a place of sacredness is attributed to the Temple, in an attempt to detach its image as a place of religious belonging at the same time. This way, it can be seen how its religious function is articulated with notions of Jewish culture and tradition, which produces both the importance of

27. Available at: <https://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/guga-chacra/post/bolsonaro-sabe-que-eua-e-israel-adotam-isolamento-social-contra-pandemia.html>. Access date: July 20, 2021.



the Temple as a cultural and educational device for the Jewish people and an aesthetic incorporated into the Church's religious repertoire.

As seen, this aesthetic is materialized in different objects, with emphasis on the Ark of the Covenant. IURD seeks to give visibility to these objects in its events, rituals and ceremonies, in addition to publicizing them in *TV Record's* news programs. However, we also highlight how this aesthetic formation was not restricted to cathedrals, temples of the Universal Church, but has expanded among Pentecostal churches in recent decades, becoming a shared style capable of evoking sensory forms that produce new modes of engagement and devotion in the public place.

In this respect, we point out the central participation of authorities linked to the State of Israel in the production of forms of recognition and legitimacy based on the mythical aesthetics of Israel. At the national political level, it is also noted how the ascension of Jair Bolsonaro to the presidency resized the visibility of Pentecostal evangelicals in the Brazilian public sphere. His engagement and initiative to capitalize the sympathy for this religious segment placed Bolsonaro as a central actor in the publicity of Pentecostal performances, practices, ceremonies and rituals. The Israeli flag, in turn, became a religious and political symbol of Pentecostalism, making its presence felt in different religious and political manifestations in which Bolsonaro was the protagonist.

Therefore, we see how the materialization of the aesthetics inspired by this Mythic Israel in the most diverse objects, buildings, ceremonies and symbols by the Pentecostal churches have reconfigured the public space around the dispute for the representation of a Judeo-Christian national identity. Despite not being a hegemonic discourse yet, its wide circulation by political authorities reveals a phenomenon of extreme relevance. In this way, the growth of the evangelical population and its insertion in the most diverse public arenas in the country has demonstrated the intention of this segment in the dispute for the representation of a national identity in the Brazilian public sphere, demarcating a place of difference in relation to the Catholic imaginary.

#### TRANSLATION

Liam Correia Inkpin.

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# CARANDIRU AND THE FRACTURED SPACES OF MEMORY

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## ABSTRACT

Between the years of 2002 and 2005, the Carandiru's Penitentiary Complex passed through a deactivation process which led to an explosion of most of its pavilions. On the same ground, the construction of the Parque da Juventude ("Youth's Park") began in 2003. This space has been since then reconfigured, experiencing radical landscape changes. It is about this reconfiguration process, the substitution of one spatial composition to a completely opposite one, that this article intends to discuss the relations nowadays established between the territory and its frequenters, relying on ethnography as a methodology and on the creation of photomontages as an epistemological movement to think about these multiple temporalities. Being so, this study has as an objective to analyze, under anthropological bias, the arrangements and rearrangements of memory in the context of Carandiru's erasure.

## KEYWORDS

Carandiru; Parque da Juventude; Memory; Erasure; Photomontage.

## INTRODUCTION

From 2002 to 2005, Carandiru state prison, located in Santana District, city of São Paulo, was gradually decommissioned in a process that had most of its cell blocks imploded. Famous for one of the worst prison massacres in world history – around 111 inmates were brutally killed by the Military Police of São Paulo in 1992 – this state prison was established from the merger of the State Penitentiary (founded in 1920) and the Detention Center of São Paulo (founded in 1956). It has

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housed a considerable number of inmates in degrading life conditions for decades on end. Being the largest prison in Latin America for a long time, Carandiru's courtyards and cells housed thousands of men and their stories. Stories that were shattered along with the implosion of its cell blocks.

On this site, in 2003, the development of Parque da Juventude began. The idea for the park first came in 1999, when the state government led a contest of projects to revamp the area. That is how Carandiru gave place to a vast green area, a sports complex, a library, and two secondary-level professional schools. Both the green area and the sports complex were opened in 2003, with the other following in 2004 and 2007. That is when the site changed entirely, with its elements completely overhauled and its design reconfigured from top to bottom. The prison was replaced by a center for leisure, sports, and culture thanks to the interest of private companies that followed the expansion of the service sector for the middle class (Zanetti 2005). Zanetti (2005) gives us a context of this renovation process<sup>2</sup>:

The fading presence of the public sector in the 1980s and 1990s gave room to a set of sporadic, disjointed initiatives that were focused on making monuments into cultural centers. These initiatives had extensive media coverage and were welcomed by public opinion, given that it meant the expansion of cultural facilities in this expanding, service-driven metropolis [...]. (Zanetti 2005, 14)

To understand the impact of the transformation of spaces, such as with Carandiru, it is important to think about the city with its complexities and hidden paths in mind. To see the city in connection to its movements, going beyond its visible reality, its commuters, and the use of its space, one must inquire about what cannot be seen, about what is hidden and the reason it is hidden or vanished (Moraes e Cavalcanti 2011). It is about shedding a light and giving meaning to the physical world and its elements. And that requires understanding the process of making and, especially, the unmaking of cities. Therefore, understanding the reasoning behind favoring or eliminating certain spaces awakens a dormant need for reclaiming memory. Erasure appears as a public policy while memory becomes its locus of resistance.

Given that life, in all its range, is at the mercy of the capitalist mode of production, it would be a methodological mistake to think about the city and its everyday life from a neutral perspective. Spaces, which are historical and social artifacts, reflect the domination framework of capitalism,

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2. Debates concerning urban renewal are part of a large and diverse field of knowledge that has an extensive intellectual production. In this article, we are not going deep into the details of such debates, which is something that can be done in future works.



stress the selective composition of places, and highlight the contradictions of an unequal system. There is no room to be naive when thinking about the city and its gaps. Every wall, bridge, rock, and brick laid each time a space is transformed reveals the logic of the paths of the city. And the same goes for what is hidden or cease to exist. Visible and invisible go together. They give shape and connect the same field, playing the same game.

This is the game we are talking about. A game of images that spurs the formation of memories. Memories that are, as defined by Barbosa (2012), “cannibalized”, embroiled in a circular movement that does not let us identify “where [image] begins and where [memory] ends. Which one is the source and which one drinks from it?” (Barbosa 2012a, 381). The arrangement of spaces, through implicit choices that guide their design, also carries a set of visual structures that are responsible for the making of representations. Therefore, images and memories are elements in dispute, given that spaces do not neutrally activate them. Considering that the collective memory is born out of a narrative of images, the question that arises is: which narratives are being favored?

This question means that we should, in the first place, identify which memory we are talking about. Bosi (1987) helps us with that when she points to the relation between processes that lead to action and processes that lead to perception – a relation first noted by Bergson. Both rely on a corporeal presence inscribed to present time that feeds off of this same present through the relations it establishes with the living environment. This way, we can see a relation between the inhabited space and the representations that are formed from it. A dialectical relation that seems to stand between the “flow of memories made” (Barbosa 2014) and the city spaces where people go through.

Bosi (1987) also allows us to identify a social aspect to memory by bringing up some contributions by Halbwachs and Bartlett. She tells us: “The most insignificant change to the environment affects the deepest feature of memory” (1987, 17). This brings up the question: What would be the consequence of imploding Carandiru prison?<sup>3</sup> Would it be the weakening of possible memories? The reconfiguration of space – as with the prison turning into a park – seems to put memory in a place of dispute.

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3. We might also ask: why would it be important to preserve a deactivated prison, a place that once witnessed a traumatic event? Institutional violence defines a traumatic event carried out by government workers. Such a traumatic event – a massacre, in this case – demands a compromise of the State in not repeating the mistake, and policies of symbolic reparations tied to the memories of victims. The implosion of Carandiru seems to go in the opposite direction. To learn more about this debate: Soares, Inês e Paula Costa. 2015. *Massacre do Carandiru: em qual espaço foi fincado o compromisso com o nunca mais?* In: *Carandiru não é coisa do passado: um balanço sobre os processos, as instituições e as narrativas 23 anos após o Massacre*, org. Maíra Rocha Machado e Marta de Assis Machado, 181-197. São Paulo: Coleções FGV DIREITO SP.

Regarding the narratives created about space, something revealing seems to strike our unconscious mind – a place we assume to be private. Influenced by the works of Barlett, Bosi (1987, 25) says: “The raw material of remembrance does not emerge in its pure state in the language of the one who remembers; it is curated, sometimes stylized, by the cultural and ideological perspective of the group this person belongs to”. What are these narratives, then? Are they made at the core of remembrances influenced by the interests of certain groups? Who is interested in imploding the cell blocks where, a few years ago, a vicious massacre took place? A massacre that, such as unresolved trauma, keeps happening in Brazilian history.

If it is true that our remembrances contain a bit of ideology, being formed and informed by a dominant perspective, it is also true that the implosion of a significant part of that prison carries an objective, a (political) choice for absence. So what does that space tell us nowadays? Is it a place of leisure and rest or a place of confinement and extreme violence? Maybe both? Maybe none of it? Do our memories still house the horror of state brutality and the deadly consequences of mass incarceration, or do we see the green of the parks as the city’s redemption?

Therefore, this article aims to think about these memories and representations in dispute and the process of giving new meaning to Carandiru and the events inscribed to it. The goal is to analyze the memories present in that place nowadays and the notions that are made of it.

The method guiding this analysis is the outcome of an ethnography conducted in<sup>4</sup> Parque da Juventude. In that ethnography, I sought to analyze the “flow of social discourse” (Geertz 1973, 11) present in that place, trying to rescue the “said” of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms. (*Ibid.*, 11). Therefore, by observing and interpreting the web of meanings created from the relationship between the new space and its regulars, I sought to understand the transformation of this space as a process of creating meaning.

Also, as a way of exploring these new uses and views of the space, of placing them in a conversation between the visible and the invisible or, as Lefebvre (1996, 61) would say, between the urban text and the urban context – between what is seen and of which is said and “what is little said and of which even less is written [...]” (Lefebvre 1996, 31), between what presents itself and what “hides itself in the inhabited spaces [...]” (*Ibid.*, 31) – I employed one more strategy by taking pictures of the place,

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4. Throughout the six months I have been to the park, between January and June 2019, I stayed connected with dozens of people who went there – regularly and rarely, young and adults, employees and passersby – and on these lucky encounters, we would share our memories and views about the place. Those are the ones I interacted with, even if briefly, and here I name them interlocutors.

connecting different time frames in an exercise of overlapping images. The result of this strategy are photomontages that unite, in a single frame, both the past and present of that place. This allowed me to not only create some scratches on the urban text and suggest new ways to see and read what is presented as visible reality, but I was also able to use images “as the result of a research process” (Barbosa e Cunha 2006, 25).

### **MEMORY: A DISPUTED FIELD**

Memory, according to phenomenology, is made of an extensive web, a wide body in which perceptions, time relations, and the texture of collective life are interwoven. The notion of anteriority, which is closely related to the mnemonic phenomena since Aristotle, helped pave the way to the interpretation of memory in terms of representation of the past. This entails that the image-recollection, once it appears, configures the contact of the mind with something that is no longer there. That is where Ricoeur (2007) identifies one of the enigmas posed by memory: “The past exists in the image as a sign of its absence, an absence that, for not being there, is taken as a having been there. This “having been” is what memory tries to find.” (Ricoeur 2007, 2).

Absence, put it this way, is an accessible absence, something that can be seen. The realization of the existence of what “is no longer there but has been” is inscribed in and by memory when recognition is possible. It is through recognition, then, that memory can vouch for the presence of this absence, of recognizing that this vanished something was once there. About recognition, Ricoeur says (2007):

[...] Recognizing a memory is finding it again. And finding it again is assuming that it is in principle available, if not accessible. Available, as though awaiting recall, but not ready-to-hand like the birds in Plato's dovecote which one possesses but does not hold. The experience of recognition, therefore, refers back to the memory of the first impression in a latent state, the image of which must have been constituted at the same time as the original affection [...]. (Ricoeur 2004, 433)

This complex game between past, absence, and recognition also requires, in a decisive manner, other elements that deal with the circularity of this dialectic, such as impressions, vestiges, or clues. So when we ask ourselves which memories could emerge when visiting Parque da Juventude, a reconfigured space that was completely overhauled, we should also ask if impressions, vestiges, and clues are also present there. The revelation of these elements is what can lead us to face this hidden past.

By focusing on the structure of this complex arrangement, we reach the collective element upon which memory is supported. In his analysis of

collective memory, Halbwachs (1968 apud Pollak 1989) pointed out that the internalization of recollections would depend on one's bond with their group. The group is in charge of establishing the references to be shared by its members, classifying them in a hierarchy according to its internal logic, which would make the content between individual and collective memory explicit (Pollak 1989).

Influenced by Durkheim, Halbwachs's perspective focused on aspects that would, according to him, add stability and duration to the collective memory. He did not recognize that this cohesion would depend on coercive efforts to hold on. His analysis, then, had an exclusively positive interpretation of the way a specific collective memory is imposed. As if its creation was not due to a process of domination and symbolic violence (Pollak 1989).

The imposition of a certain collective memory by dominant groups – which they usually refer to as national or official memory – also makes us ask about the memories trumped by official history. Taking all of this into account, we can now say that memory is a field of narratives in dispute, on which its stability and duration depend.

The replacement of a narrative for another and the disputes of references to the historical past reveal the “frames of memory”, as Pollak (1989) calls it. According to him, “the vestiges of this framing effort go beyond the production of unified discourses on events and great historical figures. They are also physical objects: monuments, museums, libraries, etc. So memory is also kept and carved in stone [...]” (Pollak 1989, 9 e 10). Therefore, vestiges are crucial indicators of a territory of memory. They are in charge of connecting the threads of the present and the absent, weaving different time frames.

If the memory in its physical form can mean the construction of references imposed by dominant groups, then the erasure of vestiges and the physical replacement of certain architectural designs by their complete opposite might, in the same way, sign the strengthening of dominant narratives by overreaching the power of forgetting. Both strategies carry a heavy ideological bias, whether by giving great visibility to monuments preserving an official history or by opting for the physical and symbolic absence of a past historically marginalized.

Therefore, to understand the way this transfigured space deals with the collective memory, we need to investigate the disputes around the narratives emerging from it and the tension between forbidden and exalted memories. So we have to focus our analysis on the perceptions that emerge when visiting the park, and on the relations we can establish between

body, space, and the flow of recollections. Also, an analytic view that is able to not only inquire about the past but also the present paves an essential way in this excavation process. Because, as Benjamin (2005, 576) once said, “He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging”.

In this excavation process, we must bring the bodies and objects that used to inhabit that place out of the narratives, speeches, and recollections of those who attend it, and with the help of visual interventions. From a technical standpoint, it might be difficult – if not impossible – to capture recollections in objects of memory that are made in the present (Pollak 1989, 11). But searching and reconstructing these bodies and objects might end up creating, as noted by Pollak (1989, 11), “a powerful tool for successfully rearranging the collective memory [...]”. Visual resources might also help people relate to that often-vanished content. As pointed out by Ricoeur (2004, 429): “Recognition can thus draw support from a material basis, from a figured presentation such as a portrait or photograph, the representation inducing an identification with the thing depicted in its absence”.

That is why I paired the field research in the park with a second stance in which I create new images of the place, connecting different time frames as an epistemological resource to deal with the varying narratives in this space. So beyond the analysis I already mentioned – focused on perceptions, narrative flows, and relations between body, space, and memory that are made during ethnography –, I also present some visual interventions that seek to connect absence with the present, inquiring about the space and what it shows of itself, and changing the flow of my writing and of what I share here as an ethnographic report. I am talking about the photomontages<sup>5</sup> I made, which overlay the past visual landscape, Carandiru’s, with the current one, Parque da Juventude’s. Using collage as a technical and epistemic resource, I sought to create visual superimpositions that could lead to encounters and clashes between different images and time frames of that space, but also between different bodies and objects that live or have lived there. As noted by Gonçalves (2016):

Montage [...], understood as construction, takes images as flow, expansion, change of perspective. [...] A construction based on dialectic, the montage invites a reflection about images, bringing us the way of thinking through images as production of knowledge. In this sense, the narration power of montage is crucial in the making of the image as an experience. This is because the montage produces a clash of images, creating contexts, connections that establish new relations and new meanings. (Gonçalves 2016, 22)

5. All but the second one (titled “por detrás do muro”) are part of a photographic essay named “A ausência como representação: um ensaio sobre a memória Carandiru”, which won second place at the 2020 Pierre Verger award, from the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA). Some of them got new descriptions here.



The analysis of new images created through montage is not the focus here, but rather their incorporation into the ethnographic text as a form of experience – it is different from the experience given by the text but a complement to it. So what I propose here is that we take a stand of observation similar to what MacDougall (2006, 7) has described: “When we look, we are doing something more deliberate than seeing and yet more unguarded than thinking. We are putting ourselves in a sensory state that is at once one of vacancy and of heightened awareness”.

### FROM HIDING TO DECEIVING


Parque da Juventude is divided into three areas (institutional, central, and sports-centered) and its landscape architecture is its major feature. The first major area is the institutional one, housing the Library of São Paulo, two schools (Escola Técnica Estadual Parque da Juventude and Escola Técnica Estadual de Artes), a small playground and a dog park. The Military Police is usually by the schools, especially on weekdays. Being the outermost area of the park, it is where more people are present, with a high influx of students, outsourced employees, and passersby always coming and going. A bit further to it, where the playground and dog park are located, it is not unusual to find kids accompanied by adults. They play, jump, and run all over the place, just like the countless dogs strutting in the dog park.



FIGURE 1.  
“Main gate”<sup>6</sup>

Many times have I walked in this area. Going in many directions, I have tried to feel – even if with great struggle – the place it occupied inside

6. Source of the image used in the montage: Arquivo Diário de S. Paulo (02/10/1992).



the vast area of the park. The fragment I could see from the institutional façade could either lead me to believe what its image suggested or, or allow me to see it as the beginning of something much bigger. Being no different from the people coming and going, I would pass by those tiles without raising any questions. Many times have I passed by that entrance and have always felt that its connection to the past was not strong. It may be the most barren and less evocative when it comes to weaving present and past.

The central area was the most intriguing to me during my fieldwork. It is divided into what I called “zones”: there is a bright, light-soaked zone covered in grass where most of the visitors are, either alone or accompanied. They make use of that place to listen to music, date, have picnics, or simply lay in silence; there is another zone, between the center and the opposite limit, where big tree canopies form a long path, covered and humid. Between columns and concrete beams, the tree cover blocks sunlight and turn the experience of being there more intense and unsettling.

One could say the journey between the institutional and the central areas does not strike as a radical change, but rather by a growing looming of a certain aura. After a bridge, I can see some big concrete beams sprouting from the ground. Its forms are very confusing. There, the concrete and the opaque vegetation mix. The grading gray almost becomes fuzzy, making it difficult to identify these objects in space. In its center, iron columns abound and occupy the area in modules, as if taking the shape of an old structure frame, unreadable at first. With that space presenting itself in such a confusing manner, visiting it alone does not seem to be enough to understand what those big columns and beams are about.

Going further in direction of the end of the park, I get to the sports area. I soon recognize its entrance because of its large gate, and the area looks different from the others due to its countless sports courts, a skate park, and walking lanes. On any day, a diverse audience (of all ages) uses the area to practice sports, relax and even meditate – in the sports courts or on the benches spread all over. Being sports-oriented, the area has a leisure or concentration atmosphere.

On its left side runs a huge, wired wall that keeps whatever is on the other side hidden. Only when I leave the park and walk towards the corner, reaching General Ataliba Leonel Avenue, can I finally see a discreet facade where it reads: “Penitenciária Feminina de Santana”. Outside the park, hidden behind tall, wired walls, is the female prison. What about the male prison of before? Can it still be seen inside the park?




**FIGURE 2.**  
"Behind the wall"<sup>7</sup>

More questions came to mind, many about the presence – or absence – of possible vestiges in each of those areas, walls, gaps, arches, or even in the dirt. I went back and forth on the path of my questions, either alone – insisting on what my senses could point out – or in the presence of other regulars of the park with whom I would talk to, making them my interlocutors. After many visits, the iron structures in the central area remained the most defiant to me. They seemed to provoke and whisper an eerie presence in that iron, steel, and concrete frame. Unable to grasp the origin of those structures, I would formulate and reformulate hypotheses, only to see them get me nowhere. It seemed like that space invited whoever laid eyes to it to a hide and seek game, even more so to those who dared make questions about it.

Despite this, the closest thing to a vestige or clue that I found was in that zone and, with these findings happening consistently, I felt like being presented to the fragment of a time frozen in time. I would ask myself if I was facing a "*lieu de mémoire*"<sup>8</sup> – as put but Nora (1989, 9), the memory that "takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects". False alarm! It was not possible to use those vestiges to establish a clear connection between absence and the present. By then, I had already had many conversations with regulars of the park, and shared views on that space were emerging, although retaining many singularities.

7. Source of the image used in the montage: Evelson de Freitas (Folha Imagem, 18/02/2001).

8. Nora's concept of "*lieux de mémoire*" (1989) refers to places in charge of ensuring that "memories are crystallized and transmitted from one generation to the next" (1989, 19). A place only becomes a "*lieu de mémoire*" if it contains a physical foundation, an aura of symbolism and if it is functional. "*Lieux de mémoire*" are mostly born out of institutional efforts to keep cohesion regarding a certain collective memory. This concept is used here to make a hypothesis – those ruins might be a "*lieu de mémoire*" – that could not be confirmed.

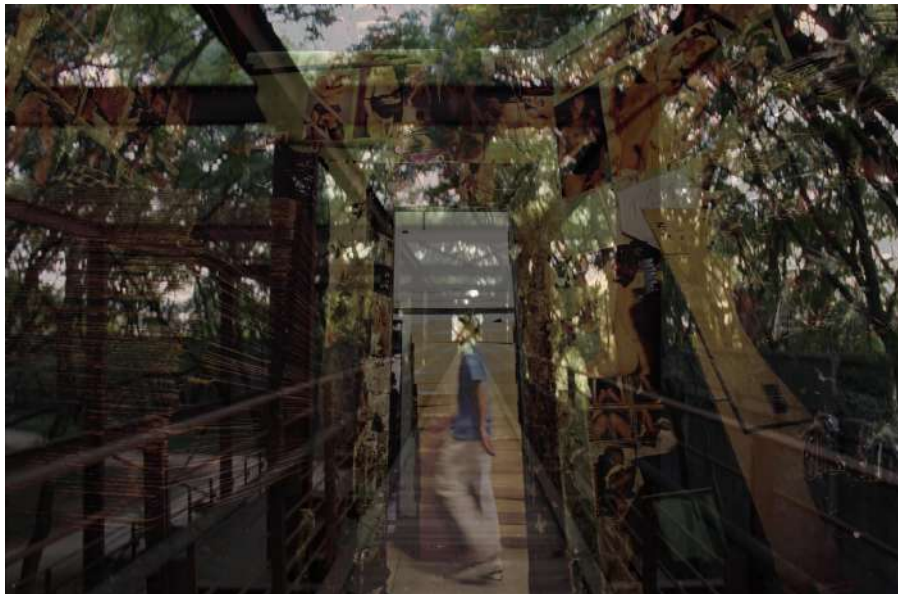


All regulars of the park whom I spoke with during ethnography shared one thing: their perception of that place is filled with gaps and inconsistencies. The limits of the park, the origin of certain materials and objects, the arrangement of its buildings in space, the types of vegetation it has and the notions of time related to its existence, all of that appeared in the discoursed of my interlocutors, but in a rather confusing manner. Being subtle, my first question to them would be: “Do you know if something else ever existed here?” With that question made, I would give my full attention to their answers. “This thing here was prison”, “there used to be a prison here, but that was a long time ago”, “I don’t know the history, but I know there was a prison”. These are some of the things I have heard for months. Most of the people would tell me there used to be a prison there, but few of them went beyond this first observation or could offer me more layers of information about that place’s history.

After many walks in the morning, afternoon, and evening, after many conversations with regulars of the park, what I saw time and again was a space that, after many changes, haunted me deeply. For many of my interlocutors, the existence of a former prison was something very vague – this existence in a recent past was overlooked many times. Also, those who remembered the former prison were often confused with the question of where to picture it in that new space. Some people thought that the former prison existed where the sports area is today, others thought it occupied the whole thing, but most of them thought Carandiru was limited to the central area of the park, as the iron structures lead us to believe.

Although I looked for maps and floor plans of the place, I only found out Carandiru’s actual layout in the final weeks of my fieldwork, after talking to a security guard of the park. As he said:

You see, Carandiru was only this first zone, from the entrance to the playground. After the bridge has nothing to do with Carandiru. There [the central zone] was a construction site. They were going to build more cell blocks but gave up. It was never finished. Nothing was ever there. Nothing to do with Carandiru.



**FIGURE 3.**  
"Vertigo"<sup>9</sup>

I finally realized: those ruined frames were a stage. It was not a "lieu de mémoire" (Nora 1989), neither a possible territory of recognition. Space does not become a place by simple addition, nor by a chemical reaction or natural transformation. It is a symbolic change, an introduction of affection, a rebound of senses. The space becomes a place when people use their agency to get to know it, attaching sensations and life references to it. As put by Carlos (1996, 16): "The place keeps in itself, not outside of it, the meaning and dimensions of the movement of history in the making as the movement of life. It can be captured by memory through the senses and the body".

With the writing of the city in mind, which Lefebvre (1996, 36) defines as "what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages [...]", we could say that what that space does is a process of deception, which can hide and deceive, playing with a Carandiru that could have been in many places or no place at all. This was never an issue for many of the people I spoke with. They rarely mentioned the name Carandiru, simply identifying it as "the prison", "the jail". It was "a long time ago", as an interlocutor once said. There, we tend to identify a decades-long past of mass incarceration, human rights violations, and an unprecedented prison massacre being subdued to a sophisticated type of absence. In this case, a resistant, hard-to-pin absence that is responsible for capturing this potent, fertile grasp of memory we call recognition. What we have, then, is not an absence in the sense of "having been there" (Ricoeur 2004), but an opaque absence that is often overlooked. The

9. Author of the image used in the montage: João Wainer, s.d.



possibility of recognizing absence through memory tends to become an absence of recognition.

In the case of those concrete frames, in the ambition of structures that strive to be a vestige, what we end up with is a cynic replacement of the real movements of life and history by a movement of staging. That space is not a place per se, and in its absence, we should think about the presence of other agents. The confusion brought to the senses, the distorted view and repeated disorientation of the mind make it seem like there is a gap of possibilities (at least partially) when it comes to linking sensations to that place, to have it fulfill the body – the body that sees, the body the listens, the body that walks. It is. It is not. If it was, I do not know. Is it here? There? It is not. What is it? It is not.

If there is a Carandiru, then it is not that one. Reality disappeared from there and took with it all its stories and emotions, names and surnames, pains and hate, tragedies and deaths, its Josés, Paulos, Joãoes, Franciscos, Antônioes, Luizes, Cláudioes, Silvas, Souzaes, Carvalhos, Pereiraes, Oliveiraes, Ferreiraes, Alves. Disappeared by the coercive and cohesive strength of a dominant ideology. 111 or 500 people shot to death? For Ubiratan Guimarães<sup>10</sup>, the Military Police of São Paulo, Fleury Filho<sup>11</sup> and the state government, it does not matter. For the victims, state and society paid little to no symbolic reparations. There is no mood for that. The *destructurations* and *restructurations* of that space, sponsored by the esthetic, narrative and architectural power of a dominant ideology (Lefebvre 1996) were done to confuse the senses, shuffle the systems of objects, shapes and materials in space, and to make it hard finding the vestiges of an undesirable past.

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10. Officer of São Paulo Military police, who led the invasion of Carandiru prison on October 2, 1992, which brought the death of 111 inmates.

11. Governor of the State of São Paulo, who gave the order for the invasion of Carandiru prison on October 2, 1992, which brought the death of 111 inmates.



**FIGURE 4.**  
"Hall of the  
excluded"<sup>12</sup>

### **BODY, SPACE, AND REMEMBRANCE: A RACIALIZED EXPERIENCE**

As I listened to my interlocutors during fieldwork, I learned that their perceptions about that space, even if fuzzy, reveal a lot about their relationship with it. The restructuration of that space, with its concealments, contradictions, persistency, and changes, materializes in writings and objects and is read through the identification of certain signs and symbols. That is why we need to think about the experiences of the "inhabitants" of that space, asking ourselves about the singularities of these experiences and the way it impacts (and are impacted) by the arrangements and rearrangements of the individual and collective memories.

To think about the corporeal experiences of people in a given place requires "understanding that a person's body is never the object of perception, but rather its agent." (Steil e Carvalho 2012, 35). Objects are precisely matter captured by the senses. They are what perception feels, and signs and symbols give meaning to. Embodiment, then, comes through as a situation – as being situated in. In the words of Steil and Carvalho (2012):

Embodiment is defined by Csordas as a situation instead of a process. It is linked to the image of a pre-existing world in which the bodies that come to it are required to adjust. The meaning is both physical and mental. The environment is a world formed by sets of objects. Perception leads to the object. Without objects, perception would be impossible. Without objects, the world would be inhospitable and unnoticeable. (Steil e Carvalho 2012, 35)

12. Source of the image used in the montage: Niels Andreas (Folhapress, 02/10/1992).

In that space, bodies go through it by “reading” the objects arranged there and their connections. This “reading” exclusively depends on which signs, symbols, and feelings these bodies mobilize through their perceptions. In a space infamous for serious episodes of human rights violations – including a massacre in which dozens of incarcerated people were killed – where racism<sup>13</sup> was repeatedly used as a tool for the segregation and deprecation of specific bodies – let us remember that “64% of the incarcerated population is Black against only 53% of the Brazilian population” (Borges 2019, 19). Also, according to the 111 post-mortem examinations of the *Carandiru Massacre*, “the majority of the dead were Afro-Brazilians” (Christóvão 2015, 146) – we should wonder if, even after the changes made to that place, we can still find or perceive the vestiges of this racialized violence that happened there. Also, how do Black people relate to that space nowadays?

Listening to the perceptions of Black regulars of the park – especially younger ones –, they demonstrate a very specific relationship with that space and their multiple objects. They mention rap as a symbol capable of mediating feelings and emotions, they identify the police brutality – selective, it is important to point out – that is still significant there. Some areas of the park are still seen with fear by them – fear of a persistent vestige, that of the continuous repression and aggression their bodies are vulnerable to. They face other features of that park, especially the features that limit their bodies to their race, and use it as a social indicator of a type of segregation that is also experienced in space, which comes to light in the arrangement of spaces. Some situations I witnessed in my fieldwork shed a light on the perceptions and relationships they have with that place. Let us focus on some of them.

On a cloudy afternoon, while I walked from the sports area to the central area, I saw two Black teenagers enjoying the calm day to make “pichações” around the park.<sup>14</sup> A boy and a girl would switch places and keep an eye for security guards or police officers so they would not get caught up. I approached them and asked about the meaning of the symbols they were making. They refused to explain the meaning, and bluntly asked me to be discreet so the security guards would not notice them. When I asked them if they knew about the past of that place, the girl replied in disbelief: “Really? You have never heard of ‘Diário de um detento’<sup>15</sup>? Are you really from São Paulo? You can’t be from São Paulo without having listened to

13. Here I use the concept of racism as defined by Silvio Almeida (2018, 25): “racism is a systemic form of discrimination that has race at its foundation. It is set in motion through conscious or unconscious acts that lead to disadvantage or privileges to certain people, depending on the racial group to which they belong”.

14. Pichação (also written Pixação) is a type of graffiti art created in São Paulo, Brazil. It is distinctive for its street writing influenced by the typography of heavy metal album covers (T.N.)

15. Diário de um detento (an inmate’s journal in free translation) is a song by Rap group Racionais MC’s. It covers the 1992 massacre that took place in Carandiru from an inmate’s perspective.

‘Diário de um Detento’. This used to be a prison, *mó fita*. (polysemic slang meaning insane here) There was even a massacre”.

By bringing up the song “Diário de um Detento”, by *rap* group “Racionais MC’s”, and showing disbelief at the idea of me never having listened to it, the girl exemplifies the power of the experience of signs as an interest. As explained by Sahlins (2008, 127): “All such inflections of meaning depend on the actor’s experience of the sign as an interest [...]. An interest in something is the difference it makes for someone”. For the girl, the song was not only capable of describing Carandiru and filling with content, allowing her to mention the prison and the massacre when asked about that place’s past. It also is an important symbolic reference, so much so that she said it would be impossible to be from São Paulo without having listened to the song.

Her account also seems to indicate a tension provoked by the presence of security guards there – park security guards or the military police officers stationed at a police patrol there. The young couple was distressed with the possibility of being “caught” by a security guard or officer. No wonder they took turns looking out for each other and asked me to be discreet. It was not the only time I witnessed tense moments like this. Once, while walking towards the park’s exit fifteen minutes before it closed, I saw a large number of police officers and security guards asking the people to get ready to leave since the gates were about to close. Unlike the others, a group of Black boys playing basketball was aggressively expelled by the police. The officers threatened the boys and pushed them out of the sports court.



**FIGURE 5.**  
“Bodies in  
perspective”<sup>16</sup>

16. Source of the image used in the montage: Hector Babenco, “Carandiru”, 2003.

In this context, a specific type of roughness can be observed<sup>17</sup>. One that is responsible for revealing marks that “cannot be reduced to a physical-territorial legacy, being also a socio-territorial one [...]” (Santos 1999, 43). This is about the continuity of a specific type of violence that springs up in the selective actions of a clearly racist police. In the park, the repeated presence of the military police and the treatment it directs to black park-goers goes against the deep changes made to that space. It brings about a conflict between the park slogan, which appeals to symbols of education, culture and leisure to the youth, and the many forms of violence that Black bodies are vulnerable to when they enter that place, with the younger ones being even more vulnerable. If we consider the age group of the victims of the 1992 police massacre that happened in that same space, the dimensions of this roughness become even wider. A detailed reading of the 111 post-mortem examinations of the massacre reveals that, in addition to most of the victims being Afro-Brazilians, “the age [...] they died is noteworthy for show how young they were” (Christóvão 2015, 145). According to the examinations, 54 out of the 111 victims were between the ages of 19 and 25 (*Ibid.*, 146). With that in mind, this roughness reveals that “racism, as a historical and political process, creates the social conditions that allow, directly or indirectly, racialized groups to be systematically discriminated against. [...]” (Almeida 2018, 39).

Constantly at odds with this specific group, the police become a symbol of the continuous violations these young people suffer in daily life. Also, those capable of identifying Carandiru and going-beyond-look with it<sup>18</sup> can connect police behavior to prison violations, especially the ones perpetrated in Carandiru. This might be one of the few points in which we see a connection between past, absence and present. When this group recognizes that their bodies continue to be the enemy fabricated in that place and by that place.

17. Concept developed by Milton Santos (1999). It refers to the marks of a different time that linger in space.

18. Neologism from the poem “As lições de R. Q.”, by Manoel de Barros: “[...]the eye looks, the memory relooks, and the imagination go-beyond-look [...]...”]. The word refers to a subjective look that is capable of looking further.





**FIGURE 6.**  
"Shadows over  
bodies"<sup>19</sup>

Counteracting the oppressive power they are subjected to and the narrative, architectural and esthetic impositions of the park, part of this youth – most of them black and from the outskirts of the city – organize the “Parque dos MC’s” *rap* battle that happened every Sunday at 4:00 p.m. at the park’s main gate. There, their bodies can finally break free from the process of hiding, dispersal and fragmentation of this marginalized history. With the use of oral history – through rhyming –, they rearrange and integrate these “underground memories” (Pollak 1989) that sprung from the ground in all its strength.

Rancière (1998) can help us understand the meanings created by this *rap* battle. Help us identify the place it occupies in this new spatial configuration. By analyzing the history of Western democracy, he points out the existence of numerous divisions that are imposed through the logic of consensus, through a homogenizing equality and a restrictive right to free speech precisely when only a privileged few could make use of the power of words made into speech. Rancière (1998) also refers to the potential role played by dissensus, which is not understood by him as lack of knowledge or inaccuracies, but as the possibility of translating the world again by using rejected perceptions. This notion of dissensus is added to the idea of distribution of the sensible, which is responsible for giving shape to the sensible experiences of being in the world. The distribution of the sensible is, before anything else, a way of sharing a world where the sensible experience happens through the experience of the difference.

19. Source of the image used in the montage: TV Brasil, documentary “Carandiru, as marcas da intolerância”, 2012.

Therefore, dissensus and distribution of the sensible are complementary, pairs that are conjugated in a process of political subjectivity.

It is dissensus that questions the role of those who were excluded from the right to speak. It is where the demand for participation in this complex system of the sensible, in this regime of visibility and visibility happens. Dissensus allows the distribution of the sensible to be reconfigured and redistributed, marginalized individuals can let go of identifying with the inferior places they were put into and then, find identification with other places (spatial, symbolic and declarative). In this new scheme, the single act of revindication, of raising questions about unequal conditions, form gaps where the true meaning of politics can be inserted, where the act of existing (and resist) gains new meaning with the demand for marginalized existences to be a legitimate existence. Here is the essential change in which politics replace the police. Politics as a form of emancipation.



**FIGURE 7.**  
"End the  
prison and the  
oppression"<sup>20</sup>

It is important to make clear that, according to Rancière (1998), there is a clear difference between police and politics. Police refers to everything related to domination and exploration, to repression, social control, daily life or the organization of space itself. It is both a result and a reason for capitalism. Politics, on the other hand, is a rare gap that makes movement and tensions possible. It only happens and those who were excluded from the right to speak regain this ability and finally produce a speech. In this enunciation gap, the spaces, imperatives and hierarchies are finally broken.

<sup>20</sup>. Source of the image used in the montage: DR - Notícias ao Minuto, s.d.

Utopia, another central idea in Rancière's notion of politics, is also a coming and going path in the process of insurrection. Is it necessary, as Rancière (1998) says, to politicize utopia, imagine it, elaborate it and produce it as emancipation? To do so, utopias need to be approached as concrete forms of organization and, at the same time, be capable of changing worlds. Would the *rap* battle of "Parque dos MC's" be a concrete form of organization, capable of reconfiguring the sensible experience in that space, bringing to those unable to speak the power to turn words into speech, to lapidate it in the form of rhymes? As Rancière (1998) said:

They do what would have been unthinkable for the latter: they establish another order, another partition of the perceptible, by constituting themselves not as warriors equal to other warriors but as speaking beings sharing the same properties as those who deny them these. They thereby execute a series of speech acts [...]. In a word, they conduct themselves like beings with names. Through transgression, they find that they too, just like speaking beings, are endowed with speech that does not simply express want, suffering, or rage, but intelligence. (Rancière 1998, 24)

Therefore, these speech acts allow the connection of the experiences of these individuals who used to be rejected, marginalized and seen as nothing. In the rap battles, these young people question the restructuring of space, strongly criticize the oppression they are subjected to in daily life – police brutality especially –, imagine and reinvent possible worlds, connect past and present, remember their dead and make a compromise with daily-life resistance. This way, it is possible that their experiences now in the present are also connected to the experiences of those who came before them in time and space – including the men whose freedom, rights and bodies were violated in prison, including those whose lives and memories were taken from. Through rhyming and improvising, there might be a revolutionary encounter of different time frames.



Figure 8. "I see you from here"<sup>21</sup>

With the marks of history, territory, affection and ancestry, these bodies share experiences, practices, memories and knowledge. Together, they give rise to what Benjamin (1987) called "the tradition of the oppressed". As they announce new enunciative loci, they imagine other forms of inhabiting that space, of naming, interpreting and codifying it. These individuals at the margins promote, as Rancière's perspective might lead us to believe, a symbolic, physical, hearable, visible and tactile expansion of language. They make politics because they reclaim a legitimate existence. They take what they say, know (in the form of rhymes) and experience to a place of recognition inside the distribution of the sensible.

And this way, as "memory stones", that is, "in the way [...] they live and occupy places, recalling and reimagining them, building and rebuilding the city they live and remember" (Barbosa 2012b, 103), that this youth articulate resistance to what that transformed space constantly tries to present as a single, homogenous content through tactics of dispersion, fragmentation and erasure of stories and bodies. They put in place a connection between "underground memories" (Pollak 1989) and space. They understand that the fight for memory is also a fight for the meanings of what is presented as form and content.

Here I present the transcription of a battle from "Parque dos MCs" *rap* battles. It is from a "rinha de conhecimento" (knowledge round), in which a member of the audience suggests a theme for the MCs to improvise on. I was the audience member who suggested the theme "Carandiru".

21. Source of the image used in the montage: Itamar Miranda (Jornal O Estado de S. Paulo, 05/10/1992).

MC 1: Yo, yo... Is two verses each? Two verses? Two verses? Yo, yo, han, han... They threw Carandiru, you know it killed the whole crew, and here I come to this demo, like Carandiru, if you wanna know just watch “diário de um detento”.

MC 2: Listen to “diário de um detento” or see a movie about detention, Slim is here to bring redemption, ‘cause that’s how it is, Slim shoot the theme in this improvised thing.

MC 3: April 14 2019, here in Carandiru I see the cop, must always be a whiz with the cop, ‘cause I don’t trust a pig in uniform.

MC 4: That’s right, man, I don’t let it through, wish was 92, how would we be? Everybody serving time, wish to see one get in and leave alive.

MC 5: Unharmed I improvise, in Carandiru slaves died, a bunch of inmates, who come and be an asshole to these mates.

MC 1: Han, han, yo, yo... wait and I explain in this fate, here even happened a carnage, like that, bro don’t get in the way, the guys shot and killed for a pay.

MC 2: For a medal they killed many in detention, and today we’re here with information. The legacy is here in the face, don’t let the brothers be forgotten.

MC 3: Nothing is changed, only time is now present-day, and Fleury laughs from the grave, you know this legacy ain’t no revenue, between Portuguesa, Santana and Carandiru.

MC 5: Surprise, surprise, you don’t write, I improvise, when the cop stops: “you got money? Back from 9-5? Are you black? What am I thinking? Oh yeah, what you were doing? Trafficking?”.

MC 1: No, yo, yo... to survive prison you gotta be the resistance, I even respect, but when the mother come to visit, han... is my son dead? Now you know, man, it was a ton, the chick went to visit the son, han... visit his tomb.

MC 2: You know I don’t have the habit, forgot what to say, but to this time... now I remember to improvise...

MC 3: Carandiru became a park and it’s always the same, every time I come here the air is full of pain, I look to the past and can’t believe it was the precedent, they made Bolsonaro president.



MC 4: It's so hot, like the desert of Sahara, I keep watching the subway go to Jabaquara, and it feels like I'm in correction, so I say, "down with the oppression".

MC 5: Yeah, surprise, surprise... Carandiru, no wonder we are here, the party will be close to MCs, right, bro? Because I style in free, only MC come over here.

MC 1: Only MCs come over here, you know the way I style in this free, but you know my verse is not a lore, and Hitler in Carandiru on that day would be just another more.

MC 2: Yeah...what they write in history we can't see, but it's the same 'cause today no one reads, if they read Bolsonaro would definitely be in shreds.

MC 4: Carandiru is in the biggest city to be, the place where even the devil would flee, would flee, shiver to the... yeah, and yeah it was in the north zone, but the men would come even from south.

MC 5: From the south zone, they would shit their pants, yeah, that's it, they would get scared and even get sick.

MC 1: Even got sick 'cause the situation was bad, relax that nowadays rap get to prison only from an age class, you know in the verse, bro, I look and get petrified, this shit ain't for kids, only adults survive.

MC 2: Yeah... this park is not for kids, what happened in confinement is now terrifying, you understand how that sunk heavily? But we still here honoring the legacy.

MC 4: Who takes 13 to the heart, it's still day, I'm underage, in jail I'm kept apart, you know why? I show you the bill, how many of those rose in over Brazil?

MC 5: That's the foundation in improvisation, instead of going to the Youth Foundation, right man? In improvisation, you go to the Youth Foundation and nothing matters.

## CONCLUSION

The implosion of most of Carandiru prison and its replacement for a park was the driving question of this article. By asking about the memories in dispute in that place, I wanted to analyze the narratives that come to light as one passes by that place. I tried to get to know the perceptions of those who usually go there, for work or leisure. Approaching that space to elaborate an effort that is scientific and sensible at the same time, I

had to face the following question: how can I think the paths of memory in a space that has been transformed?

I followed different paths to answer this question, with the help of ethnography and photomontages, which I consider to have features that “also invite to reflection, as long as it is thought about with place of meeting and allowing, this way, an understanding [...] of images or audiovisual narratives as inseparable from the production of theoretical questions at the core of ethnographic research (Barbosa e Cunha 2006, 21). My initial hypothesis was that the implosion of the prison and its replacement for a park was a process of erasure. A sensible and physical erasure, whose narrative dispute is established by the cohesive strength of a dominant ideology.

The results I reached, described and discussed in this article, confirm that hypothesis. There, the processes of *destructurations* and *restructurations* of space are done in such a way that the senses and the body cannot find the gaps that allow fruition. These processes get in the way of using memory to connect the inhabited/lived environment to the recognition of a pulsating absence. In this reconfigured space, space that hides vestiges and confuses the senses, the circularity of dialectics *past*, *absence*, *recognition* is often put down before its synthesis process can be finished. That way, the space plays with an absence that is both made invisible and makes itself invisible.

Also, by focusing on the corporeal experiences in that space, I could identify the presence of racism as a structuring element that comes to light, especially, in the selective behavior of security officers. This way, forming what I call roughness, racism keeps casting its shadow over Black bodies that go into that place, influencing the ways Black people inhabit, give meaning and relate to the park. The Black people who usually go to the park shared their perceptions of that place and revealed the existence of a specific type of fear. They recognized, in some cases, the persistence of police brutality there and often mobilized a series of signs and symbols of Brazilian *rap*.

Among these regulars of the park, I could also observe the presence of a group that organizes *rap* battles that, as a form of resistance, demands a different place inside that sensible structure where the park is, refusing the position they would be placed on as enemies or target of the space (and of the State itself). They opened powerful enunciation gaps, producing other discoursed, disputing narratives and elaborating their own history through the flow of rhyming. At the *rap* battle from “Parque dos MC’s”, we see “underground memories” (Pollak 1989) emerge with strength

from the concrete floor. They make the space and its game of hiding and concealment be questioned and have its structures be shaken.

### **RAP BATTLE IN ITS ORIGINAL PORTUGUESE**

*MC 1:* Aí, aí... É dois versos cada um? Dois versos? Dois versos? Aí, aí, han, han... O tema jogado foi Carandiru, sabe que nessa fita já morreu vários tru, desse jeito mesmo eu vou chegando nesse evento, tipo Carandiru, quem quer conhecer só assistir diário de um detento.

*MC 2:* Ouvir diário de um detento ou ver um filme sobre a detenção, Slim chega aqui libertando um trilhão, porque é desse jeito na parada, Slim também manda tema na rima improvisada.

*MC 3:* 14 de abril de 2019, aqui no Carandiru em frente os homi, mas tem que tá sempre ligeiro com os robocop, porque eu não confio nos homem de uniforme.

*MC 4:* É isso mesmo, parceiro, não deixo pra depois, quem dera se aqui fosse 92, como é que nós ia tá? Ia tá tudo preso, queria ver um entrar e sair ileso.

*MC 5:* Sair ileso no improvisado, no Carandiru morreu vários escravo, vários presidiário, quem vem e paga de babaca com esses otário.

*MC 1:* Han, han, aí, aí... Mas calma que eu explico dentro dessa sina, aqui nessa parada rolou até uma chacina, tipo desse jeito, meu mano não atrapalha, os cara atirou em presidiário só pra ganhar uma medalha.

*MC 2:* Pra ganhar uma medalha mataram vários na detenção, e hoje em dia tamo aqui passando informação, entendeu? O legado tá passando em frente, não deixar que seja esquecido vários irmão.

*MC 3:* Nada mudou, só o tempo que é moderno, e o Fleury ainda sorri no inferno, cê tá ligado essa herança não é riqueza, entre Carandiru, Santana e Portuguesa.

*MC 4:* É São Paulo, tem blazer e tem os ROCAM, e tem os cara que admira e idolatra o coronel Ubiratan, até de manhã fazendo daqui um inferno, tem coisa que os cara não anotaram no caderno.

*MC 5:* Demorô, demorô, não anotaram no caderno, vou improvisando, se eu tomo enquadro é: “Tá com dinheiro? E cê voltou do trampo? Cê é neguinho? Que que eu tô falando? É, cê tava o que? Tava traficando?”.

MC 1: Não, aí, aí... Pra sobreviver na cadeia tem que ser resistência, eu até admiro, só que o cara morreu e a mãe foi visitar, han... e cadê o filho? Cê sabe que agora, mano, foi até contraditório, a mina foi visitar o filho, han... visitar no velório.

MC 2: Você tá ligado que eu não tenho a destreza, eu esqueci o que eu ia falar, mas até então... agora que eu lembrei na improvisação...

MC 3: Carandiru virou parque e não mudou quase nada, quando eu passo por aqui a atmosfera tá pesada, eu lembro do passado e fico inconformado de elegerem Bolsonaro.

MC 4: Tá tão quente, deserto do Saara, eu fico vendo os metrô sentido Jabaquara, e até parece que eu tô dentro da prisão, então eu digo: “queda a opressão”.

MC 5: É, demorô, demorô... Carandiru, não é em vão que nós tá aqui, até porque a folia vai ser perto dos MC, né não, parceiro? Porque eu falo no *free*, só MC que cola aqui.

MC 1: Só MC que cola aqui, sabe é desse jeito eu vou explicando nesse *free*, mas sabe que o meu verso não é comum, e Hitler no Carandiru naquele dia só seria até mais um.

MC 2: É... o que não escreveram na história só dá pra ver, até porque hoje em dia tem gente que nem lê, porque se tivessem lido com certeza Bolsonaro não era nem escolhido.

MC 4: Carandiru aqui na capital, o lugar que até o diabo perdia a moral, perdia a moral, tremia os pelo até do... é, e pode pá que era na zona norte, mas os cara vinha até da zona sul.

MC 5: Da zona sul, eles até ficavam com a mão no cu, pode pá, na moral, até porque eles ficavam com medo e ainda passava mal.

MC 1: Até passava mal porque a situação é precária, calma que o *rap* de hoje em dia de prisão tem que ter uma faixa etária, sabe que no verso, mano, eu olho e já assusto, porque essa porra não é pra criança, só sobrevive lá quem é adulto.

MC 2: É... esse parque não é pra criança, o que aconteceu na detenção com certeza hoje em dia sobra assombração, cê entendeu como é que foi pesado? Mesmo assim tamo aqui honrando o legado.

MC 4: Quem é 13 dentro do coração, ainda é dia, eu sou o menor, eu sou fundação, sabe por que? Te falo que a questão, quantos desses levantaram em todo Brasilão?

MC 5: Essa é a fundação na improvisada, invés de ir pra Fundação Casa, né não, parceiro? Na improvisação, cê vai pra Fundação Casa e ainda é em vão.

TRANSLATION  
Lindolfo Sancho

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## THE NET-PULLING: COOPERATION, COLLECTIVITY AND MUTUAL HELP IN IMAGES

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### ABSTRACT

Artisanal fishing is a practice developed throughout the Brazilian coast, within territories and cultural meanings. It is one of the main productive activities carried out by some traditional communities, among them, the jangadeiros on the coast of Northeast Brazil. Among the modalities of fishing practiced by them is the “pull fishing net”, a community practice that combines mutual help and cooperation in which fishermen gather to cast and pull the net, sharing the catch. Here, we demonstrate the configuration and cultural meanings involved in the “pull fishing net”. We also discuss the importance of photographic production in fieldwork with traditional communities for capturing the symbolic elements present in the traditional way of life. Thus, the use of photographs made it possible to make records that demonstrate elements of cooperation and collectivity present in this activity.

### KEYWORDS


Fishing; Raftsmen;  
Pulling net;  
Photography;  
Cooperation.

### INTRODUCTION

Fishing has been present in human societies since its origins, in the most diverse landscapes and environments. This led to the establishment of close links between societies and their respective environments,

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culminating in different adaptations to carry out the fishing activity through numerous different management techniques adapted to each place (Diegues 1983; 1995).

Indigenous peoples already had fishing as an essential practice, producing canoes and other instruments such as arrows and hooks, as shown by chroniclers from the colonial period (Staden 2013, Ribeiro 2015). During this period, the activity becomes hybrid and mixed, carried out from the encounter of indigenous, European and African customs, resulting in the development of different management techniques adapted to the different socio-environmental characteristics. This led to the formation of a diversity of peoples and traditional communities of artisanal fishermen along the Brazilian coast (Diegues 1995, Mussolini 1953).

Traditional populations have at the base of their culture a more recent miscegenation, being characterized, above all, by living in territories where dependence on the natural world, its cycles and its products are fundamental for the production and reproduction of their way of life, as well as the maintenance and transmission of traditional knowledge (Diegues and Arruda 2001, Suzuki 2013).

Among the diversity of traditional peoples are the *jangadeiros* (Diegues and Arruda 2001), a generic name for artisanal fishermen located between Bahia and the north of Ceará. They use the raft as a vessel and artisanal techniques, such as the hook line, the net bottom, trammel, harpoon, net and traps (Casudo 2002, Mussolini 1953).

Using participant observation, a case study and an ethnographic report (Restrepo 2018), with photodocumentation and semi-structured interviews, it was possible to follow the dynamics of a community of *jangadeiros* in the municipality of Maxaranguape, Rio Grande do Norte (RN), Brazil. The municipality is located 54 kilometers from the capital Natal, with an estimated population of 12,544 inhabitants and an average HDI of 0.608 (IBGE 2020).



**FIGURE 1**  
Location of  
Maxaranguape -  
RN. Map: João P.  
Benvenuti and  
Dorival B. Neto.

Among the activities carried out by fishermen in this region, there is the “pulling-net”, a type of beach trawl fishing with the use of the trammel net that has its origins in the period of slavery, including a capoeira performance. This type of fishing, present in numerous fishing communities along the Brazilian coast, evokes elements of collectivity, cooperation, solidarity, reciprocity and mutual help (Candido 2010, Saquet 2019) in which several members of the community participate, from the organization of the activity until the sharing of fish. For this debate, we consider cooperation as being “[...] mutual collaboration, freedom of expression and overcoming individuality, with the (i)materialization of synergy, spontaneity, trust and solidarity.” (Saquet 2019, 50, our translation).

In this way, following a tradition that was established in Brazil, in which the photographic practice of an ethnographic character was used as a resource for several anthropological studies (Gama 2020), we used photography as a fundamental resource to mark the life stories and trajectories of the subjects (Caiuby Novaes 2014; 2020), being a living archive in time, a *locus* of memory (Samain 2012) and a core of the undeniable veracity of facts (Felizardo and Samain 2007).

We consider photography, used as a research technique, capable of capturing some symbolic elements of cooperation and mutual help present in

the pulling of the net and of expressing the “here and now”, of sheltering the future in “unique minutes” (Benjamin 1987b), recording the memory of this fishing technique, unveiling and setting a scenario where something happens, at the moment it happens (Brandão 2004).

It should be noted, as Rouillé (2009) puts it, that photography does not reproduce reality, but brings us closer to its verisimilitude, a very important element of this paper. For Martins (2008), photography is one of the most faithful forms of visual expression of social reality.

In addition, as Brandão (2004) and Foucault (1969) put it, photography, like other works, depends on authorship, as it establishes several possibilities, being located in a defined historical moment and being the meeting point of several occurrences. Benjamin (1987b) follows this perspective when he argues that the decisive factor in photographic production lies in the relationship between the photographer and his technique, his posture towards the photographed.

We believe that in fieldwork in general, and in those with traditional communities in particular, ethnographic photographic production is a stimulus for the researcher to approach the object, in an act that implies empathy and intersubjectivity, attentive observation and a sensitive and denaturalized look (Caiuby Novaes 2021). Soares and Suzuki (2009) emphasize the need to use photographs in fieldwork with traditional communities, as a means of capturing material and symbolic elements.

This article was elaborated through a reflection on the photographic production made during fieldwork (in January 2021), in which we tried to capture symbolic elements present in the traditional way of life, particularly in the hammock pull, as the photographs facilitate the description, comparison and support the interviews (Attané and Langewiesche 2005). Here we have the following objectives: to briefly characterize the jangadeiros in the municipality of Maxaranguape; discuss the importance of photodocumentation in fieldwork, especially those with traditional communities; and demonstrate, through the photos, the configuration and cultural meanings of cooperation, mutual help, solidarity and collectivity imbued in the “net pulling”.

## **JANGADEIROS AND FISHERMEN IN RIO GRANDE DO NORTE (RN)**



The fishing communities of the Brazilian coast were formed from the specificities of each environment, conforming to distinct spatial meanings and with different ways of life, emerging as supply satellites for



larger populations, providing fish, cassava flour, and other agricultural products to vary according to the region (Diegues 1983, Mussolini 1953).


This led to the formation of “maritime societies” (Diegues 1995), based on the construction of a way of life based on fishing and agricultural activities, with hunting and gathering as complementary. These societies established a more intimate relationship with nature, as their ways of life were completely related to natural cycles, such as seasons, moon phases, tides and weather conditions (Silva 2010), thus having, nature as an element of immediacy of the way of life (Suzuki 2013), in addition, rigid relationships of kinship, neighborhood, solidarity and cooperation (Candido 2010).

The jangadeiros were constituted from indigenous, african and european traditions (Cascudo 2002, Diegues and Arruda 2001, Mussolini 1953). Until 1888 many enslaved worked on rafts rented from their owners. Many of the Africans who came to Brazil as slaves brought a technical framework on maritime and coastal fishing, and this knowledge was used by their owners, who also owned plantations (Diegues 1983).

[...] well before the arrival of Europeans on the coast of Guinea, local fishermen were already familiar with sailing and fiber nets. Among them are the Etsi, former inhabitants of the Gold Coast (Ghana, Liberia), the Fanti, considered, even today, excellent fishermen. [...] The main instruments traditionally used by these fishing tribes were: line fishing, with one or several hooks (close to the current long-line) fixed net, a type of waiting net, for large fish. The net made of fibers [...]; night fishing, with the help of a torch to attract fish that were harpooned; the jereré fishing [...]; fishing with cast nets and small nets dragged by two people (shore net), also inside the lagoons. (Diegues 1983, 59, our translation).

The film *Barravento*<sup>2</sup> (Rocha 1962) portrays a community of jangadeiros (ex-slaves) fishermen from Bahia who perform net pulling (in this case, the net is rented from a foreman), and also fishing with cast nets and line in rafts, the first being the most important (because it “gives” more fish). The community lives in miserable conditions, with a diet restricted to the “vital minimums” (Candido 2010), but with diverse cultural practices such as capoeira, samba and candomblé, all of them related to productive activities (fishing and small agriculture), which demonstrates the cultural importance of fishing among the jangadeiros (Rocha 1962).

2. Released in 1962, the film was part of the Cinema Novo Brasileiro movement, which emerged in the 1960s, with the motto “a hand camera and an idea in the head”, having characteristics of a simple production with few resources, often using the local characters themselves to interpret. The themes were related to hunger, misery and social conflicts, politicizing Brazilian cinema. Available in: <https://www.aicinema.com.br/cinema-novo/> (accessed in June 14th, 2021).



Among the area currently occupied by jangadeiros, the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN) is the most relevant due to the abundance of fish on its coast, which contains 25 municipalities in 410 kilometers and where artisanal fishing appears as an extremely important practice cultural and economic, in order to define traditional ways of life and cultural practices, in addition to guaranteeing food security and being a source of employment and income for thousands of families (Silva 2010).

Until the mid-twentieth century, fishing communities lived in relative isolation from the capital Natal, relating to it through the exchange and commercialization of products, cultural manifestations and the flow of information (Silva 2010).

From the 1950s onwards, the number of rafts began to decrease due to the difficulty of finding balsa wood, the main raw material for the raft. In the 1970s, board rafts began to become popular, although the first rafts were made in the 1940s in RN, which replaced those made of wood (currently, most are made of boards) (Diegues and Arruda 2001). At that moment, the communities of jangadeiros began to undergo transformations influenced by the arrival of tourism, industrial fishing and other service activities, causing a reduction in the number of fishermen.

Even with this expressive reduction of rafts and jangadeiros, in coastal municipalities of RN artisanal fishing in rafts continues to be a relevant activity, as is the case of the municipality of Maxaranguape. The city became popularly known as a fishing village and currently, fishing remains the predominant traditional and artisanal activity, since agriculture, extractivism and hunting are already little practiced.

The settlement of the municipality maintains as a basis and territorial unit the characteristics of what Antonio Candido (2010) called the *neighborhood*, which is the fundamental structure of sociability, constituted by the grouping of some or several families that are little or very much linked by the feeling of belonging to the community, placed, through daily coexistence, in recreational-religious activities and through practices of solidarity, collaboration and mutual assistance. Among these practices is “net pulling”, an artisanal and traditional fishing technique that we will characterize and discuss later.

For the geographer Marcos Saquet (2019) reciprocity is related to solidarity, cooperation, spontaneity, trust and decision-making autonomy. He states that historically, “[...] reciprocity was effected with content related to family, kinship, as symmetrical relationships, mutual help and trust [...]” (Saquet 2019, 45, our translation). In this sense, collaboration is contained in reciprocity, being considered as:

[...] *a precious social practice*, of subjects acting *together*, that is, as *exchange* through which participants have *advantages* for being *together*. [...] Collaboration means mutual help, content present in *the genes of animals social* groups that come together based on different interests, with empathy with each other [...]. People come together to collaborate and live better, politically, economically, culturally and environmentally. (Saquet 2019, 46, our translation).

In this way, these elements are the result of collective practices present at a higher level in traditional communities, but which are in constant threat of being reduced due to the abandonment of traditional practices to the detriment of other productive activities. Therefore, we will highlight, through a photographic series, the presence, in the pull of the net, of elements of cooperation, mutual help and collectivity.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH TOOL IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES



The image has been gaining importance, especially since the mid-19th century when they reached the possibility of technical reproducibility (Benjamin 1987a). From 1850 onwards, photography began to replace paintings in scientific activities, marking an intensification of this process of technical reproducibility (Benjamin 1987a). At that moment, images are more used for scientific purposes, especially in the Natural Sciences. In this way, the photos are used as archives, through orders and expeditions to portray places and peoples in the world (Rouillé 2009).

In its emergence, photography brings the essence of the undeniable veracity of the recorded facts, with its impartial and unequivocal vision. Hence a high status attributed to it, of “[...] recording selected parts of the ‘real’ world, as it ‘really’ presents itself.” (Felizardo and Samain 2007, 210, our translation). Therefore, photography and memory (con)merge.

With the invention of photographic devices and cinema at the end of the 19th century, a correlation began between the gaze and knowledge, as images allow us to see between the lines, which is implied in the written text (Caiuby Novaes 2020). In the Human Sciences, Anthropology was one of the first to stick to the use of images, especially photographs.

Images have been incorporated by Anthropology since the beginning of cinema history. The Lumière's great invention of 1895 was an important piece of equipment in the luggage of scientists who participated in the Cambridge University Expedition to Torres Strait, in 1898. Images become increasingly frequent as records of distant societies, as visual signs of an Other, seen as very close to a natural world. Like collections of artifacts, eagerly sought after by museums, photographs provided the possibility of organizing societ-

ies into types, human models. [...] Anthropology's interest in the use of images for illustrations also came from the scientific model followed by this discipline at the end of the last century: the one provided by the natural sciences. [...] anthropologists, in turn, sought photos and illustrations to capture visual aspects of culture, which would allow classifying bases for the different stages of social evolution. (Caiuby Novaes 2020, 22, our translation).

In Brazil, even though photographic production was institutionalized as a theme of Cultural Anthropology only in the 1980s, ethnographic photographic production has taken place since the 19th century, linking anthropology and photography ever since. To get to know the country, its environment and its people, several expeditions were organized that used photographic records. Between 1867 and 1868, the German Christoph Albert Frisch produced the first 100 photos of the Amazon<sup>3</sup>. In 1875, Marc Ferrez went on an expedition to the Northeast and North of Brazil, photographing and documenting, mainly the Botocudo Indians<sup>4</sup>. Between 1898 and 1900, the Germans Hermann Meyer and Theodor Koch-Grünberg<sup>5</sup>, on an expedition to the Xingu, exhaustively document everyday objects, artifacts and cultural practices (Gama 2020).

In this perspective of the use of photography, Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (2004) states that it is an instrument to “show” the “invisible” of history, the people, the simple man, who were excluded from the plastic arts, which portrayed, above all, the elite, the nobility, the military and “important” people. “[...] unlike painting, in which only those who paid for it are portrayed, or very special people in the eyes of the artist, photography is, increasingly, an art for everyone, among everyone, about everyone.” (Brandão 2004, 46, our translation).

This is in line with the proposition of Walter Benjamin (1987c, 225, our translation) to “[...] brush history against the grain.”, and also, with the uses of ethnographic photography in Brazil, which sought, since the 19th century, to portray aspects of the Brazilian people and their cultures, although often placing the other as “exotic”, but which over time served as a source of anthropological studies that sought to understand different cultures, as well as create institutions for the appreciation of these cultures. .

From 1890 onwards, expeditions led by Marechal Cândido Rondon produced a large amount of ethnographic and iconographic material, resulting in

3. Available in: <https://ims.com.br/titular-colecao/albert-frisch/> (accessed in June 29th, 2021).

4. Available in: <https://ims.com.br/titular-colecao/marc-ferrez/> (accessed in June 29th, 2021).

5. Koch-Grünberg published his images in a typological atlas, *Indianertypen aus dem Amazonasgebiet* (*Types of Indians of the Amazon region*, 1906), and in the fifth volume of *Vom Roraima Zum Orinoco* (1923). Some of his narratives about indigenous myths were eventually mentioned by Mário de Andrade in *Macunaíma* (1928).

the first Brazilian indigenous policies, such as the creation of the Indian Protection Service (SPI) in 1910 (Gama 2020).

Dina Dreyfus and her husband at the time, Lévi-Strauss, on expeditions through the Brazilian Midwest and the Amazon, also made a series of photographic records. Lévi-Strauss treated photographic production with a certain disdain, which is why we know of few photographs of him, most of them in *Saudades do Brasil*<sup>6</sup>, published only in 1994 (Caiuby Novaes 1999).

For him, photographs are only indications of “beings, landscapes and events”, which he knows he has seen and known. Photography is, on the ethnographic level, like a kind of document reserve, it allows us to preserve things that we will never see again. (Caiuby Novaes 1999, 68, our translation).

Dina, on the other hand, was a specialist in ethnography and advocated the use of photographic documentation as an ethnographic research tool. She committed to teaching courses and publishing newsletters to prepare researchers to go out into the field and record images about folklore, cultural practices, and material culture (Bastos 2018).

Another couple, Berta Gleizer and Darcy Ribeiro also make use of photodocumentation in their expeditions. Berta was an advocate of the uses of the photographic image, producing more than Darcy himself, but her images are not known to the public (Gama 2020).

In this way, there is a lack of recognition of the photographic images produced by women anthropologists who traveled with their husbands, such as Dina and Berta, which “[...] seems to be related to the lack of references to the work of women anthropologists more generally.” (Gama 2020, 95, our translation).

Mário de Andrade was another enthusiast of the use of photographs for the study of culture, he had been in the North and Northeast during the “ethnographic trips” (1927 to 1929), when he made many imagery records. His interests were contiguous with those of Dina and Lévi. In 1936 they began to work together, making ethnographic photographic records and training new researchers. In the same year Dina and Mário created the Society of Ethnography and Folklore (1936-1939). Dina was a pioneer in the didactics of ethnographic studies and one of the biggest drivers of Brazilian folkloric research, being decisive for the result of the famous missions of the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Service (SPHAN) that traveled through the North and Northeast in 1938 (Bastos 2018).

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6. In these photos, taken in the Amazon, in the Midwest and in São Paulo, there is no mention of Lévi to Dina.



At SPHAN, Mário installs a “photographic documentation policy” of the cultural, historical and artistic manifestations that constituted Brazil. Two French photographers will also work for SPHAN in the 1940s and 1950s, Marcel Gautherot and Pierre Verger, who will portray “regional types”, popular festivals and the relationships between subjects and landscapes throughout Brazil. Both publish several photos in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*, an icon of photo reporting and a new photographic language in Brazil, which mixes visual and textual narratives (Gama 2020).

In the 1950s, Cláudia Andujar and Maureen Bisilliat, both photographers, settled in Brazil and produced extensive documentation on indigenous populations, under the encouragement of Darcy Ribeiro. From the 1970s onwards, anthropologist Sylvia Caiuby Novaes used photographic resources to portray the Bororo and anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, the indigenous people of the Xingu. After that moment, reflections on the use of images intensified in the Social Sciences in Brazil, with an increase in the visibility of women. In the 1980s, the profile of ethnographic productions changes and diversifies, also due to a cheapening of photographic production, intensifying its use, inside and outside of research (Gama 2020), marking the beginning of the “image era” (Brandão 2004), in which this, in addition to being repeated, can be trivialized.

According to Etienne Samain (2012), we are currently experiencing a cognitive and communicational turn in which images have a great role, a use value, and which are above all a phenomenon that participates in a thought process. Every image, in general, and photography, in particular, are phenomena that combine various inputs, such as the complex camera, time, space, light, shadow, the environment (Samain 2012), as well as the vision of the author (Foucault 1969), because in the creation process, each photograph has a personal choice (Brandão 2004).

Felizardo and Samain (2007) warn that this current “boom” of digital photographic production, which is often used without criteria, commitments or carelessness, can bring about the trivialization and commodification of photographic use, as a result of the intensification of technical reproducibility (Benjamin 1987a). But the authors also highlight positive aspects of digital photography, highlighting its greater ease and democratization.

[...] digital photography, today, has also brought revolutions: the immediate visualization of the photographed object - perhaps its most noble characteristic - the lower costs in the production of images, and a great ease in handling, editing and transmitting these images. In a few words, photography gains new support to become even more popular, more accessible and present in people’s lives. (Felizardo and Samain 2007, 208, our translation).

José de Souza Martins (2008) sees photography as an imaginary construction, a moment and act of knowledge of society and its most diverse aspects. According to the sociologist, the image demonstrates what is insufficient for the word as a matter for knowledge. This is in line with Sylvia Caiuby Novaes (2021), when she states that the images allow us to perceive the “between the lines”, the implied.

The anthropologist points to the need to use photographic images in ethnographic research, not only in interviews, so that the experience can be better expressed, but also as the capture of intersubjective elements that sometimes cannot be understood or demonstrated in written texts (Caiuby Novaes 2014).

In this sense, Brandão (2004) argues that the images must, together with the text, ethnography, because they always have something to say, to describe, to interpret, therefore, they must dialogue with the written text, and be seen as a moment of discoveries and exchanges around the image. “Photography is possibly the most iconic talk about what can be ethnographed and interpreted. [...] with photography it is intended to make visible something as, in some way and on some plane of reality, it is.” (Brandão 2004, 29, our translation).

Here, we use photographic production as a recording technique, taken during fieldwork, having above all a documentary character. For our photos, we always try to have the look of an attentive researcher, seeking to sensitize the look, following the guidelines of Caiuby Novaes (2021, 4):

You have to walk, as Tim Ingold loves so much, and watch. [...] we have to look at the whole and in detail, discover angles that we did not suspect, observe gestures and facial expressions, architectural details, pay attention to the minutiae that are part of specific ways of inhabiting and living the world. (Caiuby Novaes 2021, 4, our translation).

Attané and Langewiesche (2005, 136, our translation) demonstrate how, in their research on traditional ways of life, photography recorded data that would hardly be representable by writing, these data, “[...] go beyond the description of dwellings and their surroundings, beyond the description of the interlocutors’ attitudes or way of dressing.”. Fernando Soares and Júlio Suzuki (2009) also point out how photography can bring to light the details that say a lot about a community, its customs and practices. This is in line with Andréa Barbosa (2014), who states that images, in anthropology, have been used to understand different realities and social practices.

At first, as a new methodological possibility for recording fieldwork, the image gradually begins to insinuate itself as a language capable of contributing to better intercultural communication and provoking new questions that unfold in varied anthropological practices such as those of Ma-

linowski, Margaret Mead and Jean Rouch. (Barbosa 2014, 4, our translation).

Therefore, we will treat photographic production as a resource to complement writing in the production of data, in the restitution of the results and in the interpretation of these, allowing to record elements that are not clear in conversations or interviews and enabling the transformation of impressions into data, as demonstrated Attané and Langewiesche, (2005) and Brandão (2004).

[...] photography can be a research tool. It facilitates description and comparison. The images also allow the recording of a discourse on issues that are rarely stated during an interview. [...] the photograph can be transformed into an interpretive illustration to present the research results. (Attané and Langewiesche 2005, 135, our translation).

Other images, other photos, can be distributed in line with the descriptions of the text to, together with the words, ethnography. It is when photographs are not a pause in the text, but another speech that, like words, have something of their own to say, to describe, or even to interpret. (Brandão 2004, 28, our translation).

For good photos, as well as for good ethnography, it is necessary to denaturalize the look and at the same time to approach, because photographing implies a sensitivity in the look caused mainly by the strangeness, by the denaturalization of the look (Caiuby Novaes 2021).

As in all good research, in order to photograph it is necessary to be strange – or to denaturalize the look – and at the same time to get closer. Distance and proximity are, as we said, fundamental ingredients of good ethnography and equally of photography. Photography also implies a type of knowledge that does not go through words, but much more through the sensitivity of the look, through intuition, through the ability to be in the right place at the right time, through the sensitivity of placing the body (and the camera attached to it) in the correct distance. (Caiuby Novaes 2021, 6, our translation).

This follows the perspective of Roberto DaMatta (1985) in suggesting that ethnographic work should be a double exercise of transforming the exotic into the familiar and transforming the familiar into the exotic, through an estrangement and detachment, for a later approximation, because confronting the experiences personal and other, it becomes possible to present social enigmas in a unique way.

In this sense, the photodocumentation work was carried out during the entire time of the fieldwork, as we had the “lenses and eyes always attentive”. The photos were taken with simple and not very modern lenses<sup>7</sup>,

7. The cameras used were a 2020 LG k12+ phone, with 16 Megapixels, and a simple Nikon digital machine from 2017, with 16 Megapixels.

but we tried to capture relevant aspects of the landscape, but also small details, so we focused on an attentive observation and a sensitive look, often allowed through a strangeness, a relationship between proximity and distance.

The photographic series seeks to reproduce the practice of a people who are part of the material and immaterial reproduction of the traditional way of life. In this sense, we seek to make the visual record part of the production of research data, designed to address the research problem, as proposed by the anthropologist Eduardo Restrepo (2018)

Through photos, we are recording a memory, a practice, a living phenomenon, which is constantly changing. Samain (2012, 160, our translation) agrees with this perspective, stating that: "Photographs are memories, stories written in them, about them, from within them, with them. [...] are confidences, memories, archives." In this way, photography can activate memory, tell about a past and allow it to be revived, it can be a document, a monument, an object that carries a living memory of its own.

We seek, through images, with the help of subtitles, to intimately associate uniqueness and durability, as Benjamin (1987b) put it. For the German philosopher, the caption has great importance regarding the use of photographic production, "[...] without which any photographic construction runs the risk of appearing vague and approximate." (Benjamin 1987b, 107, our translation).

Therefore, the caption can help the viewer, because in relation to the viewer, the photograph "[...] fixes him in a frozen time of the world and invites him to enter the thickness of a memory. [...] in front of photography, we become analysts and archaeologists." (Samain 2012, 159, our translation). This comparison, between the spectator and the archaeologist, takes us back to Benjamin (1987d), when he states that to understand the past it is necessary to excavate it, and remember it, to go under its layers, as archeology does, also to understand the present.

Whoever intends to approach his own buried past must act like a man who digs. First of all, he must not fear returning to the same fact several times, scattering it as the earth is scattered, turning it over as the soil is turned over. For 'facts' are nothing but layers that only the most careful exploration yields what rewards excavation. (Benjamin 1987d, 239, our translation).

We then tried, through the captions, to place the photos in time, shifting the gaze and connecting it to the knowledge and memory that we intend to evoke through the photos of a traditional practice, the net-pulling, which, due to the advances of capitalist productive activities and not

non-solidarity communities can reduce this type of practice in the not too distant future, which is already happening in the present.

As José de Souza Martins (2008, 45, our translation) attests, photography, as a narrative set of stories, “[...] is proposed as a memory of lacerations, ruptures, abysses and distances, [...]. Lost memory. [...]. Memory of what opposes modern society to traditional, memory of the community that does not last, that does not last.”.

In this sense, the photos will serve us as archives and vestiges of a memory that portrays a traditional practice of a way of life, of the jangadeiros fishermen, which is constantly changing, reducing the volume of traditional activities to the detriment of modern activities, with trade and services.

### **NETWORK PULL: COOPERATION, COLLECTIVITY AND MUTUAL HELP IN IMAGES**




The “net pull” was one of the fishing methods practiced by the recently freed slaves, whose found in the “xaréu” fishing a way to guarantee their food and survival (NUFOLK UFPEl 2014).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, a striking aspect in fishing societies refers to the slavery of Africans and Afro-descendants something very constant, for example, in whaling. These enslaved people could belong to masters who lived and worked in fishing societies, or to subjects who rented them out for maritime work (Silva 2020).

Historically, the pulling of a hammock, when practiced by Africans, Afro-Brazilians and recently freedmen, was accompanied by chants (mostly sad) that represented the difficulty of life for those who made their living from the sea. Along with the chants, they played atabaques and stamped their feet, so that they would not get discouraged and continue to pull the net (tramband). At the end of the fishery, thanksgiving songs were sung, the fish was shared and a celebration was held (NUFOLK UFPEl 2014).

Emblematic images of the activity and the cultural meanings involved in it are portrayed in the classic film *Barravento* (Rocha 1962), in which the pulling of a net is the main source of fish in the community, performed under the sounds of drumming and by women, men and children. However, as the net (trams) is rented, most of the fish go to the foreman, outside the community. This gives rise to a revolt among the residents, who abandon the practice to go fishing on a raft, which “fishes less, it is more risky, but the fish is ours”, according to a character in the film (Rocha 1962). This cinematographic production demonstrates the cultural





meanings, ancestry and the importance of pulling the net, which is still present in much of the Brazilian coast.

Two great photographers who were in Brazil from the 1940s onwards also made rare photographic records of the pulling of the net<sup>8</sup>. They are Pierre Verger and Marcel Gautherot. This one even made rich records of the pulling of the net in Natal, an area close to the one analyzed in this study. Both carried out photographic documentation work for SPHAN, photographing traditional practices and peoples, paying attention to the social and cultural life of the Brazilian people (Gama 2020).

As demonstrated in *Barravento* (1962) and in the photographic productions of Verger and Gautherot, the pulling of a hammock is configured as a community activity, of cooperation and mutual help, which only occurs due to collective efforts, a fact that persists today.

In this way, we will present images and the characterization of the activity in the municipality of Maxaranguape through a photographic series, which proposes to demonstrate evidence of beings, landscapes, events and practices, that is, they keep a memory (Samain 2012) and attest to what is changing (Caiuby Novaes 1999). Pulling the net is a traditional knowledge (Diegues and Arruda 2001), a national cultural heritage (UNESCO 1989), which is at risk of disappearing due to modernization that leads to the abandonment of traditional practices.

The images here will refer us to a space and a time, which, even though it is present, is also past, because pulling a hammock is an ancestral practice, as we have already stated. The practice begins with the preparation of the material, made by the fishermen themselves who buy the nylon, the buoy and the lead and make the net manually, usually in a moment of rest and conversation with other fishermen, in front of the beach.

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8. Some of these photographs are displayed further on, alongside ours, aiming to highlight the similarities in the way in which the net pulling was performed in the past and is in the present, almost a century later.



**FIGURE 2**  
Fisherman  
mending the net.  
Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN, 5  
of January of 2021,  
09h43min.



**FIGURE 3**  
The ranch: place  
for weaving the  
net. Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN, 5  
of January of 2021,  
09h36min.

The net pulling occurs in periods that have some favorable conditions, moon, weather and tides, allowing the activity to be carried out for a few consecutive days (approximately from 3 to 7). The casting of the net starts in the morning, around 5 am, when a group of fishermen (from 6 to 12) starts to gather in front of the beach to cast the trammel net, which contains 100 to 300 meters of length and is owned by one of the group's fishermen.



**FIGURE 4**  
Dawn waiting for partners. Photo: Dorival B. Neto, Praia de Caraúbas - RN, 9 of January of 2021, 5h21min.

At this time, there is also the arrival of raft fishermen, who went out at dawn to fish. This occasion is a meeting, when the fishermen talk about the weather conditions to pull the net, talk about the fishing of the other days, and about varied subjects, still all a little quiet because they are waking up. There are days when fishermen combine and do not show up, making it impossible for others to cast the net and with the fishery giving up.

For the departure, there is a need to “lower” the raft to the sea, a hard process, which demands strength, being carried out through the sliding of the raft on wooden trunks, which occurs with the help of other fishermen. After that moment, the raft (called a packet), made of boards, without a motor and without a sail, sets out to sea, with two or three fishermen. Usually the packet belongs to one of the fishermen in the activity.





**FIGURE 5**  
Fishermen  
“lowering” the  
raft. Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Barra de  
Maxaranguape  
- RN, 13 of  
January of 2021,  
10h22min.



**FIGURE 6**  
Fishermen. Photo:  
Marcel Gautherot,  
Natal, Brazil, 1955.  
Source: Collection  
of Instituto Moreira  
Sales.

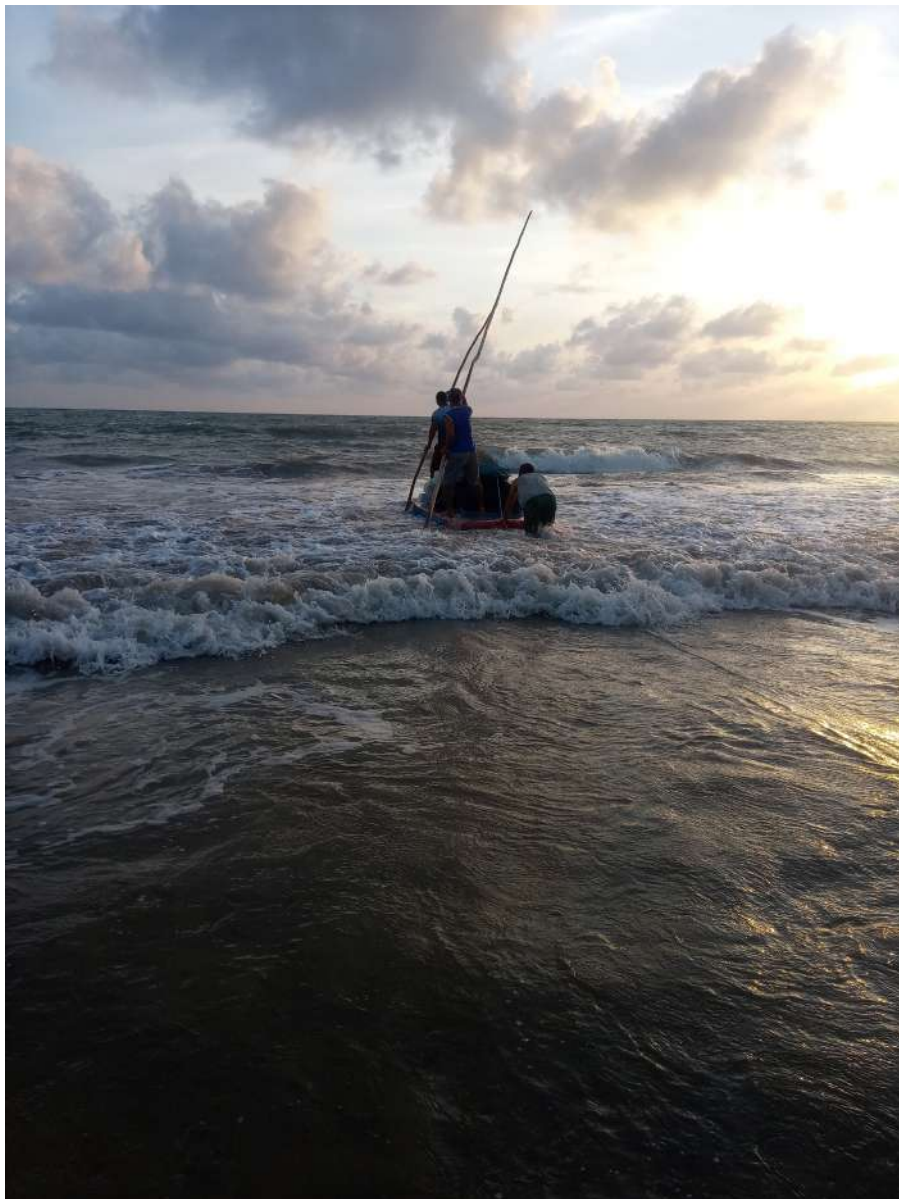




**FIGURE 7**  
The challenge of entering the tide.  
Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN, 9  
of January of 2021,  
5h33min.



**FIGURE 8**  
Fishermen pulling  
a net. Photo:  
Marcel Gautherot,  
Natal, Brazil, 1955.  
Source: Collection  
of Instituto Moreira  
Sales.



**FIGURE 9**  
Jangadeiros casting  
the net. Photo:  
Dorival B. Neto,  
Praia de Caraúbas -  
RN, 9 of January of  
2021, 5h34min.





**FIGURE 10**  
Fisherman who stayed on the beach holds one end of the net.  
Photo: Dorival B. Neto, Praia de Caraúbas - RN, 9 of January of 2021, 5h45min.

One end of the net is on the beach, held by the sharecropper (one of the fishermen who participates in the process). Then the vessel moves, with the aid of an oar, and the net is cast. This process depends on traditional fishing knowledge about the depth of the sea, the moment to cast the net and the location of the shoals. With this, the packet is maneuvered until the net makes a half circumference to envelop the shoal, with the net closed in a U-shape, trapping the fish. On the beach, a fisherman holds one end of the net, the other returns ashore minutes later, along with the raft, in order to ensure the U-shape, then, the siege is done and the net pull begins.



**FIGURE 11**  
United pulling the  
net. Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN, 10  
of January of 2021,  
11h04min.





**FIGURE 12**  
Fishermen. Photo:  
Pierre Verger,  
Itapuã, Salvador,  
Brazil, 1947.  
Source: Collection  
of the Pierre  
Verger Foundation.



**FIGURE 13**  
Pulling the net in  
Caraúbas, with the  
"U" already closing.  
Author: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN, 9  
of January of 2021,  
6h14min.



**FIGURE 14**  
Cooperation to  
pull the net. Photo:  
Dorival B. Neto,  
Praia de Peracabu  
- RN, 12 January de  
2021, 6h29min.



**FIGURE 15**  
Contemplative  
looks waiting  
for the start of  
collection. Photo:  
Dorival B. Neto,  
Praia de Caraúbas  
- RN, 10 of  
January of 2021,  
11h08min.



**FIGURE 16**  
Fish collection:  
the most awaited  
moment. Photo:  
Dorival B. Neto,  
Praia de Caraúbas  
- RN, 11 of  
January of 2021,  
09h56min.



**FIGURE 17**  
Distribution of  
fish. Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Caraúbas - RN,  
11 de January de  
2021, 9h59min.





**FIGURE 18**  
Fishermen. Photo:  
Marcel Gautherot,  
Natal, Brazil, 1955.  
Source: Collection  
of Instituto  
Moreira Sales.

At the moment of the pull, several people are waiting on the beach, including women, children and tourists. Many people are approaching. A curious fact is that many local women arrive carrying buckets, where they will put the fish they will receive, even without having participated in the activity. Some people who approach even help to pull the net, an act that requires a lot of strength. As the pull comes to an end, there are already a much larger number of people than the initial one.

After pulling the entire net, it is “turned over” so that the fish fall to the ground. Once everything is removed from the mesh, the algae (previously used for food) and smaller fish are separated and removed. During this process, smaller fish, such as shrimp, can be caught by anyone who is there, in general, it is the children and women who are looking for these fish. In ancient times, according to oral reports, algae were also collected for food.

The types of fish caught depend on the time of year, but in general they are: swordfish, hake, catfish, mackerel, flying fish, coró, serra, tibi-ro, black needle. They are separated into boxes, according to size and value,



by those who organized the fishery. These give the fish to their acquaintances, friends, family, women and children. A curious fact is that the fish given as a gift are always thrown on the ground by the fisherman, so that the gifted person catches it on the ground. The women who carried the empty buckets filled them with the fish they won. After turning the net and collecting the fish, the practice is repeated two or even three times, depending on the amount of fish acquired.



**FIGURE 19**  
Finishing the  
fishing. Photo:  
Dorival B. Neto,  
Praia de Caraúbas  
- RN, 11 of  
January of 2021,  
07h54min.



**FIGURE 20**  
Fishermen. Photo:  
Marcel Gautherot,  
Natal, Brazil, 1955.  
Source: Collection  
of Instituto Moreira  
Sales.

After the turn, it is common for women to sit by the beach, talking and cleaning the fish that were won by those who organized and carried out the fishing. These moments are also configured as an exchange of experiences and knowledge.



**FIGURA 21**  
Women treating  
fish. Photo: Dorival  
B. Neto, Praia de  
Peracabu - RN, 21  
of January of 2021,  
09h14min.

I heard that in some places and times, after the pull, the fishermen go to a ranch and roast the fish around a fire, eating, drinking and telling stories about the sea, football and other stories. This moment is similar to the end of the task force, which takes place with a good celebration, reinforcing the bonds of belonging, solidarity and partnership, as shown by Antonio Candido (2010).

The photographs shown here have a meaning that manifests itself in any time and space. We believe that we are registering a time that is ending, because traditional productive practices, such as pulling the net, have decreased, due to their abandonment, not that we believe that the practice will end, but that photos can, and are serving as a record of this traditional and ancestral activity.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the photographs, used as an instrument in ethnographic research with traditional communities, we were able to identify that the way in which the pulling of the net is carried out is still similar to that of the ancient times, with collective work, cooperation for the realization of activity, solidarity and collectivity, of people who did not plan to go fishing but end up helping, with the division of fish, which includes women, children and friends, even those who did not participate in the activity.

Currently, what has changed in relation to the ancestral practice are some contents: the net belongs to the fishermen of the community, and there is no foreman as in the ancient times; the materials for the net and rafts are no longer produced in the community, but bought in the commerce; the activity is no longer done in corners, a fact that was possibly unique to the “Xaréu fishing”, as the net pulling in the region of Salvador (Bahia) was called.

We hope that the photos and the characterization of the pulling of the net in Maxaraguape - RN can, in the future, bring us closer to the past, through the record of memory. The idea with the photos was to try to capture the way of life of subjects who do not have visibility, that is, are not popularly recognized as important or famous, such as politicians, businessmen, etc., which is part of our perspective of writing history from below or brushing against the grain (Benjamin 1987c), conceiving it from the point of view of the vanquished as opposed to the history of progress, which concealed the trajectory of the oppressed and made invisible.

In this sense, photographic production is part of a perspective of telling the story from popular and traditional traditions and cultures, which for many years were made invisible by the hegemonic way of making and telling the history of places. They are photos of subjects with names, aspirations, struggles and a way of life. Portraits of a people and a historical practice.

We believe that the practice presented here is part of the Brazilian traditional and popular culture, in general, and of the potiguar jangadeiros, in particular, or according to Unesco (1989, 2, our translation) to a “[...] cultural community, founded on tradition, expressed by a group or individuals. ”. Therefore, the practice needs to be identified and registered as a National Heritage (UNESCO 1989).

An effort was made to establish a dialogue between the word and the image, to bring moments, memories and visual reports to the light of the reader-observer. When choosing the text and image correlation to present this traditional activity, we seek to disseminate aspects of this



ritual (currently a little absent in the academy), and public investments in safeguarding this cultural manifestation and artisanal fishermen. In this way, photography, when used as a research technique to obtain data, combined with the researcher's critical sense and subsequent analysis, result in broader and more complete understandings of traditional communities, their dilemmas and problems.


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## REWINDING THE TAPE: ARCHEOLOGY OF VIDEOTAPE IN VILLAGES

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### ABSTRACT

The article digs on the soil of experiences, movements, workshops, and processes with videotape production within indigenous communities in Brazil when magnetic tape recording equipment started to become popular with portable formats. Filmmaker Andrea Tonacci is concerned about the possibilities of videotape recording and reproduction, and its figuration inside the community as a procedural, reflexive look. The Kayapó camcorders recorded speeches, trips, events, and community rituals, even before the very first tries of Video in the villages (VNA). Vincent Carelli's film *The girl's celebration* (1987) alters what was imagined as "other's look" by Tonacci – and many of the productions by Popular Video Movement in Latin America – as it places its spectator with a displacing look, which witnesses the resumption of the bodies of young people by the community, decorated and marked like their ancestors', while at the same time placing us as non-indigenous spectators.

### KEYWORDS

Community-based films; Video in the Villages; Andrea Tonacci; Documentary; Indigenous Media.

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Long before the invention of videotape, cinema had already traveled through villages and indigenous communities in Brazil as a scientific instrument in the hands of the military, in the first decades of the republic. The camera became part of Luiz Thomaz Reis' equipment in the expeditions of the Indian Protection Service (SPI), led by engineer Candido Rondon in 1914. "Before 1912, Rondon hired the services of a commercial house in Rio de Janeiro, which did not work out due to the distances covered and also to the photographers' lack of experience in fieldwork" (Tacca 2002, 1989-90).

The SPI military quickly realized the strategic character of those films, due to the effect they could have on the national imagination about indigenous populations, and tried to produce images that expressed the success of the republican administration of indigenous populations – marketed by the Rondon Commission itself (Tacca 2002). Later, other cameramen and filmmakers began filming the expeditions and villages managed by the SPI, as well as those under missionary administration. There were several ways in which indigenous communities in Brazil were filmed from then on, as were the films made – ethnographic films, television series episodes, institutional pieces of State indigenism, feature films, documentaries, etc.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the experiences that involved the arrival of the first videotape equipment in the villages, based on a set of concerns and intuitions of filmmakers, anthropologists, and indigenists, but also some of their relations with the broader debate being had at that time, especially in the field of Visual Anthropology and Social Communication. Although we make connections with later elaborations and debates, the analysis period goes from the end of the 1970s, when Andrea Tonacci undertook his first films with videotape in the villages, until the end of the 1980s, when Vincent Carelli directed *The girl's celebration* (1987) in the Nambikwara village, with a quick detour due to the experience of Terence Turner and Monica Frota with the Kayapo. These pioneering experiences have already been described and analyzed in depth by the participants themselves and by researchers. Our objective here is to trace a modest path of concerns, doubts, strategies, and insights that motivated (or even discouraged) the first attempts to bring videotape to indigenous communities in Brazil. With this, we intend to explore the context that preceded the creation of the *Video in the Villages* project, establishing practical relations of continuity and transformation, but also in the discursive field.

## THE TONACCI VIDEOTAPE

Videotape (VT) was the first form of reproduction and electromagnetic recording of images produced by electronic cameras. In the same year that Kodak launched the Super-8 amateur film format in the United

States (1965), the Japanese company Sony introduced the portable videotape recorder CV-2000, which was recorded in black and white with a half-an-inch roll of magnetic tape.

Filmmaker Andrea Tonacci realized, “that it was possible to use the image in the moment of recording” (Tonacci *apud* Trevisan 1983, 6). On a trip to the United States in 1973, he purchased secondhand equipment. “During this period, I was already beginning to understand what the VT allowed, which was this construction of a certainly lived circumstance, made by the various people who lived that circumstance” (Tonacci 1980, 8). The film *Jouez Encore, Payez Encore* (1975, 120’) marks the beginning of the filmmaker’s research with videotape.

Technology was something that intrigued me, an instrument that was created by our culture, by our civilization, the production, and reproduction of images. And what would the look of someone who has never lived in a civilization of this type be like [...] Who was that “other” look? It was the native who never saw such an instrument nor thought of producing it (Tonacci *apud* Zea; Sztutman; Hikiji 2007, 243).

With similar concerns about the “Indigenous look” through audiovisual media, Sol Worth and John Adair developed a research project that involved filmmaking workshops with a 16mm film camera in the Pine Springs reservation of the Navajo people in 1966, in the United States (Worth and Adair 1997 [1972]). However, unlike the North Americans, it was the possibility of synchronicity between recording and viewing the image recorded on videotape that instigated Tonacci in his work for indigenous villages and communities in Brazil.

Andrea Tonacci then sought out the group of anthropologists and indigenists that would form the Indigenism Work Center (CTI) in São Paulo, to develop a communication project between different indigenous communities through videotape. “The video was a black and white VT reel, so he [Tonacci] had proposed this idea to us. He had created an NGO called *Inter-povos* [...] Portable video did not even exist in Brazil, he had it imported from the United States. It wasn’t even a tape, it was a roll, like a roll recorder” (Carelli [2003] *apud* Gonçalves 2012, 77, note 83). Andrea Tonacci and Vincent Carelli even wrote a project to compete for a scholarship that the Guggenheim Foundation grants to Latin American artists. The project would make it possible “to travel through indigenous areas in crisis and make these people realize their *vision* from within. It would be an attempt to construct history from the *point of view* of the other” (Tonacci 1980, 8, emphasis added).

Tonacci and anthropologist Gilberto Azanha planned to start the videotaping project in the Canela village (Apanyekra) in 1976. “The idea was to



record with them, make their record, have exhibitions, discuss, record the discussion process, see what the result was [...] but it was done in their stead, to try to express what went on in their communities” (Tonacci *apud* France 2003, 13). The American Foundation’s negative response came with the justification that they would not finance the project due to the continent’s political instability (Tonacci 1980, 8). Without funding, the video project did not advance, and Tonacci went to the Porquinhos village (MA) with the anthropologists, bringing a Super-8 camera and the Eclair NPR 16mm, with which he made *Conversations in Maranhao* (1983, 120’), a documentary about the Canela’s discussions and demands for the demarcation of their territory. According to Tonacci, Canela ended up filming some images in Super-8, but “the only thing that was possible at that moment was to explain that little device captured an image that someone else, in another part of the world, could see” (Tonacci *apud* Zea; Sztutman; Hikiji 2007, 45), as they could not watch the filmed images. “Then, the video never happened. They did it on film, and the idea of Inter-povos did not happen” (Carelli [2003] *apud* Gonçalves 2012, 78, note 84).

Shortly thereafter, Tonacci began his autonomous videotape work with indigenous communities, until the possibility of traveling to the north of Brazil arose to follow a scouting party that sought to establish contact with an indigenous group isolated in Para State’s forests, led by the indigenist Sydney Possuelo (Funai).

When the possibility of following a front of attraction arose in 1979, of participating in an expedition to establish the first contact with a group that was still shy, I thought to myself: “Ah, this is the chance to witness this eye that is completely unaware of an image, what the production of images is. It’s my chance to get to know that eye that can eventually get behind the camera and show me how it sees things” [...] I had this idea in my head and made those two documentaries which TV Bandeirantes participated in called *The Arara*, whose third part was never edited (Tonacci *apud* Zea; Sztutman; Hikiji 2007, 244).

This third part, in which the filmmaker records the meeting with Piput and his group, was filmed by Tonacci exclusively with videotape equipment. Cesar Guimaraes (2012) analyzed the material that would form the third episode of the series directed by Tonacci for Sao Paulo TV. When describing the filming process from the moment the Arara arrive at the Funai Attraction Front camp, Guimaraes notes the destabilization of space, the decentering of the field, the change in the regime of the visible in the “strong periods” of the film, in which the natives appear for the first time in front of Tonacci’s videotape camera.

By asserting the camera’s mediation (...), its coordinates waver without collapsing, the space is shaken by the trem-

or of contact, ever so close, not directed, not calculated. The field becomes momentarily centerless, unstable. The current regime of that which is visible changes in face of one of the other being filmed. (Guimaraes 2012, 62).

Clarisse Alvarenga (2017) also analyzes Andrea Tonacci's footage showing contact. For the author, a tactile regime is established in the village, in which bodies and objects, including the videotape camera itself, are scrutinized by the Arara, forming a space in which bodies are within reach of each other's hands. And it is precisely from the hands of one of the Arara hosts that the filmmaker receives a bowl of porridge. The permeability of the boundaries between the field and the foreground allows us to perceive a trace of Arara sociability, in which the filmmaker, while still shooting the footage, is invited to participate. It is a moment of tender hospitality coming from newfound friends. "The scene momentarily became a place of commonality; and the image, a mediator of exchanges. On both sides, the exchange of things which are not always familiar sustain the contact." (Guimaraes 2012, 65). The author would come to find several other examples in which the background in Tonacci's Funai Camp footage is interpellated or summoned to take part and relocate in the scene while the film is being shot.

Regarding these images filmed with a videotape camera as a "triptych" along with the two episodes edited for TV, Clarisse Alvarenga cunningly identifies a discursive-argumentative interruption coming from the Arara's on display, revealing another regime "of touch, listening, and reciprocity" (Alvarenga 2017, 265). The story that began in those first two episodes could not provide a conclusion in terms of the narrative that the long-awaited contact with the natives, both on and off-screen, would supposedly solve. Unresolved, the images filmed by Tonacci in Pará seem to be an interruption to the very project of finding an idealized perspective of the other. As we have seen, what the filmmaker encounters is, above all, their hands and their gestures of hospitality; but also their curiosity in touching the filming equipment and recording sounds. As Cesar Guimaraes noted, in the scenes in which women and children emerge from inside their dwellings, their gazes cross the edges of the frame in unimaginable directions.

The possibilities of the invention provided by the simultaneity between the filmed image and its visualization by the ones being filmed, provided by the videotape technology, was only one of the aspects explored by Andrea Tonacci in her extensive production on magnetic tape. With the TV contract terminated, Andrea Tonacci continued the activity he began with the videotape with other indigenous communities, financed by the Guggenheim Foundation. "I traveled to the south of the United States, where I visited indigenous reservations, I went to Central America, some countries here

in South America, such as Bolivia, Peru... At that time I learned about many projects” (Tonacci *apud* Zea; Sztutman; Hikiji 2007, 246).

I went to Arizona and New Mexico [USA]. They use VT in an internal communication system, autonomously. They receive funding for education and health and use the media for those purposes. Then I asked myself: “Why to draw from here information that these people would convey to other groups in Brazil?” (Tonacci 1980, 8).

The experiences that the filmmaker had witnessed in the North American context ended up getting American researchers interested in *Indigenous Media*, mainly stemming from the debate raised by anthropologist Faye Ginsburg (1991). In 2015, Tonacci exhibited three statements recorded on black and white videotape during the trip mentioned by the filmmaker: Dona Aurora Tataxin, Guaraní leader who led his people to the coast of Espírito Santo, recorded in 1978; Cherokee (USA) activist Jimmie Durhan, who tells the story of the struggle of the indigenous movement in the United States (1980); and Constantino Lima, the first indigenous deputy (Aymara) then elected in Bolivia (1980).

The conversations, speeches, and news of the indigenous experience in America recorded by Tonacci during the period he filmed with videotape equipment (and later with other video formats) demonstrate that the filmmaker’s engagement went beyond the assumptions that first urged him to travel with his videotape to such distinct indigenous contexts. In Tonacci’s view, the new equipment would enable communication, the construction of an interethnic communication network through videotape, an inter-people *network*.

## POPULAR VIDEO MOVEMENT

In the Bolivian context of Constantino Lima, the video would only become part of the struggle of popular movements systematically after 1989, with the foundation of the Center for Cinematographic Training and Realization (Cefrec). At the same time that it continued the project led by Jorge Sanjines and his *Ukamau* group for a cinema with indigenous peoples, the film school had been training indigenous filmmakers in the development of different narratives, ways of filming and making films and videos with communities, especially from the Bolivian plateau.

Throughout the 1980s, training courses for audiovisual production collectives tied to movements and organizations connected to popular struggles were held in Brazil and Latin America.

The video reaches popular groups and movements as another component of struggle, and, due to its technical char-

acteristics, adapts well to popular communication projects that have different social groups as a target audience, providing from simple display of pre-recorded programs to the production of original messages (Santoro 1989, 60).

The Popular Video Movement was consolidated in Brazil with the constitution of the Brazilian Association of Popular Video (ABVP) in 1984, working for eleven years in the articulation of hundreds of audiovisual production groups, linked to different social movements across the country. Festivals and video shows, meetings, and training workshops for filmmakers began to be organized in Brazil and Latin America, thus establishing spaces for the exchange of experiences, images, and networking between the various movements engaged in audiovisual production, which sought popular organization – workers unions, civil associations, etc. As of 1986, the most important Latin American film festival at the time, the International Festival of Latin American New Cinema in Havana (Cuba) began to incorporate video productions into one of its exhibitions.

It was evident to everyone on the jury that the main political and social events that took place in Latin America were recorded on video: from the invasion of the Court of Justice to the eruption of a volcano in Colombia; the repression of popular demonstrations in Chile; the FMLN struggle in El Salvador; the conflict with the “contra” in Nicaragua; the murders of peasant leaders in Brazil; the actions and justifications of the Peruvian guerrillas, among dozens of other examples (Santoro 1989, 15).

The second edition of the festival organized by the Latin American Film and Video Committee of Indigenous Peoples (Clacpi), founded in Mexico, was held in 1987 at the Museum of the Indian (Funai), in Rio de Janeiro, on the occasion of its first edition in 1985. The festival brought together indigenous people from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela who participated in the exhibitions as part of the jury, but also in an audiovisual training workshop (Bermudez Rothe 1995). Among the guests were director couple from the Zapotec people (Mexico) Martha Colmenares and Alvaro Vazquez, pioneers of indigenous video in their country, who brought the only indigenous film at the festival, *Aztec Dance* (1987, 90’).

The Zapotec director says that, since 1981, young Zapotec indigenous people started to get together to talk about the problems of their communities. After the publication of a bulletin, they began to produce photographic records and the communication of the indigenous assembly of their community through bulletin boards.

A friend lent us a piece of equipment (Betamax camera) to record the celebration and the regional community party in

Tagui [Oaxaca]. As there was no electricity in this community, we took a generator, a voltage regulator, and a television. He just told us how to turn on the camera. We recorded the meeting and the party and played the tape that same day. That was in 1981. Without proposing to do so, we started to search for a language and a creative way to deal with our issues and how we see ourselves. In 1982, we edited this first material and projected the videos on the basketball courts, and people had fun watching themselves [...] We sent the videos to some Zapotec organizations that had emigrated to the United States, and that still did not, or could not, return. That is how relations were established between the Zapotec villages (Martha Colmenares *apud* Minter 2008).

There were countless popular video productions in Mexico, especially in the state of Oaxaca. In 2019, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Oaxaca held an exhibition with videos made not only by the Zapotec communities but from various other audiovisual production initiatives, many of which were undertaken by institution Ojo de Agua – which is currently digitizing its magnetic tape archive.

Unlike Bolivia and Mexico – where video equipment reached indigenous communities as one among other media in the communication networks of popular and community movements that were established in a somewhat organized way – it was through partnerships with anthropologists and indigenous communities in Brazil that their first video cameras were obtained.

In 1987, Vincent Carelli noticed the beginning of the diffusion of portable video equipment and the start of a tape distribution network between the villages. According to Carelli, until that moment, “groups supporting the indigenous cause, hesitating between insecurity about the final product and the ‘high cost’ of investment to be made, remained, so to speak, closed to this type of initiative” (Carelli 1987, 42).

In addition to the pioneering work of Andrea Tonacci and the video production company with which Monica Frota carried out her experience with the Kayapo in 1985, as we will see below, Carelli (1987) mentioned the presence of videocassette in Salesian missionary centers in Mato Grosso and the State of Amazonas, Rio Negro region. At that time, the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (Cedi) started shooting indigenous productions with the Indigenous Missionary Council (Cimi), Operation Anchieta (Opan) and the Indigenism Work Center (CTI), mainly.

### **FIRST PORTABLE CAMERAS IN VILLAGES**

On the occasion of the trips to film two documentaries where he worked as a consultant, the anthropologist Terence Turner met some of the indigenous people who were part of Monica Frota and her team’s inaugural



experience in 1985, a series of three workshops for using integrated portable video equipment (*camcorder*) in some of the Kayapo communities (Rios, Pereira, Frota 1987; Feitosa [Frota] 1991; Frota 2000). The anthropologist had been working with these people for over twenty years.

Before that experience with documentary cinema, Turner had already worked as a consultant on TV episodes produced by the British broadcaster BBC. “I began making ethnographic films of the Kayapo in 1976, working as an anthropological consultant to a BBC film series [...] I returned to the Kayapo communities [...] to make the first of two films for Granada Television’s *Disappearing Worlds* series” (Turner 1991: 69), directed by Michael Beckham.

Young people and Kayapo leaders, who had already realized the potential of recording their parties and documenting other events and trips, asked the anthropologist to negotiate the delivery of new video cameras with the Granada TV film team for Mentuktire and A’ukre, the young Kayapo who had participated in Monica Frota’s workshops. In 1990, Terence Turner starts a video documentation project carried out by the Kayapo themselves.

With the partnership of Vincent Carelli, from the Video nas Aldeias project, I have been working on my entire Kayapo Video Project and the consolidation of the Kayapo video archive. It was with his support, in the editing room of CTI, when I was still in Sao Paulo, that I learned how to work with video and its possibilities, and how to explore these possibilities anthropologically. I learned a few things I could teach the Kayapo so they could make their videos (Turner *apud* Coffaci de Lima; Smiljanic; Fernandes 2008, 149).

When Turner was starting the project, his colleague Faye Ginsburg still needed to defend the idea that indigenous peoples could assimilate the video according to their own cultural and political interests, given the first decade of experiences with communication networks. Among indigenous communities in Australia and Canada – despite the concern of some of their colleagues who believed that “authentic” cultural practices would inevitably be compromised by the presence of Western media (Ginsburg 2016, 582). Terence Turner ended up joining Ginsburg in this debate, based on the analysis of the first results of the video experience among the Kayapo (Turner 1990; 1991; 1993).

Advancing on the issue that Carelli identified in 1987 about the concern with the quality of videos made by indigenous people, Faye Ginsburg (1994) formulated reflections that significantly shifted the problem of qualification of these productions beyond Western aesthetic standards concerning the audiovisual aspect. Aiming to create a discursive space that showcased indigenous media from the complexity of its exhibition

and appreciation circuits, Ginsburg proposed the notion of *embedded* aesthetics, drawing attention to “a system of evaluation that refuses a separation of textual production and circulation from broader arenas of social relations” (Ginsburg 1994, 368).

In the context of reflection on the practices of the Popular Video Movement, the conception of the edited video as the final objective, apart from its processes of creation and circulation, also came to be questioned:

One of the most promising fields of action is the so-called video process, where a given community or group systematically uses video as an element of integration, information transmission, or leisure, in a constant self-feeding flow based on a generally collective production that seeks to meet their interests (Brazil 1992, 7).

In the field of cinema, it is from Andrea Tonacci’s films that researcher Ismail Xavier approaches the procedural dimension, primarily in the way in which the film *Bang Bang* (1970, 84’), the filmmaker’s first feature film, staunches the continuation and the chaining of the characters’ actions, subverting the logical concatenations and blocking the foundation for the viewer’s identification and emotional investment (Xavier 1993); and then in the filmmaker’s investment in indigenous America, reflected both in his production with videotape, as we saw earlier, and in one of his last films, *The Hills of Disorder* (2005, 136’). In his essay on this film, Xavier formulates the notion of *cinema-process* to characterize the filmmaker’s work and trajectory, as well as that of the character Carapiru himself, guided by the condition of marginality and nomadism (Xavier 2008, 18).

As we will see below, it was the technical possibilities imagined by Andrea Tonacci, regarding the simultaneity between recording and displaying the images and sounds of the videotape, and the incorporation of the procedural dimension in the film itself that marked the beginning of Vincent Carelli’s video endeavor in indigenous communities in Brazil.

## THE GIRL’S CELEBRATION

The importance of images for indigenous peoples who struggled to re-emerge in Brazil came to Vincent Carelli’s attention in the documentation and research work of the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (Cedi): “This idea of the importance of image as a support base for a revaluation of itself. The possibility that, through images, the Natives can perceive their processes of change and reconstruct their memory” (Carelli *apud* Carvalho 2010, 366).

I think I started working on the photographic memory of indigenous peoples through the 10-year project I did at CEDI

to build a photographic collection, and visited all the great collections in Brazil. [Vladimir] Kozak's photos of the former Kayapo chiefs at the time of contact, Eduardo Galvão's collection, [Curt] Nimuendaju, *Cruzeiro* [magazine], etc. [...] Returning these photographs to their communities could provide the Natives with a retrospective view of their process of change (Carelli *apud* Caixeta de Queiroz 2009, 151).

Gilberto Azanha worked as an indigenist at Funai amongst the Kraho in the State of Tocantins. His undergraduate colleague Vincent Carelli had already dropped out of the Anthropology course when he joined Funai's indigenism course in 1973. Azanha and Carelli worked together to implement a community development project with the Kraho, who went to Sao Paulo to look for indigenists when the project came to an end.

So the Kraho came to get us and said: "you have to come back". Thus the CTI (Indigenism Work Center) was founded in 1979, as a result of a demand from the Natives. At the CTI, we used to do reverse "subversive indigenism". We initially started by looking for ways to guarantee the survival and autonomy of those communities (Carelli *apud* Carvalho 2010, 366).

It was precisely with the Kraho that Carelli's first attempt to bring a video camera to the village was "at a fledging party for my son, as a mascot for women in rituals. But that was not possible, there was no generator; technically it was impossible to even charge the battery" (Carelli 2017, 236). Shortly thereafter, now in possession of a portable electricity generator, Carelli decides to head to a community in Rondonia where the Nambikwara people (Mamaindê) reside, accompanying a Funai team in 1986.

This is when video *camcorder* came along. The *camcorder* was a two-in-one camera. First came the camera, which was attached like an umbilical cord to a portable VT [video-tape]. In 1986, I decided to do it. I was so into it, this idea had been hammering in my head. I bought a VHS [camera] with a monitor, a little generator and such, a VCR [videotape recorder], and I decided to do an experiment. That is more or less the story that is told in that video, *The girl's celebration* (Carelli [2003] *apud* Gonçalves 2012, 78, note 85).

In the film *The girl's celebration* (1987, 18'), Vincent Carelli records the Nambikwara ritual of female initiation on VHS video. The natives are unhappy with what they see as they watch the tape. They then decide to perform the next rite with their traditional adornments and body paintings. The result of the new shooting is not only received with great satisfaction by the community but also triggers an impetus in the boys to resume the male initiation ritual – piercing the lips and nose –, abandoned twenty years ago so that they too could be filmed. According to Carelli, the routine of filming and showing the images to the Nambikwara community-generated feedback immediately. "The Indians rapidly took control of the

direction of the process and the only thing that I had to do was to allow myself to be led by them, who began to ‘produce themselves’ as they liked to see and to be seen on the screen” (Carelli 2004, 23).

Everything we did [in the first years of the project] was crazy because we didn’t have money for anything. I started with three thousand dollars that a guy from the EDF (Environmental Defense Fund) in Washington gave me to buy a TV monitor and a VHS camera (Carelli *apud* Leandro; Cesar; Brazil; Mesquita 2017, 236).

These first experiences with VHS video *camcorders* in indigenous communities in Brazil, which had served as a means for the CTI to establish collaborative relationships, were fundamental to the constitution of the indigenous film libraries that Vídeo nas Aldeias started to establish in the communities.

Vincent Carelli’s experience with the Nambikwara in 1986, as we see in *The girl’s celebration*, gives us a look into the community’s desire to hold the parties again as they did in the past. The camera is included as part of this process. Looking into the Nambikwara community is precisely what mobilizes Vincent Carelli’s camera and the film itself.

This experience of documentary filmmaking with video, which responded to filmmaker Andrea Tonacci’s concerns about the possibilities of knowing the native’s look through the videographic device, subtly shifted the problem. If we can speak of a “look” of the Nambikwara community, it is not expressed in the film as something existing previously, but with a singular intensity that displaces the documentary itself at the moment of its making. This is not about finding a form or a filmic discourse that represents, in a more or less adequate way, the Other and its “look” (or its worldview), but about finding the collective desire in the community to participate in its creation, as well as finding ways to make it inscribe itself in the film’s form, in its narrative.

We could say that the film reinvents, through video technology, modes of creation that go back to the documentary inventions inaugurated by Robert Flaherty, when he filmed with Alakariallak (Nanook) and his Inuit community in the Canadian arctic. On the trip to film *Nanook of the North* (1922, 79’), in addition to the hand-cranked Akeley cameras and the blank film, Flaherty also brought an electricity generator, a copying machine, and a video projector to Hudson Bay. (Flaherty 1922). In this endeavor, the filmmaker took a technical apparatus that allowed both the development of the filmed negative and its copy for positive, thus being able to show it to that community. For the filmmaker Jean Rouch, when setting up a development and copying laboratory and projecting

his newest images to the Inuit, his first spectators, Flaherty had just simultaneously invented *participant observation*, a concept still used by ethnographers and sociologists fifty years later “which sociologists and anthropologists will use for the next thirty years”, and the feedback, “an idea with which we [filmmakers] are just now clumsily experimenting” (Rouch 1979). This feedback strategy was decisive in the creation of his most important films such as *I, a Negro* (1960, 70’), *Jaguar* (1967, 88’), and *The Lion Hunters* (1965, 77’). Rouch incorporates the impromptu comments of the subjects who participated in the filming in these movies by using these images.

Carelli’s experience in the Nambikwara village inaugurated a new way of making films with indigenous communities in Brazil. The project and the films produced by *Video in the Villages* project started to appear as references in the practice of cinema with these peoples. *The girl’s celebration* describes a singular movement in such previous experiences in Brazil. We are distant from the tradition of ethnographic film, which would seek the means to record the material, bodily and ritual techniques of indigenous peoples before their disappearance. What the film both witnesses and provokes is the *reappearance* of certain Nambikwara practices that had been abandoned by the community. On the other hand, we are far from audiovisual narratives whose “pedagogy” would consist in suppressing conflicts or contradictions under the justification that the video should point the viewer to a single direction, to take him to actual action – the practice of popular video criticized within the scope of the ABVP’s publications (Henrique Luiz Pereira Oliveira [2001] *apud* Alvarenga 2010, 94). In this sense, we could say that *The girl’s celebration* prefigures the changes that Clarisse Alvarenga (2010) identified in the audiovisual production engaged with social struggles in Brazil, especially after the closing of the ABVP in 1995. In this second phase, audiovisual production practices were reorganized to enable more effective participation of groups in the formative processes of audiovisual realization. Thus, *The girl’s celebration* prefigures a communal intensity in the film’s *mise en scene*, which mobilizes and embeds in the film’s form the *mise en scene* and the community’s desire to participate in this creation.

The technological possibilities of videotape not only broadened the horizons of imagination and action in the struggle for indigenous rights in America but also highlighted a series of controversies and misunderstandings about these peoples. Researchers Nadja Marin and Paula Morgado (2016) recall that until the decade before the first initiatives with videotape in villages, there was the idea that indigenous populations were doomed to disappear through integration (“acculturation”) into the national society. The assumptions that supported this idea do not seem very different from those which Faye Ginsburg had to oppose in the academic circle,



and that indigenous peoples still face in their relationship with Brazilian society. In this sense, the initiatives we describe here, even if motivated by somewhat mistaken ideas, can help us understand the field of action and practices with indigenous peoples as a space for engagement capable of overcoming the impasses that our restricted imagination is often unable to let go of. Rewinding the tape and returning to the context of these early experiences can help us move beyond the frayed loops inherited from our colonial past.

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## THE QUILOMBOLA AND THE COWBOY

DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

The artwork “The Quilombola and the Cowboy” (Painting, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm. Peçanha, Minas Gerais – Brazil. March 2021), along with its poem, was produced by the artist and researcher Filife de Oliveira Maciel, through the ethnographic fieldwork, in execution, of the research “The Identity Process of the Quilombola Communities of Peçanha, Minas Gerais – Brazil: Oral History, Culture and Ethnicity”, oriented by Prof. Dr. Marivaldo Aparecido de Carvalho. This research is carried out through PPGER/UFVJM, with support from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Brazil. The artwork constitutes a process of performative transformation of the field diary into plastic arts, to manifest preliminary results of this research which finds in the land, spirituality, and violence the main mechanisms of identity structuring in these quilombos. It is a mechanism of expression of languages, codes, rituals, historical trajectories, ancestral knowledge, and dialectical relations experienced ethnographically by the body-soul-researcher, aiming to express the unspeakable and to contribute to other dimensions of the production of anthropological science.

### KEYWORDS

Quilombola;  
Peçanha, Minas  
Gerais – Brazil;  
Ethnography;  
Culture; Spirituality.

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Êêêêôôôôohhh liiiife of caaaattle!!! Bells were swinging, the leather was tearing the bush full of thorns, a character forged in the earth and in the animal, a body shouts the tune in the middle of the dark forest and the brightness of the full moon shows the cowboy that his destiny was to find the forest. There, in the forest, Grandma Rita prayed “Saint Bernabeu, I asked our Father to rain on land” and the waters fell. Those people, who were forced to cross the sea of the world, brought with them the strength of an unshakable faith, which structured their defenses to survive and fight, also giving them animus to gladden in the midst of sadness. Inheritance of the allies of the people from the forests, in the dance keeps alive the Caboclada, skirts made of Guinea fowl feathers, drums echoing in the forest, the reco-reco setting the

*tone of the stride, sugar cane brandy warming the chests at night, because while the daylight reigned, the blood and sweat dripped. Life cannot be only suffering. “My father Santo Antonio, have pity on those who suffer, I walk day and night fulfilling a promise” the Marujada enchanted, colorful and illuminated, reaffirms each presence on the boundaries of time. And it is determined that God is not vengeful, that when the father steals, the son eats and the grandson starves, and the hand that used to scourge, today applauds afflicted. It was and is this way, that the richest identities of Peçanha were forged, that brought true nobility to the cradle of Minas Gerais’ culture, through the meetings and mismatches of destinies. In the maintenance of a complex symbology and set of moral and spiritual codes, they write and maintain their way of life, their history in the secrets of orality, in the beauty and subjectivity of culture, and in the maintenance of their boundaries in body territory, soul territory and earth territory.*

The work of art “The Quilombola and the Cowboy” (Painting, oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm. Peçanha, Minas Gerais – Brazil. March 2021), together with its poem, was produced by the artist and researcher Filipe de Oliveira Maciel through the ethnographic fieldwork, in execution, of the research “The Identity Process of the Quilombola Communities of Peçanha, Minas Gerais: Oral History, Culture and Ethnicity”<sup>2</sup>, oriented by Prof. Dr. Marivaldo Aparecido de Carvalho. This research is carried out through the *Stricto sensu* Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Rural Studies (PPGER) of the Federal University of the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM), being carried out with support from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – (CAPES) in Brazil (Finance Code 001). The authors thank Professor PhD Rosana Passos Cambraia for her support in the translation review.

2. Research Approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri, according to the Consubstantiated Opinion 4.438.981 of December 04, 2020.

They are considered to be the remnants of quilombos communities, the ethnic-racial groups, which according to criteria of self-attribution (that is, through self-definition by the community itself), with their own historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with presumed black ancestry related to the resistance to the historical oppression suffered. The remainders of quilombos communities have the right to the recognition and titling of the definitive property of the territories traditionally occupied. These definitions are in accordance with Article 68 of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Brazil 1988) and Decree nº 4887 (Brazil 2003). In the text of this work, “quilombola community” or “quilombo” is understood to refer to the group or its territory, and “quilombola” is understood to refer to the individual who self-recognizes as such. It is emphasized that this canvas and poem, fruits of the aforementioned research, are inspired by the two quilombola communities studied, named Jorge de Água Branca and Purificação.

In the heart of the Rio Doce Valley, in the municipality of Peçanha, Minas Gerais, occurs since 2018, the flourishing and effervescence of the quilombola cause. The quilombola community Jorge de Água Branca, upon being certified by the Palmares Foundation, was a pioneer in the municipality in this question, being an inspiration and stimulus for the following year the quilombola community Purificação to start its process, still in the organization phase. The researcher Filipe, a native of Peçanha, having fraternal and family ties in these territories and having experienced these realities since his childhood, got involved with the communities to professionally support them in their recent demands.

When asked by the communities to assist in the study of these quilombos, initially the main immediate needs were presented, expressed in the struggle for the conquest of certification as remaining quilombola; in the founding of the community association and the transformation of the statutes; in the search for the restoration of traditional cultural trades and the rescue of the historical trajectory. Through these needs it was identified that a deeper and more complex process was taking place, since they signified the identity claim through group positioning based on historical and cultural differentiation.

Thus, it is born this research, in progress since August 2019, which of interdisciplinary nature, but with an anthropological focus, investigates the processes of identity construction of these quilombos through oral history, culture and ethnicity. We do not propose here, at the moment, to discuss the problematic of the research<sup>3</sup>, since we seek in this text,

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3. Part of this research, during the bibliographical search phase, review of the written history of Peçanha (Minas Gerais, Brazil) and theoretical conceptual introduction to the proposed identity studies, was presented at the VI Congress of the Latin American Association

precisely an appreciation and promotion of another field of language in the production of anthropological knowledge. But, for a better contextualization of the ethnographic field that inspired the canvas “The Quilombola and the Cowboy”, the result of the initial stage of this field, we make only a few general notes.

Still in the phase of fieldwork, through a methodology of participant research (Brandão 2006; 1999), has been experienced ethnographically the rich symbolism of traditions that subjectively structure their cultural identities (Laraia 2001), as by the called Marujada and Caboclada (traditional religious manifestations, with their own clothing, music, choreography and ritual). Also, relations of maintenance of ethnic boundaries (Poutignat e Streiff-Fenart 2011) between individuals within the quilombos and different groups, for example through food, religious celebrations, and political dialogues by community association. Orality (Vansina 2010) is also highlighted as a cosmological mechanism of knowledge transmission and a strategic means of maintaining their way of life. Through orality elements such as the taboo of the Holy Day and medicinal/spiritual knowledge have been presented.

It is very challenging to do this work in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current political situation in Brazil. But if on the one hand many activities suffer restrictions or interruptions, on the other hand it highlights contrasts, violence, agrarian dynamics of these rural quilombos, and diacritical elements (Cunha 1986) are reaffirmed. There are customs that the group does not live without, that the threat of imminent death that the pandemic poses to us does not affect dialogues of different dimensions of which the groups already operate at this level of language. Languages, codes and universes, of life and death, of visible and non-visible world, of human being and nature, encounters and contradictions, rites and traditions. It is in this way, so far, that land, spirituality and violence have been identified, through the body-soul-researcher who is ethnographically experiencing these realities, as the main structures of quilombola identity construction in Peçanha.

The body-soul-researcher is living the stories of Grandmother Rita, of cures, midwives, rain prayers. The stories of pain, hunger, and violence from a distant and dialectically present past. The sound of boxes/drums that resonate on the frontier of earth territory, body territory, and soul territory, a language that crossed the ocean centuries ago. The body-soul-researcher is experiencing the healing of a malaise by a medicine that is “something from another world, right?!” It is experiencing even what it

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of Anthropology (ALA) in November 2020. The work will soon be found in the Actas of the Congress (which is in process of publication).


doesn't even know that it is experiencing. He is also getting emotional, feeling tastes, vulnerabilities, loves, fears, pleasures, and knowledge.

And then the body-soul-researcher accumulates an experiential material of decolonial and political struggle. Of a subjective universe that goes from the dimension of the land that plants to the flowering of the soul. Of a ritualistic religious symbolism in which the aesthetics of his field diary performatively transforms itself into canvas, brush and paint, to say that which cannot be spoken... because, if in anthropological research the researcher reaches the interior of houses, kitchens, casseroles, prayers, beliefs and various intimacies, he also reaches secrets that must be kept just like that, in the trust of the exchange of those with whom contact is made.

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# FAITH, LIFE AND DEATH: IMAGERY REPRESENTATIONS OF A BELIEVING SPANISH AMERICA

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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This short essay is the result of the desire of a sociologist of law who always seeks to look at the world, society and social phenomena through the lens of sociology, law, history... an instrumental and rudimentary anthropologist. Seeking to turn the gaze to Latin America that is culturally violated, reflecting and seeking the strangeness of socio-cultural phenomena, mainly through photography.

This photographic incursion took place in Lima, Peru, in March 2020, when we were already beginning to feel the reflexes of the pandemic that had started in China, here in the South American countries. The images were captured by a SL2 camera with Ef-s 18-55mm lens and, most of them, produced in the “Cementerio Presbítero Matías Maestro”. It is a 19th century cemetery that has already been the target of unsuccessful attempts to become an open-air museum.

In this holy field there is the suicide hall, a place where only people who tried against their own lives were buried, a Judeo-Christian rule that did not allow interpretation at the time. Suicides were not allowed to be buried with other people.

Resting in the same field, the tomb of the “boy Ricardinho” is by far the most visited. In it’s his statue in



full size, dressed in a red tunic and always decorated with fresh flowers. It is noteworthy that the place is rarely without devotees.

Also in this line, there are the tombs of witches, very visited, and invoked by people who claim wishes and requests of the most varied notes. In one of the images, presented in the essay, it is noticed that there are holes in the drawer where the witch rests, in which the faithful deposit their wishes in writing.

Night rituals are prohibited, however, they are not banned, both on the headstones of people thought to be spiritually powerful, and on those of witches. In these, in turn, residues of various rites are found at dawn.

This syncretism between the local religiosities, the religiosities brought by the Spanish and the religiosities that emerged during the years, is also perceived in the city. Amulets acquired, ordered and/or made ritualistically for the person, bought in the market of Gamarra (witches market), are easily found in rear-view mirrors of cars, buses and backpacks, integrating into the daily life of Lima people. Some, more aggressive to look at, are transported in places of less visibility.

Closing the essay, we present the image of São Martinho de Porres, who despite of his condition of poverty and being of mixed race (conditions that made it difficult to enter a religious order), becomes Saint and quite popular among Peruvians. This saint has become synonymous with resilience, peace and friendship and is usually represented with a cat, a dog and a mouse, synthesizing peace.

These images intend to unveil, cause strangeness and break with the inertia of the gaze, about the sacred surrounding us.









el "Fotografía al carbón" de "Luz"  
Luz, 14 de octubre de 1886.

en "Fotografía inalterable al carbón" de  
Luz, 14 de octubre de 1886.

En todo caso, se trata de una búsqueda de la perdurabilidad. Por  
ello Rafael Castillo insistía hacia 1886 en el carácter inalterable  
y bello de su nuevo método de fotografía al carbón: "Hoy se  
hace fotografías al carbón que superan en belleza a las mejores  
del antiguo sistema. Las personas que deseen obtener retratos,  
vistas, reproducciones que no se borren, pueden ocurrir a la  
fotografía de Castillo". O: "Los retratos, vistas, reproducciones,  
&, que se obtienen en este establecimiento, no se borran y duran  
indefinidamente".

## RETRATOS DE MUERTOS A DOMICILIO.

Reproducciones de

Daguerreotipos	---	Fotografías
Pinturas al óleo	---	Estátuas &.

E. OARRAUD y Ca.

29 calle del Ucayali.

alt cv30p1







































## ABSTRACT

The small photo essay below presents some photographs captured in the city of Lima in Peru in March 2020, what we didn't know is that this would be one of the last months before the pandemic that would change our looks, feelings and behavior. With the intention of causing strangeness, the photographs present from everyday aspects of the local religiosity, to others that are very delicate and impactful to the external eye, such as the suicide hall in the largest local cemetery, or the tombs of witches, revered even after death in the same cemetery.

### KEYWORDS

Sacred; Faith;  
Photography;  
Religion;  
Religiosity.

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# IMAGES OF RELIGION IN A MANGUEIRA CARNIVAL

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
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**PHOTO 1**

One of the 80 Baianas of the Mangueira school wearing the costume 'Intolerance is a Cross,' representing the many people persecuted for being followers of African-derived religions. In the background, the float 'The Pained Faces of the Passion.'

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In this essay, we examine the connections between religion and carnival in recent parades of the Estação Primeira de Mangueira samba school, especially for the 2020 carnival – the last before the festival was suspended due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. In particular, we explore the backstage context of the show performance, extending from the *barracão* (warehouse), where costumes and floats are made, to the *concentração* (concentration) – that is, the moment that immediately precedes and conditions the school's entrance into the Marquês de Sapucaí Sambadrome during the champions parade. Given the magnitude of the event, we present an essay with alternative images to those disseminated in the commercial media, which are taken at the climax of the festival and perpetuate its monumental scale. What we propose is not an aesthetic appreciation of the parade but an analysis of how the images and performances of 'religion' are articulated and appear in a research field like carnival that is seen, a priori, as profane. To achieve this aim, we turn to the ethnographic repertoire compiled by members of the Laboratory of the Anthropology of the Ludic and Sacred of the Museu Nacional at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (Ludens/MN/UFRJ) since 2015. Exploring a variety of approaches, this research group has analysed the complex processes involved in realizing diverse festivals, the Rio carnival among them, seeking to understand the ritual in relation to the parades themselves and what extends beyond them (Bártolo 2018, Menezes & Bártolo 2019, Menezes, 2020).

Based on an *enredo*, plot/theme, which unfolds through dramatization, song, dance, percussion, scenography, costumes and diverse visual devices, the schools function like 'mobile operas' (Cavalcanti 2006). Put succinctly, the samba school parade is a competition in which the processions seek to demonstrate excellence in the integration of various expressive modalities as a means to tell a story. Inversely and complementarily, they use a story to demonstrate their excellence in these modes of expression. At the moment of the parade, the grandiose collective performance gives life and form to the narrative of the theme, at the same time as subverting it at various points, since if the songs and music imply repetition and harmony, the costumes and floats (*alegorias*) should express creativity and originality by performing facets of the story. In this aspect, the carnival parade is similar to other collective and cyclical rituals – religious or otherwise – that actualize macronarratives based on diverse sensorial and corporal devices (Pereira 2015, 2019, 2020). From the theoretical viewpoint, the study of carnival practices can benefit from the repertoire accumulated in studies of other parades and rituals, including processions, marches,

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1. This essay results from the research project *Enredamentos entre religião e cultura no Carnaval Carioca*, financed with resources from FAPERJ and CNPq.



*maracatus*, *afoxés* and so on, in which the symbolic logics of collective manifestation come to the fore.

In terms of religion, various carnival *enredos* (themes) evoke mythological, cosmological and ancestral figures or elements that are customarily labelled historical, folkloric, popular and cultural (Santos 1999, Simas & Fabato 2015). As works-performances in action, the parades present ideas in material and sensible forms, which not only draw from pre-existing religious contexts but also set them in motion, updating, highlighting or placing them in suspension, while also permitting their critique. In this way, symbolic contents recognized as religious are reappropriated through the specific logic of the carnival competition and expressivity, generating situations of both convergence and divergence between actors from the carnival world and Brazil's religions.

This procedure has the interesting effect of placing in question the very limits of the religious domain, allowing us to consider this space in terms of its *effective dynamic, without projecting predefined contours onto it*. In the case of the research projects developed at Ludens, the parades have proven to be important case studies since they enable us to examine religious conceptions, knowledge and practices transmitted outside the temples and sacred books. Based on the ethnography of actual sociocultural experiences, researchers from the laboratory have pointed to the instability and inadequacy of projecting any rigid boundary between ritual and everyday life or between the religious and the secular (Bártolo 2018, Menezes e Bártolo 2019, Menezes 2020).

## **MANGUEIRA: RELIGIOUS THEMES UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT**

Mangueira is a samba school with a long history of success and recognition inside and outside Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Over recent years, interest in its parades has intensified since, following the arrival of Leandro Vieira as the school's carnival creative director (*carnavalesco*), in 2016, the school has won two championships and has always finished among the top six in the carnival rankings.

2. The *Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba Estação Primeira de Mangueira* was created in 1928 from the merging of various carnival groups (*blocos*). The name derived from the hillside where it is situated and the nearby train station that used to take workers to the city centre. Its colours, green and pink, were chosen by the composer Cartola. Other *bambas* (ingenious samba composers) have left their mark on its history, including Nelson Cavaquinho, Xangô, Tatinho, Nelson Sargento, Carlos Cachaca and José Ramos, or artists like Alcione, Beth Carvalho, Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethânia and Leci Brandão. However, its support base is found among Rio's black families, given it is a school known for its 'ground' or being part of the 'community.' In recent years, its parades have involved around 3,500 performers, but the number of *mangueirenses* is much bigger, linked to what is usually described as 'the largest school on the planet.' Available at <http://www.mangueira.com.br/>. Accessed 12 May 2021.

Vieira's lively themes have brought diverse religious elements and figures to the sambadrome, giving them a new emphasis, visibility and aesthetic treatment. In his very first carnival for Mangueira – which, although a highly traditional school, had not won a parade since 2002 – the creative director became a champion with the theme *Maria Bethânia, the Apple of Oyá's Eye*. The samba theme was a salute to Orixá Oyá, 'Mother of the Storm,' as well as Orixá 'Oxalá, Xeu Êpa Babá!' and blended the 'Rosary of Mary' with the *xiré* ritual dance performed in candomblé. In 2017, Vieira produced *Only with the Saint's help*, a theme that focused on and deepened the intimate relations between saints and worshippers, announced in the parade of the year before. With a sequence of *alas* (blocks of dancers) and floats that began with an altar and ended with a candomblé temple (*terreiro*), the theme announced that 'Mangueira wants to pass through and command the procession. Its green and pink, everyone knows, already became a religion long ago.'<sup>3</sup>

In the following years, the Rio carnival felt the effects of the municipal government of Marcello Crivella (Brazilian Republican Party), a licensed bishop of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and representative of a neo-Pentecostal sector closely associated with conservative viewpoints and right-wing parties (Menezes & Santos 2017). Assuming office as Rio's mayor in 2017, Crivella introduced changes to the funding mechanisms for the samba schools, slashing funds, as well as remaining absent from the parades – deprecating one of the city's most important events. In this context, Mangueira's carnival themes constitute responses to the political setting: in 2018, *Money or No Money, I'm Playing!* defended maintaining the revelry despite the scant resources and presented the mayor as Judas being lynched on the last carnival float, as well as including the following refrain in the main samba theme: 'I am Mangueira, my lord / Don't get me wrong / The real sin is not playing in carnival.'<sup>4</sup>

In 2019, *A Lullaby for Big People* won the school another championship. Emphasizing the 'history that history doesn't tell,' the theme highlighted figures obscured in the official narratives like Marias, Mahins, Marielles and Malês, valorising the role of subalternized groups in the nation's history, as well as celebrating the PSOL councillor Marielle Franco, murdered in 2018. The symbolic, sensorial and narrative logic that characterizes the carnival parades responded, in its own way, to central aspects of social experience in the city and the country. The conscious recognition of carnival as a cultural and political platform appeared in the words of the *carnavalesco* himself: 'From the moment that the parade of samba schools achieved the notoriety of speaking for millions of people, it acquires an

3. Available at <https://liesa.globo.com/2017/por/03-carnaval/enredos/mangueira/mangueira.html> Accessed 10 April 2021.

4. Available at: <http://liesa.globo.com/memoria/outros-carnavais/2018/mangueira/samba-enredo.html> Accessed 10 April 2021.

important role as a disseminator of an idea' (IPHAN 2017: 87). And, for Vieira, among the important ideas to emphasize in the current context of a dispute of narratives is the valorisation of Brazil's cultural and religious diversity.


In 2020, the theme chosen was *The Truth Will Set You Free!* The proposal was to recount the life of Jesus Christ in 'a carnival opera divided into five acts, no different from the content of other artistic approaches to the theme' (Vieira 2020: 122-123). The production thus included floats and costumes related to the nativity, Christ's adult life in Jerusalem, his trial, torture and death on the cross, ending with his resurrection on the Mangueira hillside. While the creative emphasis in previous years had been on religious plurality and the combination of forms of worship in the country, this time the aim was to rescue the mythic and historical figure of Jesus from the monopoly of fundamentalist and Eurocentric interpretations. Affirming that 'your samba is a prayer,' the samba theme converted Mangueira into the 'First Station of Nazareth' where a Christ would be born among the popular classes. Vieira said:

[...] I believe that if he came back to earth via a hillside that touches the sky – to be born in the same form: poor and darker, raised by a humble father and mother to live among the oppressed and give them succour – he would descend via the steepest part of one of this city's favelas. [...] He would be on the side of those without a roof to their head, bemused by the sight of his statue [Christ the Redeemer] erected in the picture postcard scene so far away, his back turned to those for whom his embrace is so much needed. (Vieira 2020, 119)

The creative reading of the divine figure and his history would allow Mangueira to appropriate a central character in Brazil, 'God Above All,' associating him with other meanings. The school's intention was to stimulate critical thinking about the power asymmetries that structure relations of violence and subalternity involving peripheral collectives in an ample sense:

On the cross, he is a man and also a woman. He is the naked indigenous body in which the church saw such sin and no humanity. He is the *ialorixá* [mother-of-saint] who professes faith after being stoned and vilified. He is the frail and dirty body of the minor you fear when he holds out his hand on the sidewalk. On the cross he is also black-skinned with curly hair. Like it or not, the androgynous body that perturbs you is also the extension of his body. (Vieira 2020, 119)

Tell Christ's story in carnivalized form; actualize and multiply his face, making him reborn as a resident of the Mangueira favela and other subalternized groups: these were the solutions encountered by Vieira and performed by Mangueira to present their version of Christ's message through



samba. The narrative constructed in this essay through the images taken by Edilson Pereira presents more than a documentation of this setting. For both authors, it seeks to reinterpret this artistic appropriation, offering an anthropological reading of an exemplary case of the carnivalization of the religious, while simultaneously pointing to the 'staged' dimensions of the festive performance and its effects.

### **CARNIVAL AND RELIGION IN THE SAMBADROME**

The spectacular explosion of the samba school at the parade venue – the climatic moment of its competitive performance – is preceded by a process of physical and intersubjective staging that interconnects materialities, images and persons. While the parade is the school's moment of full existence when it presents itself to its members, fans and competitors, that is, to itself and to the world, the context that precedes this ritual space-time, known as the *concentração*, 'concentration,' is established as the setting in which the parade itself is transported and assembled, ready to enter the spotlights. In the quest to capture attention, in which surprise is a fundamental element, there is a series of mediations and interdictions in terms of what is made visible, registered and divulged before carnival.

The monumentality and narrative coherence displayed in the sambadrome are constructed in the school's *barracão* (warehouse) where, however, what is found is a plethora of materials, floats, costumes and people arranged in non-linear form. If we take the samba school carnival as a rite of passage, marked by the liminality embodied in the climax of the parades, the *barracão* is the space that anticipates and creates the conditions of the posterior 'subjunctive' state (Turner 2015) outside the habitual structures. Behind the scenes, though, numerous unforeseen reconfigurations already emerge, since the elements that make up the floats can generate an unplanned and indeed disordered 'staging.' In visual terms, the *barracão* encompasses numerous conflicting planes, generating unexpected transgressions of the canonical forms of presenting figures like Christ – such as his cross strewn on the ground or cut in half, since it is only at the time of the parade that the sculptures will be fully assembled, assuming their finished state and final positions to be adopted during the procession. This is done both to facilitate the transportation to the avenue and to ensure the mystery that will impress the audience.





**PHOTO 2**  
The Mangueira warehouse (*barracão*) in Samba City: planes in conflict. The floats are restored between the parade on Carnival Sunday and the Parade of Champions the following Sunday.





**PHOTO 3**  
Fourth float in the parade: Calvary, in which a gigantic crucified Jesus assumes the face of a young black man with tattoos and bleached hair. Lying on the warehouse floor, the cross was raised by a crane only at the entry to the sambadrome due to its size.





**PHOTO 4**  
The fifth float, 'Jesus Rises to Heaven,' depicts a black Christ on the Mangueira Hillside. In the warehouse, many floats are disassembled to fit in the space and allow them to be transported later.






**PHOTO 5**  
The fifth float  
being assembled in  
the concentration  
for entry into the  
sambadrome.

It is precisely in the concentration area – a section of Presidente Vargas Avenue adjacent to the Marquês de Sapucaí Sambadrome, blocked off during the carnival period to prepare for the parades – that the final touches are made. It is there that the costumes, *alas*, floats, special participants, *baianas*, percussion bands, *Velha Guarda* and so on all assemble some hours before entering the venue itself. The floats taken to the city centre merge into the landscape as diacritical signs of the process of assembling the dramatic space. Being on the physical and symbolic margin of the carnival ritual – on the margin of the margin to borrow an idea proposed by Dawsey (2013) to describe liminal situations – the concentration is composed of a state of things and persons that converge and, once assembled, begin to organize themselves. It becomes a space and also a movement of adding the finishing touches and readiness, which will condition the subsequent performance in the avenue. In sum, the concentration is the setting that enables a float to be transformed into a scene and a person into a *desfilante*, a member of an *ala* and part of Mangueira.

By interacting with people in this setting, the photographic camera becomes one more catalyser of the staging of their performances in emotional and physical terms. As in other ritual contexts (Pereira 2019), it participates in the pre-established relations and can stimulate the acting of the performers. In front of the camera, they begin to act in a self-conscious way to produce an image of themselves, for themselves and for others. When they perceive that they are being seen, many smile and pose, as though rehearsing to become part of the school about to make its presentation. As well as serving as a mediator that allows relations to be established through the process of taking portraits and the subsequent conversations that they generate, photography appears as one of the first devices to signal entry into the position of an agent to be perceived or, more precisely, admired.

In the ethnographic incursion made at the school's *barracão* and the parade *concentração*, we observed that the participation of people in the restaged drama articulates two complementary dimensions of the experience of assuming a particular figure: *transformation* and *transportation* (Schechner 1985). The first of these expressions refers to the transformation that results from the performer 'leaving' her or himself, seeing themselves from a new perspective, as in the case of those who transform into Christ, Our Lady and other characters from the Scriptures. The idea of *transportation*, in turn, indicates a displacement: 'during the performance the performers are "taken somewhere,"' Schechner writes (1985: 125-126). This movement can be understood as emotional too since although the notion of 'transportation' has taken on fairly unpoetic meanings over the course of history, until the eighteenth century the term designated in European literature a kinetic movement that occurred within human



bodies (Nhaoum-Grappe 1994). Emotions result from a stimulation that leads the sentiment from inside the person to overflow on the surface of the skin.

For those who deal with the ludic arsenal of dressing up together in costumes to parade, the diacritical signal of the beginning of their performances resides in the emotions expressed when they ‘concentrate’– a psychological, corporal and material state that combines with the action of dressing up, embodying a role and feeling part of a collective dedicated to the common goal of representing the school well. Entering the game of seeing and being seen, their bodies and faces start to interact in a ritualized form with the cameras and gazes that multiply from backstage to the climax of the competition. In this dynamic, the human face, the sacred zone of the body insofar as it concentrates the traits of individual identity (Le Breton 2019), gradually transforms, opening up in smiles and producing bonds. The portraits presented here provide a glimpse of what happened on the edges of the parade and, above all, the diversity of human forces that composed, along with the floats, the carnival appearance of the Mangueira Jesus.





**PHOTO 6**  
The first float, opening the procession, symbolizes the birth of Christ with nativity scenes showing the Baby Jesus as black and as indigenous. Joseph and Mary were represented in the parade by the *sambista* Nelson Sargento and the singer Alcione.





**PHOTO 7**

A member of the school directorate, dressed as a shepherd, helps a participant put on the 'Body of a Woman' costume. The photo shows the encounter between the history of Jesus, a Galilean carpenter in a land of shepherds, and his actualization as a victim of violence against women.





**PHOTO 8**  
Carnivalizing the miracle of the fish: Jesus liberates the people from their anguish by giving them food – and drink.





**PHOTO 9**  
The percussion group, composed by 250 members, embodied Roman brutality in centurion clothes. In Rio de Janeiro, the skull image can be associated with death squads.





**PHOTO 10**

One of the crucified prepares to get on the Calvary float. The makeup combines the scenography of wounds with the colours green and pink of Manguera and with a purple beard with glitter in a carnivalesque modulation of the Passion.





**PHOTO 11**  
Our Lady of Sorrows  
interpreted by a man: the  
purple, gold and silver evoke  
the opulence of baroque  
images and the suffering of  
Lent and the Passion.



**PHOTO 12**

The last act of the parade, in which Jesus is reborn on the Mangueira Hillside and in the Carnival, the school muses, as 'stars,' announce the Good News in costumes that evoke the funk aesthetic.





**PHOTO 13**  
The Pharisees, the maintainers of appearances, are the hypocritical and arrogant figures criticized by Christ for their obsession over following the rules. Although this is a negative role in the biblical story, the joy of the *desfilante* points in another direction.





**PHOTO 14**  
In the *ala* 'The good criminal is a dead criminal,' Jesus is crucified by a discourse of justice frequently supported by Christians.





**PHOTO 15**  
Bate-bolas or Clóvis, traditional characters from the street carnivals in the centre and suburbs of Rio, update the figure of Christ in revelling bodies.



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## ABSTRACT

A photo essay containing images taken behind the scenes of the Mangueira samba school parade from 2020, whose theme was "The Truth Will Set You Free!" The school proposed a modern carnivalized reading of the life of Christ, depicting him with faces from subalternized groups of contemporary Brazil. More than a documentation, the images in this essay offer

#### KEYWORDS

Mangueira; religion  
and performance;  
religion and  
carnival; samba  
schools; religious  
materialities.

a reinterpretation of the parade's visuality, providing an anthropological reading of an exemplary case of carnivalization of the religious, while also highlighting the 'staged' aspects of the festive performance and the social critique that it encompasses.

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**Authorship contribution.** The two authors contributed to the elaboration of the textual essay and in the selection and ordering of the images. Renata de Castro Menezes has conducted research on the Mangueira samba school since 2016, while the photographs for the essay were produced by Edilson Pereira.

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# AFRO-BAHIAN RELIGIOUS IMAGERY: THE JARÊ OF LENÇÓIS

DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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The photographs in this essay were taken as part of the research of the project “Memória das cantigas do jarê”, made with Aldir Blanc Law’s financial support. I was invited by the president of the Associação dos Filhos de Santo do Palácio de Ogum e Caboclo Sete Serra to collaborate on a project funded by the law’s aid. The municipality of Lençóis was unable to transfer this funding, so in order to help the jarê’s religious leaders to access this support it was necessary to draw on state funding from the Bahia Secretariat of Culture.

Thus, we developed this digital archive of religious songs aiming at preserving them and also at valuing these leaders and their terreiros. The municipality, whose economy is based on tourism, has suffered from the beginning of the pandemic with resources shortages, which affected even the income of people not directly related to the local tourism. As a result, since 2020 there has been a migration to the “roças”, small rural properties far from the urban center of Lençóis, where the cultivation of cassava, corn, string beans and chickens, as well as fishing in the Marimbus wetland and its tributaries, provides the staple foods.

The local spiritual communities have suffered severe losses. Daso, also known as Pai Gil de Ogum, passed away during the course of research. His terreiro is one of the most actives in the region and has inducted more filhos de santo than any other. Daso’s departure was felt throughout the city. Another Pai de Santo confessed to me that “some fundamentals that only he knew are going with him”. Milton, known as Cachacinha, a



famous filho de santo of Pai Gil de Ogum, and Alfredo Alcântara, a member of the church and one of those responsible for organizing the festival of Senhor Bom Jesus dos Passos<sup>1</sup> have also died during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Nine leaders were interviewed and photographed in their terreiros between February and March 2021. The digital archive has more than four hundred songs in audio and transcripts, as well as biographies of the leaders, photographs and a brief history of jarê. During the interviews we had the privilege to photograph the leaders and particular details of their terreiros and pejis. These elements were carefully selected to compose the opening collage of the site<sup>2</sup>.

For this essay, we chose photos that praise the religious leaders of Lençóis, revealing their care and dedication in the decorations of each of the Pejis. These photos also bring out elements of the aesthetics typical to jarê, its colours and the typical clothing of this religion.

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1. Popular Catholicism and Jarê are not opposed. Daso was a devotee of Senhor dos Passos and fulfilled his obligations during the festivity: he carried the patron of the miners and took part in the washing of the church's stairs.

2. [www.cantigasdojare.com.br](http://www.cantigasdojare.com.br)



**FOTO 1**  
Ensaio dedicado  
à memória de  
Pai Gil de Ogum,  
liderança religiosa  
do jarê e curador,  
falecido neste ano  
em decorrência  
da pandemia de  
Covid-19.





**FOTO 2**  
Peji de Pai Gil de  
Ogum



**FOTO 3**  
quarto destinado  
a receber filhos de  
santo em processo  
de iniciação ou  
aqueles que  
buscam o terreiro  
para curar as mais





**FOTO 4**  
Pai Gil de Ogum mostra sua mesa de jogo, é no processo divinatório e por meio dos caboclos guias que se revela a natureza e a causa da doença.



**FOTO 5**  
Mesa de jogo





**FOTO 6**  
Guias. Pai Gil teve muitos conhecimentos transmitidos de seus antepassados: de um lado da família sua avó era indígena e seu avô rezava animais. O seu outro avô era o curandeiro Justo Canela. Assim, quando a mãe de Pai Gil se torna evangélica e se desfaz das imagens e atabaques na beira do rio, Gil as recupera e passa a cuidá-las no quintal de casa, continuando os festejos de Cosme e Damião e até rezando algumas pessoas.





**FOTO 7**  
Gildásio Batista de Oliveira é conhecido na cidade por Daso, mas no jarê é chamado de Pai Gil.



#### FOTO 8

Daso é também devoto do Senhor dos Passos e por 34 anos carregou o andor durante a festa do padroeiro dos garimpeiros de Lençóis. Sua mãe fez uma promessa ao Senhor dos Passos para que ele sobrevivesse à febre tifoide. Soma-se à promessa da mãe a sua própria promessa: quando foi graduado para ser Pai de Santo, Daso pediu ao Senhor dos Passos para conseguir fazer o próprio terreiro. Desde então lavava as escadarias junto com as baianas na abertura da novena.

#### KEYWORDS

Afro-brazilian  
religion; Jarê;  
Chapada  
Diamantina; Law  
Aldir Blanc; Ditty.

#### ABSTRACT

This photographic essay was carried out in the context of the project “Memória das Cantigas do Jarê”, a website created between January and April 2021. The photographs present the main religious leaders of jarê from Lençóis, Bahia, and their Pejis.

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# "FROM THE CITY TO THE MOUNTAINS": DISPLACEMENT EXPERIENCES, REUNIONS DURING THE CELEBRATION OF DIA DOS MORTOS IN BOBONARO, TIMOR-LESTE

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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This essay handles the importance of the ancestors' cult, the way it is configured during the celebration of Dia dos Mortos at Casa Sagrada Dom Cailito, in the municipality of Bobonaro, in November 2016. Timor-Leste is a small island located in the intersection of Asian Southeast and Oceania. The independence of East Timor was unilaterally proclaimed in 1975 and restored only in 2002 after several conflicts, cultural encounters and disagreements: 430 years of Portuguese colonization, 24 years of Indonesian occupation and 30 months of transitory administration by United Nations.

In East Timor, Dia dos Mortos is a national holiday; it is an event in which many residents of Díli, the capital city, get together in order to return to their *uma lulik*, the sacred houses of the municipalities. To many East Timorese populations, *uma lulik* is the center of

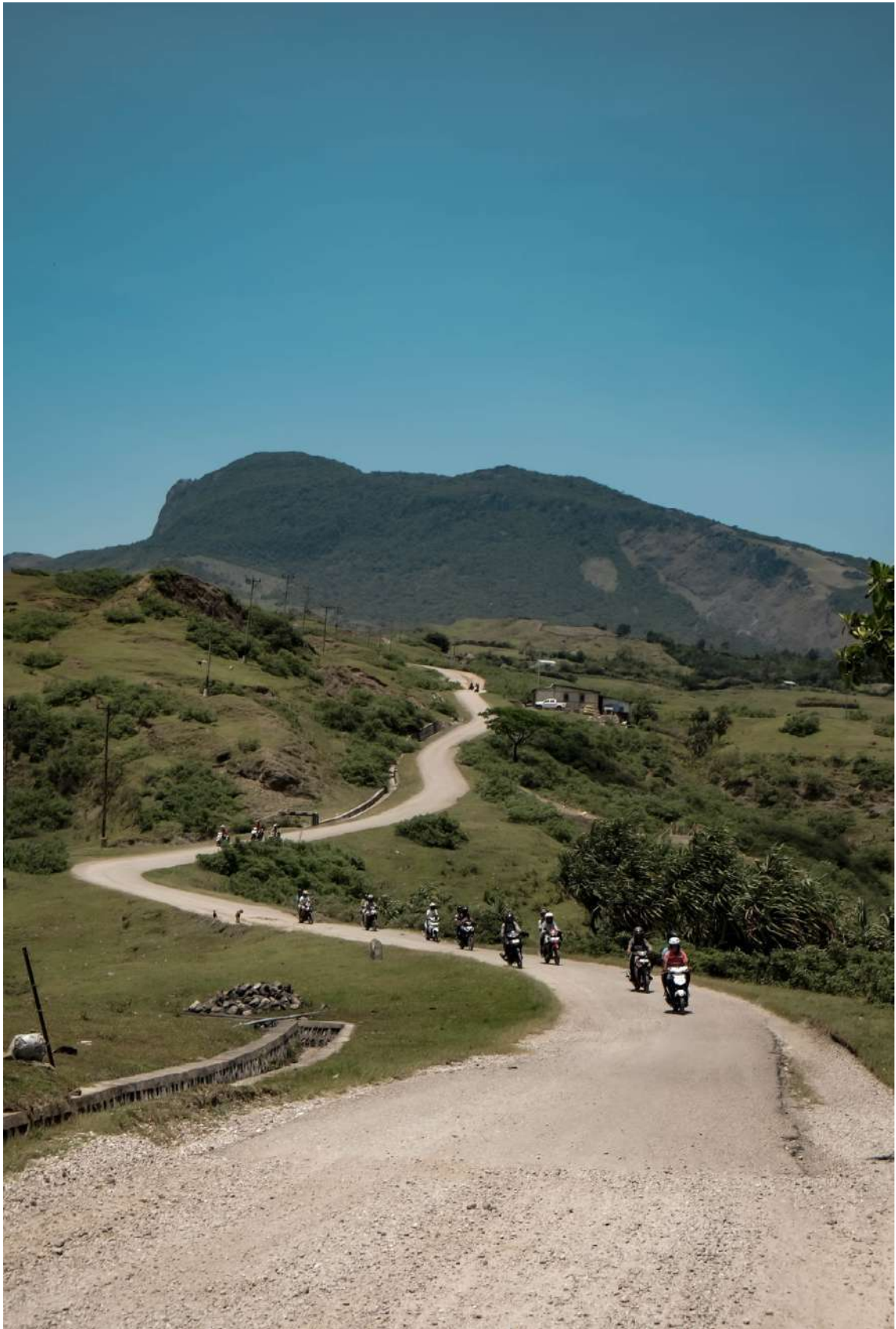


collective celebrations; it is the material and immaterial memory repository which allows their origin narratives reproduction. *Uma lulik* is the term used to treat a construction, both physical and symbolic, on which a descent group identifies with (FOX, 2006) and people are placed, not only in precedence relations, but also in mutual mandatory net.

The Houses are summoned to engage themselves in a continuous reproduction by means of an active participation in reinauguration ceremonies of the sacred houses' edifications, harvest, weddings and mournful rituals which are broadly denominated *kultura* ceremonies (SILVA, 2014). The sacred house embodies the ancestors' presence and that's why the celebration of Dia dos Mortos mobilizes investments of multiple orders. This implies an intense traffic of people and circulation of food, beverages, cigarettes, candles and flowers from Díli to the municipalities or, as it is commonly said, "from the city to the mountains". This celebration evolves many activities that precede and surpass November 2<sup>nd</sup>: the trip preparation, the welcome in the municipalities and the cemetery visit which ends up with the return to Díli on November 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> (SILVA, 2019).

In 2016, we were invited to participate in on the November 2<sup>nd</sup> celebration with Mira's family – Mira was an interlocutor of the research – at Uma Lulik Dom Cailito in Bobonaro village. Mira, as most East Timorese, lives and works in Díli, but dislocates to her hometown – in this case Bobonaro – to pay honor to her ancestors, pushed by this felling of belonging to her origin community. The celebration of Dia dos Mortos to Mira and her family that year would count with the introduction of Alejandro, Mira's son, to her sacred house. The images that follow are, therefore, the register of encounters, ancestors' cult and arrival celebration, besides the presentation of a new son to the house. During this period, there is an intensification **on the neat of the graves and on the cult of the deceased.**







Mira left East Timor as a child to live in Portugal with her mother and siblings. Even far away, she followed up the situation of her country participating actively in the fight for its independence. In 2005, Mira returned to East Timor and begins to participate in ritual events at her sacred house, as in the celebration of Dia dos Mortos.





Sacred House guardian, the one who takes care of the House, feeds the ancestors and cultivates the relations between the humans and not humans.







At the celebration of 2016 Dia dos Mortos, Alejandro, Mira's son, visited his mother's hometown for the first time. At that occasion, he was initiated to different ways of thinking, conceiving and living the world than the ones he was socialized in Europe. Although the usage of traditional garment is not required at the celebration of Dia dos Mortos, for being presented to his House, Alejandro performed wearing clothes and objects that are generally used during other events.







On November 1st evening, a feast is prepared to the ancestors with diverse dishes: beef, *katupas* (cooked rice wrapped in vegetal fiber), biscuits and wine displayed inside the Sacred House. This feast is offered to the ancestors and shared with the present people.







November 2nd is day to embellish the loved ones' graves. Flowers are transformed into adorns that, along with the candles, are offered to the ancestors at the cemetery.







The House guardian proceeds with the rituals and authorizes the departure to the cemetery. The women leave the Sacred House to the cemetery carrying offers in baskets covered with mantles.







At the village cemetery, people meet their neighbors and friends who also honor their deceased. Many people pray and cry while embellishing the graves with flowers and candles and also take pictures, many of which are posted at social networks during the day.







The flowers and candles left over the graves demonstrate the neat and affection that the alive ones have for the ones who occupy another dimension of existence.





At the cemetery, the members of different Houses get together. At this occasion, Mira and Alejandro connected themselves to a net of people from suchlike Sacred Houses. At the celebration of the deceased, Alejandro begins to be part of a ritual community in East Timor.



**TRANSLATION**  
Leonardo da Cunha  
Mesquita Café.

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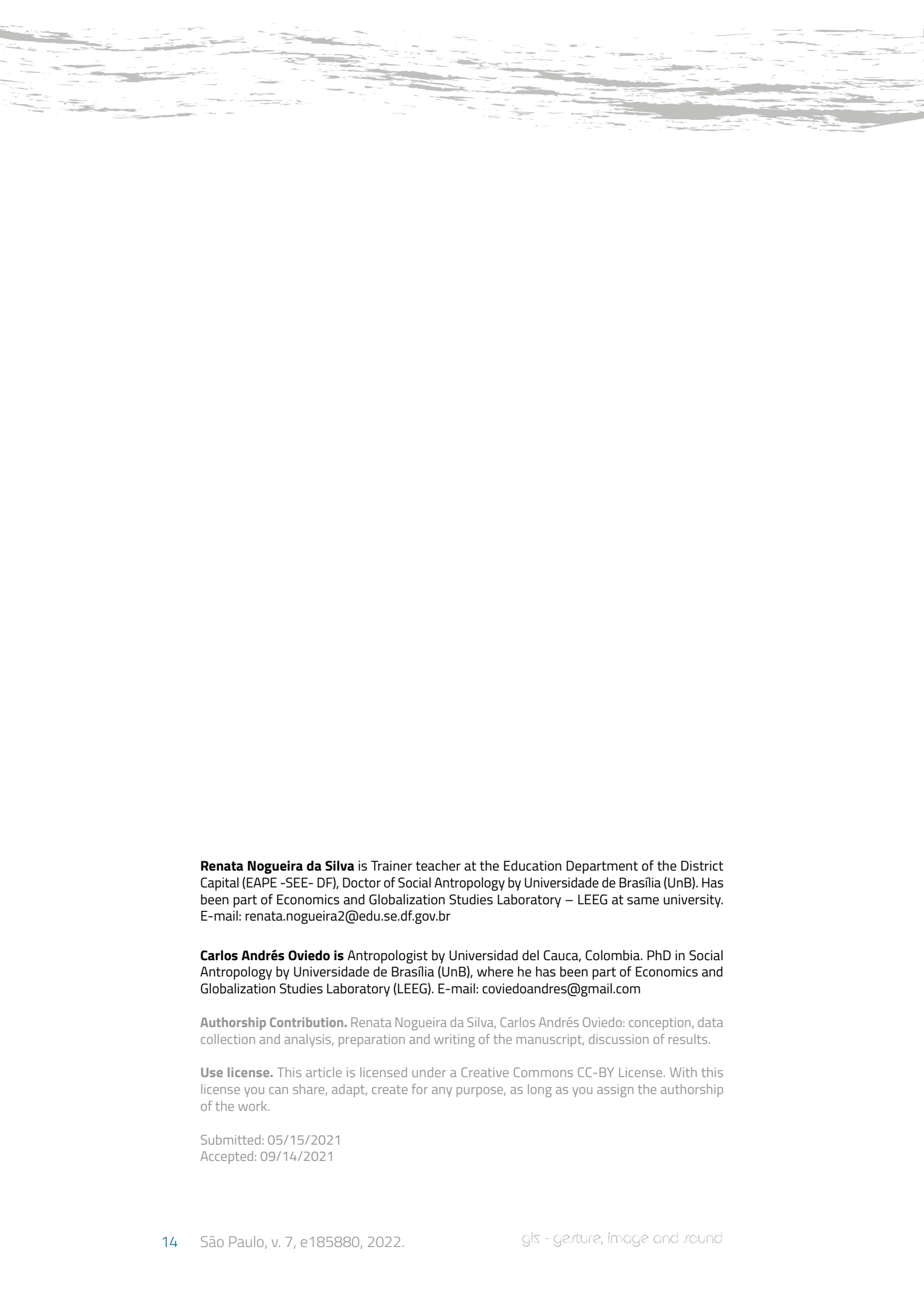
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## ABSTRACT

In East Timor, Dia dos Mortos is a national holiday; it is an event in which many residents of Díli, the capital city, get together in order to return to their *uma lulik*, the sacred houses of the municipalities. This essay handles the importance of the ancestors’ cult, the way it is configured during the celebration of Dia dos Mortos at Casa Sagrada Dom Cailito, in the municipality of Bobonaro, in November 2016. This event mobilizes investments of multiple orders, implies an intense traffic of people and circulation of food, beverages, cigarettes, candles and flowers from Díli to the municipalities or, as it is commonly said, “from the city to the mountains”.

**KEYWORDS**  
Dia dos Mortos.  
Sacred House.  
House. Ancestors.  
East-Timor.



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**Authorship Contribution.** Renata Nogueira da Silva, Carlos Andrés Oviedo: conception, data collection and analysis, preparation and writing of the manuscript, discussion of results.

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# ASHE, WHAT IS THIS?

DOSSIÊ RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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## IMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE

I was at Ilê Axé Idá Wura waiting for the bath my mother was going to give me. Kneeling, naked, I stared directly at the floor. Never into her eyes. Then, my mother told me to wait there for a little bit, as I was, and left. While she was gone, I lifted my head and looked at the wall. There, I saw some saint's clothes that were hanging. These were probably from some saint-sister of mine who had bathed before. Clothes like mine, white, frilly, round and sweaty from the day's work. I looked at my bead strings hanging beside my clothes, looked at the lamp above them, and automatically imagined a drawing. I imagined my making, imagined what my gaze couldn't see when closed. It wasn't just imagining, it was also living in a world populated beyond people and things, it was living in a world populated by Orishas.

This imagined drawing guided me to a path trailed by someone who was an anthropologist, but who at that moment was just a saint's daughter. I couldn't feel at ease to photograph my saint's house, nor to picture that intimate, ritual and familial moment. However, I felt comfortable to draw. Drawing has such things. That image didn't leave my head, it accompanied me wherever I went. So I decided to materialize it. It was at this point that other drawings emerged along with some *ítàn(s)*<sup>1</sup> I was reading. These *ítàn(s)* who helped me to draw-live were present in the book organized by Reginaldo Prandi (2003) entitled "Mythology of the Orishas".

1. *ítàn (s)* is the Yoruba term used for the collection of all Yoruba myths, songs, stories, and other cultural components.

The drawings I drew accompanied me further than the way an anthropologist tells and narrates a lived experience (Benjamin 1994), linking what I read in a book with the *itàn(s)* I heard from my elders (Damasio and Ahualli 2018) and the possibility of putting the (for some people) unimaginable on the paper. In this sense, this drawn-essay is an invitation to imagine not only Orishas, but to envision whatever they can say and communicate. Being Eshu the one who always opens everything, eating first, being the messenger, the owner of movement and communication, he is the one who will open this drawn-essay. Imagining the unimaginable is a possibility to account for other subjective facets that are not only momentary, but also ancestral. They are possibilities of postponing the end of our world, of imagining what this world can be like (Krenak 2019).

The drawing presents itself as the possibility of a spelling, an invitation to know the lived world, walk and also understand that, in the words of Michael Taussig (Parreiras 2020, 3), “Anthropology is in a good place, I believe, between the intimate and philosophical, and that’s what I like”. It dwells in the space of what is lived, dreamed, felt, experienced, expected and, in so many ways, materialized (as in this drawn-essay).

#### TRANSLATION

Leandro Marques  
Durazzo.

#### ABSTRACT

“Axé, é o que é” [ashe is what it is] is an essay that seeks to present imagined, lived, felt, mourned and experienced worlds through drawing. The latter presents itself as a space for dialogue with material and immaterial beings, with that which escapes the eyes, the colors and some rationalities.

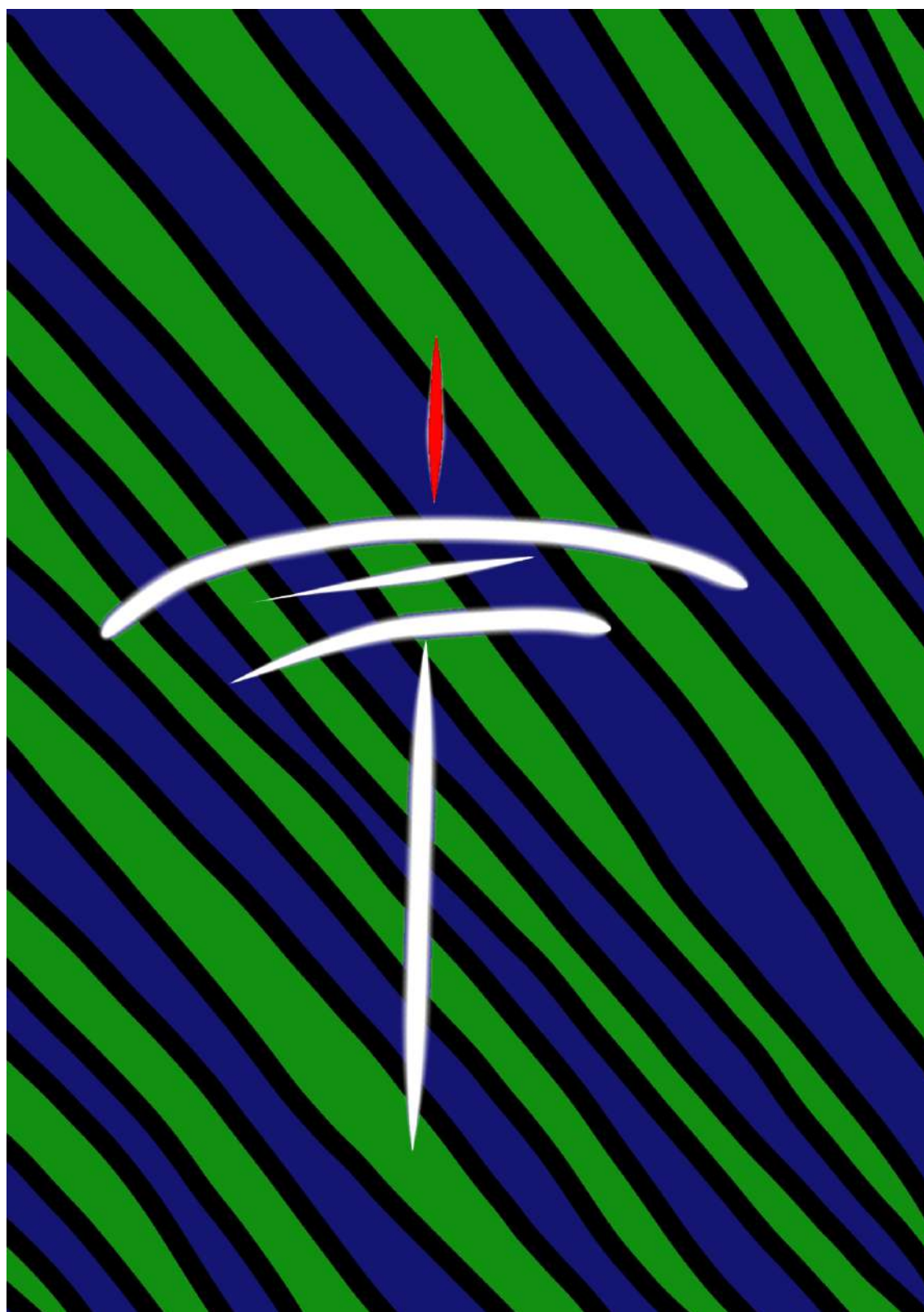
#### KEYWORDS

Anthropology;  
Drawing; Axé;  
Ashe; Candomblé.



**FIGURA 1**  
A Boca que tudo  
come. O Olho que  
tudo vê.

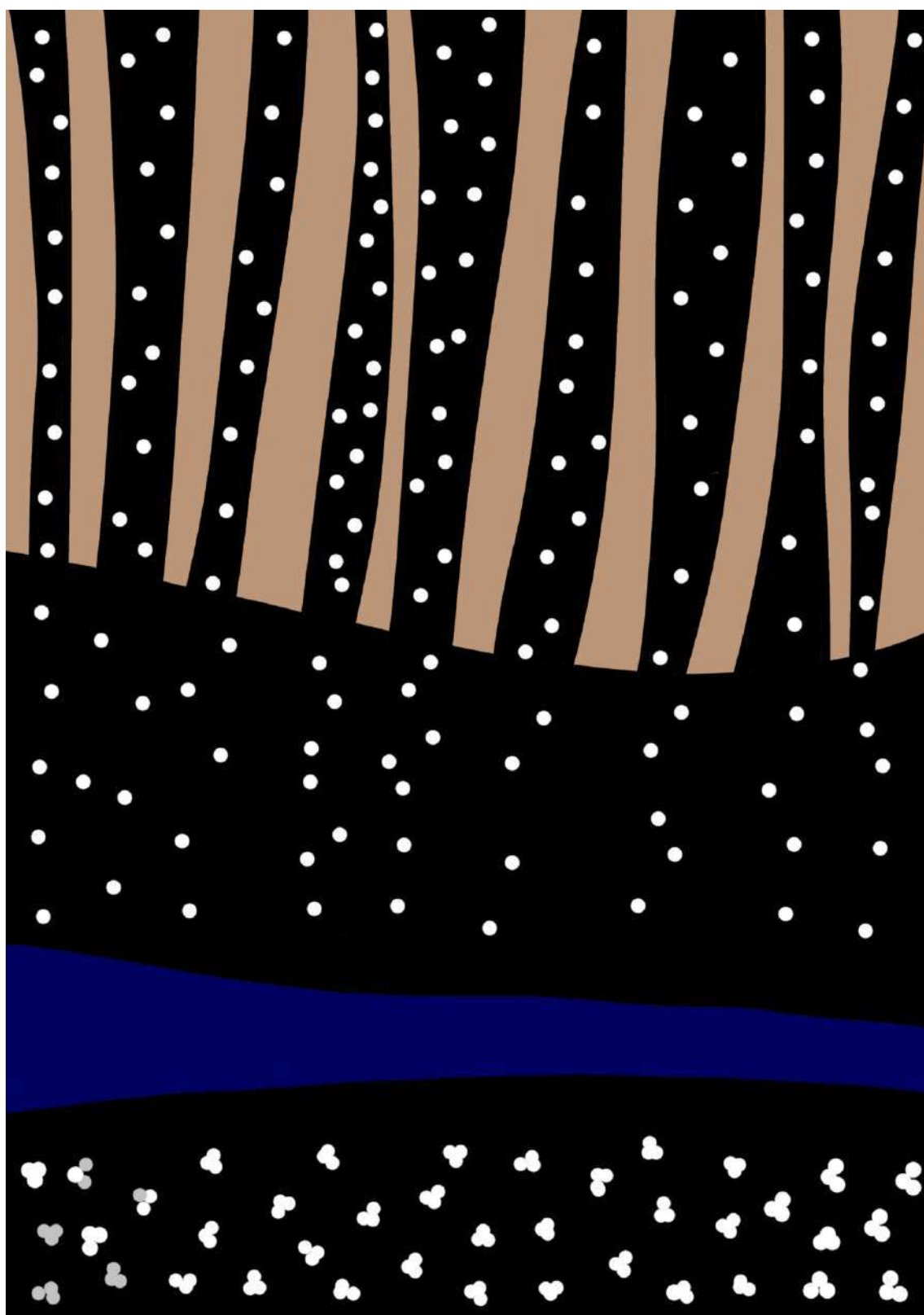




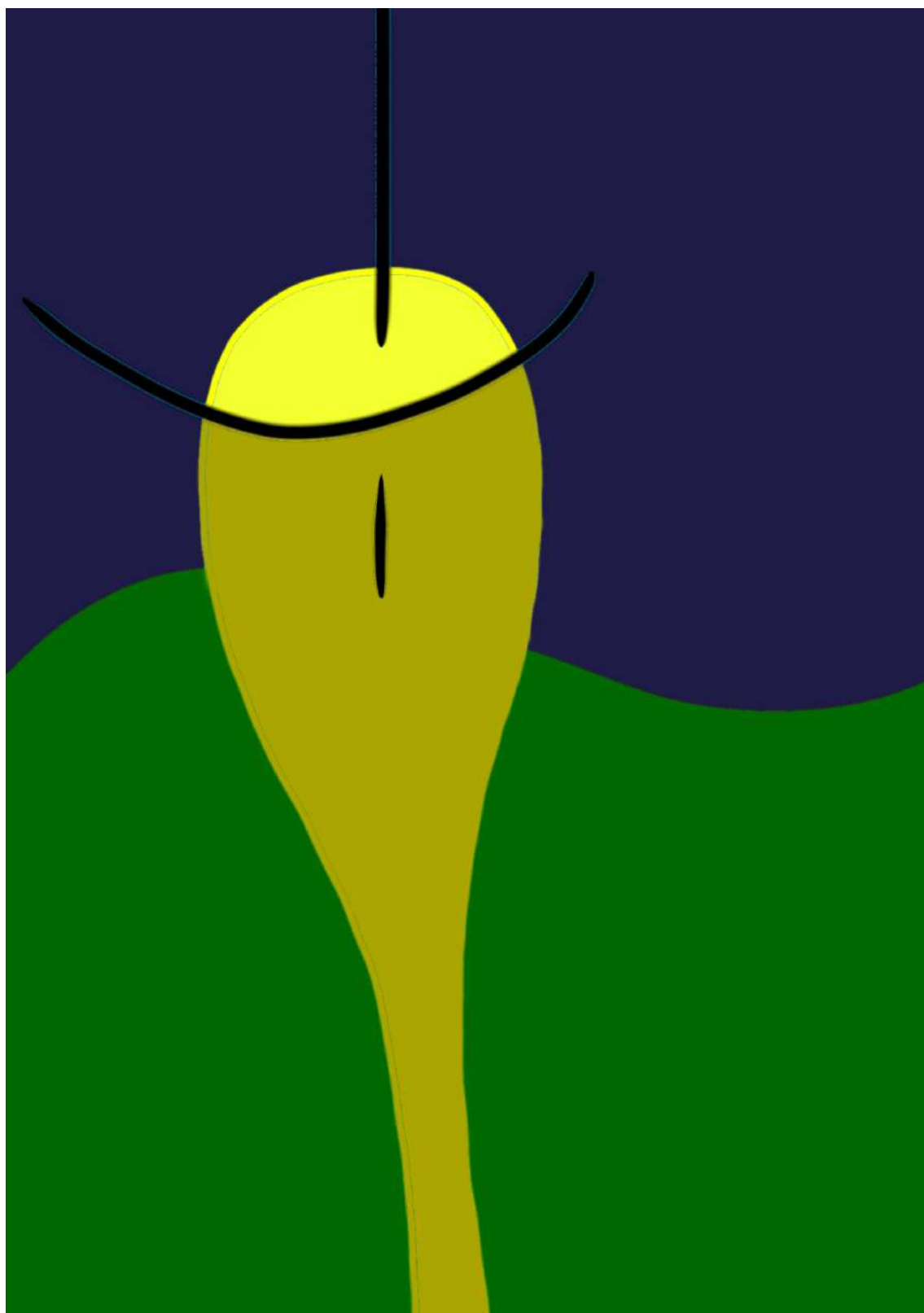
**FIGURA 2**  
O Caçador de  
uma flecha só.



**FIGURA 3**  
O Dono das  
Folhas.

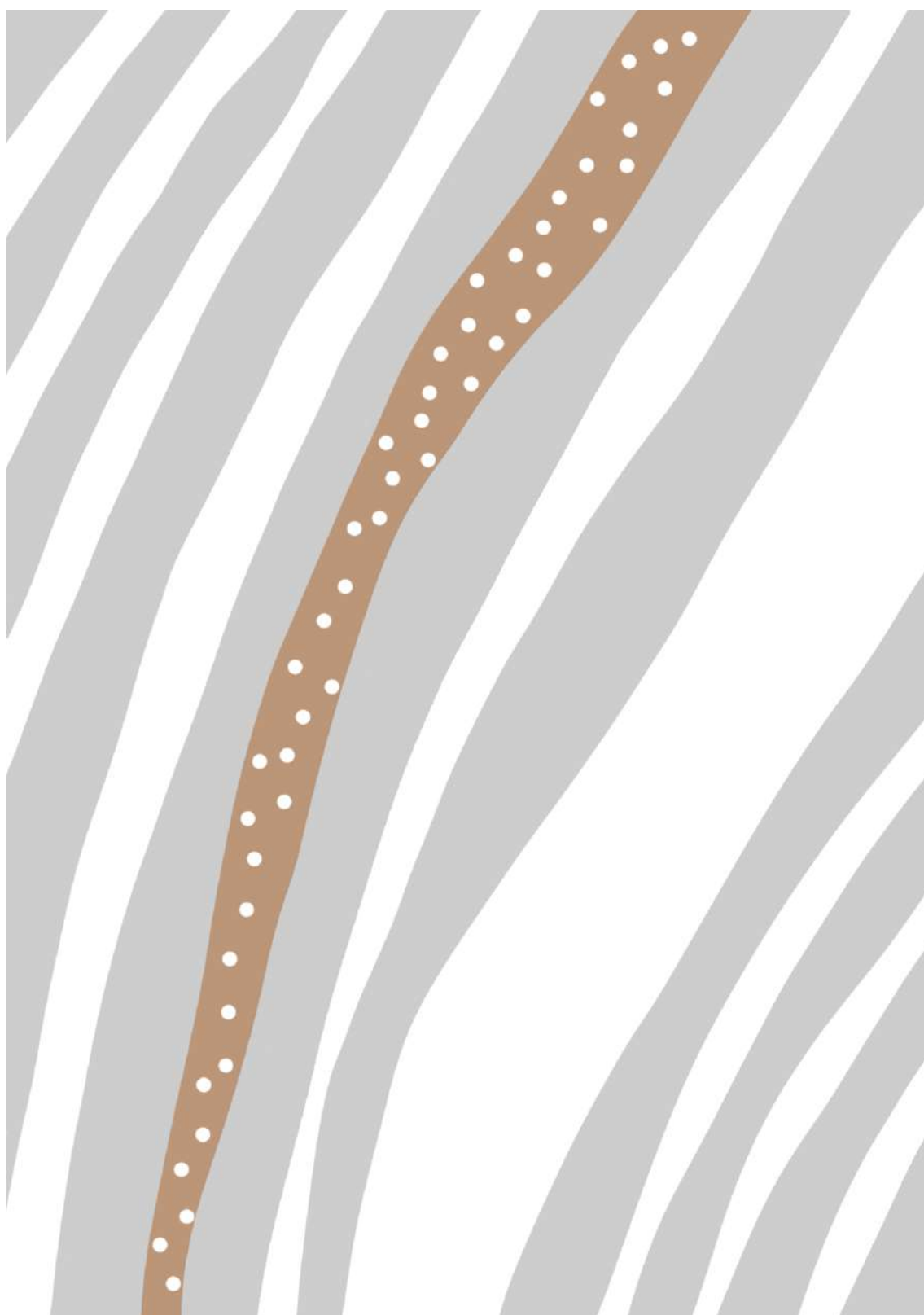


**FIGURA 4**  
Atotô.



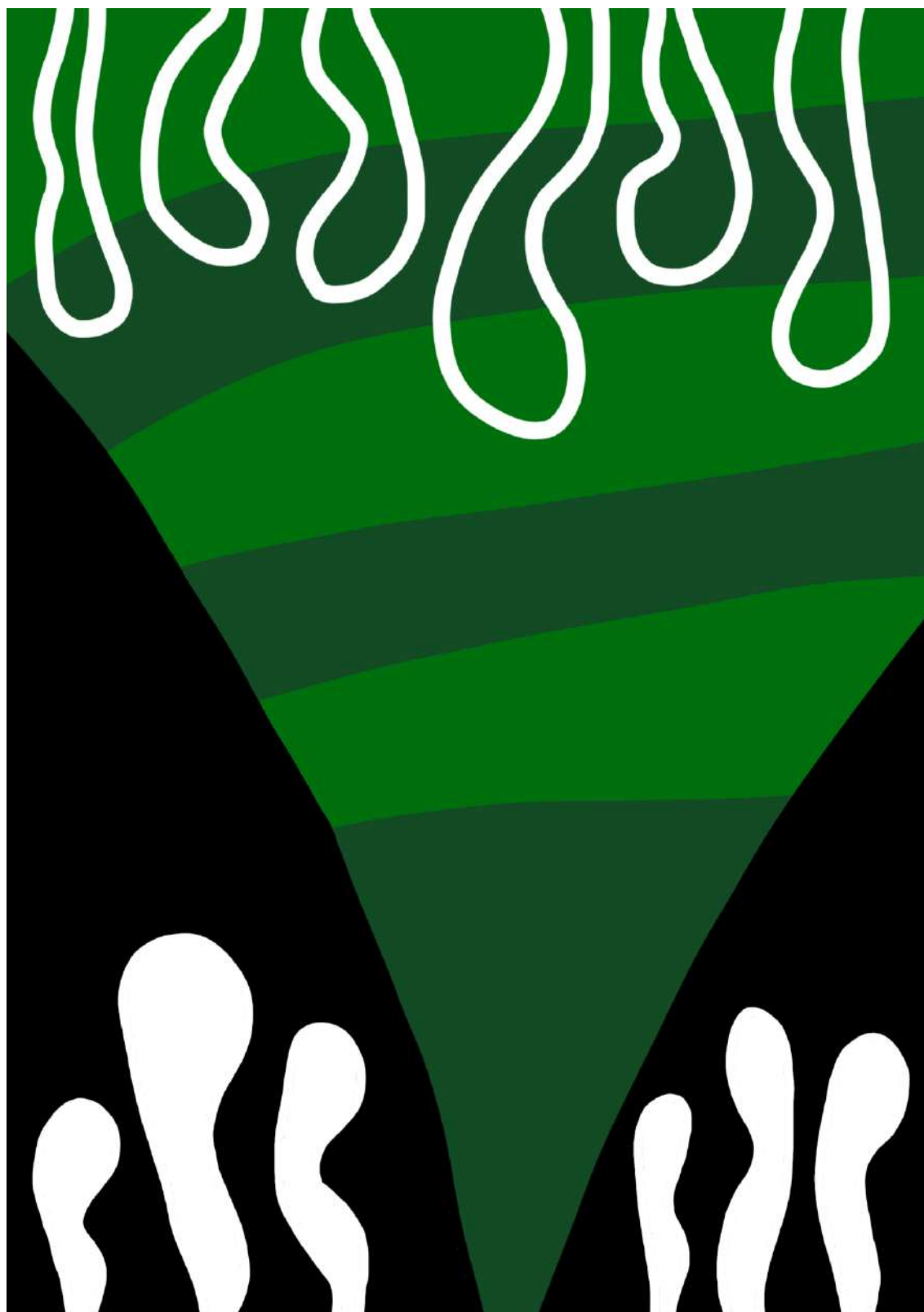
**FIGURA 5**  
Herdeiro da caça e  
da água.





**FIGURA 6**  
O Pai de todos.





**FIGURA 7**  
A noite de Iroco.

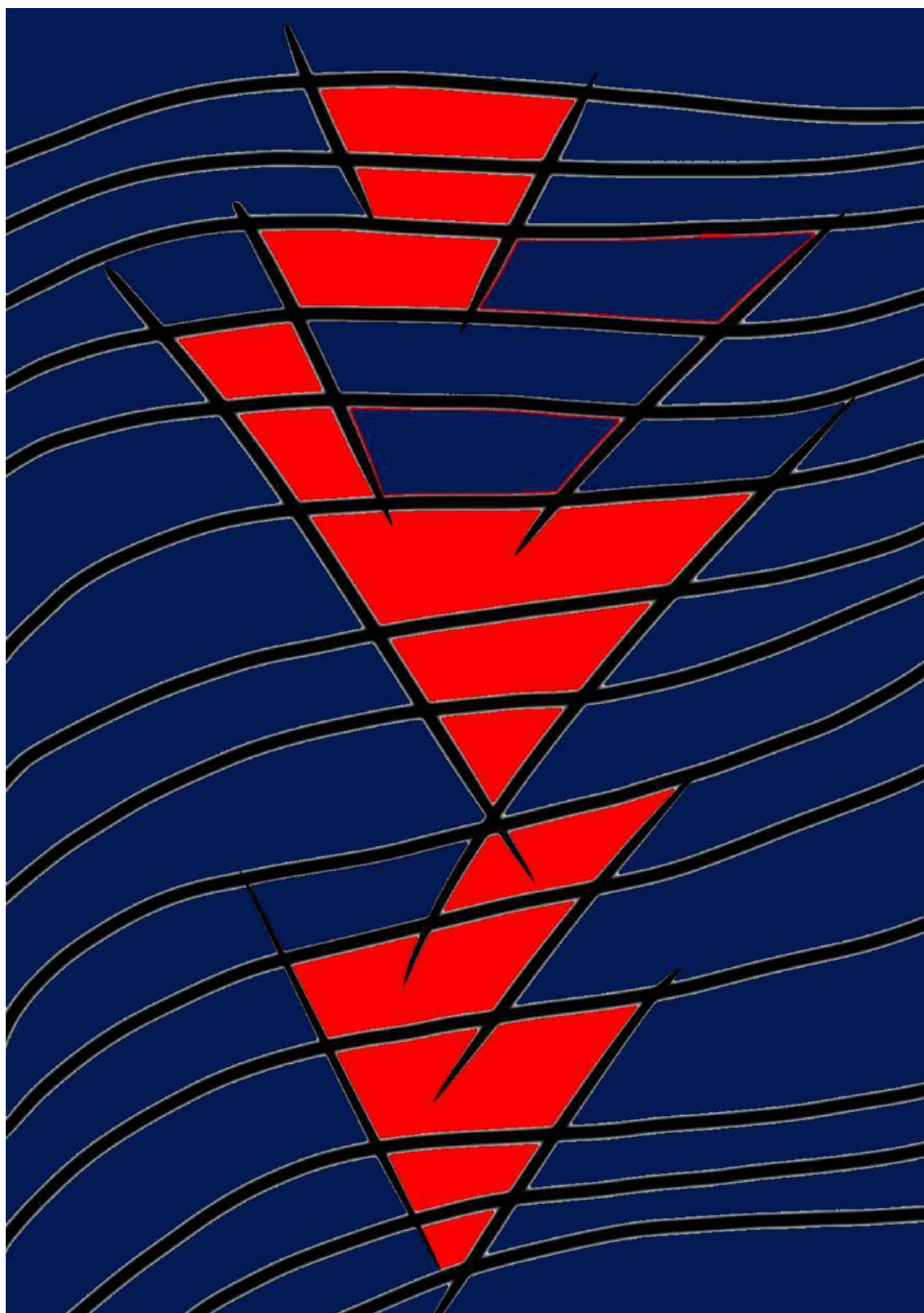


**FIGURA 8**  
lalodê.

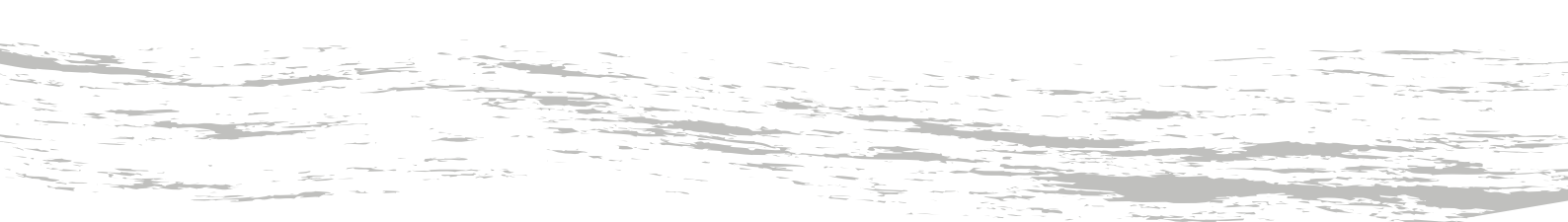


**FIGURA 9**  
Canto pra  
Ogum.





**FIGURA 10**  
Dona do céu.



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# OPTCHA! IS ROMA A RELIGION? AN ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITIES, PERFORMANCE, AND RITUALS OF THE ROMA PEOPLE IN THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO<sup>1</sup>

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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## PRESENTATION

This essay analyzes the activities of the different actors that comprise the Roma scenario, which has become established in the city of Rio de Janeiro in recent years. I decided to highlight two of the rituals I have been following in field work for my doctoral research, presenting some of the Roma people who were present, and their participation and activities in these rituals. In the images, in a photographic and ethnographic narrative, I present, describe, highlight, and propose to reflect on the two rituals, as scenarios of *social situations* (Gluckman 1987)<sup>2</sup>, to emphasize issues I consider central to understanding these activities in a collection of photographs.

1. The essay *Optcha! Is Roma a religion? An analysis of the activities, performance and rituals of the Roma people in the city of Rio de Janeiro*, was presented and exhibited at the IV Arthur Napoleão Figueiredo Photography Awards - EAVAAM, held in 2020. The essay received the prize for the second best photographic essay in that edition.

2. Gluckman, Max. 2010. Análise de uma situação social na Zulu-lândia moderna. In: *A antropologia das sociedades contemporâneas*, Bela Feldman-Bianco (Org.). São Paulo: UNESP.

In the first group of images (Photographs 1 to 5), I present the group called *Tenda CiganaEspiritualista Tzara Ramirez* (Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Tent) in Nova Iguaçu, Baixada Fluminense in the city of Rio de Janeiro. It is one of many religious groups, which are presented as *tents*, *tzaras*, or *tsaras*, their networks, and how they are regularly activated by other Roma representations in the city. Thus, like many other *tzaras* in the city, the *Tenda CiganaEspiritualista Tzara Ramirez* group, which is characterized for practicing a ritual called *Salamandra*, in which the mediums incorporate entities called *spiritual Roma people* (Maia 2014)<sup>3</sup>, to develop their Roma rituals, and with their dance and music performances gaining notoriety and, thereby, establishing themselves as *Roma people*, but *spiritual Roma people* in these specific cases.

The second group of images (Photographs 6 to 8) focuses on the commemoration of the National Roma and Saint Sara Kali Day, a Roma celebration with the greatest visibility that takes place in the city. The ritual incorporates civil, religious, and cultural Roma expressions. The event has taken place since May 25, 2006<sup>4</sup>, since Saint Sara Kali Day was established as National Roma Day by decree in Brazil on May 24 of that year. Since this time, MirianStanescon, who is described as a *genuine Roma*, holds a ritual to commemorate the date. The grotto has a fixed image of the saint and, therefore, the park has become one of the religious tourism destinations, being listed on the City Hall's official calendar of events in the city in 2017. The event involves the presence of approximately five thousand people, and has been transforming a public space into one of dispute and controversies about the Roma issue, their culture and religion. From this presentation of the Roma, and MirianStanescon's ritual<sup>5</sup>, I propose to highlight another of the different forms of being a Roma, which I have followed during the process of my research. In this case, it is the Roma people who are asserting themselves as *genuine Roma*, a term formulated by MirianStanescon.


Through this ethnographic photographic essay, I intend to present how the different forms of Roma representations, such as the *spiritual Roma* and *genuine Roma* rituals constitute *different forms* (Brah 2008)<sup>6</sup> of being a Roma, performed and ritualized in the city of Rio de Janeiro in recent

3. Maia, Cleiton Machado. 2014. *Possoler a suamão?: uma análise da Tenda CiganaEspiritualista Tzara Ramirez*. 113 p. Dissertação (Mestrado em Ciências Sociais), Instituto de Ciências Humanas e Sociais/Instituto Multidisciplinar/Instituto de Três Rios, Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Seropédica.

4. The festival takes place with support from the Rio de Janeiro State Special Department of Policies to Promote Racial Equality and the Department of Culture.

5. The Roma is an Advisor of the Order of Attorneys of Brazil (OAB/RJ) Human Rights Commission, founder and president of the Saint Sara Kali Foundation (Fundação Santa Sara Kali), and has held the "National Crusade for World Peace" for twenty years in Garota de Ipanema Park, in the Zona Sul of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

6. Brah, Avtar. 2006. *Diferença, diversidade, diferenciação*. In: *Cadernos Pagu*, v. 26: 329-376, Porto Alegre.



years. There have been great debates on the Roma people in Brazil in the last thirty years. Focusing on the last fifteen years, the decree to establish National Roma Day was signed on May 24, 2006<sup>7</sup>, and has promoted increased research, placing the topic of the Roma people at the center of new academic productions.

This visibility is part of a broader debate, which has been fostered since the process of formulating our Magna Carta in 1988. As author Susan Wright (1999) demonstrates, a number of international organizations have promoted public policies which understood that constructing democracy, supported on the idea of cultural diversity as a possibility (Wright 1999, 13), which has gained strength in the international context. This socio historical process has presented new actors, and new forms of involvement in the construction of our Constitution, and has continued to produce new spaces of visibility, and disputes, among a number of old and new actors in recent decades.


### **THE TZARA RAMIREZ SPIRITUALIST ROMA TENT *SPIRITUAL ROMA* IN NOVA IGUAÇU**

The Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Tent started in the 1990s, with the medium, Juan, who is also a *pai de santo* (priest) in a *candomblé terreiro*, in a region called “Chacrinha”, in Nova Iguaçu. According to reports from the Tent mediums, initially only *candomblé* rituals were held, but he and some other followers started to feel the presence of *Roma spirits* during these rituals. Juan commented that some of the followers also attended *umbanda*, what was causing a different energy in the space. Then, one day, he incorporated Roma Juan Ramirez for the first time.

Once he had incorporated this Roma spirit (Photograph 1), the medium took the responsibility of organizing a place where these Roma spirits could be taken care of. Multiple religious belonging (Sanchis 1997) among followers is a characteristic of the Tent. Besides the Tent, it is commonplace for mediums to attend *umbandaterreiros* and *candomblé* houses, which they call the “other side”. Juan started to allocate one day solely for work with the Roma spirits in the same space that served as a *candomblé terreiro*, but this attendance of Roma people started to become well-known, and was advertised among followers and worshippers in the region. Three years later, Juan’s Roma spirit advised him to look for another, larger, space for these ritualistic activities, mainly so there was a separation between the Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Tent and the *candomblé* house. The request was complied with, and the medium started to meet with the Roma spirit that he presents under the name of Roma Juan Ramirez.

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7. [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_Ato2004-2006/2006/Dnn/Dnn10841.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2004-2006/2006/Dnn/Dnn10841.htm)



On this request, the mediums decided to move to a region known as “Chacrinha”, in the Santa Eugenia neighborhood, which is further from Nova Iguaçu city center, where they attained a larger area and, therefore, the rituals were separated. They purchased two sections of land with the sale of the former space; one was allocated for construction of the Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Tent, and the other to maintaining the Candomblé temple.

The religious group is one of many, which are presented as *tents*, *tzaras*, or *tsaras*, their networks, and how they are regularly activated by other Roma representations in the city. Similar to many other *tzaras* in the city, the *Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Group*, which is characterized for practicing a ritual called *Salamandra*, in which the mediums incorporate entities called *spiritual Roma* (Maia 2014), to develop their Roma rituals and music and dance performances, gaining notoriety, thereby, asserting themselves as *Roma people*, but as *spiritual Roma* in these specific cases.

### THE SALAMANDRA RITUAL

Among my photographs and observations, a number of objects stood out for their constant presence in all of the mat arrangements, and became important symbols, not only due to their repeatedly invoked presence in the Salamandra ritual, but also when attending the Roma with incorporated spirits (Photograph 2). However, in order to understand the centrality of the Salamandra ritual, I highlight the candle, to demonstrate how this object, and the element of fire, are fundamental in the Tent rituals. We are able to observe how attendance by the mediums incorporated within a covered space takes place, and its collective incorporation in an open space during the Salamandra ritual.

During the services, the covered space operates as a screening process. The followers go through the pass and, depending on their needs, indicated by the person who applied this pass (Photographs 3 and 5), the person attended is referred, and placed on the consultation list with the *spiritual Roma*. On the majority of occasions, the desire for assistance is shown by the follower. Having arranged the attendance mats, the mediums sit down, light the candle and incense, and spray the Roma perfume on their hands, the mat and in the air, beginning a process of concentration. This is followed by a few seconds of silence, where at times there were set minutes until the incorporation, and the spiritual Roma's arrival. The incorporation of this spiritual Roma takes place in a completely individual and silent way, and the silence is usually broken by a single “cry”, “shout”, or sudden movement (Photograph 5), which produces a sound, such as hand clapping, or beating of the chest, or floor. The silence and non-silence caused by the preliminary moment (Schechner 2012, 49) are the highlight, marking the incorporation. The incorporation is the

preliminary moment for the Tzara Ramirez Tent followers, and they take on new forms of identities, and of being a Roma through this.

The candles are the “requests”, “desires”, or “work” carried out during the day (Photographs 2, 3, and 4). The people attended by the *spiritual Romas* have their concerns and needs in this ritual, in addition to the work, attendance and advice that are agreed to be conducted at specific times between the *spiritual Roma* and the follower. In the ritual, the Roma recommends that a candle is lit on that day by each person who is present, according to the need noted on the previous visit. Thus, those present always have a candle in their hands, and they all have “something to offer to Salamandra”<sup>8</sup>.

With the candles lit, the music of the Salamandra ritual begins to be played, and the same eleven recordings are always played in the same sequence. The first two are a *Prayer to Saint Sara* and *Our Lady*, respectively, and the call to *Invoke Salamandra*. At this moment, all of those present at the Tzara Ramirez Tent start to pass their candles from one hand to the next, from the back to the front, until all of the candles are stored and, together, they light the large bonfire, the *Salamandra* (Photograph 4).

During candle storage (Photographs 1, 3, and 4) in the *Salamandra*, the song *Invoking Salamandra* is intoned; the lines from the song are like a call to the *Salamandra*<sup>9</sup>, “its powers”, “its strength”, “its spirit”, and all of its “mystery”. In the last verse, in a tone of invocation, a shout in the space is exclaimed from all of the loudspeakers: “SALAMANDRA, SALAMANDRA, WE SUMMON YOU. SHOW YOUR MYSTERY!”. Following this prayer, nine songs are played on the Roma topic, or by Roma groups<sup>10</sup> used during the ritual. The author, Richard Schechner (2012, 70), in his analysis of the ritual performance, emphasizes the impact that the *sacred space* has on participants, as if this place is part of a collection of *ordinary symbols in the performance* (2012, 61), highlighting the songs and chants as a lease mechanism for this performance. The importance of the sacred space in this ritual can be noted, and music plays an important role in the incorporation ritual at Tzara Ramirez.

### **THE *GENUINE ROMA* AND COMMEMORATING NATIONAL ROMA AND SAINT SARA KALI DAY IN IPANEMA, ZONA SUL OF THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO**

Among the activities which I followed in my field, the actors involved and networks activated, I selected another ritual to illustrate some of these

8. Is the “spirit of the Roma caravan”, or “Roma spirit”, as the Tent members refer to *Salamandra*.

9. The caravan *Roma spirit* which the followers assign to the bonfire.

10. I highlight that this analysis of Roma music, its disputes, legitimacies and circulation are taken up once again.



Roma mediations in the city: commemoration of National Roma and Saint Sara Kali Day in Ipanema – Rio de Janeiro. The event to celebrate National Roma and Saint Sara Kali Day, took place in the Saint Sara Kali grotto in Garota de Ipanema park in 2017, in the Zona Sul of the city of Rio de Janeiro. I highlight this particular event, since it is the celebration with the greatest visibility which takes place in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and since it is a ritual that incorporates civil, religious and cultural Roma elements.

The event has been held since 2006, and May 24 of that year established Saint Sara Kali Day as National Roma Day in Brazil. Since that time, MirianStanescun, who is called Dr. MirianStanescun, a *genuine Roma* (Photograph 7), holds a festival that was organized for many years in a joint action with the Rio de Janeiro State Special Department of Policies to Promote Racial Equality and the Department of Culture. MirianStanescun is an Advisor of the Order of Attorneys of Brazil (OAB/RJ) Human Rights Commission, founder and president of the Saint Sara Kali Foundation, and has promoted an event called the “National Crusade for World Peace” for twenty years in Garota de Ipanema park, Rio de Janeiro.

In 2006, the Roma, MirianStanescun, was invited by the federal government to write a pamphlet entitled “Roma People, the law in their hands” launched on May 25 of that year. It was a joint undertaking by the Ministry of Culture, Special Department of Human Rights, Department of Identity and Cultural Diversity, Special Department of Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR), and the Saint Sara Kali Foundation (FSSK). Following the pamphlet launch, the author was invited to personally publicize it in the Brazilian states, helping to promote Roma culture, and the right to citizenship in Brazil. Also, as established in the federal decree<sup>11</sup>, Saint Sara Kali was promoted as the “Patron Saint of the Roma people in Brazil”.

At her monthly meetings, Mirian frequently highlighted the Garota de Ipanema Park grotto as the “first Saint Sara Kali temple in Brazil<sup>12</sup>”, thereby meaning that the “Roma people and the saint’s worshippers and devotees” had a space to worship her in Brazil<sup>13</sup>.

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11. The decree to establish National Roma Day was signed at the same event by the president at the time, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who made a point of posing for photographs and kissing the image of the Roma saint which had been presented on this occasion.

12. Parallel to her activities with the federal government, and the wide range of areas in which she participated throughout her life, Mirian has maintained the foundation and some of the activities that are her mark, such as chains and commemorations, with the greatest highlight being the month of May and the festival in tribute to Saint Sara Kali.

13. In reference to the Saints Maries de La Mer festival in the south of France, where there are annual peregrinations, a great pilgrimage, and festivities in tribute to Saint Sara Kali.

## THE SAINT SARA KALI GROTTO RITUAL

The Garota de Ipanema Park grotto has a fixed image of Saint Sara Kali (Photograph 6) and, therefore, the park has become one of the religious tourism destinations in the city of Rio de Janeiro, being listed on the City Hall's official calendar of events in 2017. There have been editions of the event which have involved the presence of approximately five thousand people, and has been transforming a public space into one of dispute and controversies about the Roma issue, their culture and religion. From my presentation of the Roma people in this chapter, I propose to highlight another different form of being a Roma, which I have followed during my research process, and the Roma people, asserting themselves as *genuine Roma*, defending values linked to the Catholic Church, as a way of being legitimized in the Rio de Janeiro public sphere.

I have followed the event for several years, but in my analysis, I highlight the event which was held in 2017, with the objective of emphasizing how MirianStanescon performs, and gives new meaning during the ritual, which is held in the square, and the ethnic, civil, religious and cultural symbols. Therefore, I highlight how these elements are incorporated in the narrative that MirianStanescon (Photograph 9) provides on her trajectory, political accomplishments, and creation of her products. I emphasize how MirianStanesconamends and performs Pastoral Cigana da IgrejaCatólica (Roma Apostolate of the Catholic Church) guidance in her actions<sup>14</sup>.

The ritual is taught pedagogically by MirianStanescon every month, holding a blessing which is called the "blessing of seven herbs and seven essences". Those present then burn their incense, representing their requests, on a bonfire. The blessed bread of Saint Sara Kali s then distributed by members of GRASSA<sup>15</sup>. During the event, Mirian highlighted on the microphone that "as in every Roma festival, our blessing ends with a great celebration, accompanied by traditional Roma music, and a lot of dancing and happiness!". As scheduled in the program, a live concert was held, announced by Mirian as being an action to: "promote Roma culture and traditions, and helping to combat discrimination<sup>16</sup>".

Meanwhile, the Roma read the last verses of her pamphlet over the microphone: "Say no to discrimination! Support Peace!" In order to provide further information on the story of Saint Sara Kali and Roma traditions, she read the book *LiláRomai – Cartas ciganas*(Roma Letters), which she authored, and immediately amended her reading of the prayer to Saint

14. As I will present, the organization has different names, depending on the time and place. For formatting issues, I will adopt the single name of Pastoral Cigana da IgrejaCatólica (Roma Apostolate of the Catholic Church) throughout the text.

15. Grupo Amigos de Santa Sara (GRASSA)

16. Section of the speech by Miriam Stanescon, National Crusade for World Peace, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Field notebook, March 24, 2017.

**TRANSLATION**  
Christine Eida  
Madureira.

Sara. The prayer was led by Mirian, in Romani, followed by the crowd who read aloud in a chorus, in Portuguese. On occasions, this ritual is conducted alternately, verse by verse. At the end, they all say the “Thie Diel o Dhiel” in Romani, and “amen” in Portuguese. The microphone gives way to the bundle of herbs in the Roma’s hands, the crowd strains against the RIOTUR railings, seeking a blessing and piece of bread. Simultaneously, the voice of her daughter, Lhuba, takes charge of the ambiance, and the young woman instructs them over the microphone: to remain “calm”, “everyone will receive the blessing”, “there is bread for everyone”, or “move”, since she is responsible for directing the devotees (Photograph 10) to the grotto, to burn incense at the small fire at this specific time (Photograph 8).



































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## ABSTRACT

This essay analyzes the activities of the different actors that comprise the Roma scenario, which has become established in the city of Rio de Janeiro in recent years. I decided to highlight two of the rituals I have been following in field work for my doctoral research, presenting some of the Roma people who were present, and their participation and activities in these rituals. In the images, in a photographic and ethnographic narrative, I present, describe, highlight, and propose to reflect on the two rituals, as scenarios of *social situations* (Gluckman 1987), to emphasize issues I consider central to understanding these activities in a collection of photographs. In the first group of images, I present the group called *Tenda Cigana Espiritualista Tzara Ramirez* (Tzara Ramirez Spiritualist Roma Tent) in Nova Iguaçu, Baixada Fluminense in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The second group of images focuses on the commemoration of the National Roma and Saint Sara Kali Day, a Roma celebration with the greatest visibility that takes place in the city. The ritual incorporates civil, religious, and cultural Roma expressions.

## KEYWORDS

Culture;  
Subjectivity;  
Religion; Ethnicity.





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# RITUAL PHOTOGRAPHY: AN EXPERIENCE WITH THE HUNI KUIN PEOPLE

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"THE FIRST TIME AN ASHANINKA told me that the medicinal properties of plants were learned by ingesting a hallucinogenic preparation, I thought he was just making fun of me. We were in the middle of the forest, crouched down, talking, and he explained that the leaves on a bush beside us could heal the bite of a deadly snake.

- By drinking ayahuasca we learn these things – he said and, after all, he wasn't mocking." (Narby 2018)

I had already been in contact with Ayahuasca, but from that experience on, it would be different. It was January 2017, in the reserve region of the city of Cotia (Greater São Paulo), I was introduced to the indigenist Txai Macedo and we were waiting in the backyard for the arrival of the four Huni Kuin who would spend that time with us. Pajé Ninawá, Txuã, Bixku and Yakã, the only woman in the group, married to Bixku, who was a student of Pajé (the study of pajelança takes place through diets and monitoring by an elder to the young man who will become a healer in his community); Txuã, who had already been the chief of his village, and Pajé Ninawá, an elderly healer who knew mysteries. The Huni Kuin people are found in the territory they call Brazil, predominantly in the state of Acre (linguistic backbone: Pano); of complex immateriality, in this culture, contact with enchanted beings is the basis of their living experience, a reality not only for the shamans, but for the entire community - coming from the Middle Envira River region, self-organized by CCEFYY (Yurabaka Naibai Center Yuxibu Baibu) and self-represented by FEPHAC (Federation of the Huni Kuin People in Acre), with their three-month stay in São Paulo, sought to exchange and strengthen the support



network that makes it possible to carry out community projects independently from the State. pyromaniac. We spent this time dedicated to the practice of healing... I was particularly attentive to the experience of the immersive process as a cure, and to the practice, above all, of poetry, through photography. I experienced a few dozen rituals in the end of subsequent weeks, where, from the use of Amazonian power plants (snuff, sananga, ayahuasca) I produced the work that I have been showing as an essay with these words that seek to welcome the viewer in the [counting] particular of my experience, which gave rise to the master's project I have been developing, "Ritual Photography".

I seek to synthesize a form capable of reverberating to the viewer the glimpse of healing as an action, which expands beyond its own moment. Would it be possible to create sensory aspects similar to my feelings of remembrance to those who were not in these situations? In no way would the solitary image be able to reconstitute a scene in its entirety. Sounds can bring me images... as well as images can bring me sounds, however, based on the necessary choice, I believe that this work could be developed in other ways, using other languages as regards its intention. But as I can only do it being myself, photography, the creation of the luminous image, is what fits. I am immersed, after getting lost, what would be the path to the meeting. A meeting that has no name, no end, and perhaps not even a meaning. The questions that sew my thinking are guided by the idea of the rite as a photographable object, and of photography itself as a rite based on the performative gesture of photographing. Being the immersion experience, a fundamental part of this creative process; Relational practice, as a creator of spaces where such intimate realization becomes possible.

Next, I present records made during the experience with the Huni Kuin people in 2017. Preceding the ceremony, body painting is already part of the rite, a preparation:







“[...] They carry exclusive paintings on their bodies: each one presents itself as a representation of the spirit of nature (animal or otherwise) that protects it and transmits magical teachings that give it the power of healing and premonition [...]. The Xerente body painting system constitutes an active language, strictly linked to the social structure and which is taken as a reference in the definition of roles and social relations. [...] Once painted, however, bodies express a classification that it is clan (and consequently, of moieties) and unequivocal. In this sense, body painting says something fundamental about this society and corresponds to a perspective that illuminates aspects of Xerente's social life, making them evident.” (Vidal 2000).







Above, a series of snuff-like images: tobacco ground with ash and leaf husks blown into the nostrils with an instrument called a tepi; whose primary physical function is to decongest the airways, this sacred medicine has in recent years been increasingly used in large cities, being used even in the treatment of drug addicts. The chants of prayer are called the “spirits of the forest”, and healing is done to the ethereal planes. Among my motivations for carrying out this work is undoubtedly to contribute in a way, if we do not extinguish, at least we can alleviate the aura of misunderstanding and prejudice about the millenary use of the aforementioned power plants. Below, some more records of the specific



circumstances I investigate, ritual photography in ritual situations with the use of ayahuasca.

“The use of drink is a means of learning, which is part of the training needed to acquire courage, skill in hunting and warfare, see the spirits, and learn to know the world, travel and see the things that exist beyond the village. It is also used by the shaman to obtain information about the cause of an illness, to evoke the spirits and beings of the forest for the cure of physical and spiritual ailments.

It is used by 72 indigenous groups in the Amazon Basin and is known by some 42 different names. It is also used by the Brazilian religions of Santo Daime, Barquinha and União do Vegetal.”. (Ika Muru et al 2014)

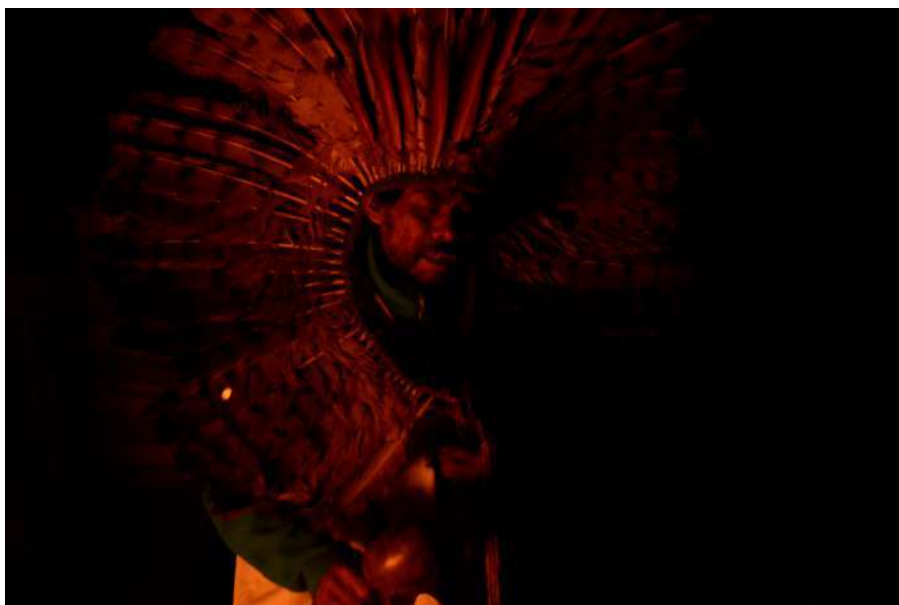






“[...] These mirrors cover the forest for the first time, and the spirits move over them without stopping, playing, dancing or fighting. It was in these mirrors that they came into existence and it is from them that they descend towards us. It is also in them that we deposit our image when they make us shamans.”. (Kopewana and Albert 2015)







To end this presentation, an excerpt from the text “The photography of Claudia Andujar” in *The Vulnerability of Being/Inner Territories*:

[...] “from the perception, the photographer intuits that its duration has essentially the power to reveal other durations, to encompass others and to encompass itself to infinity, as described by Deleuze.

In the last photographs of this exhibition, we access the Unique Duration, which Bergson spoke about. Because, as we read in Lapoujade. And now we need to repeat: “only intuition can put me in contact with durations other than mine, because it reveals to me that I am not only interior duration, but also élan vital and material movement or the effort of the entire universe to paradoxically resume it in a monism that attests to the prodigious plasticity of the spirit and the extension of its circuits of recognition.”. (Garcia dos Santos 2005)

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## ABSTRACT

The investigation of the ritual as a photographable object and photography itself as a ritual based on the performative gesture of photographing are the guidelines of this work. Fruit of an immersion experience with the Huni Kuin people in 2017, and the development of a photographic work carried out in ceremonial circumstances using Amazonian power plants, the text/story “Ritual Photography: An experience with the Huni Kuin people”.

### KEYWORDS

Photography;  
Ritual; Ayahuasca,  
Huni Kuin;  
Experience.

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# CHALK CITY: GRAPHIC EXPERIMENTS

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## ABOUT INVENTIONS AND (DIS)ENCOUNTERS

The sun shyly rises through the clouds that cover the seven-thirty in the morning sky. The rhythm of the streets is calm and my steps run along the cement of the sidewalks, molding themselves through the irregular shapes of the stones. I look attentively at the movements of the surroundings, I observe the shop windows, the doors of the stores that are still closed, the posts with their layers of paper and symbols superimposed. For a moment, I look away and my attention lingers on marks on the floor: they are made of chalk and, at first glance, they don't seem to conform to some sort of pattern.

I ask myself: when does ethnographic fieldwork begin and when does it end? Since the first time I found the chalk inscriptions on the sidewalks, walls and street lamps of Viçosa (MG), a kind of “ethnographic instinct” (Peirano 2014) awakened in me. Who had made those marks? For what reason? What did they mean? These were questions that followed me for a long time. At the time, I wasn't developing any specific work, as I would do later, even so, I started to look for such marks in my daily journeys.

According to Ulf Hannerz (2015), it is very likely that ethnographies are the “most characteristic product of anthropological work”. They are contributions through which anthropological theories feed and reinvent themselves from the recombinations of an intellectual nature and the inventive practices adopted by researchers (Peirano 2014). Thus, each ethnography has its singularities, posed by the subjectivities of the anthropologists and by the implications of the contexts that are being observed.

Make ethnography in cities and their spaces lead us, then, to a unique experience of ethnographic and anthropological approaches. Depending on the methods used, it can be one of the ways to approach kaleidoscopic, multiple and polyphonic city compositions. A way of looking at a complex whole in a constant process of transformation, through its micro-actions and micro-resistance that emerges around every corner. It is an invitation to the unexpected, where the raw material operates on the symbolic constellations, at the same time that these imply in its material conceptions. Understanding that: “The city, each city, looks like its creators, who are made by the city” (Silva 2011, XXVI).

When I began to look closely at the chalk marks on the streets of Viçosa, I noticed certain similarities: the graphs were done in such a way that I understood that they were being drawn by the same person. The inscriptions had no right place to appear, they appeared on the floor of the streets, on sidewalks, on poles, on store doors, on walls, on signs and other surfaces. The material was repeated: they were letters, numbers, drawings, words and phrases made in chalk, although I also found various papers with similar marks made with a pen. Not infrequently, I came across supermarket brochures, lottery tickets, book pages and other papers nailed or embedded in poles, trees and trash cans.


I didn’t know who left these artifacts and inscriptions around the city, I just fed imaginary suspicions. In a discontinuous, subjective and unexpected cartography, my paths intersected with these narratives, at the same time that they were at odds with those of their creator. Since I didn’t know who this person was, everyone could be him.

In this way, I was (ethno)graphically “inventing” (Wagner 2017) someone from the clues that this person left scattered around the city. Clues in a composition as ephemeral and shifting as the traces of those who drew them. Given its processes and its matter, the chalk marks disappeared, became opaque or appeared with force, as if made recently. This unpredictability and the ephemeral character of the chalk marks accentuated our (dis)encounters.

After I saw the chalk marks for the first time, I started to walk around the city with ethnographic experiments in view for the project “Narrating the city: the poetics and politics of everyday life”<sup>1</sup> and started to find new inscriptions with some frequency. During this period, after talking to close friends<sup>2</sup> about these marks, I received a report from one of them

1. Research carried out between March and September 2019, guided by Prof. Dr. Douglas Mansur da Silva in the Department of Social Sciences of Federal University of Viçosa, to whom I leave my thanks.

2. I would like to thank: Andre Aguiar, my companion on walks and errances, and Matheus Freitas, for his reports about the Chalk Man.



who said that he had seen a man registering them at dusk in front of the City Hall. Here I had my first clue to know who this person might be, this person that marks the city with pieces of chalk, but unfortunately it was the only one. Apart from this report, I got no further information about the apparitions of this man, even though his marks continued to appear in the streets.

My encounters with the “Chalk Man” inscriptions (as I came to call him intimately) lasted months. As they didn’t have a defined frequency or place to appear, I continued with the project’s experiments, letting the marks surprise me. When possible, I registered them with my cell phone or collected some of the papers left by the posts; others I just watched, looking around in the hope that its owner was nearby. The unexpected became one of the elements of fieldwork, the city and the Chalk Man’s expression and creation processes guided me in this unstable map, in a floating cartography.

In a previous work (Silva 2020), where I present the outline of the expansion of the categories of “imprinting” and “moving around”, mobilized by Teresa Caldeira (2012) in your article “Imprinting and moving around: new visibilities and configurations of public space in São Paulo”, I mention these encounters with the Chalk Man. However, their experiences are so undisciplined that they escape any definition. His existence and his creations flee from the attempts to limit thought and order the urban space. These inscriptions reveal, as pointed out by Caldeira (2012, 39), a process of “representation of itself” in which the Chalk Man begins “to dominate its own production of signs”.

If to some extent, in the previous approach, I tried to apply a “disciplined look to see the city” (Uriarte 2013), currently I understand that this look can become somewhat limiting and dominated, as it is just one of the possible ways of observing the dynamics of the city. However, sensitive forms of experience and production of city spaces emerge at every corner, undisciplined, transgressive, deviant like those of the Chalk Man. Observing these forms of expression and existence would lead to what could be methodologically called “undisciplined ways to see the city”, understanding that looking at something or someone is a political action immersed in power dynamics (hooks 2019).

During the time that I lived in Viçosa, I didn’t meet the Chalk Man, I only got close to his marks, his artifacts scattered through the streets, his passage stories inscribed on the stones of the city. Our relationship was built on a cartography of ethnographic (dis)encounters. Therefore, I return to the question posed at the beginning of this text: when does ethnographic fieldwork begin and when does it end? And to it I add others: do our researches only have the duration of the submission of our

works? The time to write articles and monographs? Or do our researches accompany us and start beyond?

I say that because my concerns and this “ethnographic instinct” (Peirano 2014) in relation to the creative processes of the Chalk Man began before the formal beginning of a research, followed its development, its completion, and extended beyond. After I moved from Viçosa, after completing my graduation and finishing the research mentioned above, I had to return to the city to resolve some pending issues. And, precisely on this return, walking through the streets without any greater expectations, I found the Chalk Man inscribing the stones of the sidewalk on which I was passing. I didn’t approach, I watched him for a few moments and continued walking again. I chose this way.

In an “exercise of anthropological fiction” (Viveiros de Castro 2002, 123), I return to this material and these experiences here, using imagination and graphic experiments to approach and present the creation processes of the Chalk Man. Inspired by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2002, 123), the “experience, in this case, is my own [...] and the experiment, a fiction controlled by that experience”. Reporting this now brings me closer to the ways of thinking and inscribing in the city in the ways of the Chalk Man, through his lines and his marks.

Drawing lines on paper, making drawings, can be one of the ways to get closer with the sensitive forms of expression and construction of cities. To enter an imaginary space, a constellation of symbols and materials. As Michael Taussig (2011, 13) points out, “The drawings come across as fragments that are suggestive of a world beyond, a world that does not need to be explicitly recorded and is in fact all the more ‘complete’ because it cannot be completed”. Cities bring us closer to this: they are constructions of the human imagination that are destroyed and reconstructed at every moment; they are mutants and present themselves in a continuous process of creation, in permanent inconstancy and incompleteness.

As mentioned earlier, make ethnography in cities and their spaces lead us to a unique experience of ethnographic and anthropological approaches. Furthermore, make ethnography in cities with graphs and drawings as ways of entering their narratives and forms of expression can be one of the ways of approaching the multiple and kaleidoscopic compositions reworked daily by their inhabitants. Because, “Like the lines of a drawing, the lines of social life manifest histories of becoming in a world that is never complete but always in progress” (Ingold 2015, 317).

A redrawing anthropology, as proposed by Tim Ingold (2015), which takes drawing as a metaphor and methodology, describes and knows



the world through its forms, lines and movements. This anthropology, “graphic anthropology” or “anthropography”, “would aim not at a complete description of what is already there, or has already come to pass, but to join together with persons and other things in the movements of their formation” (Ingold 2015, 319). In this sense, approaching the inscriptions of the Chalk Man, graphically experiencing their ways of thinking and inscribing himself in spaces, I understood and imagined – even incompletely and inconstantly – their mutual experiences of making the city.

The city that is formed through the inscriptions of the Chalk Man, which pulses in his paths, trajectories and marks, is his invention (Wagner 2017). At the same time, the Chalk Man is an invention of the city itself. Meet the Chalk Man, then, is meet the city itself. This one, in turn, also invents me, at the same time that I invent the Chalk Man.

This movement is part of the “anthropological fiction” that is presented here in an attempt to get closer to the “city itself” (Agier 2011). Thus, I understand that the Chalk City – which can be the city of Viçosa, or the cities of Viçosa, which are presented in my or Chalk Man’s lines and drawings – is founded independently of ethnographic (dis)encounters. It pulses in the relations and constellations of matter and symbols that emerge and are imagined at every single time.

### **ABOUT THE GRAPHIC EXPERIMENTS**

According to Fabiana Bruno (2019, 200): “The challenges with images in research in the human sciences, particularly in anthropology, imply rigorous ‘acts’ and ‘movements’ of work: looking, selecting, cutting, reframing, shifting, associating, imagine, assemble and dispose in a way to ‘make see’”.

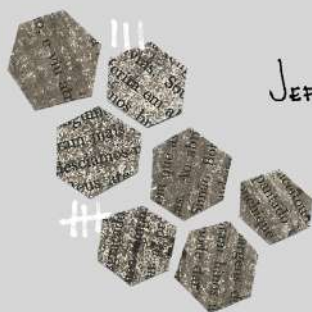
Therefore, inspired by the encounters with the artifacts of the Chalk Man’s creative processes, the graphs (images of various types, inscriptions such as writing, drawing, photography etc) presented here, emerged from experiments in different techniques and forms of composition. Most of them were done manually, from cutouts, paintings with chalk and colored pencils, drawings with pencils and Nanquim pens, on drawing sheets of 140g or tracing paper. After, they were digitized, cut and digitally modified. In this digital editing process, some phrases were added to the composition of the graphic narrative.

The photographs were taken with my own cell phone during everyday walks and erratic experiences. There are also two artifacts with interventions using a ballpoint pen, found in the streets of Viçosa and made by the Chalk Man: the first, a lottery ticket, the second, a loose page from, possibly, a textbook.

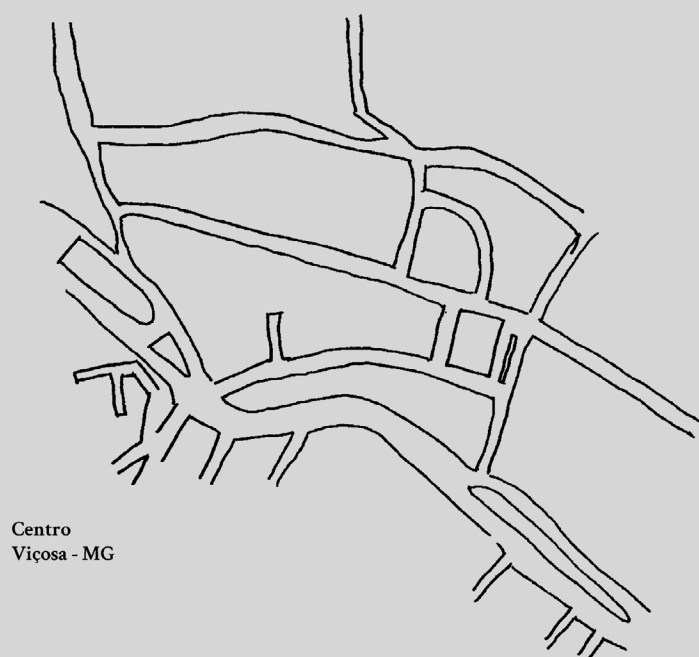
# CIDADE DE GIZ

experimentação gráfica e desencontros etnográficos

JEFFERSON CARVALHO



desencontros  
em uma  
cartografia descontínua



Centro  
Viçosa - MG

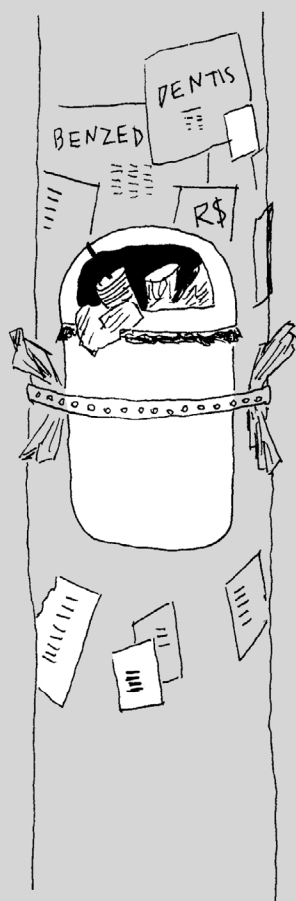
um mapa instável  
inconstante



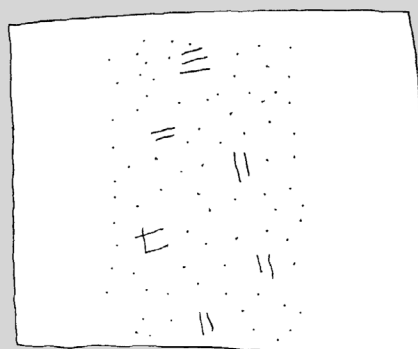
SETE E MEIA  
DA MANHÃ



MEUS PASSOS  
PERCORREM  
O CIMENTO  
DAS CALÇADAS

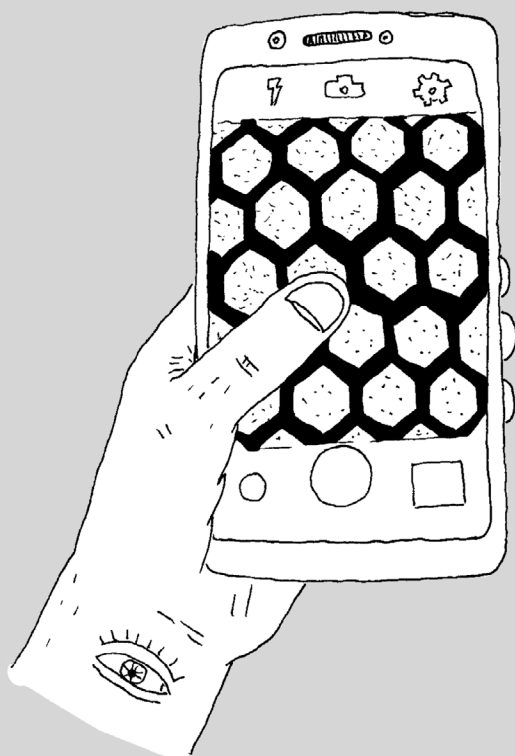


MARCAS  
DE GIZ  
NO CHÃO



O QUE ELAS  
SIGNIFICAM ?





passo a tomar notas  
das marcas que encontro

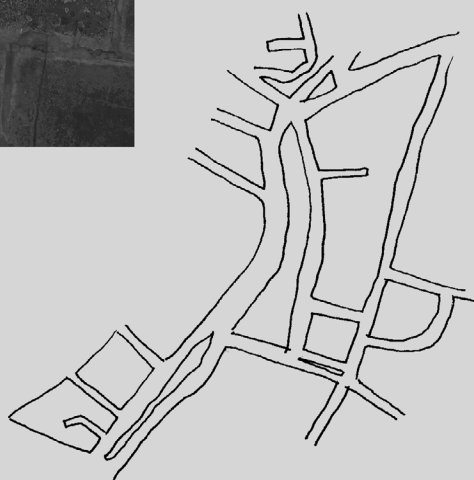


efêmeras



não sei onde e  
quando elas podem surgir





elas se multiplicam,  
desaparecem...





e tornam a  
aparecer

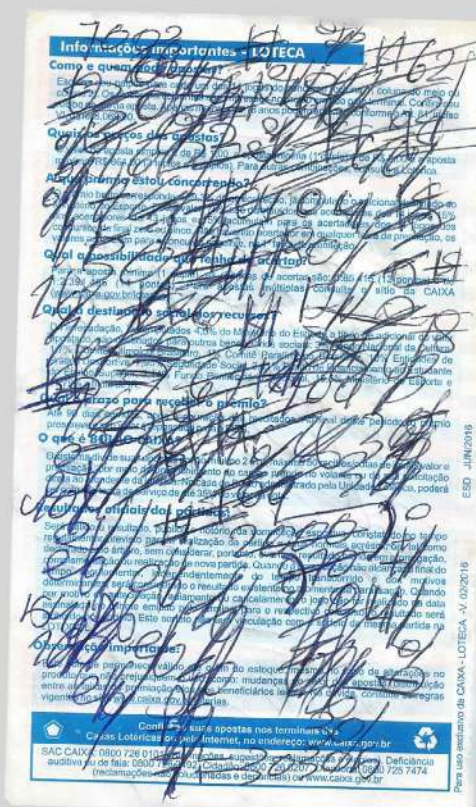






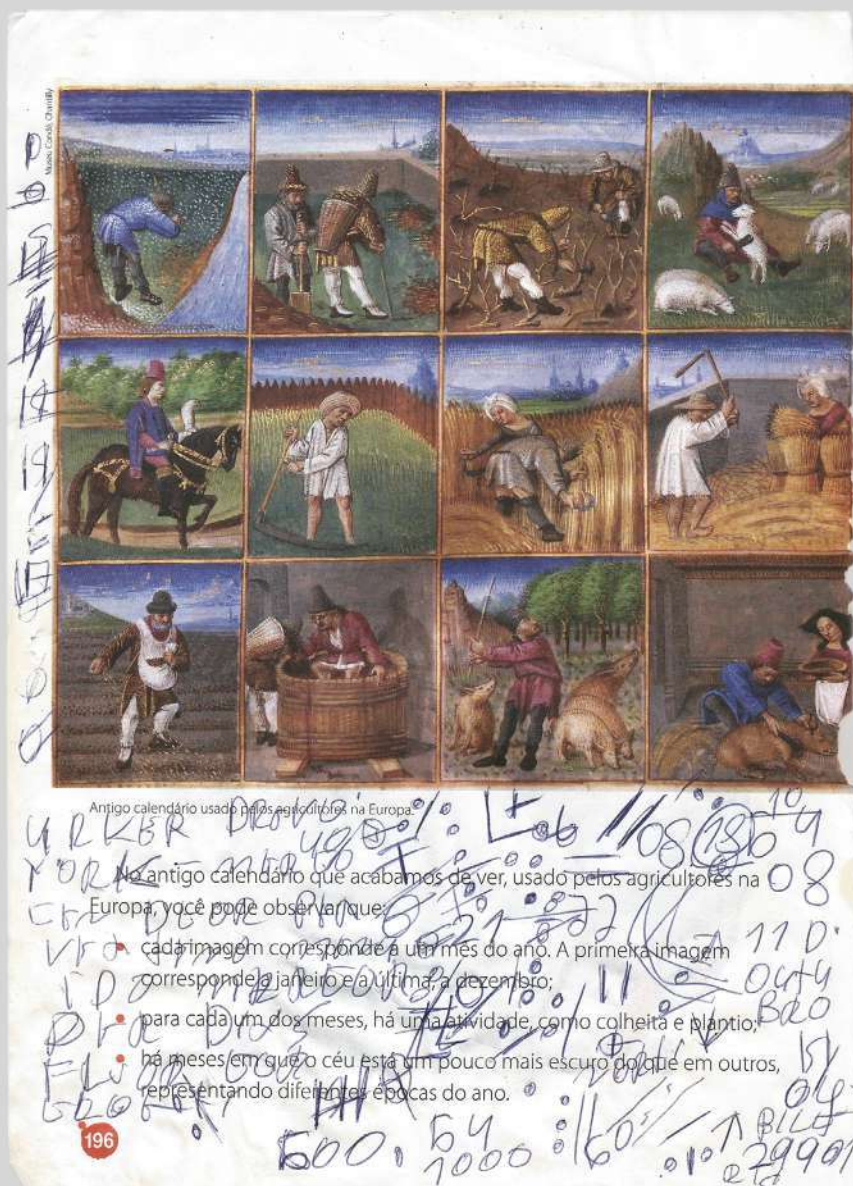
e encontro artefatos  
espalhados pela cidade

instigado, observo as ruas com  
atenção redobrada

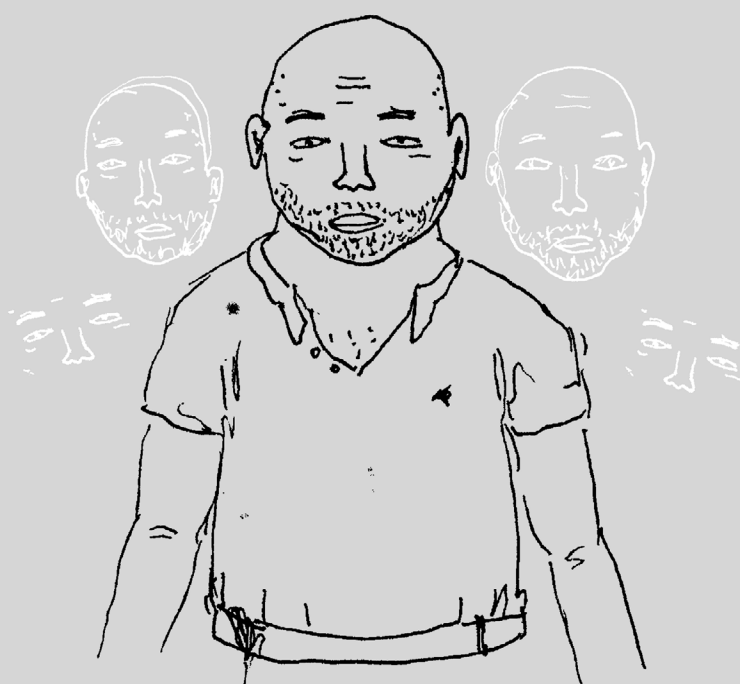




nos postes, árvores e lixeiras...  
em caneta e com grafias semelhantes



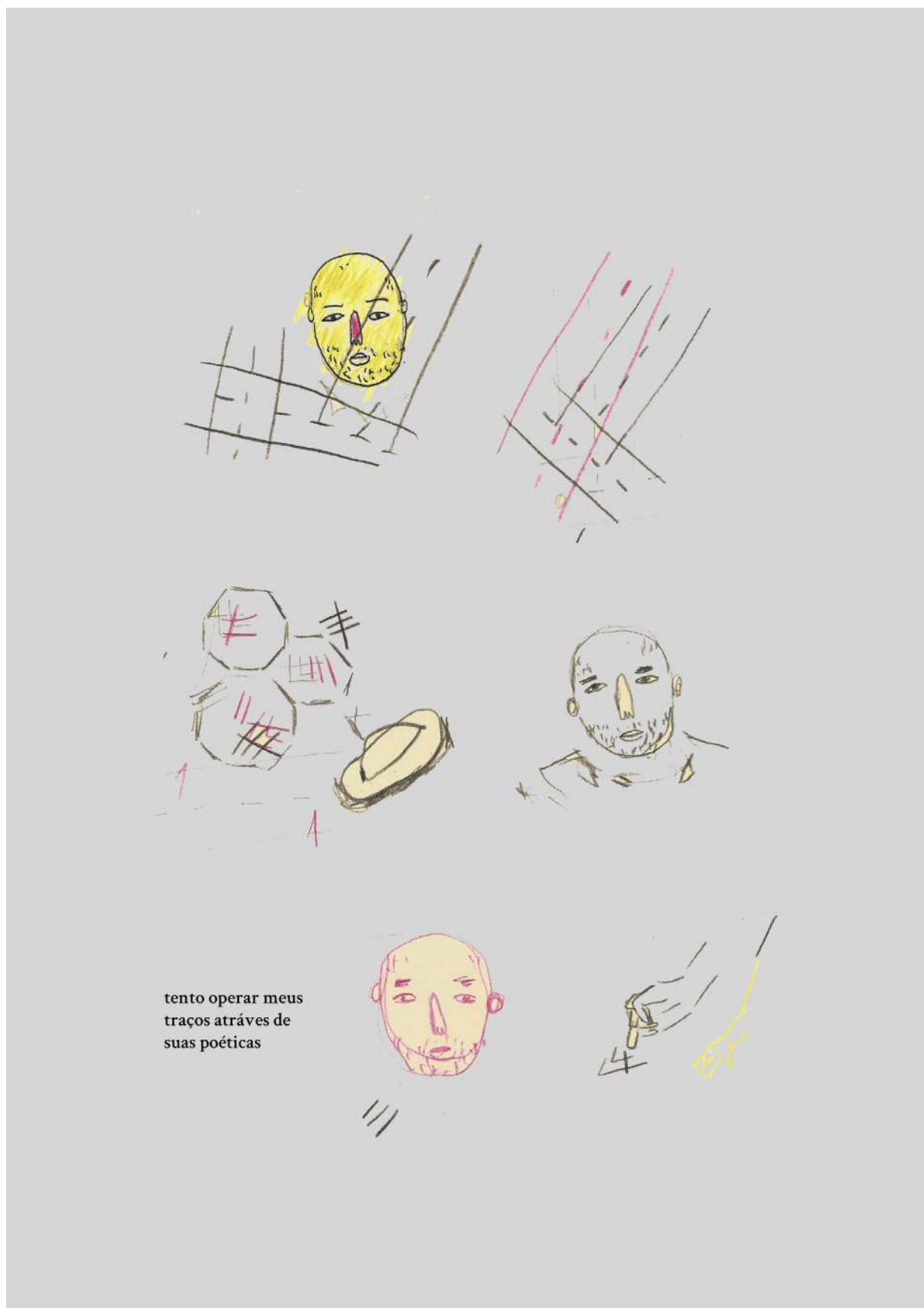
aos poucos entendo que  
as grafias são feitas pela  
mesma pessoa...



mas quem?

me dizem que um homem negro, de meia idade,  
estava inscrevendo as marcas ao entardecer  
em frente à Câmara Municipal, no Calçadão

o procuro, em vão...  
passo a imaginá-lo





me pergunto:

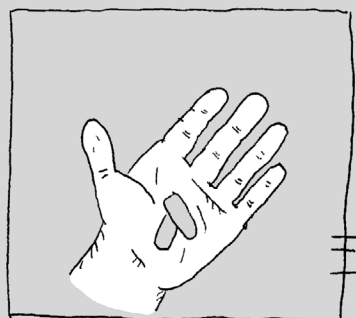
como inscrever-se  
na cidade aos modos  
do Homem de Giz?



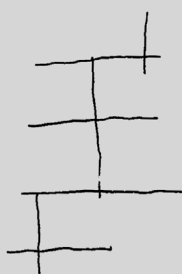
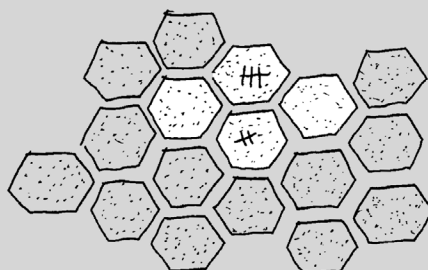


e em minhas ficções  
passo a habitar sua cidade

UMA CIDADE  
INVENTADA

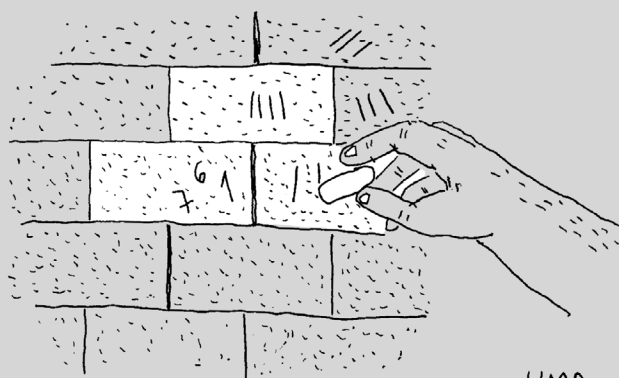
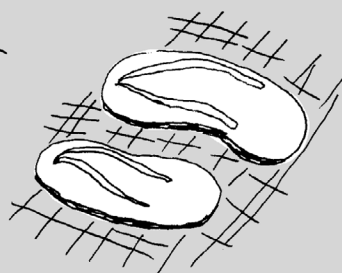


QUE PULSA EM  
SEUS CAMINHOS  
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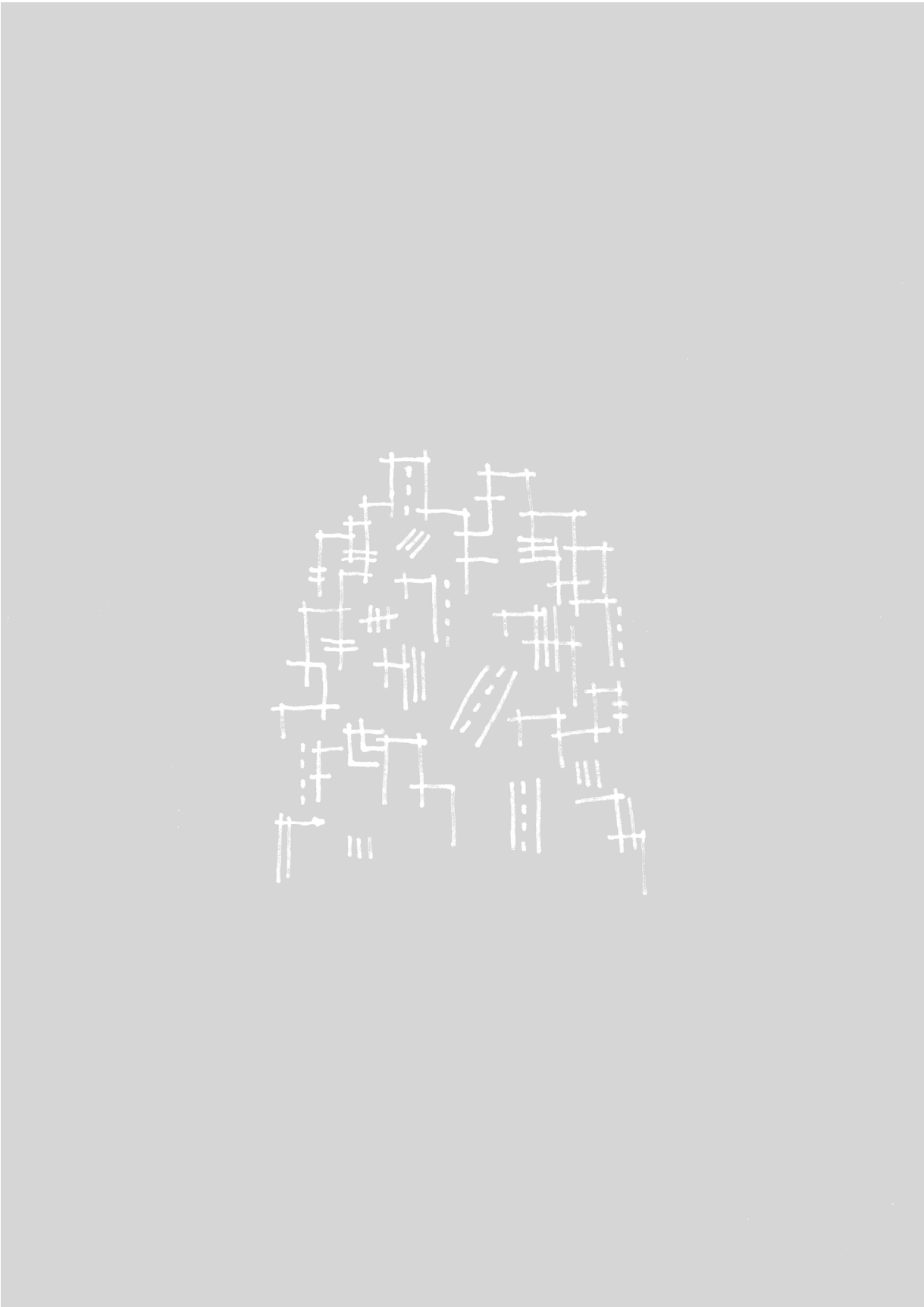
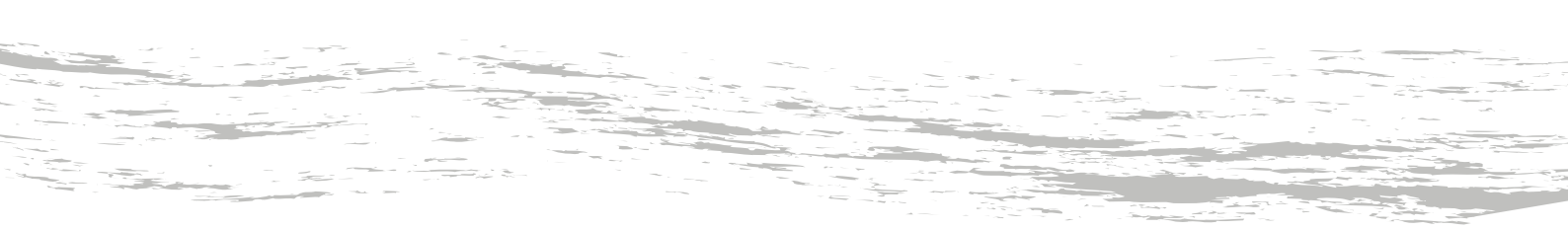


Zo  
X

01



UMA CIDADE  
DE GIZ



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## ABSTRACT

This graphic essay presents the creative processes of invention and occupation of the city produced by one of the inhabitants of Viçosa, Minas Gerais. Following their ephemeral inscriptions, we enter in a discontinuous cartography of ethnographic (dis)encounters, approaching us of spaces constructed and imagined on a daily basis. This experiment is an attempt to think and inscribe in the city on the ways of the Chalk Man, through his drawings and lines. In an “exercise of anthropological fiction”, inspired by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, where drawings and lines become central metaphorically and methodologically, as proposed by Tim Ingold, we get close to an anthropological approach based on the “city itself”, as pointed out by Michel Agier.

### KEYWORDS

Graphic  
Anthropology;  
Drawings; Cities;  
Ethnography;  
Experimentation.





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# YES SINHÔ, PHOTOETHNOGRAPHY OF THE AUSENTE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITY

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The Vale do Jequitinhonha, so rich and large, has already been called “continent”. It has lived, since the year of 1964, with the stigma of “poverty valley”. A politically constructed social representation reinforced by the media to justify public interventions and maintenance of large estates favoring the wealthy. The Vale do Jequitinhonha, in its Minas Gerais portion, corresponds to a region in the northeast of the state, with about 65,850 km<sup>2</sup>, comprising three hydrographic areas: the upper Jequitinhonha River, the Araçuaí river and the middle and lower Jequitinhonha River, there are approximately 770 thousand inhabitants distributed in 54 municipalities.

To explore another possible reading of the Vale do Jequitinhonha, based on photoethnography, or a photoethnography shared between the researcher and the inhabitants of the place, an exercise in reinterpreting this social representation is proposed. In this case, the frame of reference is the Ausente Quilombola Community, in the municipality of Serro, upper Jequitinhonha. Created in the gold and diamond rush in the 18th century, the city has five quilombola communities certified by the Fundação Palmares. Communities marked by

cultural richness, traditions, family farming and processing of products such as sugar cane and milk.


Added to photoethnography, the investigation comprises documentary and bibliographic parts. For the documentary research, we used vehicles from the hegemonic press and with national circulation, such as *Revista Manchete*, *O Cruzeiro* or *Jornal do Brasil*, in addition to GERAES with regional circulation, which at times endorsed the official discourse of “misery valley”, at other times they tried to be a counterpoint. And in the case of the bibliographical review, works on photoethnography, on the critical theory of the cultural industry, on the historiography of Vale do Jequitinhonha are reviewed.

Constructed from participant observation, avoiding intellectual colonialism and responding to the population’s needs (Brandão 1999), the photoethnographic essay will contribute to the critical questioning of the posed representation of “misery valley”. Allowing people to express themselves about the image that best represents them and that represents the region in which they live, either by participating in the final edition of the images, or by collaborating with the construction of imagery that represents the region. According to Luiz Eduardo Robinson Achutti, it is not a simple visual transcription of the data obtained in the field, but the construction of a visual narrative “that is effective and contains interpretive information about a given reality” (Achutti 2004, 66).

Ethically, we work with guiding questions about respecting vulnerable people, avoiding images of shock and massification, proposed by Sontag (2003; 2004), Martins (2008), Galard (2012), Didi-Huberman (2017), Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), Rancière (2012). Kant (2013) is also a reference when dealing with ethics with the concept of categorical imperative, when he says that we must act with enough common sense so that our actions do not harm us or harm others. And that we know how to handle the responsibilities of agency. A similar condition defended by Habermas (2004), about the need for common sense to defend particular issues in collective struggles, to recognize differences in order to guarantee democracy.

Aesthetically, from concepts of imaginary documentary (Lombardi 2007), concerned photography (Bogre 2012) and the concerns of the artist photographer (Rouillé 2009), we work with our photographic language so that the proposed interpretation of the community can be respectful and poetic.

The research does not deny the difficulties and contradictions existing in the region (Leitão & Filho 2019), but rather the representation by an image, a concept, built from political and economic interests (Servilha



2012). To give new meaning to this image, based on coexistence with the community, is something that is still unheard of in Vale do Jequitinhonha.

To give new meaning to the experience, the coexistence with the community, is, therefore, to read and find other images of Vale do Jequitinhonha. After all, as Tina (Laurentina) teaches us, “yes, sir, it’s when you’ve seen the person earlier that day. It is in the return that you speak”<sup>1</sup>.

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1. Interview given to the researcher during the field visit.













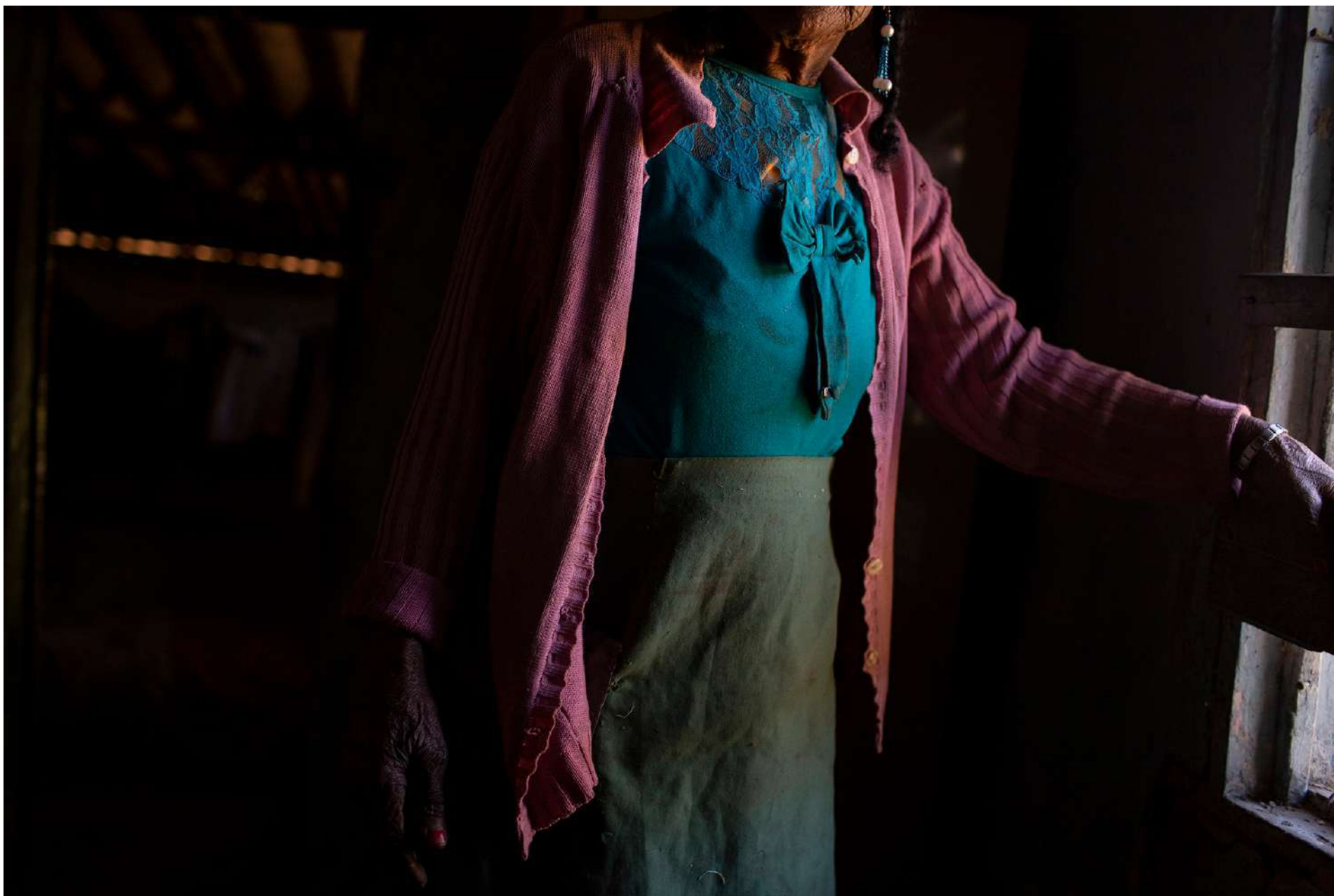




































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## ABSTRACT

The Vale do Jequitinhonha is known for its mineral wealth and cultural diversity, however, opportunely, the recognition “valley of misery” was built by political actions and the press to represent the region. The purpose of this work is to give new meaning to this social representation, based on a photoethnography developed with people from the Comunidade Quilombola do Ausente, in the municipality of Serro/MG. For this, based on previous works that discussed this performance of the press and the economic interests behind this constructed recognition, we sought to expand the debates already presented and based on the coexistence with the quilombolas, we built a photoethnography that could be an alternative to represent the region. A relationship built by rethinking concepts and values, and provoking them to also bring a particular look to present their community, in addition to participating, in some way, in the final editing of the images.

### KEYWORDS

Culture;  
Subjectivity;  
Religion; Ethnicity.



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**Authorship contribution.** Alan Faber do Nascimento, Nilmar Lage: conception, data collection and analysis, preparation and writing of the manuscript, discussion of results.

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# MIRROR OF MEMORY: SYLVIA CAIUBY NOVAES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

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*We can conceive photography as something that is related to a physical-chemical effect, something connected to time in travels, to social issues, to the identification of people, things, and past events. And it is exactly this privileged relation between photography and reality that should bring it closer to Anthropology since the latter has made a great effort to register, document, and analyze social reality. The machine to photograph dreams has not been invented yet, even though a photo can evoke exactly the same magic and mystery of things we register with the camera, something that scientific texts can hardly do.*

(Sylvia Caiuby Novaes)

*An experienced event is finite, at any rate confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it.*

(Walter Benjamin)


To enter Sylvia Caiuby Novaes's universe, we are invited to come aboard on a real journey. For someone who has photography as a central part of her personal and affective trajectory, there could not be a better way to enter it. There is not just one door or a great ceremony to do so — the invitation allows us to enter her photographs as if they were a car, a Kombi, a plane, a boat or a canoe. Once we are inside it, Sylvia takes us to Mato Grosso, Alto Rio Negro, Pakistan, Ethiopia, England, and Scotland; we go on stepping on beach sand, dancing in the carnival balls of her childhood, watching her unforgettable classes and seeing her daughters, grandsons, and granddaughter as they grow up. We walk in front of the house where she has lived as a child, we then look at many faces in portraits and self-portraits, we pet her dogs, and also visit her numerous friends. Each stop in this long journey is special: those are the people and the places that Sylvia has met, loved, and where she has built homes.

The visual essay that we present here is composed of photographs from her trajectory, and here we indicate its itinerary. At the beginning of this trip, we can go along with Sylvia in her first fieldwork travels in the 1970s, where she spends many months among the Bororo, in Mato Grosso, doing research, and making fieldwork with her young daughters, Laura and Isabel, in the 1980s. At this point, one can already notice that reciprocity, alliances, immersion, and photography are fundamental parts of her fieldwork method of research, but it also shows a way of being in the village and in the world. In a trip to Alto Rio Negro, Sylvia adds to these elements another passion: to advise her students' research. Then we go to Ethiopia, with her daughter Camila, where she has built memories that are as impressive as they are colorful.

The route takes us to the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology of USP, founded by Sylvia in 1991. Her enthusiasm during classes, her presence in daily life, her attention to the garden, and her knowledge over each item of LISA's immense collection are a real adventure. As she says in the interview published at *Gis*, LISA is housing for her, and in this sense, it reflects a collective life.

In a curve, Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal and Maureen Bisilliat come aboard. This encounter leads us to visit the exhibition "The Yanomami Struggle", at Instituto Moreira Salles, in São Paulo, during the development of the project "Photographs and Trajectories: Claudia Andujar, Maureen Bisilliat and Lux Vidal", coordinated by Sylvia and financed by FAPESP. There, we



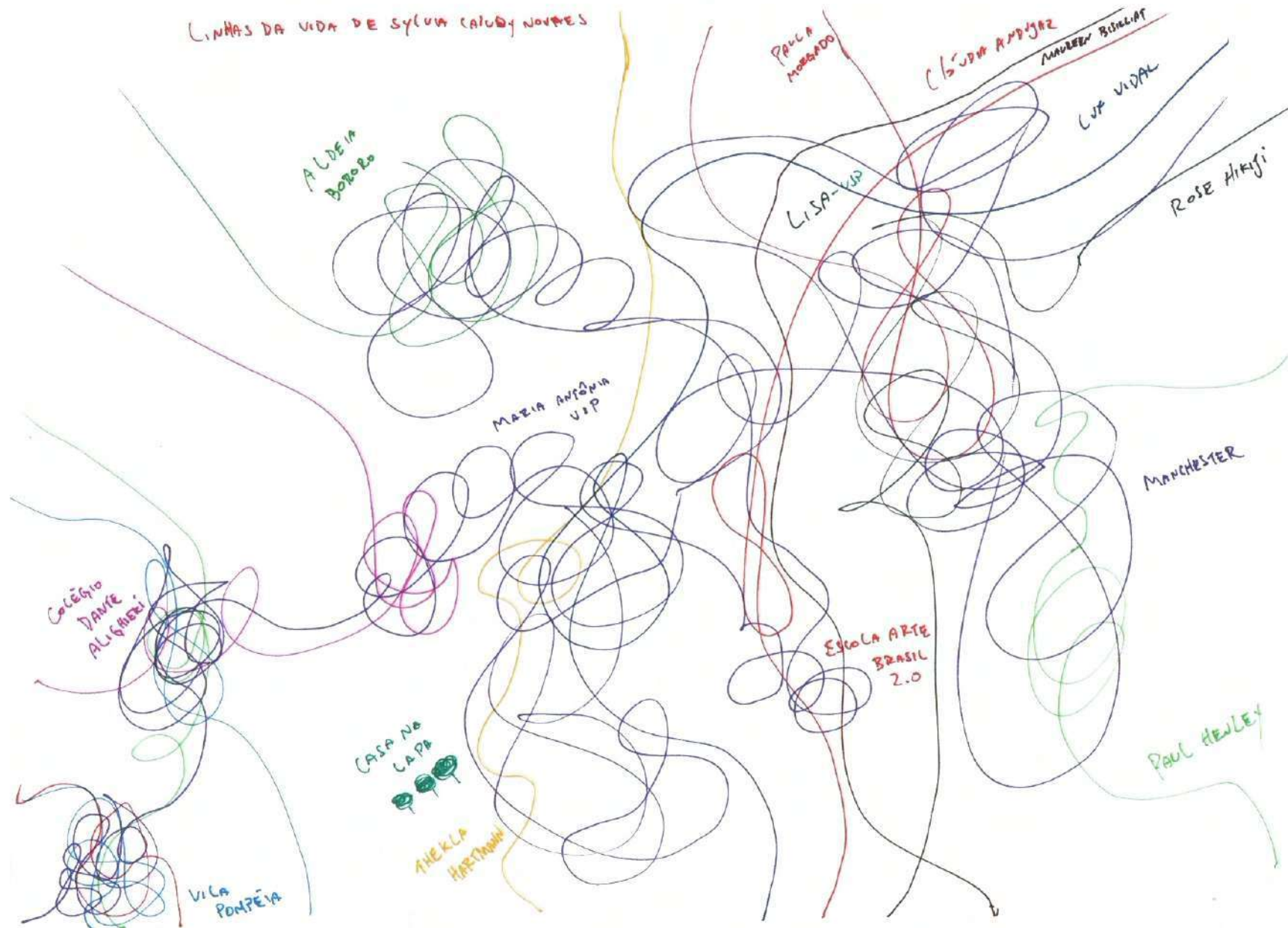


wander around the forest of images that Claudia has built among the Yanomami people, those Lux built among the Xikrin, and Maureen among the Xinguan people.

As we leave the forest, we fly over to Sylvia's house, in São Paulo, where more than 30 of her present and former students, from different generations, have interviewed her. Many questions were made, and the answers have led to unexpected paths. More than revealing herself, Sylvia allowed her students to know each other, sharing the interest of the interview with them all. It was an experience that caused displacements and allowed them to go to unknown zones, where a play of mirrors was set in place.

Back to the ground, Sylvia welcomes us to her house for some coffee and cake. There, we venture into the garden: the persimmon tree, the jabuticaba tree, the blackberry tree, the olive tree, the pitanga tree, congea, and begonia are characters in the house, full of stories. And then the journey becomes psychedelic if we allow image, magic, and imagination to blend. Inside the house, Sylvia opens boxes, albums, folders, and drawers, where memories exchange glances. All this is told with photographs, whose eloquent silence says a lot but not everything: as someone who can tell a good story, it is Sylvia's narrative that "wakes up" the photographs and reveals their secrets. Even in her memories, there is an open attitude towards surprises, which animate the images. As she questions: "How do we say the unspeakable, how can we make intelligible something that belongs, first and foremost, to the sensible domain?" (2005). It is this constant inquietude of the thought and the desire that reframe image and memory, where photographs are not the capture of moments. Instead, it is the movement of an active and creative gaze: among the lived and remembered events, there are also some small gaps and fingerprints which are typical of everything that is constantly being created.

**Opening image:** Sylvia's lines of life. **Drawing:** Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, 2021.

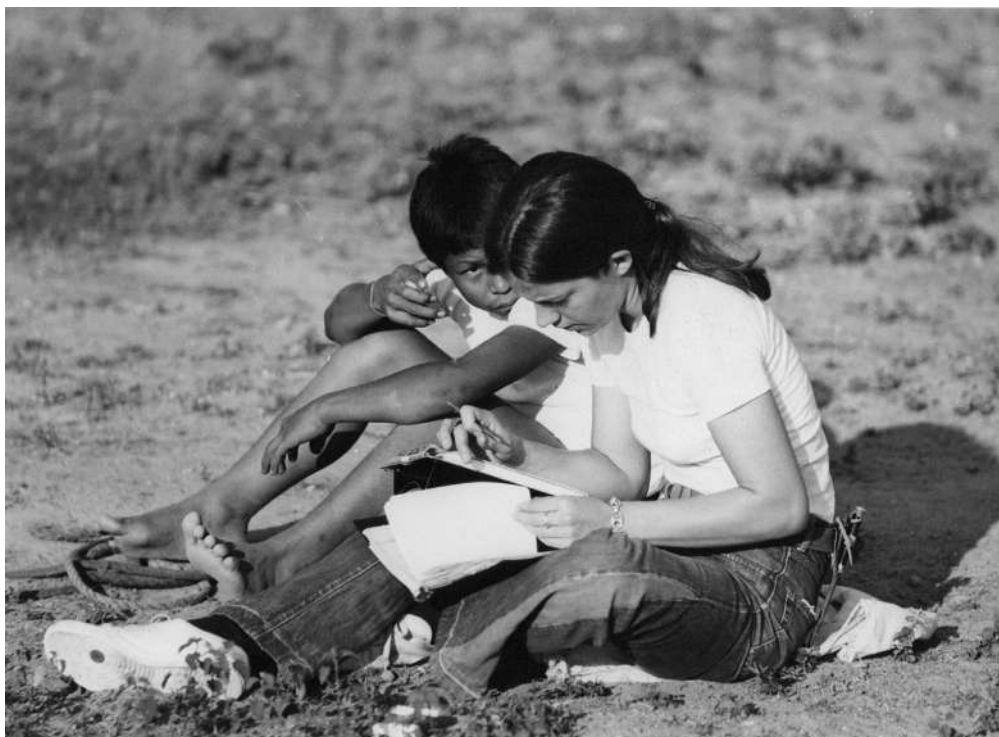


# THE FIELD







































1. Sylvia doing fieldwork with notebooks and carrying her camera, Mato Grosso, Córrego Grande. The name that the Bororo attributed to her is *Kuogori Pijiwuda*, "The one that came from the hill where the yellow flowers of Paratudo grow". **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection, 1973.

2. Sylvia doing a genealogical survey in the indigenous community of Córrego Grande, in 1973, in dialogue with Kogenawo, a Bororo child. Laura and Isabel, her daughters, performing body paintings, 1983. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection.

3. Portrait of Sylvia by Jorge Eduardo Leal Medeiros. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection, 1973.

4. Highlighted, Laura and Isabel, Sylvia's daughters, 1983. In the lower right corner, Sylvia and a Bororo child swimming in the São Lourenço River, 1970. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes' personal collection.

5. Hupd'ah children playing of building houses, Alto Rio Negro. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, February 2012.

6. House built by Hupd'ah children. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, February 2012.

7. At the top, a basket made by Hupd'ah women. At the bottom, the details of a fire pit and a hammock inside one of the houses at Alto Rio Negro. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2012.

8. Alto Rio Negro; it takes two days of boat trip from São Gabriel da Cachoeira to the Hupd'ah indigenous community on the banks of Tiquié River. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes; portrait of Sylvia by Danilo Paiva Ramos, 2012.

9. On a trip to South Ethiopia, Sylvia tried to oppose her images, those that people have in mind when they think about this

country - images that were consolidated after a period of hunger between 1983-1985, when nearly one million people have died. The only African country that was not a colony, this multilingual country, with over 80 ethnolinguistic groups, presents lots of diversity and its culture is equally rich and impressive. The top photograph, which was presented in an exhibition, was shown, at first, without the woman on the right, since she seems to diverge from the other two, who are wearing adornments. On a second exhibition, Sylvia reflected on the photographs she had previously chosen and the way she had organized the exhibition, so she decided to present the photograph as it was originally. In the photograph below, a "wooden pillow": it is an object that most men carry with them and it is this "pillow" that we see in the hands of this man. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

10. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes and Camila, her daughter, in the field in Ethiopia. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

11. In Ethiopia, a group of people observe the vehicle where Sylvia and her friend Elizabeth Ewart, British anthropologist and professor at the University of Oxford, who is married to Tadesse Wolde, Ethiopian anthropologist who was, at the time, coordinator of the Christensen Fund - an entity that gives financial support to revalue culture at South Ethiopia. In that region, cars are like OVNI's, it becomes an event when they see one. At a second exhibition, the same picture was presented next to the original image, which shows the interior of the vehicle - that was, after all, what people were looking at. It shows a movement of looking and being looked at. **Photos:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

## **LABORATORY OF IMAGE AND SOUND IN ANTHROPOLOGY**









1. Sylvia with her students in LISA's auditorium. **Photo:** Bianca Vasconcellos, 2017.

2. During a meeting to look at the photos of the Xikrin collection gathered by Lux Vidal. Sitting at the table (from left to right), Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Mariana Floria Baumgaertner, Lux Vidal and Isabella Finholdt. Standing in the background, Mihai Leaha. **Photo:** Paula Morgado, 2019.

## **CLAUDIA ANDUJAR, LUX VIDAL AND MAUREEN BISILLIAT**





1. On the left, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, Claudia Andujar and Lux Vidal in the exhibition “The Yanomami Struggle”, at Instituto Moreira Salles - Paulista. **Photo:** Laila Kontic, 2018. On the right, Claudia Andujar and Maureen Bisilliat at the opening of Instituto Moreira Salles - Paulista. **Photo:** Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, 2017.

# THE INTERVIEW



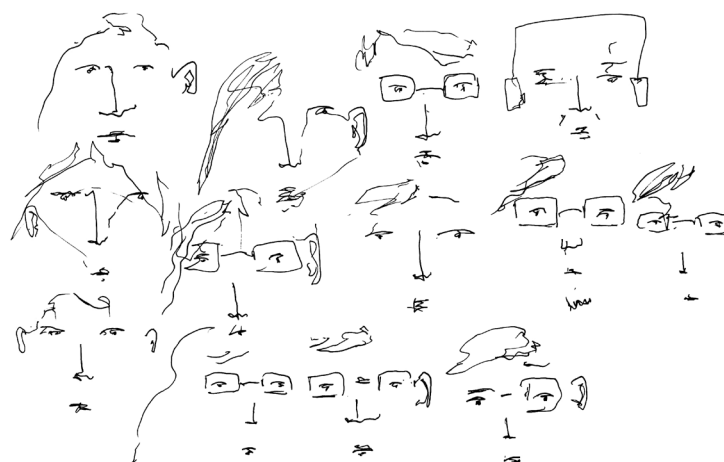














1. Sylvia in her office. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

2. On the left, Sylvia in an interview with her advisees. On the right, a screenshot of Sylvia's computer during the interview.

**Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

3. Gestures and notes taken by Sylvia during the interview.

**Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

4. Behind the scenes of the filming carried out by Ricardo Dionísio Fernandes, LISA's audiovisual technician; Maíra Bühler, filmmaker and Sylvia's former advisee; and Iago Calmon Angeli, LISA's audiovisual monitor. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

5. Sylvia and the drawings made during the interview. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021; **Drawing (top right):** Tatiana Lotierzo, 2021; **Drawing (bottom right):** Jeferson Carvalho, 2021.

# THE HOUSE

































1. Sylvia with her first camera, which was gifted to her when she was 6 years old. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021; personal collection of Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, c. 1955.

2. In her houses' garden, among many fruit trees. Looking at the persimmon tree, loaded with the fruits still green, which will only be harvested in the winter (above). Sylvia also shows the olive tree that her cousin Fernanda planted when her granddaughter Olivia was born (below). **Top photo:** Laila Kontic, 2021. **Bottom photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

3. While petting Zara, she explains that the other dog, Maui, had recently undergone a surgery in his front paw, and needed to use an "Elizabethan collar" so as to not lick his stitches, which he pulled out frequently. **Photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

4. Memories from different temporalities coexist in the room. A crystal vase, gifted from her advisor, Thekla Hartmann, when she defended her doctoral thesis at USP. Detail of the Plik analog camera, produced in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s (at the bottom). **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

5. As she handles the camera, Sylvia brings out memories and gestures from when she took photographs as a child. In the background, a colorized photo of Alice, her maternal grandmother (c. 1930). **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

6. The photographs are present in every room of the house. After preparing some coffee, Sylvia shows the kitchen door, designed by her to fix and make photo combinations with magnets, where several moments are close to each other, especially from her family history. **Top photo:** Laila Kontic, 2021. **Bottom photo:** Kelwin Marques, 2021.

7. Many albums and boxes containing photographs drive Sylvia's professional and personal trajectories, which merge as we see

her daughters during field research and her field interlocutors in moments of her everyday life. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

8. Details of her trip to Pakistan in 1994, when she filmed and photographed the wedding of Sonia and Omar, whose celebrations typically last a month (top). The trip resulted in the movie "A wedding in Pakistan" (1994): <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9dwdC4-3ncos>>. Laura's records in the Bororo village in the naming ritual (bottom). **Top left photo and right photo:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021. **Bottom left photo:** Kelwin Marques, 2021.

9. Notebooks and field diaries from her research among the Bororo. Detail of the standardized forms that, according to Sylvia, all Thekla Hartmann students should organize from the data collected in the field (top). **Photos:** Laila Kontic, 2021.

10. Drawers with thousands of negatives, from which many of the photographs were used in the montages for her Lecturer-Professor thesis at USP. **Photos:** Rafael Hupsel, 2021.

11. "Sylvia looking for research grants", photo at Estação da Luz, taken by her friend Miguel Pacheco Chaves, around the 2000s.

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## ABSTRACT

To enter Sylvia Caiuby Novaes's universe, we are invited to come aboard on a real journey. For someone who has photography as a central part of her personal and affective trajectory, there could not be a better way to enter it. This visual essay, built with many hands is a composition of photographs from this trajectory, about which we indicate its itinerary. This montages result from long conversations, and research on Sylvia's archives and memories; they take us to meet people and places that this anthropologist has loved, and where she has built homes. In a play of mirrors, Sylvia revisits different moments of her trajectory, sewn in a weft where lived and remembered events reveal to us something typical of everything that is constantly being created.

### KEYWORDS

Visual  
Anthropology;  
photography;  
montage;  
trajectory; Sylvia  
Caiuby Novaes.

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# LIVE LIKE AN EAGLE. A SENSITIVE APPROACH TO THE TRAJECTORY OF A CUBAN IMMIGRANT IN CANADA

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*The Eagle* (2015), the short film directed by Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier and Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji, translates some of the textures present in social life. At first, the filmed image of the eagle invites to reflect on the power of the senses. The panoramic vision, the attentive and focused gaze, the power of capturing noises, the flight dancing with the wind, the caution in each movement... Everything reveals a set of bodily and sensorial perceptions.

By informing that the narrative will tell the story of Miguel Aguila, the scenes lead the senses to associate this name with the eagle, the one that appears at the beginning, tracing its routes accurately in the blue sky, emitting its noises in communication with the world through all its opulence. However, we have to deal with an elderly subject, with a clumsy gait, a Cuban immigrant in Canada, and 'strangely' outsider in terms of social conventions. This apparent contradiction reveals in fact the complexity of a character. It also deconstructs our preconceptions about walking through life, by calling for reflection that to be sure and to falter is part of the process of the human condition itself.

The short film results from an interview with the singularities of the experience of a former prisoner who, after fighting many struggles in his life, faces the challenge of cancer. Both his nature and his last name are compared to the characteristics of the eagle. The interlocution seeks a 'framing' that locates the interviewee in the environment present in his routine. Images of the streets, the stores, the traffic, the coffee shop, demonstrate a place of tranquility and movement.

The dialogue takes place in a coffee shop, and before a narrative of life is conducted, film cameras register the gaze, the detours, sighs, laughs, silences, the reflections, restlessness, non-verbal exchanges, details that escape in the physiognomy. The eagle reveals itself through all these elements, seconds before the interpellations of the anthropologist. In the relaxed atmosphere, live music and a drink invite to relaxation and satisfaction. As he recounts the trajectory that led him there, the environment goes on its way, with people working, sometimes attentive to the ongoing dialogue. He speaks with the nuances of a navigator, who has known several places in the world aboard a cruise ship, and therefore has the wisdom of who travels the seas and the land with the same self-confidence. Miguel Aguila shows an ability to choose the important facts of his life narrative, interweaving and articulating the past with the present.

He introduces himself, names and qualifies without any kind of shame, informing the production team where he came from, what he has done and is doing wrong, and where he wants to go. Because of this, the team



includes itself in the film and does not foster an illusion of neutrality. Despite the large number of vicissitudes in his life, he seems to have mastery over it, through choices, not always planned, but conscious. Substance trafficking, the escape from Cuba, the illegal immigration, generated a number of arrests, deportations, disease that are, in spite of everything, narrated with naturalness and even a 'what' of haughtiness. Thus, he shows in his language how firm and decisive he is, and how he is not afraid of the official structures and systems, building up an image of a 'bully boy' for the listener, able to stand up to everything and everyone that turns against him. On the way to his residence, the steps reveal tastes, pleasures, restlessness, conflicts, and the sagacity of who always sees himself in the condition of a good observer.

However, when entering his home, we can see a cozy, organized, and colorful house, with berets, panels, and pictures of Cuba, bears, puppies, among other things that would not be 'expected' in the home of a man with such trajectory and way of presenting himself. He announces, «Welcome to my paradise!» The coziness of his home can be seen in the eyes of the research team. The feeling is captured and the record is shared. In other words, Miguel Aguila declares his condition as a worker, the paths he walked until he was exposed to the labor of the mines and the oil industry. The contamination was already circulating around him, affecting men and women, until the pains also reached his body to reveal the existence of a tumor. The challenges and costs of treatment, the surgery, all these elements follow in a narrative flow of tension, trust, and overcoming. Despite all the difficulties, he reaffirms that he will not give up his pleasures.

In this moment it is possible to see how affectionate he is with the anthropologist and the whole team, giving them gifts, smiles, and showing how much he considers himself loved by the people he cares for in his work. If on the streets, the encounter with the local culture prevails, the domestic environment reveals the symbols of his country of origin and his attachment to them. At home, the dialogue invites to think about the different perceptions of comfort, well-being, satisfaction, and happiness.

The man, permeated by the contradictions of his own existence, works in a support service for homeless people and shows himself very respected, helpful, and affectionate to everyone with whom he relates. At times, the plot leads to rationalize the contradiction of what one thinks about his history and memories, what one sees and feels when watching it, because the filmic frame moves one closer to his realities, awakens affection, a graciousness and tenderness with his existence. Seeing him dancing, smiling and having fun in the last scene of the short film makes the eyes light up, arouses laugh, and his behavior enchants.

Undoubtedly, each image, each cut of the camera and the movements point to the potency of the senses, of how these elements that are sometimes secondary or invisible in scientific research are important as tools for understanding social life (Simmel 1907/2015, Laplantine 2005, Gélard 2016). The microactivities of everyday life, therefore, produce details that can help in the knowledge of a certain social context, practices, beliefs, values, as well as a singularity of perception in relation to the external observer. Audiovisual tools can broaden the field of observation and capture elements or details unreachable to the senses of an observer/interviewer. It constitutes a contribution that qualifies the obtaining of information and nuances that escape immediate attention.

Finally, it is possible to return to that initial questioning of «Who are we talking about? A man or a bird? ». As a response, «a bird-man » emerges, full of contradictions, strength, beauty, movement... but also a friend, a spirit who flies without limits to everywhere and nowhere and, simply, LIVE.

Beyond the eagle as a posture, a way of being in the world marked by the experience of migration, we can finally ask ourselves if it could not also be associated with the place and attributes of the researcher, as well as with all the subjects of a research in their dynamic of being in the world.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a review of the film *The Eagle*, directed by anthropologists Alexandrine Boudreault-Fournier & Rose Satiko Gitirana Hikiji. It focuses on the contributions of the sensitive approach of the trajectory of a Cuban immigrant in Canada, Miguel Aguila, provided by the use of audiovisual tools. It aims to reflect on the potential of the senses and sensitive perception in the exercise of analyzing social life, and more specifically the issues related to migration, illness and other lived difficulties. It highlights how, by relying on the associative, sensitive and imagetical dimensions around the figure of an eagle, the audiovisual tools can help to expand the field of observation but also the forms of writing the research. They constitute an important contribution in obtaining elements and nuances that escape immediate attention. The sounds and images also allowing a fine reconstitution of these nuances.

## KEYWORDS

Senses;  
Perception;  
Sensory Approach;  
Sensorial  
anthropology;  
Visual  
anthropology



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**Authorship contribution.** Marciglei Brito Morais, Lais Chagas de Carvalho, Marina Rougeon: conception, data collection and analysis, preparation and writing of the manuscript, discussion of results.

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# AUDIOVISUAL ETHNOMUSICOLOGY: AN OLD-NEW FIELD OF STUDY

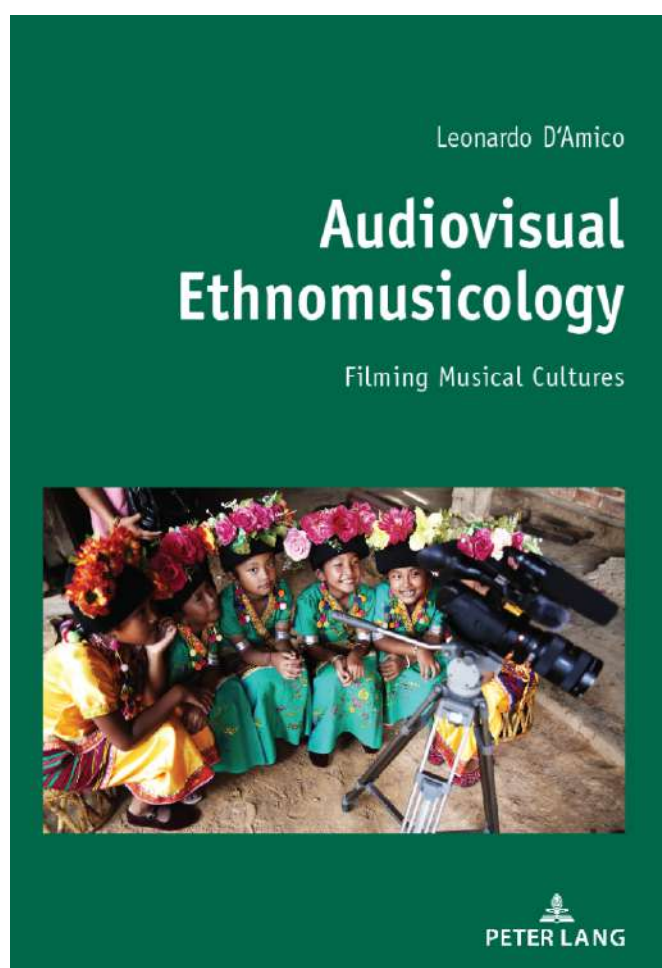
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1. This review was written during my postdoctoral studies at the Department of Anthropology of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). I would like to thank the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) for the scholarship (2019/27545-3).

In the field of ethnomusicology, sound recording is widely considered an essential tool for the analysis and interpretation of what was sung and/or played during the fieldwork, the preservation and dissemination of musical cultures, or as a product of the research associated with the written text. However, as Killick (2013) points out, ethnomusicological work is also based on visual evidence, such as the careful observation of how participants interact in a particular musical event, the transcription of works, and the audiovisual recording. The last modality in particular has increasingly drawn the attention of ethnomusicologists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, largely due to the cheapening and popularization of filmmaking devices.

While in anthropology, considered a neighboring discipline to ethnomusicology, important works have long been shaping the subfield of visual anthropology<sup>2</sup>, most manuals of ethnomusicology have not discussed the use of audiovisual media for the recording of musical practices<sup>3</sup>, the majority of the reflections being in the form of articles<sup>4</sup>. At the institutional level, the situation is not very different. Taking Brazilian universities as an example, while it is possible to identify quite a several anthropology departments that possess their centers and laboratories of visual anthropology (Peixoto 2019), teaching and research in ethnomusicology usually hold a minority position in music departments whose *modus operandi* is based on the conservatory (Araújo and Salgado e Silva 2009), with no technical structure (shooting equipment, projection rooms, post-production assistants, etc.) or continuous training programs that encourage and enable future ethnomusicologists to make use of audiovisual media in their research projects.

An important step toward a greater presence of audiovisual media in ethnomusicology was the colloquium *Methods and Techniques of Film and Videorecording in Ethnomusicological Research*, organized in 1988 by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM) and reported by Baily (1988), as well as the publication, in the following year, of the dossier *Film and Video in Ethnomusicology* in *The World of Music* journal. However, it was necessary to wait until 2015 for the creation of a constant forum for discussion among ethnofilmmakers, the ICTM Study Group on Audiovisual Ethnomusicology. With the mission of investigating the potential of audiovisual media in ethnomusicology from the axes of research, preservation, and dissemination, the group has already held two international symposiums (in 2016 and 2018) and has taken the forefront in establishing audiovisual ethnomusicology as a major sub-discipline. This is the context

2. I highlight the works of Banks and Morphy (1997), Banks and Ruby (2012), Crawford and Turton (1992), Grimshaw (2008), Hockings (1995) [1975], Macdougall (1998; 2006), Pink (2001) and Ruby (2000).

3. A notable exception is *The Ethnomusicologist*, by Mantle Hood (1982) [1971], which mentions the use of the film in chapter 5, dedicated to the technical aspects of fieldwork.

4. Some of the best-known works are the ones by Baily (1989; 2009), Feld (1976), Titon (1992) and Zemp (1988; 1990).

of the recent launch (2020) of the book *Audiovisual Ethnomusicology: Filming Musical Cultures*, by Leonardo D'Amico, an Italian ethnomusicologist and filmmaker who chairs the study group at ICTM. Made up of seven chapters and an appendix, the work intends to provide a historical overview of ethnomusicological film, the different theoretical and methodological approaches adopted by ethnofilmmakers, as well as the various ways of using visual media to represent musical cultures (p. 39).

The preface is signed by Timothy Rice, which takes on special meaning since one of the definitions of ethnomusicology that he proposes in his book *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (2014) is “word-based, reasoned discourse about all music” (2014, 10). Although Rice acknowledges that visual documentation has become almost mandatory in fieldwork (2014, 40), it is clear how prevalent is the idea that knowledge production in ethnomusicology occurs in the form of thesis, articles, and books. In his preface, Rice recognizes the limitation of his definition and states that D'Amico's book can shed light on a “parallel path” (p. 17) of ethnomusicology that is still not properly explored.

The first chapter seeks to highlight the importance of audiovisual representation of musical cultures, given that music is a multi-sensory phenomenon, and that audiovisual media can document simultaneously the sound, visual, and contextual dimensions. In that sense, the use of audiovisual media would agree with the very nature of ethnomusicological work, since researchers in this field of study tend to be more interested in the study of musical processes rather than specific works. The author also gives a brief historical overview of the use of film in ethnomusicology, which will be developed in the following chapters. At this point, it is possible to raise a first question: considering that D'Amico recognizes the difficulty of tracing a historical panorama of ethnomusicological film, given its strong connection with ethnographic film (p. 23), how to establish the specificity of the former without falling into a “chimerical and academic exercise” about which Luc de Heusch (1962, 9) had already been concerned in his attempt to define the sociological film? According to D'Amico, even though ethnomusicological and ethnographic films have areas of overlap, the focus of the first one on music-making and musical performances in context (p. 23) assures its own denomination.

The second chapter seeks to define the range of the term “ethnomusicological film” from several fronts. At first, D'Amico discusses the opposing terms *research film* and *documentary film* (the first as a support for research and the second as an autonomous work), and *world-music film* and *ethnomusicological film*, which would be distinguished mainly by the importance given to ethnographic work (higher in the second type). In the latter pair, when seeking to establish a contrast between the “catchy” character (p.



45) of the world-music films produced by European television stations and the “ethnomusicological correctness” (p. 47) of ethnomusicological films, the author treads on dangerous ground, as it seems that there is a valorization of the scientific character of the latter over what Harbert (2018, 10) calls the “aesthetic attention” in filmmaking, crucial for the spectator to get into the “filmic world.” Although this view is attenuated throughout the book – in this regard, the section about the impressionist mode of representation is especially enriching –, the academic/scientific dimension is indeed relevant to D’Amico, since he defines ethnomusicological film as an “audiovisual representation of music cultures through moving and sounding images, using methodologies and theoretical perspectives developed in the framework of ethnomusicology, and capable of conveying information of ethnomusicological value” (p. 47). It is worth asking ourselves, however, if the excessive search for a supposed “ethnomusicological value” in audiovisual representation would not be turned into a restraint on creative freedom, a concern already expressed by Paul Henley regarding the intellectual training of the anthropologist (Henley and Flores 2009, 94). The chapter also presents the modes of filmic representation (expositive, observative, reflexive and impressionist) proposed by Barbash and Taylor (1997); it proposes a taxonomy of filmic content organized around three axes (thematic, organological and biographical); and it addresses issues ranging from ethics in audiovisual representation to the numerous uses of ethnomusicological film (research tool, teaching material, preservation of musical cultures, among others).

The third chapter highlights films produced in three European institutions (Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film - IWF, in Germany; Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - CNRS, in France; and National Film and Television School - NFTS, in England), in addition to the work of Hugo Zemp. Although the association of these institutions with certain styles of cinematography may have been inspired by the guidelines written by its prominent members (Dauer 1969; Rouch 1974; Baily 1989), the very panorama made by D’Amico shows that, especially in the case of CNRS, the films produced there can cover quite diverse themes and aesthetics. Taking into account that the production of the NFTS was reduced to a single individual (John Baily), perhaps the author could have highlighted the productions of specific filmmakers, as in the excellent section dedicated to Hugo Zemp, rather than suggesting a stylistic uniformity of each of the institutions.

The fourth chapter uses the geographical aspect as a way of cataloging ethnomusicological films. Surprisingly, the section dedicated to Latin America does not mention Brazil, a country whose vast and varied musical culture has been the subject of panoramic series of wide circulation, such as *Música do Brasil* (direction by Belizário França and idealization

by the anthropologist Hermano Vianna), exhibited by MTV Brasil, and *Taquaras, tambores e violas* (direction by Hidalgo Homero and research by the anthropologist Alice Villela), aired on CINEBRASIL TV. Although films about Brazilian musical manifestations are mentioned in other parts of the book, I think it would have been worthwhile to include them in this section for those who are interested in getting quick access to this information. In any case, the survey made by D'Amico has the merit of expanding the panorama of non-fiction films beyond the commonly cited American and European productions.

The fifth chapter highlights the use of audiovisual media both as a tool for conducting analyses that surpasses the dimension of sound (interactions between musicians and audiences in musical performance, in Regula Qureshi's videographic method; the relationship between the technique of executing an instrument and musical structures, in Gerhard Kubik's frame-by-frame analysis; comparison of body movements from different cultures, in Alan Lomax's *Choreometrics* project) and as a possibility of visual representation of musical structures. This last mode, used by Hugo Zemp, has been unexplored in ethnomusicological films and may be of particular interest to ethnomusicologists who seek to present their transcriptions synchronously to visual and sound elements or do not wish to give up the explanatory clarity of the written representation in audiovisual productions.

The sixth chapter focuses on filming music "in action," covering the execution and/or construction of musical instruments, processes of musical interaction between musicians and audience, and the transmission of musical knowledge. The illustration of the second point by D'Amico, from his film *Cantar l'ottava*, is especially interesting and makes us wish that accounts of his experience as a filmmaker and film festival director had had more space in the book.

The beginning of the seventh chapter deals with the dissemination of ethnomusicological films on "big and small screens," representing the movie theater and the television, respectively. It would worth a mention of the even smaller screens of the omnipresent cell phones, which have been used by ethnomusicologists both for filming musical practices in fieldwork and for the dissemination of their productions on the internet, since it is not always possible to present their films at festivals or on television channels. It should also be noted that nowadays it is common that musicians themselves, even those belonging to the so-called traditional cultures, film themselves and publicize their actions on social networks, which has opened, through the use of netnographic approach (Kozinets 2014), a new and promising field of research for ethnomusicology. The chapter also presents other themes of ethnomusicological film, such as

memory, identity, and political and social engagement, which, despite their relevance, do not communicate directly with the previous discussion and could be allocated in a separate section. Finally, the appendix presents a long and valuable list of films organized into the categories shown in the second chapter.

It should be said that the specific questions made here do not mean to diminish the value of this work for ethnomusicology. D'Amico presents a combination of bibliographic and cinematographic knowledge about filming music that, I venture to say, few people could rival. Just as impressive is his didactic ability in organizing the vast amount of information in categories of easy understanding, which will be of great use to teachers who want to organize courses in this area and/or filmmakers searching for references to their creative work. Likewise, the extensive filmography raised by the author will be a fundamental reference for the establishment of future collections of audiovisual ethnomusicology laboratories.

Finally, I think that D'Amico's book can establish an interesting dialogue with the also recent book *American Music Documentary: Five Case Studies of Ciné-Ethnomusicology*, by Benjamin Harbert (2018). Although the two works present significant differences in approach – D'Amico proposes a panoramic view, while Harbert selects five documentaries for in-depth analysis –, both consider that certain films about music produced by non-academic filmmakers may be part of the field of audiovisual ethnomusicology (D'Amico) or cine-ethnomusicology (Harbert). In that sense, the subdiscipline lives a paradox: it can be considered to have a long history of ethnomusicological films *avant la lettre*, but has a long way to go in terms of theoretical reflection and institutional presence. In any case, it remains the wish that this renewed interest in audiovisual representation in ethnomusicology be no longer a chapter of the discrepancy between the film as a promise and its peripheral presence in the discipline (Harbert 2018, 4), but an effective opening to new ways of feeling and thinking music.


**TRANSLATION**  
The author and  
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de Sá

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# IMAGONURE KUOGORI PIJIWUDA JI, TALKING WITH SYLVIA

FILM



The film above refers to the interview with Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, presented in the TIR section along with the visual essay *Mirror of Memory: Sylvia Caiuby Novaes through photography*. The reader will hereby be able to see and hear Sylvia, exploring her sensorial world, as she dialogues with several advisees who have been a part of her professional trajectory. In the interview, we have access to the worlds of sense that Sylvia created in various research fields, at the University of São Paulo, where she has always worked, and in the house where she lives in São Paulo.

The interview consists of two parts, covering two days of recording at Sylvia's home, on October 25 and 29, 2021.

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# DWELLINGS, *JABUTICABAS* AND AFFECTIONS — TRAJECTORIES WITH SYLVIA CAIUBY NOVAES<sup>1</sup>

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1. The interview was carried out by several authors, all of Sylvia's advisees or former advisees, according to her suggestion. Although all of them participated at some point in the elaboration of the script or the conduct of the interview, we highlight below some activities that involved, in addition to the authors, interns and LISA employees. Transcription: Fernanda Caires de Moraes. Editing the interview (text): Bruna Triana, Francirosy Campos Barbosa, Mariana Flória Baumgaertner, Tatiana Lotierzo. Presentation of the interview (text): Francirosy Campos Barbosa, Kelly Koide, Rose Satiko G. Hikiji and Tatiana Lotierzo. Image editing: Jeferson Carvalho, Kelly Koide, Laila Zilber Kontic, Luis Felipe Kojima Hirano, Rafael Hupsel. Photography (Still): personal collection of Sylvia Caiuby Novaes, LISA-USP archives, Danilo Paiva Ramos, Kelwin Marques Garcia dos Santos, Laila Zilber Kontic, Rafael Hupsel. Drawings: Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Jeferson Carvalho, Tatiana Lotierzo. Cameras, audio and editing: Maíra Bühler, Ricardo Dionisio and Iago Calmon Angeli.

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### ABSTRACT

Sylvia Caiuby Novaes is a Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of São Paulo (USP) and has been dedicated to research and teaching in anthropology for nearly 50 years. Among other accomplishments, she is one of the pioneers of visual anthropology in Brazil, is the founder of the *Laboratory of Image and Sound of Anthropology* (LISA) and the editor in charge of the *Gesture, Image and Sound. Journal of Anthropology* (GIS). In this interview, conducted by more than 30 advisees from different generations, Sylvia talks about her trajectory, projects, worldview, her various travels, her fascination with field research and the university. When telling about her academic and personal trajectory, Sylvia reflects on her relationship with photography and the production of images.

### KEYWORDS

Sylvia Caiuby  
Novaes; Interview;  
Trajectory; Visual  
anthropology;  
University.

This interview marks the trajectory of a researcher with almost 50 years of work at USP, 30 years at LISA — Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology, and 26 years coordinating GRAVI — Group of Visual Anthropology. In the gardens of her home, we gathered some memories from so many years of dedication to the academic life, individual and collective production. A token of appreciation given by her advisees in 2010, when she became Full Professor of the Department of Anthropology at USP, the *jabuticaba* tree was the way we found to express to Sylvia that her tree had generated a fruitful offspring.

Aware of the fact that trees are constantly bearing new fruits, Sylvia refuses to be interviewed only by one generation of students, once her crops continue to be intense and new shoots should also be present. Gathering more than 30 people in the same place would not be feasible during the pandemic, so the interview was conducted remotely over two days.

A good part of her advisees and former advisees formed the mosaic of a digital platform while a small team of former advisees, worker and intern at LISA recorded and photographed Sylvia in her home's study. What you are about to read crisscrosses multiple stories that are not necessarily aligned with each other, but undoubtedly connected to this tree that makes everything bloom in her trajectory among the Bororo, images, trips, photographs, daughters, grandkids, advisees, multiple writings, presentations, and exhibitions that would never fit into one single interview, but which inhabit the various memories and forgetting of a lifetime.

Sylvia started at the university in 1968, a landmark both for Brazil's political history and the general transformation of youth, politics, and the role of intellectuals. The so-called 68 Generation at USP protagonized the Maria Antonia battle with Mackenzie University, a confrontation between left and right-wing students.

After her Scientific Initiation<sup>2</sup> research under the supervision of Thekla Hartmann, Sylvia becomes a Master's candidate in 1972. It is over this time that a new horizon is presented to her, in which the field research occupies a major role — and she starts studying indigenous societies. Sylvia spends two years among the Bororo in Mato Grosso, and two weeks among the Guarani and Kaingang in São Paulo. This is when her collection of photos of the Bororo, with approximately 2500 negatives, starts to come to life.

Her work at USP's faculty starts in March, 1974, when she is hired as an Assistant in the field of Anthropology by the Department of Social Sciences as a part-time worker. In 1976 she becomes a full-time professor, and in 1979 is fully dedicated to teaching and researching for the university. Her tenure as Professor of Anthropology is awarded in 1990, when the Department of Anthropology is finally separated from the former Department of Social Sciences.

By the end of 1979, a moment of democratic opening in the Brazilian scenario, the Center for Indigenist Work — CTI — is created: an entity she co-founded alongside a group of anthropologists, educators, and indigenists. At CTI, Sylvia has an important political role in defense of indigenous rights, for both the recognition of their territories and preservation of their cultures.

In 1980, she defends her Master's thesis: *Mulheres, homens e heróis: dinâmica e permanência através do cotidiano da vida Bororo* (Women, men, and heroes: dynamics and permanence through the daily lives of the Bororo), a study which, by looking at women, stands out from other

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2. Translator's Note: Scientific Initiation researches are junior research grants awarded to undergraduate students in Brazilian universities.

anthropological works produced at the time. The book with the same title is published in 1987 by the FFLCH-USP press. During her master's degree, conducted over eight years at a time when deadlines were very different from today, Sylvia also has two daughters, Laura and Isabel, who used to accompany their mother to the indigenous communities from a very early age. Her PhD dissertation is defended in 1990, entitled: *Jogos de espelhos — imagens da representação de si através dos outros*. The manuscript was published in Brazil by EDUSP (Universidade de São Paulo Press) in 1993; in English by the University of Texas Press in 1997, under the title: *The Play of Mirrors – the representation of self mirrored in the other*, and in Italian in 2018, by the Co-op Libreria Editrice Università di Padova, under the title: *Gioco di Specchi, Immagini della rappresentazione di sé attraverso gli altri*. At the time of her dissertation's defense, Sylvia is pregnant with her third daughter, Camila. Motherhood, her daughters, and academic life will be explored throughout the interview through the eyes of her advisees. In 1993, sponsored by FAPESP, Sylvia becomes a post-doctoral fellow at Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at University of Manchester, in the United Kingdom, this time accompanied by her three daughters then aged 15, 13, and 2.

In 1991, Sylvia inaugurated the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology (LISA). In her Inaugural Professorial Lecture at USP, Sylvia described LISA as the result of a joint effort, a work environment filled with joy and a space for relationships without rigid hierarchical structures, where undergraduate students had the opportunity to take important decisions, employees could have an opinion on their academic work, and professors would also engage in manual labor. Sylvia also took care of LISA's gardens the same way she takes care of her own. In this conversation, Sylvia speaks about the lab — international reference in the field of research with image and sound in Anthropology — as her home, and underscores the accessibility ramps that she made sure to include in the place — fundamental to receive so many female graduate students and their baby strollers.

During her post-doctoral research in Manchester, Sylvia produced her first film *Al-Masoom, wonder women*. Shortly after that, she is invited to Pakistan, where she made her second film *A wedding in Pakistan*, which received an Honorable Mention at the Pierre Verger Award from the Brazilian Anthropology Congress, in 1998.

After her return from England in 1995, Sylvia established the Group of Visual Anthropology — GRAVI, and has the first thematic research project approved and sponsored by FAPESP, under the title *Image in focus in Social Sciences*. In four years, the project set up three video editing stations and the acquisition of equipment to record sound and image that started our



activities in audiovisual production at the lab. Besides the various theses and dissertations, scientific papers, videos, and exhibitions, this project also resulted in the publication of *Scriptures of the Image*, by EDUSP and FAPESP, in 2004.

Sylvia is again a post-doctoral fellow between 2001 and 2003, this time at the Centre for Indigenous American Studies and Exchange, at the University of Saint Andrews, in Scotland. At the time, Joanna Overing and Peter Gow become her americanist interlocutors.

Between 2003 and 2007, Sylvia coordinated a second thematic project sponsored by FAPESP, entitled *Alterity, cultural expressions of the sensitive world, and the construction of reality — old issues, new orientations*, and between 2010 and 2015, a third one *The experience of film in Anthropology*, whose results have been published in the edited volume *The experience of Image in ethnography* by Terceiro Nome editors in 2016.

Each one of these projects had dozens of researchers, from junior undergraduate advisees to post-doctoral fellows, and result in productions such as books, articles, films, photos, theses, dissertations, exhibitions, and national and international seminars that helped consolidate USP as an important hub for Visual Anthropology both at the national and international levels.

During this time, Sylvia defended her professorship thesis at USP in 2006, entitled *Ethnography and Image*, which gathered articles, photo essays, and videos. By the end of 2006, she is invited by Anne-Christine Taylor, director of the recently inaugurated Musée du quai Branly, to present her writings in the institution. She was the first invited lecturer at the Musée du quai Branly in the “Chercheurs invités” program at the Museum’s Department of Education and Research. From Paris, she goes to Oxford, where Elizabeth Ewart and Marcus Banks invite her to be a Visiting Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Oxford. Many of her advisees and former advisees were able to work in such a prestigious British institution due to the work previously done by Sylvia, be it during their post-doctoral fellowships (Andréa Barbosa, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Francirosy Campos Barbosa) or during their doctoral research (Victor Issa).

In 2010, Sylvia becomes Full Professor at the Department of Anthropology, a moment when some of us “planted” a jabuticaba tree (*Plinia cauliflora*) in her garden. Alongside such intense production as a researcher and leader of research projects, Sylvia also became Head of the Department three times: in 1999, 2001, and 2007, an activity that she highlights as extremely important, given the 10 new professor chairs and three vacancies for full professor, she was able to get for the Department, the “search for better

working, study, and research conditions”, and “the efforts to build an environment in which everybody felt equally responsible for the construction of common grounds”, words used in her Full Professorship memorial.

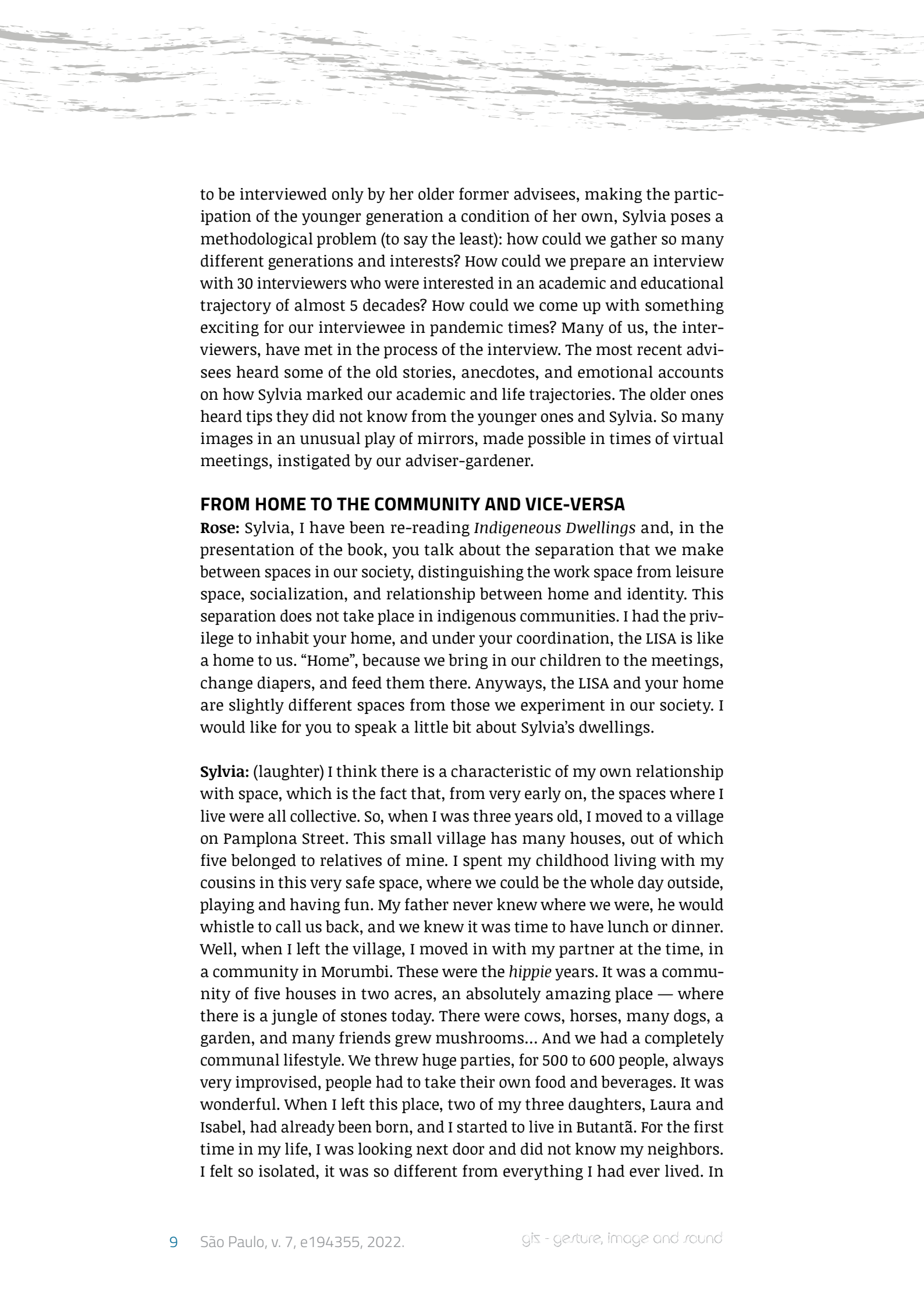
More recently, Sylvia has developed projects with a smaller group. As she says in the interview, she “would rather drive a minivan” at this time in her career. Entitled “Photographs and Trajectories: Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat”, her current project sponsored by FAPESP tackles the universe of these three photographers.

In the beginning of the 1970s, Sylvia was Claudia Andujar’s student in a Photography course at the Brazil’s Arts School. Going to that school has marked her life and relationship with images, especially with photography. Sylvia says that Claudia used to recommend that her students left without their cameras, making photos with their hands — a way to train their gaze. She is given her first camera by an uncle, Cleso, and learns how to use it with two friends — Paulo Cleto and Marcos Rufino. The joy of leaving her home to take pictures without an agenda also involves a process of reflection and thinking through walking.

In her first field trips with the Bororo, Guaranis and Kaingangs, she uses photography as a research medium. These experiences were conducted as part of an elective discipline: Introduction to Brazilian Ethnography, offered by Thekla Hartmann, in 1970. Photography then acquires a central role in Sylvia’s work as anthropologist and she has organized various exhibitions and also published some of these pictures making sure to preserve the relationships established with the images by the indigenous peoples. The three women that are part of her current project — Claudia, Lux, and Maureen — have a profound impact on Sylvia, who recognizes multiple similarities in their trajectories: independent women ahead of their own professional and personal lives.

Sylvia continues to renew and broaden the reach of Anthropology made through images. Various themes with which she works go through a careful examination of the notion of image and its implications. These are dreams, mirror reflections, projections, appearances, memories, ideas, metaphors, descriptions, drawings, paintings, among other images. All of them are dimensions of an extremely complex phenomenon, which Sylvia articulates through the production of photographs, videos, and texts. This way, she also opens up the possibility to make an Anthropology beyond the text — a universe that transforms the conditions of possibility to “know with” the others.

And it is no surprise that, even when she is invited for an interview, Sylvia decided to explore other possibilities of knowledge! By refusing




to be interviewed only by her older former advisees, making the participation of the younger generation a condition of her own, Sylvia poses a methodological problem (to say the least): how could we gather so many different generations and interests? How could we prepare an interview with 30 interviewers who were interested in an academic and educational trajectory of almost 5 decades? How could we come up with something exciting for our interviewee in pandemic times? Many of us, the interviewers, have met in the process of the interview. The most recent advisees heard some of the old stories, anecdotes, and emotional accounts on how Sylvia marked our academic and life trajectories. The older ones heard tips they did not know from the younger ones and Sylvia. So many images in an unusual play of mirrors, made possible in times of virtual meetings, instigated by our adviser-gardener.

### **FROM HOME TO THE COMMUNITY AND VICE-VERSA**

**Rose:** Sylvia, I have been re-reading *Indigeneous Dwellings* and, in the presentation of the book, you talk about the separation that we make between spaces in our society, distinguishing the work space from leisure space, socialization, and relationship between home and identity. This separation does not take place in indigenous communities. I had the privilege to inhabit your home, and under your coordination, the LISA is like a home to us. “Home”, because we bring in our children to the meetings, change diapers, and feed them there. Anyways, the LISA and your home are slightly different spaces from those we experiment in our society. I would like for you to speak a little bit about Sylvia’s dwellings.

**Sylvia:** (laughter) I think there is a characteristic of my own relationship with space, which is the fact that, from very early on, the spaces where I live were all collective. So, when I was three years old, I moved to a village on Pamplona Street. This small village has many houses, out of which five belonged to relatives of mine. I spent my childhood living with my cousins in this very safe space, where we could be the whole day outside, playing and having fun. My father never knew where we were, he would whistle to call us back, and we knew it was time to have lunch or dinner. Well, when I left the village, I moved in with my partner at the time, in a community in Morumbi. These were the *hippie* years. It was a community of five houses in two acres, an absolutely amazing place — where there is a jungle of stones today. There were cows, horses, many dogs, a garden, and many friends grew mushrooms... And we had a completely communal lifestyle. We threw huge parties, for 500 to 600 people, always very improvised, people had to take their own food and beverages. It was wonderful. When I left this place, two of my three daughters, Laura and Isabel, had already been born, and I started to live in Butantã. For the first time in my life, I was looking next door and did not know my neighbors. I felt so isolated, it was so different from everything I had ever lived. In



terms of research, the beginning of my academic life was entirely in the indigenous communities, which are communal spaces par excellence, so my whole life is marked by this way of living. Maybe that is what I took to LISA, this habit of living with many people together, collectively, and of hosting everybody here. These meetings, to me, were always extremely important. At LISA, all the doors have access ramps. We never had anyone on a wheel chair, but we had many students who were mothers pushing their baby strollers to get in. I remember a report for a thematic project in which we talked about our greatest feats. They were not publications, or articles, not even a book or a film: they were the kids that had been born throughout the project. And there were many of them! I always loved these meetings very much, the parties. This is one of the things I missed the most over the pandemic: traveling and partying. So, the space to me is a collective space, and I always think about how much space means power. The spaces we occupy, the spaces in the city, the spaces in the community are all related to the notion of power of each one of these spaces. The difference between the space of the indigenous community and the city is gigantic.

**Lilian:** Throughout your academic life, different spaces were inhabited by you at USP, since your education and the first years as a faculty member at the time in the Maria Antonia Street building, the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences in Butantã, and, more recently, at LISA. These spaces, added to your own research experiences, especially with the Bororo, and allowed you to experience other ways of living. How do the sensorial, imagetic, and architectonic experiences of these spaces affected and influenced your career as a professor, researcher, and photographer?

**Sylvia:** An interesting experience was when I was named the director of the Maria Antonia University Center. As soon as I set foot on the building as director, I immediately remembered what it was like to be a student there in 1968, the year I got into college. When walking up those marble stairs that have a flatness in the place where one steps, what I remembered most was all the students descending Maria Antônia's stairs. Well, 1968 was when it all happened. And it was the year I started Social Sciences. I am a typical Generation 68 student. People would gather in the huge lobby and, in one of the columns there was a magnificent man, a wonderful man that would invite everybody to join the protests with an absolutely inflammatory speech. That gorgeous man was José Dirceu — a “catch”, as we used to say back then. He was a gorgeous man and had a very contagious speech. I do not remember the classroom exactly, especially because we were occupying the streets most of the times, in demonstrations, in the lobbies, in the war against Mackenzie. But it was very interesting to have started my academic life in the Maria Antônia space, coming out of



Dante Alighieri, an absolutely conservative, backwards, and middle-class secular high school.

**Aristoteles:** Sylvia, going back to 1968, I have a specific question, which is part of this timeframe. You, as an undergraduate student at USP, had the chance to know something none of us did, which was the important Plínio Ayrosa collection, formed by your professors at the department. Could you tell us a little bit about your experience with this collection, about how it was to be in that room where all of those objects were kept?

**Sylvia:** It was a huge collection and the pieces had been collected by many different researchers. It started with Plínio Ayrosa, but the importance of Lux Vidal to this collection, for example, is huge. Both Mariana Vanzolini and Paula Morgado who had been undergraduate students in Social Sciences were hired to work there. They started their careers as part of USP's staff for Plínio Ayrosa's collection. I was not directly linked to Plínio Ayrosa, and the one who had been working a lot, besides Lux, was Dominique Gallois. But I recall often going to the collection and was absolutely stunned with Mariana Vanzolini's ability to think about packaging and ways of storing each one of the pieces. There was a specific way of packing arrows, bows, baskets, and everything was thoroughly catalogued by Paula and kept by Mariana. It was a prime collection. Afterwards, during the centralization of the museums, the collection was added to the collections from Museu Paulista and the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology (MAE). And we, at the Lab, kept the images that were also part of Plínio Ayrosa's collection. They were sent to us, as well as Mariana and Paula, two absolutely fundamental members for what the Laboratory is today.

**Danilo:** The interview reminded me of when we did field work together in Rio Negro. You told me a lot about your work with the Bororo there. I would like to hear you talk about what it was like to do field work amongst the Bororo alongside your young daughters. I remember once you saying: "Oh, as soon as they were out of the diapers, I could go to do field work". I would also like to know how you tell your grandchildren about the Bororo, or any other field work you have done. I remember a photographic trip during this field trip we took together, and how you had a very sensitive gaze towards the children, and the Hüpdah's plays. Mariana, my partner, was pregnant at the time. You used to say: "are you not going to talk to the women?" And it was hard for me to talk to them. Anyways, this was all part of a turn in my own research and gaze as an anthropologist.

**Sylvia:** [laughter] Out of the thousand things I have done in almost 50 years working at USP, the field work is certainly one of things that I love the most and, fundamentally, the field work at the communities. I have visited many indigenous communities and this is, until today, what I like

the most, though I have engaged in other works, and other researches, and supervised students who work in other fields. What amazes me is the community. The community gives me the feeling that people live the way they are supposed to live, that people relate to each other the way they are supposed to. There are certainly gossip, conflicts, quarrels, but it is a world of its own and the values, the space, the relationship with nature cannot be compared with anything else. One thing I find extremely important, which is important to indigenous peoples, is that we do not divide or compartmentalize. So, now I am a mother, now I am a researcher, now I am whatnot... I think this is a lacerating experience. I would have found it very difficult to be so long out on the field, doing my research, without my daughters, you know? On the other hand, the community is a wonderful space for children. As soon as Laura was out of diapers, she came along. It was a very long trip, because I took a bus and a car. Learning how to have children in the community is completely different, because I knew everything regarding the researcher, that they are supposed to exchange, reciprocity, etc... And I forgot that the child, in order to establish a relationship with the community, also needed reciprocity. So, when I saw Laura being isolated, I said: "Oh, I know what to do". We went to the city and bought a lot of toys. She was only 3, which is the typical age in which the child is constantly claiming ownership of everything "this is mine, this is mine, this is mine". She arrived at the community and distributed everything. From then on, she was invited by all the children to do absolutely everything. So, I learned a lot too. After Isabel, my second daughter, was born, I took both of them with me and it was wonderful, because Laura would play with Isabel, take care of Isabel, carry her around, it was absolutely amazing. And Camila, who was born 10 years later, my third and last child, also got along really well with the community. None of them was baptized and not a long time ago, I heard that my mother, before passing, took the three of them to be baptized in secret. But at the community, the three of them received names, went through naming rituals, it was always extremely wonderful. I think one of the most incredible experiences I have had, Danilo, was going with you to Rio Negro. I should have done that with all of my students, because it really does make a difference, even while supervising. The one who taught me that was Peter Gow, who went along to the field trips with all of his students. It was impossible to be there the whole time, of course, otherwise you would invade the field, but these ten days among the Hüpdahs with you were wonderful, and also a chance to help you get closed to the women, the children, something I noticed was lacking in your data. It was when I went there that you moved from a place outside the community, and started to live in the community. To me, it was wonderful and I think there were important gains for you too.



**Sylvia:** it's one of Edgar's prints.

**Edgar:** It's a drawing, a print's sketch [laughter].

**Sylvia:** It's a feather's tip.

**Edgar:** I thought about this drawing as a question-dispositif, to bring in some sensitive elements to our conversation. It is a parody of *photovoice* — a method to use photography to stimulate memory, a “drawing voice” [laughter]. The idea is to surface a shared experience, your experience in the community, my own, the one we had together, even if it was very short. The central element of the drawing is a *bái*, the main house. Rose mentioned being hosted at your home, and so was I. I actually know this house before you even lived there, when it was Thekla Hartmann's. In fact, I keep thinking of this house almost as a community house. So, I would like to think a little bit about how multiple we all are. This was something very important I learned from the Bororo, but also here. When I evoke your home, I think about how multiple it has been. I would like to hear a little bit from you, on such multiplicities that life experiences bring us through our work, from relationships.

**Sylvia:** I think I can talk about it thinking that LISA has turned 30. This is a long time! Many many years. And Franci wanted to do an interview with me so much, so she said: “all of us, Edgar, André, Rose...” and I said: “oh, an interview is boring, so square. And only with my older students, when I have supervised so many others” — look! Jardel, Jefferson... So, I said: “No, I do not want an interview only with my first students”. To me,

**FIGURA 1**  
Bái, central house  
Bororo, Edgar  
Teodoro da Cunha,  
2021


talking about multiples is also talking about the multiplicity of students I have worked with, for instance. You are all linked to things I like, are all in the most diverse fields. I certainly could never have done all of these things, everything you do. It would be simply unfeasible. So, I love this multiplicity. We, throughout our lives, have different interests, different roles, and I think having new perspectives is always very interesting. With some of you, I have had very interesting joint works. Works with Rose, the research in Tiradentes, the *Fabrik Funk* film. The exhibition at Sesc Vila Mariana, *Amerindian Encounters*, of which Aristoteles is the curator and which I coordinated, that I started thinking about in Maria Antônia. Since 2015, I had been thinking about this exhibit and we finally made it. With Kelly, Laila, Mariana and Bia, I have a project today, which is the project about Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat. So, I think this opportunity to have shared activities is extremely rich and deals with such multiplicities, such array of interests.

**Priscilla:** You talked about this experience with Danilo and your house that hosts everyone... In fact, there is a mirror there, right? I learned to take care of my babies in the community, with the Broad Belt women in 1981. But it was at your home, in 2005, that we had my baby shower. My question is about that, about the generations and multiplicity of affections. This is something that nurtures you a lot, which is working with many generations. You talk about your young granddaughter, but also dives into a movie on Lux Vidal. You get excited when, besides this group of researchers who have been with you for so long, you also see the new students that bring in freshness to life, right? You go through all of these generations and all of these languages and allow all of that to happen. They have proposed that I sing a song I composed, called *The Grandmothers of my Voice* [Avós da minha Voz]. I think it will fill out the rest of my question:

*The faith, girl, the faith  
my grandma used to sing  
washing the clothes  
leading life  
simply  
with warm lips  
and us by her feet  
playing of once being a woman*

**Sylvia:** I think I am one who pays a great deal of attention to time. I do not know why, whoever works with photography deals with time. Photography gives us the feeling of stopping time, freezing time. André Bazin says that photography embalms time. So, I have a strong connection to time and also to generations. If you walk through my house there are many things that used to belong to my grandmothers, my aunts. I like to think about





time as something that carries continuity and change. It cannot be just continuity or just change. And I am deeply attracted to the new. I love my new students, new projects. So, the new is like a blood that feeds you, and having continuity is also interesting. But I think of generations both in terms of family — I absolutely adore my four grandkids — and in terms of my different advisees from different times. I think this is incredible, isn't it? To be able to follow such different phases, different generations.


**Kelly:** My question has two interrelated parts. It is about memory and the constitution of your gaze. Some photographers believe we repeat, unconsciously, variations of the same photos we have once taken. Some writers also say that they keep making versions of their first works throughout their entire lives, as if they ended up going back to the same story. Having such inevitable repetition in mind in the creative realm, what were the visual experiences or photographic experiences that marked you the most? Your researches have been very diverse, but what if these important experiences, or echoes from these experiences, keep reappearing in these new researches and photographs, as a kind of repetition? Once you told me that you got your first camera from your uncle at the age of 6. What/ In what circumstances did you like to take pictures back then, and which perhaps continue to be with you until today? Another related question is: what do Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat have that is familiar to you? Can you see anything in them that reminds you of other people in your life, or even yourself?

**Sylvia:** This camera is actually in my living room. It is a PLIK camera that I got when I was 6 from my uncle Cleso, married to Sylvia — which is why I was named Sylvia, but he was my father's brother. Two things I still like a lot to this day: I like to observe people and to study people. I do not like to research archives. I like to observe things and people. I remember when I was about 6, 7, or 8 years old, how I used to lie down on the floor to watch the ants, the paths that they took, the way they walked, and I think this is fascinating. To this day I keep looking at my garden, almost as if my state of mind is altered, looking at the plants, the leaves, and so on. Claudia, Lux, and Maureen are admirable women, because they were the masters of their lives, and incredibly autonomous at 91, each of them with a very active life. I think feminism is extremely important. We, women, would not be able to vote if it wasn't for the suffragettes. And some women in Anthropology were indeed silenced. Vilma Chiara, who lived on the shadows of Harald Schultz, Pia Maybury-Lewis, who lived on the shadows of David Maybury-Lewis, Dina Dreyfus, who lived on the shadows of the great master who was Lévi-Strauss. All of them complained about being invisible women, silenced women. But Lux, Maureen, and Claudia lived in many countries. Claudia had all of her paternal relatives murdered in concentration camps in Auschwitz, Dachau. These are absolutely

incredible women until today, great protagonists, which is what I love the most about them. As for what I like to photograph, I like to photograph people, to study people. I'm not interested in photo-denunciation. Last time I visited the Bororo community, I was devastated and unable to take many pictures, because nothing I could see there made me happy. It was very hard. Any picture I took seemed like a photo-denunciation; it was not what I meant to do. I think with this relationship between photography and memory, we also tend to remember what we photograph. So I have a very vivid memory of everything I have photographed, and I recognize when a photo is my own, even after a very long time.

**Francirosso:** When thinking about my question, it came to me that you never really said "I am a feminist, I discuss gender". This was never really your claim, though the title of your thesis was *Women, men, and heroes: dynamics and permanence through the daily lives of the Bororo*. That does not mean you did not look at women and men, to questions of gender, but you look at them in a different way. I kept thinking that when I decided to study the Islam, you let me borrow three books from Fatima Mernissi, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Leila Ahmed. The question I am going to ask is: did you know these women were Islamic feminists? Another question has to do with the time in which you were in Pakistan. You kept saying that you could hear the Bororo, and this idea of making such a different field work and at the same time hearing the Indigenous group you are most familiar with is very interesting. I wanted to understand a little bit about that, and how much the homosocial relationships affected you, and if the homosocial relationships you saw in Pakistan were similar to those you saw among the Bororo. Finally, is your current work, studying three photographers, three women, a way of revisiting yourself as an academic, as a woman, as a photographer, and ethnographer?

**Sylvia:** I knew for sure that Fatima Mernissi is an Islamic feminist, and I had read her work. The feminists have an absolutely fundamental role. Before going to Pakistan, I did research with a group of feminist Muslim women in Manchester. Some of them used to wear the burka, were extremely sensual, had many different interests for everything that was going on, and their great struggle was against the rapes in Bosnia, against what was happening in Manchester. And they sought to pressure their congressmen to act in defense of Pakistani women and immigrants in England. It was through these feminist women that I started working in Manchester on my post-doctoral fellowship. When I went to Pakistan, I was absolutely amazed with everything I saw there. And why did I hear the Bororo in Pakistan? They spoke urdu, which is the official language of Pakistan, and I heard Bororo. Because the Bororo is my reference of a different world, and Pakistan was a different world to me. It was this association of a completely different world from where I live my daily



life, to the point that I could hear many things in Bororo. But that is it. It is because this was the reference of total alterity. I have two important references of alterity in my life: the Bororo and Pakistan. Now about Lux, Claudia, and Maureen. Once they were leaving the movie theater on Augusta Street, and I saw them walking side by side. I said: “I have to make a project about these women”. Then I found out they had much in common. They were all born in the 1930s (two of them in 1930, one in 1931), they are European, displaced, cosmopolitan, multilingual, protagonists of their professional careers, women who were very successful as women, and who engaged in defense of indigenous peoples, the peoples with whom they worked. They have a great deal in common. We sometimes find out even more. This is why I decided to do this project.

### **GAZING, TRIPS, DREAMS, AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Andrea:** I would like to make a movement back home as well, but to another home which is the body. We say, or keep hearing, in Anthropology, of a certain anthropological gaze. The eye that observes, to draw, to photograph, to ethnograph, the eye that knows itself and its agency in the world, which is the gaze. You yourself have already problematized such prominence of the gaze in your own texts. And you are an extremely corporeal person. I know when you are teaching next door, because of how you walk, the rhythm of your footsteps. Their sounds are very characteristic. You have a strong voice and we know when you are speaking, your voice is unmistakable. You dance wonderfully, in your parties you are always inviting everyone to dance. I wanted to ask you how you insert or what links to your presence in a broader sense, in other words, to the corporeal experience in the world, you make with the anthropological practice. Do we look with our whole bodies? Do we think we our whole bodies? Do we make images, drawings, photographs, films, and Anthropology with our whole bodies?

**Sylvia:** I think so. I believe we exist with our whole bodies. I think we photograph with our whole bodies, film with our whole bodies, there is a corporeal feeling in the act of photographing, in the act of filming, and in the act of teaching as well. I think to be in a given situation is to be there in body and soul, as a whole. As a matter of fact, something I keep saying is that I learned to teach taking dance classes, with Ivaldo Bertazzo. I took classes with him for four years, and I have always loved to dance. Before that, when I was 13, I took classes at Madam Poças Leitão, a place none of you know, where one could learn foxtrot, samba, bolero, tango. Besides these classes, what I have enjoyed the most were the classes with Ivaldo Bertazzo. Ivaldo is an absolutely present person. The way he speaks, the way he moves his body, the way he relates to other people in his classes. I thought that was fascinating. And teaching from the computer is different. Because you move less, cannot walk, has less possibilities to perform,

and the classroom is a stage. I never doubted that the classroom is the teacher's stage and that, in order to really engage the students who are their audience, the teacher must be present as a whole. I believe in the body as a whole, the gaze is fundamental. And I like to walk and look and notice, anyway, this Tim Ingold thing — a typically British author who thinks while walking. I also like to think while walking.

**Bruna:** I would like to hear a little bit about the deep relationship between traveling, experience, and the anthropological gaze. It is moved by the relationship between your trips that involve some sort of visual production (you were invited to a Pakistani wedding, which became a film, then went to Ethiopia to visit some friends, and that became an essay, an article). So, I would like to know a little bit about these processes, this crisscrossing between the gaze, experience, Anthropology, and traveling.

**Sylvia:** I think traveling is what has always fascinated me, because it allows a single experience which, perhaps, is extremely important to anthropologists in general. Just like Caetano Veloso's LSD, "*caminhando contra o vento, sem Lenço, Sem Documento*",<sup>3</sup> I think traveling takes you out of your roots. It allows you to leave a certain social class behind, certain world view. Traveling takes that perception that others have about you, which already brings an expectation. People relate to you according to how they think you are. When you are traveling, if nobody knows you, this is wonderful because you get out of fixed categories. This is what fascinates me about traveling, this possibility of leaving all you are behind and take up new identities or others you have and which did not develop so much, or finding new horizons, new people, this possibility of being someone else. And it allows this experience of getting out of your roots that is so important to the gaze and the making of Anthropology.

**Jardel:** My question stems from one of our advising sessions. At the time, I explained one of the arguments I intended to explore for my prospectus and in my master's thesis. You carefully heard me and suggested an exercise which I did not do, but which made me think a lot. You said: "Try to draw what you are trying to explain to me." But you warned me not to look at the paper sheet while I was doing it. I was talking about your last article published at GIS, *Gaze Sensitivity - about the importance of photography in the academic training of the anthropologist* (2020). At some point in the text, you call attention to the fact that you attended a school of experimental art. I would like for you to comment a little bit on the importance of the aesthetic education you obtained in your youth for the Anthropology you have produced since then.

3. Translator's note: Sylvia makes a reference to the play with words in Caetano Veloso's *Alegria, Alegria*. The song's opening lines in Portuguese, which would translate as "Walking upwind, no scarf, no documents" form the acronym LSD with the letters as marked in bold.



**Sylvia:** This is something I did at Brazil's Arts School<sup>4</sup>, which belonged to four architects—Frederico Nasser, Carlos Fajardo, José Resende, and Luiz Paulo Bravanelli, all of whom had been advised by the artist Wesley Duke Lee, who had been supervised by Marcel Duchamp, and which was so important to my training: drawing without looking at the sheet, without looking at your hands doing it<sup>5</sup>, because this gaze presents an absolutely destructive kind of criticism. You will end up thinking that the drawing you are working on is horrible, and will never be satisfied, while if you do not look, you will be able to get incredibly expressive results. I believe in the drawing. That is why I like to supervise Jeferson's work so much, a wonderful work that has everything to do with drawing. I think that, in order to work with Visual Anthropology, you have to have a solid foundation in the Arts. They teach you how to see, listen, and feel things. And modes of seeing, listening, and feeling are so diverse that it is important to have such repertoire. Knowing different painters, different artists. I do not know music, or literature, I ended up pursuing visual arts, but that is something I value a lot, and which I think values the importance of a sensitive gaze. Sensitive gaze is that which makes you see, as explained by many artists, such as Picasso and Paul Klee. But you learn to see. If you want to photograph, I think it is important that you see hundreds of photographers, so that you amplify your repertoire on the different forms of seeing, a different sensitivity through the gaze. You can work with something I have always been very interested in, which are dreams, which brings images through the unconscious, the pictorial, etc. Danilo is also interested in dreams as an element of strengthening language, cultural recovery, which is something fascinating. In fact, at some moment, I used to teach a course on mythology and symbolism, and then invited an important psychoanalyst, Tenório de Oliveira Lima, to speak about the relationship between the analysis of the myth and the analysis of dreams. It is something very interesting, but I could never go down this road. So, whenever I have advisees who end up going in that direction, I get extremely pleased. And you, please, start drawing. [laughter]

**Luis Felipe:** You always talk about the importance of dreams in your classes. I would like to know the importance of dreams to your research, if you take note of your own nocturnal dreams, and how some dreams inspire your life. The other question is whether it would be possible to take a blind picture, just like a blind drawing. And if you take blind pictures.

**Sylvia:** My answers will be very disappointing. There is such a thing as blind photography. Evgen Bavcar is a blind photographer. What has not been invented yet, and which I think would be extremely interesting, is a camera that captures dreams. That would be amazing, can you imagine,


4. *Escola Brasil*: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/instituicao407326/escola-brasil>.

5. This form of drawing is known in the Arts as "blind drawing".

a camera that photographed dreams? I would love it, and you know why? Because I only remember my own dreams in therapy, or when I am traveling. But here in São Paulo, I do not recollect my own dreams. Fundamental moments for my research, and which I keep talking about to my students, are the great insights that come to you shortly before you sleep. You know when you are almost embarking on your sleep, and then something comes up, and it is absolutely amazing, and it ties everything together? Another time, which I also tell my students about, is when you are taking a shower, and then some insights that are wonderful come to you. But my dreams, I can barely remember them. Unfortunately, I would love to remember them more.

**Rafael:** My question is related to photography. As soon as we were in touch with each other, when I was still flirting with Anthropology, I had the chance to interview you for a project called “The representation of indigenous people in Brazilian photography”. The site was given the Marc Ferrez award, with you and Leonardo Wen, and I suggested that your photographic material on the Bororo be part of the project. So, I had the opportunity to see part of your archives on the Bororo, and, as a photographer, I was impressed by the quality of your work, by the quality of the images, which I think are nothing short of what photographic documentarists we have today are doing out there. I want to ask you how photography became part of your life, how it was developed in your career, and how you used it in your field work. Was it a natural process? How did it happen?

**Sylvia:** Lovely to hear such a compliment on my photography. A photographer talking about my photos. I learned to take pictures with two great friends of mine, one of whom has passed away, Marcos Rufino, and the other one is Paulo Cleto. We used to take a lot of pictures back then, and, at the time, it was all analog, with the development done in the bathroom. I thought it was fascinating to look at the image coming up on the paper, in the development bathroom, but the laboratory was never really my thing. As soon as I learned it, I took a one-year course, actually with Claudia Andujar, at *Brazil's School*. This school was absolutely important to my training, and the course I took with Claudia Andujar was fantastic. It was one year in which we kept looking at photographs on this gigantic table filled with great photographers, so we could have a repertoire. It was the time when Claudia was married to George Love. So there were pictures by George Love, but there were also pictures by Edward Weston, Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Robert Doisneau, Robert Frank. It was very important to see and comment the pictures of such great photographers. That was the class. We would go out to photograph São Paulo with Claudia Andujar, but without the camera. We would look at things and use our hands to photograph them, making frames, so that we would



not get lost with technology, because technology could hinder the sensitivity of our gaze. The most important thing was that we learned to see, learned to cut, learned to frame, and not using the *high-tech* cameras that were being launched. For the research, I always used photography. Since I started doing research, in 1970, at the indigenous community, I took the camera and photographed. It was wonderful to be able to take back the pictures I would have enlarged in heavyweight paper, so that they could be handled in the community by those hands full of coal and annatto. It was also an extremely strategic resource in order to introduce a theme which you wanted to explore. The theme does not fall from the skies, you do not start talking about funerals out of nowhere. If you have the pictures of a funeral, the theme is unfolded and, because photography has this immense potential to surface things, people start talking about everything through the picture. So, as a research resource, photography is fantastic. And I have always used it. It was present in my master's, and in my doctorate. But it was only when I became Full Professor that I incorporated photography as a theme, and visual anthropology became the focus.

**Rafael:** Something that stood out in your material is that your photos of the Bororo are not merely records. And I think this is largely because of your background studying with Claudia Andujar. This is a provocation I have done before: have you ever thought about publishing a photo-book with these images?

**Sylvia:** [laughter] The difficulty to publish a selection of my images on the Bororo has to do with the image rights, a tricky matter these days. Even because the Bororo do not share the same concept as we have: who represents them? Who represents each community? It is something extremely complex. So, I do not really know how to do it. If somebody finds out the pathway to do that, I think it could be very interesting, because I have records from the Bororo since the 1970s, incredible images and in all communities. But I don't know how to do it.

**Maíra:** I was very impressed by how special you are to each one of your advisees, how much you marked the lives of each one and how much you marked my own life. What is this process of advising like to you? How do you feel about it? How do you live it? You have not just advised me on the things I wrote or researched about, but also on swimming, or walking, or on how to deal with life, because things are so much more complex than the work that has to be turned in to conclude a master's degree or a PhD. Life is a lot more complex. I think you had a role in everyone's life. So, I would like for you to speak a little bit on that, and, to wrap up, on this specific moment when we are all gathered.

**Sylvia:** I have recently discovered, and I think I found that out in the pandemic, that, besides the research work, the other thing I like the most is to advise. I did not know that. I always liked it, it is obvious. I have advisees since at least 1990. I have advisees today that I have not met in person yet. I have barely had any contact with Jardel, I have never seen Jeferson. I do not know how tall he is, can you imagine that? Because we only see each other through the screen of our computers. And, in the pandemic, this became very clear to me, because since I could not do my research, I had these advising activities and these meetings via *Google Meet*, be it for the research group, or my new advisees. This is something I love to do, but I like to follow them in person. With the pandemic, I found out that one of the things that gives me the most pleasure is to see my students. And I like to advise people who have their singularities. And some of my advisees, during orientation, have had difficult moments that affected their lives and which I tried to follow. I love people [laughter]. So, this advising is not something distant, unfamiliar. There are advisees I have been working with since their junior undergraduate research, then in their master's degree, then in their PhDs [laughter], to some of them I have to say: "No, go do your post-doc research somewhere else! You cannot be here with me all this time; you have to conquer the world!". I think I said that to Franci, for example. I said that to Edgar too. They had already done too much with me. They needed to leave and conquer the world. Now this is a wonderful meeting, especially because you are so many and so different and you did not know each other. What a chance!

**Francirosy:** I would like to add something to Maíra's question. In fact, I wanted to give a testimony that I think is extremely valuable. For those who do not know me, I think they do not know this story, and how generous Sylvia is for the lives of so many people. For my life in particular, Sylvia has touched on an extremely fundamental subject, she was not just being my advisor for the texts, theses, and works I wrote, but Sylvia was a decisive person in my doctorate, because I would never have been able to support myself financially, emotionally, and to keep on going with three small children and a life turned upside down. Sylvia was the advisor who sent me an email telling me all the reasons why I should stay doing my PhD and not give up. So, I owe my doctorate to Sylvia. Every time I thought about giving up, Sylvia would come and say that I had to resist, so I think this is one of these generosityes we bring to our academic life, which is usually so hard, so full of vanities, competitions, and to have an advisor who believes in your work, who believes that you will make it somehow, I have no clue what she saw in me that told her I would be able to do it in the middle of that chaos, but this is what happened. Thank you, Sylvia.




**Sylvia:** But Franci, I have to say that you do not owe your doctorate to me, I did not write your doctorate. You owe it to yourself. It was you who wrote your dissertation, not me.

## **ENCOUNTERS: THE UNIVERSITY, ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Ana Lúcia:** I would like to invite another being to this conversation. It is this body I have here at home, of something that is always changing: this small viola vase with a few sprouts. I wanted to give you a flower in person, to give you a hug, but in the context of the pandemic, what we have is this little flower. I would actually like to think about this work of observation that is the relationship with other bodies. The debate on the non-human today proposes to think about the way we relate to the world, with plants, beings, with the various presences in the territories. How can we deal with expressive non-human forms? Have you dealt with this discussion before?

**Sylvia:** In this pandemic, I lost a cousin of mine who was like a younger sister, Fernanda, a cousin-sister with whom I lived in the Pamplona village. She was one of the first 100 people to die of Covid, something extremely difficult and sad. I have a brother and Fernanda, who is the cousin I have always considered as my sister. She died in April, 2020, right at the beginning of the pandemic. It was very sad, very sad, also because of the impossibility of having a service, a funeral, and a burial. Fernanda has a granddaughter called Olívia, the daughter of Julia, and, when Julia was packing the village house where Fernanda lived, she asked me to keep an olive tree. This olive tree, Fernanda and Robinson, her husband, planted on the day Olívia, their granddaughter, was born. And this olive tree was planted in this massive vase in front of Fernanda's house. Julia said: "Can you keep it for me? Because I cannot fit it in my apartment". So, I went there to get the olive tree, cleaned it up, removed the tall grass, because it had been almost one year since Fernanda had passed away. So, it came here, and I placed it right in front of the house, where there is sunlight in the morning. Yesterday, Julia came over with Olívia to have lunch here and I said: "I have to show you the olive tree". Ana, you just showed us the sprouts of your viola, and the olive tree is also full of sprouts and flowers, it is vigorous. I think the non-human beings are just like us. One of the passages by Lévi-Strauss that I enjoy the most is when he talks about compassion, in the text *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man*. He shows how much Rousseau did not look just at humans to perceive humanity, he establishes this notion of compassion, referring to any living being, be them animals, or plants, which takes place when you feel a certain compassion, when you see animals and plants being mistreated. I had the experience only once, of being in a situation of deforestation in the Teles Pires River. I had never been in a place of deforestation before. It is just awful, because you



can hear the chainsaw, a horrible sound, with decibels that are truly disturbing. When the chainsaw is finished, the tree moans, it moans [she mimes the sound] and falls on the ground. The smell in the woods is the smell of blood, which is sap from those colossal trees. You hear the tree dying, it is something very impressive. I think that, just as trees, as said by Marisol de la Cadena, there are the rivers, the rocks, and the mountains. For the Bororo, this is something very present, the way all of these entities are beings surrounding us.

**Carolina:** While I heard you speaking, I remembered when we visited Saint Catherine, the dead saint, in Bologna. Your conversation with a local nun that took care of the chapel was incredible. We approached her to talk and she said she had been cloistered for over 50 years. She saw our reaction and said: “but I am happy, this was my choice”. After that, we kept thinking “wow, she has been cloistered since before I was born”. This recollection came to mind while you talked about observation, the sensitivity of the gaze, the learning how to look. In other words, world experiences, trips, and so many other things. I thought about that cloistered woman who has not had less experiences, trips, transformations and processes of sensitivity than us just because of her choices. You mentioned learning to be a teacher taking dance classes, with the engagement of your whole body, the gestures, the presence, the gaze. The question I would like to ask is on the classroom space, the space of exchanges, the shared adventure: how do you think your experience as a teacher marked your way of living relationships, both in and outside the classroom? How have you been constituted and/or transformed by the experience of being a teacher?

**Sylvia:** I just remembered this nun. Since my childhood I used to hear of cloistered nuns, and this has marked my life. Suddenly, I was face to face with one of them. During my childhood and teenage years, I used to think that they abstained from the world, lost what I loved the most, which is living in this world. But that lady who we met in that chapel in Bologna showed us how it is possible to live the world outside the world, and how the world might prevent you from living the world, because our world dictates a rhythm that can be maddening, which can take away amazing things from you, including your chance to observe. I think that learning to look, when I think about Social Sciences in general, is absolutely fundamental. The training that the Social Sciences major offers is absolutely liberating! One can have classes and classes on the exploitation of capitalism, added value, minorities... and then you stumble on a homeless person on the street without acknowledging their presence. This is something that happens in the Social Sciences that have always bothered me very much. I love to read, love to write, but I think that if we limit ourselves to that, we lose what Social Sciences, and Anthropology in particular, have to offer. So, in every course I have offered, I have always

emphasized the importance of learning to look, to observe, and to write for an audience that is outside the university, because students, specifically in Social Sciences, end up writing in a way that is almost illegible. Indirect orders, gigantic sentences, and redundancy all distance any reader. So we end up producing a kind of knowledge that is not useful to anyone, it does not get to the places it should get. Visual Anthropology is a way of making this knowledge more accessible. But there is something else I love to do, which is to teach. With the pandemic, what I think we lost the most was this stage, this direct contact, face to face, with the students. You are all with your cameras open. This is a punishment to the teacher. I insist on that every class, because it is an extremely difficult contact, when the camera is off we lose connection. I do believe that one learns a lot when one designs and offers a class, because then you are forced to systematize the subject, the reading, the reasoning. I think this is an absolutely fundamental exercise, to learn how to teach, and that is an important component of post-doc fellowships. I always insist on that.


**Joon:** The first memory I have of you is you speaking of books. You did not have a Xerox folder and forced us to go to the library to see the authors' faces. So, I would like to ask you about this distanced gaze from someone who grew up in a completely analogical world. You grew up in a world that was even more analogical than for me. What do you think is the effect on academia, including the researches, as it is increasingly reduced to the "talking heads" you hate so much? Even here [at Google Meet], we are all a mosaic of "talking heads", mediated by apparatuses that reduce the world into a non-place. The discussion on non-places reached an unimaginable standard 20 years ago, and we are all here in a non-place while we are all in a specific place. What do you think happens to the academic space in this world highly mediated by non-places gadgets, which somehow also generate a generalized impoverishment of ways of seeing, listening, and speaking? With the cameras turned off, one cannot know whether the student is really there. This ends up creating an asymmetric relationship, in which one does not have feedback when, paradoxically, cybernetics is the science of feedback.

**Sylvia:** You know, I remember the time libraries stopped offering the service in which you walked up to the front desk and asked for the book on the counter, and started to work in an open collection format. Thus, the student, professor, or researcher would have to go to the stacks and look for a specific title placed according to a catalogue. It is about the opportunity to look at a book next to the one you were looking for —something that did not happen when someone picked up the title for you. I thought that had been a great revolution in the library services, because, in fact, that enhanced the research possibilities for the students. I always liked to look at the authors' faces. Have you ever seen Weber's face? I

was always very impressed realizing that students could only recognize Marx. I even live to know the person's voice when I am reading. What is the voice you hear when you are reading an author you have never heard speaking? I read Rita Castro's texts and know Rita's voice. I read your text and know your voice, and can hear your voice when I am reading. But I do not know Durkheim's voice, or Weber's, and I think that's a bit weird. Not knowing one's face then... This thing about the extent to which the apparatus may interfere, impoverish or hinder the gaze is something I learned very early on, at the Brazil's School, with Claudia Andujar. We did not hold a single camera during her course over one year. Until this date I have some technical difficulties with photography, because I never really dedicated myself to the technical part of it, the most important for me was the sensitivity of the gaze. I, in fact, do hate talking heads, and we are all talking heads now, but this is the online environment situation in the pandemic, there is no alternative. In Manchester, in the Visual Anthropology course I attended, we learned how to interview, where to position the camera, where to place the person speaking, where the person should look at, etc. However, the main thing was creating the characters, how to create a character so that it is not needed for someone to be there talking, explaining, something very easy for a social scientist, such as transposing a book. These films that focus on the native and the specialist's voice are not films, to me this is the radio, it is a radio show. It is very poor, lacking, boring, and just bad. You mentioned the non-place and it is true. This non-place does not favor connections, personal relationships, it does not favor what we, here, have that is so rich. I adore all of you, and I know all of you. You know something that bugs me in the world today aside from the non-place? The place of speech. So what is linked today is, on the one hand, the non-place, and on the other, such place of speech. So, you can only have women talking about women, black people talking about black people, Asians talking about Asians, gays talking about gays. To me this is something extremely harmful to Anthropology. I think that there is a very interesting political movement in the contemporary debate, which is diminishing the force of political parties, and, on its turn, the importance of social movements. This can be something very interesting, the power is more diffuse because in the contemporary political life, parties are no longer enough. On the other hand, we live in an absolutely segmented world, like small islands of identity that create their own place and position themselves as the only legitimate voice to speak of a certain group. I think this is poor and falls into a politics that can be a boring and impoverishing trap. And this is all very contemporary.

**Rita:** I got to Anthropology and USP when I was already a professor at UnB, but I had never experienced such a rich and instigating collective of exchange such as the one at LISA/GRAVI was to me. I am extremely





moved to see each one of you here, such diversity of researches; it is truly fascinating. I came from Drama and, suddenly, I arrived at LISA amidst such profusion. You are like a master figure, a shaman for this collective, which impresses me a lot. The strength and potency of LISA, with Paula Morgado there, Mariana Vanzolini, and, at the same time, your completely singular gaze, the way you listen, your individuality and close relationship with each one of us. When my father passed away and I could not be seated, you took me to walk in the parks, you advised me while walking, which is something I never forget. I would like to hear you talk about being an advisor with such richness and diversity of students along the way.

**Sylvia:** Rita, it's so nice to see you! I would like to take a moment to remind us of someone extremely important to the life in the Lab, which was Luciana Aguiar Bittencourt, who brought you to São Paulo and to me, and I thought that was wonderful. Up until that moment, I did not have any relationship to anyone from the field of Drama and Theater, and it was with you that I was able to build that relationship. You are living proof of how talented my students are. Very talented students look for me, people from Drama like you, people from Photography, such as Laila and Joon, people from Drawing, like Tati and Jeferson, and also people from Film. I think the Arts and Music end up attracting the most various expressive forms, which is extremely rich, and lucky me! [laughter]. I think it is only possible to advise from a relationship. Of course, there is a relationship with the research project itself, and your project was thrilling to me, with the question of how theater embodies Asian techniques, so there is a relationship with the project. But it is fundamentally a relationship with the person who is conducting the project. This is fundamental in any advising relationship. One cannot advise just a research project. I was talking about my students with my daughter and she said: "but mom, you do not have the relationship that most professors have with their students". And I said: "Well, I cannot speak of that, but I have to work like this. To me it has to be this way otherwise it will not work". This is why it is so hard to advise over the pandemic. I also do not like when my students finish their course work and move back to their home states and you do not see them anymore. This is very complicated. To me it does not really work like that, the relationship is fundamental.

**Laila:** Sylvia, my questions goes back to a memory I have of you, at the occasion I met you at the Anthropology III course. I had started my research and you invited me to give a presentation at LISA and, at the time, I declined because I was too shy and felt unable to speak in public. You looked at me and said: "Ok, the decision is yours to make, but you should take advantage of a trustworthy space to practice". I understood that response after attending LISA many times, so I would like for you

to comment on LISA, the researches that went through the lab and the lab's dynamics.

**Sylvia:** I think one of the things Social Scientists need to learn is how to speak. What do we do? We observe, we write, we read, and we speak. And the exercise of delivering is fundamental to learn how to speak. We have to see ourselves speaking and we have to listen to ourselves speaking so that we can lose some mannerisms. LISA is a space that favors a good coexistence. People who go to LISA are people who are linked to NAPEDRA, John Dawsey's Center of Anthropology, Performance, and Drama, which is linked to PAM, Rose Satiko's group of Researches in Musical Anthropology, which is linked to GRAVI, the Group of Visual Anthropology that I started before going to Manchester. GRAVI started out before LISA. GRAVI started off with the desire to discuss political films. There was one of Dominique Gallois' students, Roberto Morales, from Chile, who loved Politics. He wanted to start a forum so we began to watch many films together and discussing these films. And we also started with cinema, not photography. Then the group gradually increased, we found out that we wanted to do more things, and that we needed a space to do them. At the time, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, who was linked to the Center of Indigenous History and Indigenism (NHII), asked the Provost for a space for NHII at the Hives, which had been occupied by the Departments of Languages, and I went there with her. She said GRAVI also needed a space, which was more "incipient" and I said: "not more incipient, but the most recent!". We were able to get those two wonderful combs, and it was amazing. And it was Manuela who donated LISA's first camera. Paula Morgado always worked in an impressive way, with the festivals and series she put together. She saw that Jean Rouch was coming to Brazil and she said: "We have to invite Jean Rouch for a seminar here, so that he can speak at LISA". I proposed that we filmed Jean Rouch and made a film about him, which was made by Paula Morgado, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, Renato Sztutman, and Ana Lucia Ferraz. It was the first film made in the lab, on that filmmaker that most influenced everyone who worked there. I was able to get funding from FAPESP and with Mariana Vanzolini we started to remodel the space, which is the one we have today, including the editing stations. So, I think this trust that the space inspires comes from the pleasure that people have to work there, and I think it is, in fact, a quite different place. I am most proud of this Lab. It exists thanks to many people, one of whom is here, Paula, others are Rose, Mariana e all of you who go there. This partnership with Rose in the coordination is also absolutely fundamental.

**Paula:** Sylvia, I would like to add something to what you just said, because I think you speak from a tripod of research, of course, the classes, and the orientations, but you just brought up another side to you, which is

the entrepreneur. I have followed you for “just” 30 years, and you have taught me this entrepreneurial side and without it we would not have been able to work on our scientific dissemination, it is all connected. So, I would like to ask you to speak for those who are not following such enterprise, because I think LISA is a huge enterprise that is not meant for any researcher. You mentioned Jean Rouch, and I remember that we did not have an editing station then, did not know how to write a script, did not know anything, and you came up and said: “now you are going to make a film”. And I said: “What?” And you: “yes! It will be LISA’s first film”. We worked hard, wrote the project, spent one year watching films, and were able to get FAPESP’s first project sponsoring a film in Anthropology, thanks to your entrepreneurship. So, I would like for you to recall what it was like, for your peers in the Department, when you launched the idea. We have at LISA, a physical folder that tells the lab’s history, which precedes the 1990s, going back to the 1970s, when you already had the desire to make this Anthropology laboratory with some of your colleagues, and the idea kept changing. So I would like for you to speak about the challenges in this enterprise. If I am not mistaken, it is Brazil’s first Visual Anthropology lab. What are some of the most relevant achievements for the Department as LISA’s coordinator?

**Sylvia:** Other labs had been put together before LISA, such as UERJ’s. I think the entrepreneur side is also the housewife side, because these things are interconnected. Especially when you have a household with children, things have to work out. But to be a housewife at the university is very different, such entrepreneurship implies getting to know some of the hard paths. Also, the partnership with Mariana Vanzolini was fundamental. Mariana was the person who divided the world into the people she liked, the people she did not like and all of the key workers at the Hives, as well as a good part of the Faculty’s best staff members who were also part of those she liked. We were able to get, during a very long time, two people, and you were the other one, Paula, because all the relationships that were impossible with Mariana Vanzolini (deceased in 2016) were made through you, who was always a very kind person, who dealt very well with these relationships, with famous people, professors, researchers, and with the documents. I remember I always liked working with images and always liked to screen films in my classes. Doing that at our building was very hard. First one had to find a TV, then the cable, then the TV was awful, and so was the sound. I was so upset with all of that that I said we had to have a set up space, with all the possibilities for effectively using film in a single place. And that motivated me to set up LISA. We were able, at LISA, to achieve the feat of having all the equipment we needed and a high-definition screen, which is wonderful. Then it was decided that all the classrooms should be equipped in our building. The classrooms are equipped now, professors use the projectors for slide

shows, but the image is green, the quality of the projection in the Social Sciences and Philosophy's building is awful. Nothing really works well. When we organized the International Meeting of Visual Anthropology (EIAV), there was a wonderful film by Claudia Andujar that was going to be screened. We could not find a screen. It was really hard to get a decent screen to exhibit her film at EIAV's closing session. So it was also a huge challenge because people linked to Social Sciences in general, but also to Anthropology, do not give sound and image their proper value. They need good libraries. So, this was a huge challenge, and we would not have gotten the resources to do what we did at the lab if it was not for FAPESP. I think this is an absolutely fundamental space.

**Tatiana:** I see you and the relationship you have with your students and with the people who are close to you as a caring relationship. There is a fundamental and extremely important work for the university, for a general transformation of the very notion of university and the way the university is organized and experienced. You have a fundamental role for such transformation of the university into a space of caring through relationships of research, orientation, and friendship. In a way, it is as if you brought a little bit from these field works, we do, for example, with indigenous collectives, a little bit from these relationship orders that are totally different from those we usually find in academia. It is as if there was a tendency at the University to depersonalize and atomize people, which are trying to keep up with productivity metrics, and I feel like the spaces where you are involved are very different. I kept thinking whether you have some kind of reflection about that, about your role in the transformation of the university. I would like to know from you: who were the other people, throughout your history at the University, who also shared this kind of view and perception?

**Sylvia:** Tati, I just did the math on how long I have been teaching. I started at USP in 1974 and we are in 2021, so 47 years, a very long time. Throughout these 47 years, the university changed a whole lot. The transformation is really impressive. One of the greatest transformations of the university was that it became a university for the masses, with a gigantic number of students. When I was a student, I had classes in a room with 20 students. Now Rose has taught 70 students many times, and so have I. This transformation fundamentally changes the relationship between professors and students, because for many years, I was able to know all of my students by name, which I always tried to learn and was able to learn. Now this is impossible, extremely difficult, with the growth of the university. I think this is important, because the university has a role, it must reach more and more people, but the way of dealing with the burden of a larger institution is to form research groups, which did not exist in the same fashion they do today. Nowadays, there are at least 10



research groups only at the Department of Anthropology, where you live more closely with some of these students. I was part of a research group during my undergraduate years, but it was one of the very few in the Department, which was called “The Logics of the Primitive World”. The research group is fundamental for one’s formation, and so is the Scientific Initiation for undergraduate students. I insist with many students that they must develop a research project. It creates a stronger bond with the professor and the relationship with the major in general. What the student is able to articulate in different subjects is a lot more interesting after a junior research. This is the way, I think, that was found to deal with a university of the masses. There are people I admire a lot, who were very important throughout my formation. My advisor, Thekla Hartmann, already deceased, marked my career very much. She was someone who was completely different from me. She was a very Germanic person, with major mood changes, she either liked or disliked things. Her ethics and generosity were admirable. She worked at the Paulista Museum and one of the things I liked the most was to go to the Museum, because I had to walk on the roof of the Paulista Museum and could see the whole city to get to the room where Thekla used to work. Before walking into the room, we saluted Curt Numuendajú, because it was Thekla who gathered Nimuendajú’s bones, which were kept in a huge funeral urn in her office’s entrance, and she was the one who was able to bury his bones in her family’s grave. Another person who I have always admired a lot is Eunice Durham. I think Eunice has a passion for the university that very few people have, a unique dedication, and it never bothered me the fact that she greeted very few people, and would only come talk to you whenever she needed something. She looked at you and the eyes crossed you. I remember when she gave classes with Ruth Cardoso, and Ruth was extremely kind, but I liked Eunice better, because I thought she was incredibly authentic. Another person I love until today is Marilena Chauí, because I think she is admirable, with a huge talent for reflection, expression, and excellent oral skills. And certainly, the three protagonists of our project, Claudia Andujar, Lux Vidal, and Maureen Bisilliat. Lux advised pretty much all of my friends and I was the only one who was not advised by her. So, I have a distant relationship, which is also good so that I can conduct my research now. Alongside this research, I also have three Scientific Initiation students: Laila, who is studying Claudia, Mariana researching Lux, and Bia who is studying Maureen. This was something fantastic about this research project.

**Victor:** Sylvia, should (or must) Anthropology be seen as a Science today? How do you perceive, feel, and experience this field of knowledge? What took you to Anthropology?

**Joon:** May I add something? Is self-ethnography a tendency of contemporary Anthropology? What do you think is the impact of self-ethnography and engaged research for the status of Anthropology as a science?

**Sylvia:** Two very interconnected questions. I never had the need that many social scientists have, perhaps more in Sociology, but also in Anthropology, to characterize Anthropology as a science. I think Joon is concerned about that and I think it is admirable the way he conducts his research, with very clear scientific criteria. I do not have such worries, and always thought of Anthropology in a beautiful threshold between Arts and Sciences. I like thresholds a lot, I love door frames. I like these situations of passage, not here, not there. I think these are extremely rich spaces. Anthropology cannot be anything, it cannot be taken lightly, but to me the idea of the lab is interesting in regards to the experience. Anthropology has to experiment and experiment different approaches, different research possibilities. In the films and photo shoots, this experimentation is very visible, and I think Anthropology fundamentally relies on the researcher's experience, who has to be willing to have an experience effectively. I think this is what makes a good research, when you open yourself up to the imponderables. I think the engaged research in Anthropology is also extremely important. Both throughout the undergraduate years and after that, when we were leaving a dictatorship, there was a reorganization of the social movements. I was part of the establishment of the Center for Indigenist Work (CTI), of which I still am an active member. I was the president of CTI for many years, also the treasurer, developed projects, and the great thing was the engagement with the struggles for indigenous rights. I have always believed in the importance of that. CTI came into being in the end of the 1970s, alongside other indigenist organizations, such as the Pro-Indian Committee, and the National Association of Indians. All the CTI's work was done at the community, with indigenous peoples, making it possible, for instance, for a co-op to trade guarana berries amongst the Sateré Mawé. This was absolutely fundamental, the Sateré Mawé needed to have control over the whole process of manufacturing and selling the guarana. Also, regarding the Sateré, the Elf Aquitaine, a huge French Oil Company, exploited the oil in their territory using dynamite. It was something absurd and we decided to denounce that in France. For that, we brought in a wonderful French anthropologist, Simone Dreyfus-Gamelon, who did a whole research, visited the area with Sonia Lorenz, a great friend of mine, and also CTI's. When Simone came back with the report, Maurice Godelier said: "Simone, the Elf Aquitaine is the sponsor of the *Centre National de Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS). If you make these claims, you will take away the funding we have". Maurice Godelier! Incredible! And Simone took a stand, denounced the company, and we forwarded the full report to Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who was the president at the time, and he lectured Maurice Godelier. So, I think the engaged Anthropology

is absolutely fundamental. It is extremely important. We are the ones who, as anthropologists and researchers, have this closer contact with these populations who, in a country filled with disparities, are constantly ignored. This does not take anything away from Anthropology, and it should not, not its scientific element, nor its artistic aspect. These aspects do not exclude each other. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha's work in the 1988 Constitution was fundamental. Lux's work with the Xikrin, and even after that, with indigenous peoples from Uaçá, is absolutely fundamental. I think that the engagement itself is very important.

### IMAGES, LINES E DRAWINGS

**Luis Felipe:** I saw at Anpocs's website that you were the first member of the Image and Sound Committee. I would like for you to tell us a little bit about what it was like to insert films and photo shoots at Anpocs, and also of your role at the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA). My other question is a question-dispositif. I remember that in the course Photographs and Trajectories that you offered, I suggested that the students drew the life lines of their interlocutors. I know you have said many times that you will not draw, but I would like to propose, inspired by Tim Ingold, and it does not have to be now, for you to draw your own life lines. What are the thicker lines, and the dotted ones, and the thin ones, and the short ones? If you are not up to doing it, maybe we can draw the lines of this interview. But this is the proposal-dispositif.

**Sylvia:** Very good! To draw the life lines, I can go through here [shows her hands]. These are my life lines. From the right to the left. One of the most important things that was done by my generation for Visual Anthropology was to allow the area and the results of this area (such as films, photo shoots, internet works, hypertexts, and now also podcasts) to be recognized, because one of the problems is that, if Anthropology only recognized texts and books, everything we did would not be worth anything. And if nothing is worth anything, there will not be funding. There are funding agencies which, amongst its funding possibilities, do not include anything related to audiovisual production, to the making of films and photographs. So, the first step was to take to debate forums of Anthropology, such as ABA and Anpocs, the discussion on what we were doing. This was not just me, but also Clarice Peixoto, Cornélia Eckert, Ana Luísa Rocha, Carmen Rial, and Renato Athias, among others. People who were fundamental. Out of the most important things, what was very difficult was the elaboration of the *Audiovisual Qualis*<sup>6</sup>, because Capes had designed *Qualis books*, *Qualis periodicals*, but how about the audiovisual production? It was a huge battle with Graduate programs that did not dedicate themselves to any kind of audiovisual production. They did not

6. Translator's Note: Brazilian research metrics of scientific productivity determined by CAPES.

want these products to be worth anything, an enormous challenge. Now, in this world, the recognition of what you do in the university comes from metrics, the index h, index h-10, *Qualis*, and so on... This is awful, but one cannot run away, because this is the model of university-enterprise that has been imposed on us. We have to make academic projects in which specific goals are set. And how will you gradually reach these goals? What is the company's goal? To produce X products, sell... Anyways, this is the world today, in which, as Marilena Chauí says, even the government has to work like a company. Politicians do not present themselves as politicians anymore, but as managers. They manage the government, they have goals to be achieved. It is a boring job, but there is no escape from it, otherwise we will be completely left aside. As for drawing my life, I leave that up to you.

**Ana Lucia:** I would like for you to talk about your time in Manchester, and how you appropriate all of these references to make your films your way, from your experience. Would it be possible to think, following Ingold's text *Knowing from the Inside*, that in order to make the film *A Wedding in Pakistan* you were living the universe and experimenting what it is like to be a Pakistani woman?

**Sylvia:** Wow, this is an absolutely fantastic memory! This trip to England was fundamental for my life in numerous ways. I went there in August, 1993 and stayed there until February 1995, so it was a long time away, which professors can no longer get. Those were fundamental eighteen months. The leaves of absence given by the University today last up to six months, a very short time when you move to another country, because there is a whole adaptation period. In my case, I moved with three daughters of three, thirteen, and fifteen, Camila, Bel, and Laura. It was in a strategic moment because I had just separated from Jorge and since the newly separated life in São Paulo was very boring, moving to England meant to face new challenges, with three children in very different school ages. I must add that Jorge went there with me, and helped me. He was always and continues to be a wonderful ex-husband and an amazing father. It was an extremely rich period, both personally and professionally. I had a whole support system at the university, so it was very important for me to move there inserted in a professional environment. I owe Paul Henley absolutely everything, Paul and Olivia, his wife, who helped me find the two houses where I lived, bought me a car, then sold the car when I left, found the best neighborhood for me to live, because I would be close to the schools where Laura and Bel could study. They helped me find a day care... The neighbors would come to my house and say: "oh, your children are the same age as mine, we should get to know each other..." I find British sociability admirable. Manchester is a town with 300 days of grey skies. It is the worst climate in England, so everything is



indoors. That being said, sociability is vast. In professional terms, as there was no post-doctoral fellowship then, I did a master's degree in Visual Anthropology as if I were a student, but I was a *visiting scholar*, so I had all the prerogatives of a visiting researcher and all the access that the university's master's students had. Part of the degree included making a film. I started off thinking about a film on the street musicians, something absolutely impossible, because I had always worked with collectives and musicians were individuals in subway stations, in the streets, playing in front of their hats, and I have never researched a single person. And with the cold, they started to disappear from the streets, there was no musician left for me to study, until with Pnina Werbner, who was an anthropologist from the Department, I met the Pakistani women and was fascinated. I could see a collective environment among those women that I have always appreciated, just like in the indigenous communities, and made the first film, which is the *Al-Masoon Wonder Women*. What charmed me the most is the way those women, all covered up, could be absolutely sensual and erotic, something very impressive. And one of these women, who was part of the Feminist Association of Pakistani Women, invited me to attend her daughter's wedding. We stayed in the bride's grandmother's house and I went there with my three daughters. The wedding is an event that lasts a very long time, just like the Bororo funerals last a very long time. And the girls were fascinated because one of the wedding's activities was to buy the bride's trousseau, so imagine walking around with Laura, Isabel and Camila in all of those enormous Pakistani bazars in search of clothing and accessories, it was amazing. I walked with the grandmother, the bride's mother, and the bride who is a wonderful person, a physician, and she was from a high social standing in Pakistan. I, who had left England with houses without fences, suddenly felt as if I were back in Brazil in a way, because the houses in this place had very high walls with a security guard in front of the gates... I left England where everybody was somewhat the same, and went to an unequal Pakistan that I could recognize very well. I was in the house where everything happened, which is why the film is indeed a gaze from the inside. And I was able, on a day everybody had gone out, to be with the bride, in an interview in which she gave me the whole ethnography of the Pakistani wedding, which ended up structuring the film, where everything happens. It was from that moment on that I met everyone from Visual Anthropology in England, Paul Henley, Ana Grimshaw, Peter Crawford, David Turton... We were able to make a film from the series *Trajectories* on David MacDougall. Then we went up there, Lilian and Caio were part of this trip, it was them who made the movie, and it was incredible. I kept a close relationship with Paul Henley, we wrote, Edgar, Paul, and I two papers on the filmography and photos about the Bororo. I am once again with a paper with Paul, on Heinz Foerthmann. So, these

bonds remain strong and creating branches, reaching former advisees, advisees, children, and everything is mixed up.

**Jeferson:** Once while commenting on some of your experiences with drawing at Brazil's School, you said: "the observation drawing was almost an equivalent to the very experience of seeing: the hand that draws follows the eyes that see." Thinking about that, I would like for you to comment on how drawings have affected (whether they affected) your gaze, as a photographer and anthropologist, and as a way of making Anthropology.

**Sylvia:** I think drawing and photography have a very close intimate relationship. Henri Cartier-Bresson himself, for many years, was a photographer, known for being a photographer, but stopped taking pictures at some point and from then on, only drew. He used to say that photography was like a faster drawing, but you have to have the same kind of observation. So I do not agree with Tim Ingold's observations, who diminishes photography and technological apparatuses. Tati and Luis Felipe translated a wonderful paper, which I recommend to all of you, in *GIS 6*, by Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz, entitled *Drawing with a camera? Ethnographic film and transformative anthropology*. (*Desenhar com uma câmera? Filme etnográfico e antropologia transformadora*). It is indeed possible to draw with a camera and with the body as a whole. Sometimes you are photographing, or filming, but you are so connected with what you are seeing that it is a bodily experience. There is a part of my film, *Al-Masoon*, in which the women are dancing by the end of the movie, but I remember that I was filming that and was almost dancing with them. It is something that is not even possible, as a matter of fact. It is difficult for the researcher to film, or photograph, because you keep looking for the focus, and, if you stop to interact, that damages the shooting. But I think there is a huge relationship between photography and drawing. Both of them are important to my gaze, for sure.

**Bruna:** I would like to know what your relationship is like with your own photo collection, how do you archive and organize them, your negatives, the amplifications, field notebooks, objects, and all of these things?

**Sylvia:** In the last visit that Fabiana Bruno and Eder Chiodetto did to Maureen Bisilliat's home, Maureen showed them her office, the entire photo collection that had been organized by a friend of hers. She said it used to be a mess. Mine is a little bit like that. My photo collection is here in negatives and suspended folders. Rafael and Maíra came over on Monday to shoot, looked at it and said: "Sylvia, you need a dehumidifier!", and I don't have one. I have my field notes stored in a large dog chow box, which Maíra put beside here. I thought it was interesting that she put this giant heavy box right next to my chair so I do not have to get out of this place,

so I do not disappear from the camera. So, this huge box here under my chair is where I keep a lot of my field notes, researches, etc. Everything is here. I also have folders for a digital collection, which are not very well organized. My text folders are good, but my *drive* is a mess. It is very hard to organize one's own material, and I think this is something Lux, Claudia, and Maureen do with the people who help them. Mariana Baumgaertner, from our project, who did a junior research with me, organized Lux's cabinets and collections. Claudia also has someone to help her. They are both 90 years old, and I am 70, but anyway, I think this external look for the organization of the collections is fundamental, because you keep producing, doing things and then add them the best way possible, which is certainly not the best way. I never really thought of my photos then, but I have photographs from a trip with Renée Castelo Branco, a great friend of mine, a journalist who made weekly documentaries for a TV show called *Sem Fronteiras* [Without Borders], and I sent a different researcher every week to follow Renée in the production of the documentary. It all started with her at the beach doing production, and it ended in the editing station. Many of my students had the chance to go, I think Rita was one, Edgar and Andrea, Maíra, and it was an amazing experience in order to learn a different rhythm of production. After all, our documentaries usually take years. So, at the time I attended the *Brazil's School*, I took a few trips to Colombia with Renée, and there are some incredible negatives. I also took a trip with her alongside some other friends in which we went up the São Francisco river by boat. It was a crossing that took six days, starting at Pirapora and finishing in Juazeiro/Petrolina, then I continued for another month. That was in 1971, hitchhiking with Lilia Valle, we would sleep in churches and in the homes of people we met along the way. There are photos from this trip too. But I do not even know how to look at them, I do not have a very specific gaze for them.

**Vi:** My questions go back to two situations, one that you have already brought up, that I experienced due to the EIAV. You mentioned Claudia's beautiful lecture and I had the pleasure, the privilege, and the honor to take Claudia back home. And the way she walked really moved me, especially near your house, in streets with a lot of trees, saying: "look at that tree's shape. So pretty". She paid attention to all the trees. And when we left your house, she kept making comments and saying: "I recognize this tree, we have already been here, right?" I thought it was very interesting, because we, living in the city, do that with other things, like houses, traffic signs, buildings, but we hardly look at the trees. So, I kept thinking about the way her gaze had been trained, by those many years of experience in photography, but also in the forest. So, I would like to go back to this theme of the gaze sensitivity that you have worked with. The second situation is when you accepted me as your advisee, before my transition. I had proposed to research BDSM, and you said: "I don't even

know what that is, I can't advise you on that", and I said: "so can we look for another research on *travestis* subjectivities?" Then you invited me over to your house, where a great deal of our conversation revolved around a photograph of your father wearing a dress, which you showed me right off the bat, and it served to start off our conversation. Somehow both of these situations make me think of the role of photography and image as a place of mediation for relationships, as well as a kind of objectification of social relationships. Could you comment a little bit on that, please?

**Sylvia:** It is no surprise to me that Claudia would pay that much attention to the trees. In fact, this is what she recognizes the most. Once I hosted Canajó for six months, a Bororo man who had come to São Paulo for a dental treatment. I would walk a lot around the city with Canajó, we would also go to USP, and he worked on the restoration of some pieces at the Plínio Ayrosa collection. We would walk around the city and Canajó's ability for observation was impressive. He observed the city from a completely new perspective that I had never seen before. He knew where the jaguar (the animal) was... There was a car dealer that had a jaguar, and I had never noticed it was jaguar. As soon as he got here, he asked me where the sun rose. So this ability to observe varies a lot from person to person. This photo of my father, I have it in my living room. It is a wonderful picture. My father was born in 1905, and his family had 10 siblings, five men and five women. My father was the fifth, but all of the boys at the time were dressed with dresses. It was truly a crossdressing experience. Because boys would only start wearing boy's clothes once they left the mother's nest, but until then, they would wear hair bows, dresses, something I thought was very peculiar. So, when you brought in this subject that I knew nothing about, the only think that sounded familiar within your topic was, in fact, my father's picture. And it was thanks to Francis's efforts and thanks to your "dressing up" of your own project into a Visual Anthropology project that I accepted to advise you, because I said: "but I don't even know what this BDSM thing is, I don't even remember the acronym, do not work with gender, have no clue about the topic". And it was extremely rich to be able to work with you and get to know you better. As for the image as a form of objectification of social relationships, I suggest that everybody read Ewelter Rocha's articles on painted portraits. From existing portraits, the artist would make new portraits in which they placed people who had never seen each other together. So, there is the grandmother and her granddaughter, but the grandmother had passed away before the granddaughter had been born, and when they produce the image of the grandmother and granddaughter, they place these two people together in a visible and objective way; the importance of the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter. Or the couple who had gotten married, but at the time of their wedding had no money to pay for wedding clothes, and could only do it ten years



later. So the artist makes a portrait of that couple. I think the image is a way of objectifying social relationships and the first person I know to have ever talked about it is Anthony Seeger, in a beautiful paper entitled *The Meaning of Body Ornaments*. He talks about objects used by the Suyá (Kisêdjê), such as lip ornaments, decorations of ear lobes, and the way they mean something very specific. I think that the image can be really thought through this article.

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# FOUND ON THE NET

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## PATRÍCIA MONTE-MÓR AT THE RCB



Patrícia Monte-Mór has produced movie shows and debates and granted many other interviews over her trajectory as a visual anthropologist and cultural producer. With her passing away at the beginning of 2022, we could not fail to honor her in the **Found on the net** section. This is an interview given to the T.V. show *Revista do Cinema Brasileiro* [*Brazilian Cinema Magazine*] eleven years ago, due to an edition of the *Mostra Internacional de Filme Etnográfico* [*International Ethnographic Film Festival*], one of her many initiatives that have marked the field of Visual Anthropology in Brazil and generations of researchers and filmmakers who have great interest in the conjunction between anthropology and image. The images in this interview remain timeless, reminding us of something she has always done: spreading and thinking about cinema and anthropology in their multiple facets. A shout-out to Patrícia!