

The Saint and the encantado: the Afro Umbandista Procession to St. Sebastian in São João de Pirabas

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ABSTRACT

Every year on January 19th and 20th the municipality of São João de Pirabas celebrates King Sabá (Rei Sabá). King Sabá. As a version of the King Sebastian (Rei Sebastião), he is an entity that belongs to the pantheon of the encantados, beings who did not know the experience of death. These encantados transform themselves into entities that have their own territory – the encantaria – and manifest themselves from King Sabá and other agents. Based on an ongoing research, the article presents the rituals that precede the main feast of King Sabá, dedicated to St. Sebastian (São Sebastião). The purpose is to describe how the religions of encantaria mark and produce the city itself.

KEYWORDS

Afro-brazilian,
Amazon
umbanda,
Encantaria, city,
Northern Brazil

THE MULTIPLICITY OF KING SABÁ

In this essay¹, I will describe a procession and tour held to St. Sebastian on January 19, as part of the complex of rituals that precede the main festivity of the encantado King Sabá, because in São João de Pirabas, there have been taking place for a little over a century, celebrations, obligations, ceremonies, in short, a varied ritual dedicated to this entity. Pirabas is a coastal municipality, bathed by the Atlantic Ocean and the river with the same name as the city. Its location, in the micro region of Pará's Salgado, places it in a geography full of beaches and islands, some of these regions being places of enchantment to king Sabá.

King Sabá is a multiple entity, worshiped and lived in the same way. We can speak of an initial triad to describe it: King Sebastian, St. Sebastian and Oxossi. This is if we accept that King Sabá and King Sebastian are the same personalities. If not, we would have a quadriangulation. This picture becomes more complex if we take into account some reports that say that King Sebastian is Xanapã (Leacock e Leacock, 1975: 137). In my research, I did not find this reference directly, but this relationship is chanted in stalls, Giras and celebrations: “Ê Xanapã, ele é pai de terreiro” [Ê Xapanã, he is the father of a terreiro]. This multitude of the encantado it's not to be seen as synonymous between the beings involved, there are relationships. This is what Pai Sival, Mãe Rita, Pai Zé Pajé, Pai Pingo, Cabocla Mariana (in Croa – Mãe Rita's Head) and other interlocutors tell us.

In 2019, Pai Sival and Mãe Rita announced that this was the 107th Afro-Religious festival to King Sabá. Last year, the date was different, showing decades of difference. According to Pai Sival, in 2018 the prefecture made a mistake in disclosing the years, so they do not want to contest it, but he claims that this dating is in accordance with the ancients, such as Maria Pajé (already deceased) and Pai Pedrosa (who is very sick), leaders responsible for implementing the festivity as it currently happens.

For the conception of this text, I start from experiences and conversations with people who participate in city life during fieldwork carried out between January and February of 2018. In this period, I talked in more depth with two women, a young mãe de santo from White Umbanda and a healer shaman², Dona Oneide, who is over 80 years old. However, both are not active members in the festivities of King Sabá, opting for not participating in the festival. In June of 2018, due to a meeting that I participated in at the State University of Pará (UEPA) in Belém, I took advantage of the trip to go again to Pirabas. Thus, I talked with two pais de santos with a strong local presence, both participate in the festivities: Pai Sival, of linha de Pena e Maracá, who coordinates the spirit tent Preto Velho (which was locked in the occasion on behalf of a filho de santo who was retired), and Pai Zé Pajé from the temple of Umbanda Ogum Beira Mar e Zé Pelintra.

Furthermore, since January 11 of 2019³, I find myself in São João de Pirabas, where I watched the procession and the festivity for King Sabá in Castelo's Beach

¹ | The prototype of this text was an exercise proposed in the special topic discipline, Religion and Public Space, offered by Emerson Giumbelli under the PPGAS/UFRGS. In addition, part of this work was presented at the 31st Brazilian Anthropology Meeting, in the Performances and marks of religion in the city working group, coordinated by Emerson Giumbelli, Edilson Pereira and Christina Vital da Cunha, whom I thank for their contributions. Thayanne Tavares was present in some moments in the field, having contributed to this reflection. I emphasize that anonymous reviewers of this text contributed to its qualification and improvement. To the people of São João de Pirabas, especially the people of encantaria, I would like to thank you for the reception and for the past valuable moments and for those that still continue.

² | The Mãe de santo from this Umbanda center classifies its terreiro as such. We must keep in mind that the umbanda practiced here is still Amazonian, that is, it has a reference in enchantment (one of the leaders is the enchanted Cabocla Mariana, therefore, she respects and reveres King Sabá). The healer, Dona Oneide, is guided by these enchanting entities, in addition to the Macaw and other animals that are part of the enchantment complex. Thus, the caboclo entities, for example, are not like those of the Southeastern Umbanda. In Amazonian Umbanda there are also the caboclos of the forest, who are indigenous or descendants of them, but the caboclos have other nationalities, as well as participating in other ethnic-racial markers: they are Turkish, Portuguese, French who inhabit the enchantment (Ferretti, 2000; Luca, 2010). This does not mean that the ritual technology for receiving and relating to these enchanted ones is not black, with an African matrix and in constant dialogue with the pajelança.

(Praia do castelo) again. Thus I could talk and accompany the activities of Mãe Rita of Oxóssi, who organized the big festivities with the help of Pai Sival. I had the opportunity to accompany the installation of the new images of Iemanjá, Toia Jarina, Cabocla Mariana and Zé Raimundo, and I got to talk at length with Santeiro, the character that constructed the images. I also watched a work of Exu in the Temple of Ogum Beira Mar e Zé pilintra, talking with Pai Zé Pajé. Therefore, 2019 will surge time and again to complement the narrative, granted that Pai Sival, Mãe Rita of Oxóssi, from the Temple of Umbanda Oxóssi and Mãe Oxum, Pai Zé Pajé and Dona Oneide had become, throughout the research, the main interlocutor of the ethnography, just like the encantados and encantadas that irradiates them.

Therefore, in dialogue with my interlocutors, as we follow the different moments where King Sabá is present, we could extend this triangulation infinitely: ramifying, dividing, aggregating and differentiating. In Pará it is common that those who have the name of Sebastian are called, affectionately, Sabá. It's a clue of proximity. For this reason, we could say that King Sabá can be King Sebastian. Cabocla Mariana, the beautiful enchanted turk in the Croa of Mãe Rita of Oxóssi guaranteed me: King Sabá was a walker of the waters of Maranhão and Pará, and happened to be enchanted in that region. When in people's form, it appears as a white man, tall and handsome, being able to arise, in other moments, turned into Cobra Grande (a big snake entity), and for that, Cabocla Marina gives it the name of Rabudo (big tail).

King Sabá has a home in Fortaleza, in Castelo's Beach, territory located in the city's watery surroundings. The entity has as one of its materials existences a dark stone. The stone had, or has, according to the angle and the perception, the form of a sitting person. With the reforms of the prefecture, in the mandate of Bosco Moisés (2000-2008), the stone, a natural manifestation sculpted by nature, as the people of Pirabas tells, has turned into a monument, with the addition of a square base of concrete. Now, at first sight it does not remember an anthropomorphic figure anymore. There have been reports that the stone is lower than before, showing changes in its regions, mainly because it's a place for encantaria (enchanted). Besides the transformation of King Sabá into a monument, there was the addition of four images: Iemanjá, Cabocla Mariana, Toia Jarina, and Zé Raimundo. The stone of King Sabá is on rock and calcarium formations, containing a rich fossil collection of the cenozoic marine period.

The changes of the region are justified by the encantaria, but also by the movement of the sea tide. When high, the sea water covers a great part of the monuments and images, although it never covers the stone completely. There's reports and distrust, even though I never heard certainty in the accusations, that some of the destruction that happened in the complex of King Sabá had been caused by humans.

The encantado has two outstanding features. First, King Sabá does not have a fixed form, as it was said to me by Mamãe Oxum. Besides that, it's a very old entity, an old Vodunsi, according to Pai Zé Pajé, pai de santo (religious priest in Umbanda

3 | When I submitted this article for review, I was still in Pirabas. I stayed in the city between January 11th and the first half of July, making small visits to Belém to attend the terreiro of Pai Pingo de Oxumaré, a Pirabense who was active in the festivities of the King Sabá. Still in 2020, before the context of the covid-19 pandemic, I made other visits and continued my field research, being able to accompany another celebration for King Sabá. However, most of this writing is based, as I said, on the field experience of 2018, only supplemented with that of the following year.

religion) of Temple of Umbanda Ogum Beira Mar e Zé Pelintra. The festivity in its honor it's celebrated in January 20th, this is also the birthday of an old king of Portugal, that disappeared, died or did get enchanted in the battle of Alcacér-Quibir in 1578 (Ferretti, 2013; Leacock & Leacock, 1975). In São João de Pirabas, in addition to the denominations already mentioned above, King Sebastian is also called pai velho, nego velho, Cavaleiro do Céu and Guerreiro Militar.

St. Sebastian, Roman soldier canonized for its fidelity to the Christian principles, it's also celebrated on the 20th. Therefore, January 20th presents itself in São João de Pirabas as a multitude of celebrations to a diverse group of characters like king Sebastian (king Sabá), St. Sebastian and Oxóssi. There's disagreement, on the part of both the catholic church and the afro religious in respect of some specific associations between the characters, however, it's not the goal of this paper to make phenomenological and historical distinctions of these characters that have different trajectories and stories. To Pai Sival, there shouldn't be any confusion between King Sabá And St. Sebastian, each one having its own space in Pena e Maracá, Amazonian Umbanda and Mina.

The people in Pirabas I talked to don't seem to perceive King Sebastian as the concealed one that will return to establish the order on earth (Ferreti, 2013). Pai Sival tells us that in the previous versions of the festivity to King Sabá, the prefecture brought (as a solicitation of the terreiros) to speak about Sebastianism and other questions, the anthropologist Anaíza Vergolino, and the deceased and important pai de santo of the mina paraense, Pai Tayandô. This interlocution, of afro religious interests, shows the multitude of King Sabá in the region. Besides all these ways of manifestations of King Sabá, we know that "the return of the king happens in every public fest in which a filho de santo receives this entity" (Luca, 2010: 112).

We will see ahead that it's not easy to receive the King Sabá, just like its cult and its offerings are not attempts of bringing the encantado back to the region. King Sabá said to Maria Pajé, who was one of the most important leaders of the Pirabas, that he would be absent during a period from the Beach of the Castelo, moving away temporarily to the Island of the Lençóis in Maranhão. Maria Pajé had so much impact in both Pirabas and the region that a cultural and sportive center has been built with her name. Dona Caçula, biological mother of Mãe Rita, tells: Maria Pajé worked with Pena e Maracá and only made use of linha virada for protection (trabalhos da esquerda and quimbanda). It was that Mãe de Santo that oriented the mayor Bosco Moisés in the implementation of the images in the complex of King Sabá. This story of the distancing of King Sabá was told by Dona Caçula in greater detail, passing by regulars of the center of white umbanda that I already mentioned.

However, a few years ago, King Sabá came closer, as a result of the cults rendered to him and the intensification of its festivities. Dona caçula, mother of Mãe Rita of Oxóssi, for having experienced the time of Maria Pajé, emphasizes that King Sabá, irritated with the disrespect of its festivities, with people that would go to the event

just to drink or do something other than respect and worship him, decide to depart. Its stone was lowered at this moment. However, Bosco Moisés, the mayor of the city at the time, perceiving the festivities of King Sabá as the event that brings most people to the city, bringing people from the outside of the county, consulted the cowries with Maria Pajé, asking how they could make that King Sabá be pleased again and returned. Thus, it was authorized for him to make the modifications in the region, adding the base and the construction of the images of Zé Raimundo, Iemanjá, Cabocla Mariana, and Tóia Jarina. This entanglement of agencies that engages the public authorities and encantaria (enchantment) will be developed throughout this text.

THE CITY

On account of these joint efforts, Pirabas, on the eves of the festivities, it's crossed by several forms of religiosity, mainly afro umbandista forms (the way some terreiros of the region are identifying themselves for the local power and exogenous societies) and Amazonian shamanism (pajelança, a kind of indigenous influenced religious practice). As these religions have an ontological foundation in encantaria (enchantment), sometimes I will denominate them religions of encantaria, which encompasses the Amazonian Umbanda, the Pena e Maracá (Amazonian Shamanism) and the Mina. Here, the encantados caboclos live together with voduns and orixás (em Prandi [2004] we have a vast selection of materials about the encantados, masters and caboclos). Not every caboclos is indigenous, some are turke, others from various European nations, as we can check in the works of Taíssa Tavernard de Luca (2010). This characteristic of the caboclo in the Mina drum, the theme of the thesis of Mundicarmo Ferreti (2010), still has a lot to say for us and cannot be read hurriedly.

I will bring the procession for St. Sebastian mobilized by the afro umbandistas of the City as a locus of expression and mark of the religions of encantaria. In this perspective, these religions construct their own city. For such, there's a whole effort by the religious leadership, in negotiation with the local public authorities, so that its festivities can happen and be recognized. With this, discourses that depict the festivities and religions dealt with here as expressions of local history and culture, capable of transcending these produced spaces-times, runs the city.

São João de Pirabas is a city located in the northeast of Pará. Its coast it's constituted by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Pirabas River. It has approximately 22 thousands inhabitants and an area of 701, 896 km² (approximately 436 mi²) according to IBGE data. One of its main economic activities is fishing, having as the most important company in the city, currently in decline, the fishing enterprise Pricomar.

From a colonial point of view of history, the first villages that are know were formed in the end of the XIX century:

About the official version of the occupation of the territory where the county of São João de Pirabas its located, the majority of the writings about the origin, among some differences, point to what would be the first years of occupation of that place, this occupation would had occurred between 1985 and 1901. In that year, on July 6, 1895, according to Theodoro Braga e Palma Muniz the place gained the status of village belonging to the county of Salinópolis. In 1901 the then village of São João passed to the denomination of town through the state law No. 79768. This information is contained in every reference to this origin, but they surely are talking in occupation of those who come from outside, however, there's evidences of occupation by native populations, like the legendary explanation given previously, about indigenous societies that evidently had inhabited the place not just in Pirabas but also in the islands in its surroundings and in the giant territory in the Amazonian region (Santos e Silva, 2007: 43).

After being associated with other municipalities of the *salgado* (a Pará state region), like Salinópolis and Primavera, in 1988 São João de Pirabas emancipated itself. The paving of the City is restricted to some of the main roads that connect the central equipment like the public schools, the market, the beachfront, the *Princomar*, the graveyard, the squares, one of them the central square, in front of the Church of São João Batista, and the square were there are the Assembleia de Deus church and the Church Universal, a police station and some food services. This square is the most popular of the City, which provides free internet service, the *Navega Pará* (Browse Pará), financed by the state government. A quick walk, beyond this equipments, take us to roads without pavement, like, for example, where there are the center of white Umbanda, the house of the *benzedeira*, and the temple of Umbanda Oxóssi and Mamãe Oxum, this one already further away from the center of the city, staying in a farm, behind of the houses constructed for the Complex Raimundo Barros, that also gives its name for the neighborhood and for many of its members doesn't make part of the City anymore.

Until now, the only afro religious temple that I visited which had access by pavement is the street of the Temple of Ogum Beira Mar and Zé Pilintra, led by Pai Zé Pajé. Anyway, the aspects perceived as more rural are important to these religious people and the conviving entities. They construct a territory full of streams, eyes of waters and vegetal beings, a lot of them being plants of strength⁴, coating the territoriality of these places with the fundamento and axé needed for the maintenance of the religion.

To think how the religions of *encantaria* mark the city of São João de Pirabas, just as they produce distinctive effects in its constitution, it's an attempt to amplify the Afro-Brazilian studies which have consolidated in large urban agglomerations (Carneiro, 1977; Leacock and Leacock, 1975; Rabelo, 2014; Gonsalves da Silva, 1993). In Pará, the studies developed in cities in the rural area and with lower population density had their focus on the *Cabocla* and Amazonian shamanism (Cavalcante, 2008; Maués, 1995; Villacorta, 2001; 2011). My research has been developed between *pais* and

4 | These plants intensify the performance of shamans, *mães* and *pais de santos*, as well as the enchanted ones.

mães de santo, but which are also based in Pena e Maracá, the way which denotes the shamanism that happens inside the terreiros (Quintas, 2007). In São João de Pirabas, caruanas, word used by the ancients to denominate the encantados, just as the encantaria and the fundo are present along with the orixás, caboclos, vuduns and exuns⁵.

About São João de Pirabas and the encantaria of King Sabá, there are previous studies (Rego, 1983; Santos e Silva, 2007; Vergolino-Henry, 2008), although all of them are specific, except for Gerson Santos e Silva, that developed its dissertation about the encantaria of King Sebastian in the cultural history perspective. Because there is still no research that is dedicated in an ethnographic way to the terreiros of the region and the encantaria of King Sabá, I decided to construct my doctoral thesis about the topic.

THE PROCESSION, THE MASS, AND THE BEAT OF THE DRUM

Speaking with some people that partake of the afro umbandista religions of the City, as with professors and secretaries of the prefecture, it quickly became apparent that the celebration to King Sabá it's considered one mark of the popular culture and history of São João de Pirabas. From now on, I will report the rituals that I accompanied in 2018, bringing, from time to time, the experience of 2019 to complement the image.

Speakers, placed in vehicles, announced the procession. This one left Mãe Rita de Oxóssi's house and had route to the Church of São João Batista, where the priest celebrated a mass, downing in drum beats and chants, made by the afro-religious of Pirabas and those who came from other cities. The event occurred in the cultural and sporty center Maria Pajé, another work built under the management of the prefecture of Bosco Moisés. In addition to the speakers, the city heard the call to the luau, that I could not accompany, organized by the former mayor, connected to the colony of fishermen of Pirabas. These sound announcements had excerpts from Afro-Brazilian chants and emphasized the key words: culture, history and religiosity of São João de Pirabas.

On January 19, there was a procession that left from Mãe Rita de Oxóssi's house⁶. I didn't get there in time, so I waited for the procession to pass through the door of the church. In the meantime, Ana Marcia, a lady who knows a lot of things about the city, introduced me to Paulinho Pinheiro, writer of a blog about São João de Pirabas, which addresses local issues of historical, cultural, political and criminal relevance. Paulo tell me the names of pais, mães de santo and old shamans of the city, while reinforced the words that I already heard from others, that currently the city is putting aside the cultural and touristic potentialities, mainly in what concerns the popular ways of cult and festivities to the saints and King Sabá.

Approximately 30 people, dressed in white and red, coated in commonly worn clothes in the rituals of Mina and Umbanda from Pará, arrived at the destination of the procession. The people followed a car, which carried in its rear a Berlin, all decorated with colorful ribbons, In which the saint was leaning in a stall: St. Sebastian 's stand⁷.

5 | In Mãe Rita's terreiro, the mães, filhas and filhos de santo call exun the entity that organizes the people of the street, the material works and, sometimes, the so-called "linha virada", among the oldest, and the "linha da esquerda", among the youngest. The Leacocks (1975) found the same term in Belém. It is important to emphasize that in Mãe Rita's terreiro there is a simultaneous and synonymous use of exun and exu.

6 | Mãe Rita lives in the central region of the city, and that's where the procession came from, as her congá is in the Raimundo Barroso Complex, almost at the entrance to the city, quite far away for a walk. I could not follow the procession leaving his house in 2018, however, in 2019 I was able to watch a Gira at his house, as well as the procession leaving, guided and narrated, via voiceover in a sound car, by Pai Sival.

7 | This year's stand was given by someone connected to the prefecture. Mother Rita was unable to inform me who had donated the Saint.

After the coming of the afro-religious, everyone entered the church that had St. John Baptist as patron. The mass lasted from 7 pm to around 9 pm. Its public was mainly formed of afro-religious people, being minority those who weren't wearing terreiro clothes. It was perceivable that this was an extraordinary mass, having the ordinary mass happen on the same day in the afternoon. The priest emphasized “the presence of the afro-Brazilian” highlighting that respectful coexistence between religions and several other denominations is important, highlighting also that the most important thing is to search for God. He narrates the story of St. Sebastian, emphasizing its historical record, therefore, the truth in his vision, and its official recognition as a Saint of the Roman Catholic Church.

At a certain moment of the mass, he took the opportunity to say for the public that King Sabá and St. Sebastian are not the same characters, reinforcing that St. Sebastian existed, being in the documentary and official record, while King Sabá is part of the popular legends, having relates from elder people, the elders, that he would have done miracles. “It could have happened, it could not”, the priest argued “who am I to say anything?”.

However, it highlighted the distinction that the priest had made between a character that had the church recognition, and another, revered by the religions of encantaria. In the bibliography about the theme, there's suggestions that there's a confusion between King Sabá And St. Sebastian.

In Pirabas, I found more one appreciation and devotion to one multitude that surpass King Sabá – King Sebastian, St. Sebastian and Oxóssi than any confusion. On the contrary, the people that I talked to knew very well what they were doing.

Here, we will cut our narrative for a moment. King Sabá, that may be a variant of Sebastian, presents itself in its materiality in the stone, although it has its home in the encantaria. Its home extends along the coasts of Pará and Maranhão, with a strong reference to Lençóis' Beach in Maranhão. When I asked Pai Zé Pajé about King Sabá and its difference to St. Sebastian, he delineated: king Sebastian is a fundo's king, an encantado from the fundo, he's an old vodunsi⁸, whereas St. Sebastian is a Warrior Saint. About the antiquity of the encantado, it's important to notice that emphasis in many narratives. Cabocla Mariana, in the croa of Mãe Rita, gives the nickname “Pai Velho” to king Sabá. This perception of the encantado is encountered in the other terreiros. Sariza Venâncio (2019) in her ethnography about the encantados in the Umbanda in Northern Tocantins, dialogue with a mãe de Santo who, in addition to receiving King Sebastian, denominating him as “velho”, feast the encantado once every two years, always on January 20th, together with St. Sebastian, remembered yearly.

To Pai Sival, the distinction made by the priest had already been made by himself: “our part in the church was as catholic Christians, the Mass celebrated at January 19, its for St. Sebastian, the Saint of the catholic church”, continuing “because we are catholics and we have that devotion”. He explains that the mass cannot be made on the day of St. Sebastian precisely because of the festivity to King Sabá.

8 | Vodunsi: denomination for who is the son of voduns in the Mina's drum.

King Sabá, in the way that it appeared in the research, it's a force that passes through the entire region. Materialized in its stone, in the points of force and encantaria: the ocean, rivers, wells, eyes of waters and a lot more, it's present in the sayings and practices of the city, both among afro umbandistas and lay people. Mãe Rita de Oxóssi says that King Sabá can turn into many animal and human forms.

Although Roger Bastide has been criticized by scholars of religions of African origins in Pará, especially for having elaborated his analysis basically on top of research made by others, the participation, described by Bastide mainly in *Algumas considerações em torno de uma "lavagem de contas"* (1973), must say something about what happens around this multitude of characters experienced in São João de Pirabas. After all, there Bastide decrees that "all orixás are multiple" (Bastide, 1973: 363), although in-depth research is yet to be carried out that will say whether this statement is valid to the encantados, for all or just a few of them. Furthermore, we should remember the transformational aspect of King Sabá: if he doesn't have a fixed form, he can associate himself to and itself in many beings. In 2019 the image of the Saint in its stand-shack, the same used in the procession, was taken to King Sabá's stone, where the saint and the king met.

About the relationship between catholicism and the religions of encantaria, we can say that many that dedicate themselves to the later consider themselves Christians. It's not uncommon for shamans to declare that they follow catholic principles, and even the evangelicals (Vaz Filho, 2016; Maués, 1995; Silva, 2014). In the religious census carried out in the city in 2010, 15,731 people declared themselves of the Roman Catholic apostolic religion, 3907 of the evangelical religion. Only 20 people declared themselves spiritists. About the quantity of terreiros, I was helped by Pai Sival and Mãe Rita in this counting, and we have five terreiros that are active, but I believe that the number is much higher, because here I am not counting the smaller houses, the healing yards, shamans, prayers and healers that work alone, like Dona Oneide.

The declarations suggest that there's conviving between these religions, where people move between them with some ease. After all, the afro and shamanism manifestations are in the official calendar of the City, presented as a compost of religion and culture. Although the afro and shamanism religions do not appear in the census, they are visualized and heard by the streets of the city, specially on the eve of the festivity of King Sabá.

Figure 1.

São Sebastião brought by the procession. Author's photo (2018).



Let's return to the end of the mass. Throughout it, the priest remarked the importance of the festivity of King Sabá for attracting people from outside and for composing the cultural calendar of the City. By the end of the mass, Pai Sival was called to speak. He thanked the priest for the receptivity, announcing the names of the Pais and Mães de santo that came from Belém and Ananindeua, metropolitan region of the capital, for the festivity.

After the mass, the afro-religious went to the sporty and cultural center Maria Pajé, where there happened a gira, that lasted until late at night in the square facing the center. Drumming and chanting were performed for the encantados, King Sebastian, St. Sebastian, Oxóssi, and many other spiritual entities, depending on the manifestation of the encantados in the heads of their sons and daughters who were at the Gira. With the sound of the atabaques, there was a small sound equipment to amplify the voice of the person that initiated the sung pontos. A chant that was repeated in that moment, In addition to the many others referring to this festivity, is the following:

Rei, Rei, Rei
Rei Sebastião
Quem desencantar lençol
Põe abaixo o Maranhão
[King, King, King
King Sebastian
Who disenchant Lençol
Will take Maranhão down]

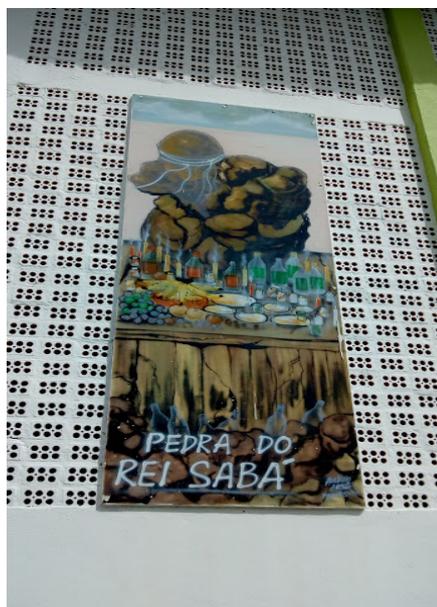
The place where the Gira happened, the cultural center Maria Pajé, is on the edge of the city, being an open and wide construction. In its surroundings, there's concrete kiosks, a basketball court and a football court. Has in one of its sides, the one adjacent with the street, paintings evoking the king Sabá stone, the beaches surrounding the city of and the monuments that were constructed around king Sabá, forming an integrated complex. The art is signed by "Adriano artes". He's the same artist that signed some other paintings in walls that I found in the city, like part of the drawings in the walls of the terreiro of Pai Zé Pajé.

Maria Pajé, as I already mentioned, gave the name of the center and was an important shaman of Pena e Maracá of Pirabas. She helped the mayor, at the time of his management (2002–2008) in the choice of the entities that would have its images constructed and transformed into a monument in Fortaleza's Island. It was her that gave the fundamento so that the work was done according to religion. In the cultural center there's a plate explaining a little of her story:

Flaviana Serrão da Silva, "Maria Pajé", as she was known by our society. She was born in Igarapé Miri, on January 20th of 1929. Adopt São João de Pirabas as her nation. When it was still Vila da Primavera. She stood out as a lover of popular culture, having founded the fandango group of São Benedito. She also turned to other folkloric activities like the carimbó. Her work encouraged the youth to also be interested in the popular regional culture, providing the dissemination of São João de Pirabas through the arts. Maria Pajé passed away in September, 20th of 2019, in São João de Pirabas, where she stayed for the last 42 years of her life. Borrowing her name to this cultural and sporty space, it's a posthumous homage that society gives her, in recognition of her love for the city.

I highlight that despite the nickname of "Pajé" (shaman), what is highlighted is her action to the local culture and the activities denominated as "folkloric".

Figure 2.
Side of the Maria Pajé center.
Author's photo (2018).



For the purposes of this article, I will not delve on the festivities that happened on January 20, but I reiterate that It was common to hear from the representatives of the prefecture and other public agents that the celebration was part of the culture, history, and incentive of tourism of the city. The mayor, together with his family, participated in the celebration and the prefecture constructed a tent/ranch in the Fortaleza's Beach, for the feeding of a part of the afro-religious and their employees, just as a life-guard toured the Beach. The celebration was announced by the site of the prefecture, including in the schedule the activities that occurred from the procession until the festivity. On January 20, in addition to the afro-religious, there were many bathers and persons that came to accompany the celebration and/or took the opportunity to enjoy the carimbó and sound system parties. The TV Liberal, a Rede Globo affiliate in Pará, was in the festivity, registering it for the elaboration of a TV report⁹.

⁹ | The TV report aired on January 22, 2018. Consult at: <https://g1.globo.com/pa/para/noticia/afroreligiosos-celebraram-o-rei-saba-em-sao-joao-de-pirabas-no-pa.ghtml>

THE AFRO UMBANDISTA MARKS IN THE CITY

There's many discourses: sounds, visuals, felt and materialized by the ways of Pirabas, and when crossing to the islands, they spread out, covering the island regions with discourses about the festivity as a culture and religion. For the local powers, the church and the professional sectors, the highlight tends to be the culture, being the religions lived most by the afro-religious. Having the speakers in mind, the announcement of the prefecture, blogs and other media agents related to the festivity of King Sabá, there's an act to make public the existence of afro-religious people in São João de Pirabas, as well as in Greater Belém and other regions, where the majority of other

afro-religious people came. With their clothes, drums and chants, from the day before until January 20, and when they cross to the islands with their ritual clothes, drums, offerings and obligations to King Sabá, they construct an enchanted afro-Brazilian landscape.

This is a political act not only because of the relationship that is established between the prefecture and the afro-religious. It is political in the cosmopolitical sense. After all, in addition to the relationship with the humans, the festivity is a relationship that is established with an encantado: from this connection, permission to enter its territory it's solicited, making requests for the year to be full and prosperous. Even a fisherman who picks up a bottle of cachaça that was offered to King Sabá, saying that next year he will bring one for him, is in a political relationship with encantaria. For the purposes of this reflection, I am focusing in the politics in the more restrained sense, dialoguing with what Paula Monteiro said about making (something) public:

An act or object become public not just because it's on a public place, but because its presence in that place puts on movement, for some public, a set of argumentative dynamics that redimensions its public importance. Taking as focus the observation of the processes of production of publicity, maybe it's up, however, to understand which networks of publicity that collective religious action make emerge and the languages that make them work in the sense of managing the relationship between the people and the more institutionalized social domains (Montero, 2016: 145).

In the many domains of possibilities presented here, it's hard, maybe impossible, to point out what types of public is in focus: those who watch a TV show about the celebration to King Sabá, passing by theirs catholics, evangelical convictions and the many nations and terreiros that participate in the celebration. That's without counting the shamans, healers, pais and mães de santo in general, that celebrates king Sabá, St. Sebastian and Oxóssi on January 20, without crossing to Fortaleza's Island. Thus, holding the services in their own religious spaces. None of these publics, if that's what we want to call them, are uniform, and neither could consist of a closed public. We perceive an intricate network that is much broader and full of other assemblages, from the King Sabá stone, which is a monument, a stone and an enchanted entity at the same time, to people who strive to make the activity still happen every year. We have a multitude of actions. But, obviously, those who most consume this publicized information are the Afro-religious themselves. Before and after the festivity, we can see them comment on what happened, sharing pictures and videos in social media, mainly Facebook and WhatsApp. Before the festivity, Pai Sival makes or tells someone to make many invitations for divulgation, for sharing in this network. As in the figures 3 and 4.

Figures 3 and 4. Divulagation images.

In 2019, Pai Silva and Mãe Rita joined the Religious Union of Afro Umbandista Cults in Brazil, UR CAB, led by Colonel Itacy.



Anyway, what I want to emphasize in Montero's excerpt is that what is put in public mobilizes a complex of arguments and criticisms that redimension political acts. The images that were constructed around the King Sabá: Iemanjá, Jarina, Marina and Zé Raimundo, were mostly broken and worn out by the action of time and, maybe, humans. Jarina is not in its base of concrete anymore, and yes, leaning against it, with only its torso intact, but still worn out. Mariana is still there, but with a broken arm. Zé Raimundo, only his feet were on the base, and it was possible to see the image just ahead with its trunk resting on the stones, decapitated. Many afro-religious persons commented that the state that the images were in was shameful, and that it was a responsibility of the public power. Others commented that Afro-religious people had a responsibility to preserve those images. Also, the two people already mentioned who do not participate in the festival, a white umbanda's mãe de santo and a healer/shaman Dona Oneide, find in their motivations not to visit the beach on the 20th, the state in which the images are located. The mãe de santo tell me that the entities are certainly sad with the degradation of the images and that they don't live there anymore, taking refuge on the other side of the beach. I heard some narratives situated in the last few decades: because of the degradation of the place and the disappointment of the encantados with its devotees, the encantaria of King Sabá had moved out, definitely, to the Lençóis' Beach in Maranhão.

The mãe de santo of white umbanda, still justifying the reason she disliked participating in the festivity, commented that she did not appreciate the way in which the celebrations were carried out, because people consume alcohol and offer plenty of

drinks to King Sabá – it is common for the act of pouring alcohol on the stone. When talking about the consumption of alcohol by the entities and their own “horse”, the Mãe de santo says that this act came more from “our culture”, by the “culture” of the “popular umbanda”, that created the image that the entities are drinkers. She says that she doesn't think that this behavior is wrong, but the fundamento in her terreiro is other, and doesn't include alcohol in their rituals. Thus we have one more meaning for the word culture, although we cannot say that it circulates in the same public that speaks about the festivity of King Sabá as culture. However, one could say that there are several discourses in place, where culture, history, religion intertwine and are mobilized to compose the very city. Is in this aspect that the propose by Montero (2016) is of interest here: because beforehand we aren't speaking neither of religion in the public sphere, nor of public religions: “the collective activity of putting on stage certain confrontations construct specific actors as ‘religious’ and the religion as ‘public’” (Montero, 2016: 144).

It's interesting that the discourse that folklorizes the afro religions and shamanism is shared both by the catholic church and the state, here, in the ethnographic level that we are treating, the Church of São João Batista and the Prefecture. In this aspect, we can bring as a disjunctive example the research of Matthew Engelke (2013), if we agree that the act of folklorizing religions of African origin passes by a certain level of culturalization of them. Engelke (2013), describing the perception of a British biblical group that, among many of its activities, had the porpoises of divulgation of the Bible with several modes of publicity, shows that one of the strategies adopted by the group was the distribution of several biblical charades in outdoors, scattered across Manchester, and also in coasters in bars. The biblical group proposes such undertaking because it believes that the enemy of the church is the culture itself. The process of secularization, according to the group, distanced the church (religion) from the world. Thus, the proposal of spread these biblical images, which drink and are circumscribed in an aesthetic of “culture”, intended to bring Church and Culture together, as the group does not accept the liberal conception of religion, in the sense that it should be restricted to the scope private (Engelke, 2013). In the case of the church in Pirabas, the association between religion and culture perpass the relationship that the religions of African origins and shamanism have with the encantaria. Here, the catholic church thinks itself as the religion, and doesn't have to worry if it were apart from the most mundane practices. Furthermore, the church classifies the religions of African origins and shamanism as culture. In that sense, they can even be recognized as a pathway to God, being “almost legitimate” forms to get to Him, although to the church hardly these “cultures” are equivalent to the catholic religious field.

To the church, St. Sebastian is part of a legitimate cult, because he was a historical character, and provedly deserves the elevation to the category of saint. King Sabá would be in the register of culture – legend – folklore, because is worshiped by

people of the popular classes — after all, one of the main devotees of Rei Sabá are the fishermen, who constantly see him and roam his territory, as well as Afro-Brazilians, healers, prayers and shamans. To the prefecture, King Sabá, his cult and the religions of the encantaria are part of the culture because they compose a tradition that lasted for tens of years or even a century. It mobilizes the population of the city and attracts the public from outside. It makes part of local culture and provides tourism for a region that is famous for its beaches and balnearies, but that never really got into its touristic activities, like its neighbor Salinópolis, famous for its vacation tours and crowded beaches in the summer.

BEFORE THE END

As we saw, King Sabá is multiple and transforms into several beings. From the procession of St. Sebastian, the Saint is invited to participate in the festivity of the King, just as on the 20th, constituting modulations of these participations and correspondences, King Sabá is impregnated with Oxóssi, as Mãe Rita de Oxóssi tells us, “King Sabá is Oxóssi in umbanda”. Furthermore, Pai Sival has said more than once that fruit is offered to King Sabá, which would usually be offered to Oxóssi, to ask that the year be prosperous and full.

A lot is asked to the King, however, what is offered? As we saw, the festivity to King Sabá has been abandoned for some time, then the encantado himself decided to spend a season at Lençol's Beach, approaching Castelo's Beach only in the period of its festivities. But with the mobilization of the people that worship the encantado in the region, in fluctuating relationships with the local power, it was finally possible to return the festivity to the way the King likes it: with respect to him, in an organized and beautiful way.

The people we talked to in Pirabas show that King Sabá as an enchanted entity exists and wants to exist. I am not making the same mistakes as priests and lay people, well, let's remember Bastide (1973) and his writings about bead washing. There he says that the candomblé philosophy has a concept of person where there's various degrees of existence, between being and non-being. This philosophy is in contrast with the modern conception, largely based on Kantian rationalism, in which there is only being and non-being, with no space between the possibility of existing and nothingness. On the other hand, in the washing of beads, as in other Afro-Brazilian rituals, the person becomes a little more existent, and this adds obligations, taboos and ritual prescriptions for that person, now, dedicated to and protected by some orixá. If the person exists with greater intensity, in the same way it is the orixá that now reigns in that head. Wouldn't the enchantment of King Sabá be in the same way? Here we are not talking about washing beads, but about various ritual operations, festivities, offerings and obligations, which make public the existence of your enchanted region, so enchanted

and beautiful that it deserves to be seen by more people. Cabocla Mariana, in the head of Mãe Rita said that King Sabá wishes to have more people coming in his festivity, so that he will be more recognized. The recognition increases its existence. Pai Sival Dias, in a similar remark, tells that a few years ago the festivity was abandoned by the public authorities. The afro umbandistas community, without support, could not lead the festivity in the way they pleased themselves and the encantado. This impossibility drove away both the religious and the King Sabá. Pai Zé Pajé helps us to understand this past situation, informing that he stayed several years without going to Castelo's Beach because the festivity had lost its organization and the dedication to the encantaria. It was with great insistence and mobilization that the desired support returned. The greater existence of King Sabá in the world implies greater obligations to him and his enchantment¹⁰.

Having said that, before the local government, the religions of encantaria in São João de Pirabas are inscribed as a culture in the public space – I would say that more than a public space without markers, we are in front of an enchanted public space (Carvalho, 1999), just as they are inscribed in a readability, sometimes at least, “differentialist”, that is, they mobilize arguments that particularize the presence of these religions in the public space (Giumbelli, 2008). But there is more. As we enter the terreiro communities that participate in these festivities and worship the King Sabá and all its enchantment, we will see that these social relationships established with the public power it's expression of the religion itself. It was by getting closer to the local government that the broken and worn images of Iemanjá, Mariana, Jarina and Zé Raimundo were finally substituted in 2019. With these actions and others, people who live these religions nurture the life of their own enchanted and show the world the beauty that is their kingdom and home. In this way, festivities and celebrations are essential events (Pereira, 2017). For the world of enchantment and the encantado, as Cabocla Mariana teaches us, a taste for beautiful things and festivities is very important.

10 | This conversation with Pai Sival took place on January 18, 2019, when the new images were transferred and installed at Castelo's Beach. The dialogue took place in the only available shadow, while we were on the plateaus where King Sabá and the other images are. The conversation with Pai Zé Pajé took place on February 10 of the same year, at his house-terreiro.

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