

Influence of Black Culture in Brazilian Culture

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Abstract: This article aims to make an analysis of the contribution of black culture in the formation of Brazilian culture in a broad sense and, in particular, the city of Muzambinho. Through a historical view of its resident's daily lives and their relationship to the city from the 1980s, using the field research.

I aimed at understanding this black community from their oral histories and memories, as a rich instrument of reconstruction and recovery of their cultural identities. It was evident in the reports, the fight and the desire for recognition as part of this reframing formation of their culture. Currently, facing the fragmentation of collective life and exacerbated individualism present in the hegemonic culture and the world's integrated capitalism that encourages cultural practices with clear objectives to develop a cultural industry, disarticulate local cultural practices, leading to community acculturation, i.e, dismantles not only citizens of their belonging to social history but also makes them not feel part of a cultural whole. Thus, the development of public cultural policies is indispensable for the preservation of our cultural identity which is also marked by traditional festivals like *cangado*, *moçambique*, *capoeira* and the carnival and the rich handicrafts produced in the neighborhood.

Key words: daily, field research, gender, memories and cultural identities

1. Introduction

Culture refers to the concrete experiences of subjects, variability ways of conceiving the world, the particularities and similarities built by humans throughout the historical and social process. The human beings, through culture, stipulate rules, agree on values and meanings that enable the communication of individuals and groups.

The black culture is vast, rich and transcends borders. For a long time, and even today, although the progress made, topics of that culture remain unclear even because not recognize as culture. However, it is necessary that the discussion occurs and continues to occur, as analyzed by the Brazilian sociology.

We understand that the current history is more comprehensive, dealing with various aspects of the lived reality, close ties with other sciences, questioning, analyzing and seeking new ways to make history. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to present the cultural appreciation of these subjects through their representations, their symbols, gestures, and images, helped in the formation of the city with their work, their life stories and their culture. We believe that all knowledge, practices and values bequeathed by the past to the present will contribute to the formation of society as a whole and can provide continuity of cultural value so that it is not lost in the

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2. Material and Methods

The present study was carried out in the city of Muzambinho, held in southeastern Brazil, in the state of Minas Gerais, south of the state, at Brejo Alegre community, which according to old maps, ancient artworks and historical accounts, is a remnant quilombo community. Through research it was made a cut in the history of the community's daily life and their relations with the formation of the city of Muzambinho.

To this end we have established a dialogue with the oral history, written sources and photographs to try to understand these historical subjects that have a rich culture, but that is hidden on the fringe of society. The question that guided the research was to understand what was the social role that black people exercised in Muzambinho society? How did the culture related within the public sphere, markedly mixed-race, but with white, Catholic and European dominance?

Popular stories tellers of the neighborhood were primordial in the construction of this article, we used an analysis of simple people, who for many years had no opportunity to be heard because of a repressed and silenced past.

For this cultural ethnic contribution not be lost in the reconstruction and reinterpretation of Muzambinho history, I present residents of the neighborhood and the place lived and experienced by these people, their identities, relating them to others who were part of their past, how the black people were forming their resistance and redefining their space through their cultural representations, their daily practices.

Portelli (1997) and Perrot (1989) contributed so we could put into practice the oral history and appreciate it. We believe that all knowledge, practices and values bequeathed by the past to the present will contribute to the formation of society as a whole and can provide continuity of cultural value so that it is not lost in the changing constant process of our times.

3. Case Study

Anchored in Davis (1990), working with microhistory I realized that the everyday issues of the neighborhood residents, starting in the past and on the formation of the city composing political aspect, closely linked to the dominant social classes, raise general questions that occurred in Brazil.

The policy and the formation of the city were in the hands of agrarian elites, the farmers, and they made clear in their reports that the direction of the city should be exercised by the most enlightened and wealthy. Consequently, a small portion held power since, in the general, most of the population was illiterate, mixed-race and poor. Marriages took place within the same social class, which remained the same or even intensified in the countryside because the wealthy farmer's condition was a leveler for political and social influence. And it is through this force that the contribution of other ethnic groups is losing its value in the formation of national, state and local history.

In this process of continuity and enhancement of blacks, I found in Muzambinho's history the city name's terminology and concluded that it is linked to the influence that the blacks of various African ethnic groups had in the formation of the village. Muzambinho is a municipality located in the state of Minas Gerais, south of Minas

Gerais, with a population of about 23,000 inhabitants, with an area of 414.0 square kilometers and with a population density of 53.60 inhabitants/km². It is believed that there was Quilombo formation in the region around the years of 1765 and 1767. The first housing project ever heard there dates the year of 1765 on a map organized by order of the governor of Minas Gerais Captaincy, Dom Luiz Diogo. In this map is marked the site with the first name of Quilombo, which would now be the area of Muzambinho and two cores called: Dumba and Zumdu, inhabited by black Africans in the current region of the city of Jacuy/MG, 58 km away from these two cities.

The neighborhood Brejo Alegre is one of the oldest districts of Muzambinho if not the first. I could see that the neighborhood is located in the lower town, which was formerly surrounded by many forests and swamp whose name itself suggests (Brejo Alegre would literally means "Happy Swamp" in english) to us that it was a region difficult to access, being favorable for slaves and former slaves to hide. As reported by one witness (João Thobias, 90 years, retired employee of the City of Muzambinho), "here was the woods, they would check and gather here".

According to Mr. João Thobias blacks came in a fearful way to obtain information about the place and were crowding on this site. The expression that Mr. João Thobias uses that blacks had been "checking" means that they wanted information if there would be a safe place so that they could live and raise a family.

Thus, through the memory of witnesses and visits in loco, we present the neighborhood as it was. Very simple, the streets were not paved. At the beginning there were not roads, there were tracks that were gradually being opened to give way to the streets. These streets, even today, do not follow the standards of a designed neighborhood, but have a natural pattern that the trails were being opened, lopsided. The houses, in the same condition, follow the streets, some seem botched. The buildings were made of wattle-and-daub and dirt floor. Currently the houses were improved, but most are still simple, it's interior too. The witnesses report that there was no running water, water came from wells and also when there was a house with electricity, it was poor electricity.

A dialogue with Vidal (1997) was important to realize that the organization of a territory can follow changes and adjustments according to the users' needs. They say Brazil has poor memory regarding politics, but the residents of the neighborhood Brejo Alegre prove otherwise. They are keen to search in their memories those who helped their community. They recognize all the achievements made to improve their neighborhood and are grateful for them. These achievements were not acquired through struggle or great mobilization of residents, but through the political campaign commitment that turned their eyes to the outskirts of the city.

Politicians and people in society are part of the residents' memories because they made something visible in the neighborhood; they were able to cross the bridge that separated them from the rest of the city. The bridge was a social divider that contributed to increase and reaffirm social differences. Even the topography of the bridge was bad, because it was very steep and was built at the time for the Mogiana railway. When it rained, the difficulty of access to the neighborhood was even greater. Residents complained that garbage and dead animals were thrown in the valley, thicket that was under the bridge. Removing of the bridge not only eased the ascent and access to the neighborhood, but also facilitated the transition and connection to the city center and other neighborhoods. It was built a playground and sports court where the valley and thicket was. The region also received flooring (Vidal, 1997).

Also at the same time some housing renovations were made together with construction of bathrooms that some houses did not have. The benefits come in access to the neighborhood and also the panorama and hygiene, as well as the floods that no longer overflow the neighborhood, drunken people also lost place on the bridge. What were not lost were the prejudices, present in the memory of the residents especially the elderly. The exclusion symbol that represented the bridge is still alive (Vidal, 1997).

The relation of Brejo Alegre neighborhood with the city was very friendly according to ancient tellers. We cannot say that this happened peacefully because in their accounts, their stories and memories, these respondents are keen to remember those who won respect of other citizens from the city. And this achievement was through the only way they knew or that made them recognized, showing their prowess through strength and endurance.

According to the interviewee Dulce Lea de Oliveira, she heard about Maria in ribbon, but she said it was not from her time. But she recognizes that both men and women had body confrontation. She reports that when police went to the neighborhood, a resident named Mr. João Vicente “left about three fallen at the door of his house”. Police had a very hard time to take him under custody, because he attacked them. Both male and female reports were making it clear that residents used the Capoeira as self-defense and did not let anyone mess up their neighborhood. They faced much prejudice against their skin color, but they imposed themselves through brute force, violence that is present as output and solution for them to be recognized, accepted and respected as equals. The respect and prestige that farmers have earned through their socio-economic status, blacks and their descendants of Brejo Alegre neighborhood conquered by body strength and own cultural manifestations.

Women’s memories are strongly linked to work as support and often family backers. Their memories refer to coffee plantations, vineyards, family houses and washing clothes for people in the “city”. They recall that the factory of lard and sweet milk factory did not contribute to improving the neighborhood. On the contrary, there was resistance by women who have lost the place where they washed the clothes, having to conform to a small space that was left. Children would go along with their mothers in these streams and other places of toil, which caused an even greater wear on the women who were accumulating functions. According to the above deponent, “we earned very little, the City did not pay wages. The City Hall did not have enough income. The Avenue who was restored by Mazzilli (mayor at the time) and he had to pay the guys with his own money”.

When come reports about the construction, paving, Muzambinho urbanization, they search in their memories and file those who contributed to this, recall that the stones were taken from a farm and donated by important families. Anyway, not ignoring the value that families had emblazoned on the construction of the city, the descendants of slaves, simple workers also want to be recognized as part of this story. After all, the settlement of the stones in Dr. Americo Luz Avenue, the main avenue of the city was also part of their work and memories. As well as D. Pedro II Park, the Chapéu de Sol, the phallic water fount and Cruzeiro. (These works were designed by the sculptor Antonio José de Carvalho, a native of Barcelos, Portugal). The Folha Regional newspaper, in a special article about the 122 years of Muzambinho reports the cobbles of Dr. Americo Luz Avenue, formerly called Largo, where the typical dances of black culture were presented. Measuring 548 m from an extension to another, the original park design was by Elias Blanco, which worked specially with stones.

According to ancient tellers, blacks stood out with their dance, the traditional Congado, Consecrated to the Holy Mother of Rosary (Nossa Senhora do Rosário) was held in every October, in the “Largo” (currently Dr. Américo Luz Avenue). There was also the Moçambique dance. These dances no longer exist, the carnival and capoeira took place on the avenue, with own crafts with clay and sisal enchants its exhibits on Dr. Lycurgo Leite House of Culture. It is through the carnival, capoeira, and crafts those blacks and their descendants will regrouping and forming their leaders, giving a new impetus to the old parties. They are still very happy and they are the only ones that know how to throw an avenue party, delighting everyone that watches it, with their drummers, dancers and highlights. It can be observed that is innate, very itself, present in the body.

Donizethe, a resident of Brejo Alegre neighborhood and descendant of black is the most illustrious figure of Muzambinho carnival. Always a highlight. The samba school is called Espelho de Futebol ('Freedom Mirror').

Football, the Ponte Preta team, is the pride of the residents and fans of Brejo Alegre neighborhood. This team, with all its tradition since 1954, brought many victories to the neighborhood. Men, women and children fanatically cheer for their team. Women in a space that would often be a male space discuss and manifest themselves as equals. Football transcends the idea of just a game, it's like it transposes a little of each, a little of their lives. And the team's achievements are now being considered as life achievements. Like all the locals come from the same social status, union is something very visible and present in the neighborhood. I noticed this union not only through all the reports of the witnesses, but also sometimes I witnessed it in my visits to the neighborhood. They mobilize, recognize each other's needs. This union may also be influenced by the topography of the neighborhood. The houses are quite close to each other, the narrow streets. The windows are always open, as well as the doors, leaving the whole house in sight, with its objects and residents. They go outside their houses to talk to this or that neighbor, tell something of their daily lives. And so they go on establishing links with each other, experiencing a more intense human side.

However, the implementation of the Dona Francisca Alegretti Bianchi School and FAM (Support Minor Front) at the beginning society had to be prepared for a good acceptance. The heads of schools reported that they had a lot of work with children and parents as well, to participate in the school life of their children, so they could see the school as something that would bring improvements to the local community. Improvements were seen in the issue of school dropout, hygiene, school garden, feeding and relationship of parents with school.

Given the above we can infer that the act of love to tell their stories is a striking feature among the elderly witnesses in the neighborhood. This search exercise for their past using memory is something fascinating for anyone who is interviewing them. That look that is lost for a moment transcends a simple reminder; it brings the past to mind (Bosi, 1983).

Not only in their eyes we can feel such emotion, but also in all the gestures that accompany it, after all the body speaks. The hope of these wise history tellers, even if unconscious, is that there is no cultural massification. The massification, they said, would be the end of the possibility of human transcendence, that is, this ability to go beyond and overcome the interdicts (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1985; Certeau, 1998). This desire to revive the history, to bring to the present this one or that which does not exist, but that somehow is present in behavior, in the speaking, body, dance, capoeira, in football, the art craft is all a form of resistance and at the same time a rich contribution to the formation of Brazilian culture.

4. Conclusion

It was evident in the reports, the fight and the desire for recognition as part of this reframing formation of their culture. Currently, facing the fragmentation of collective life and exacerbated individualism present in the hegemonic culture and the world's integrated capitalism that encourages cultural practices with clear objectives to develop a cultural industry, disarticulate local cultural practices, leading to community acculturation, i.e., dismantles not only citizens of their belonging to social history but also makes them not feel part of a cultural whole.

Thus, the development of public cultural policies is indispensable for the preservation of our cultural identity which is also marked by traditional festivals like cangado, moçambique, capoeira and the carnival and the rich handicrafts produced in the neighborhood.

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