



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES OF THE DIVINE HOLY SPIRIT FESTIVAL IN ALCÂNTARA-MA: MEMORY AND TRADITION

¹**Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento** and ²**José Alves Dias**

¹Master in Memory: Language and Society by the Post Graduate Program of Memory: Language and Society from the Southwestern State University of Bahia – UESB – Brazil. Permanent Teacher of Basic, Technical and Technological Education of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Maranhão, Campus Alcântara, Maranhão, Brazil

²Doctor in Social History by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Full Professor in the Department of History and Permanent Professor of the Post Graduate Program in Memory: Language and Society of the Southwestern State University of Bahia, Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brazil

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 22nd January, 2019
Received in revised form
09th February, 2019
Accepted 21st March, 2019
Published online 29th April, 2019

Key Words:

Culture, Divine Holy Spirit Festival, Tradition, Collective Memory.

ABSTRACT

From the narratives of participants of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival held in the city of Alcântara-Maranhão-Brasil seeks to verify cultural tradition and collective memory as evidences of preservation of local identity. Celebrated in several parts of the country, this celebration acquires in the city of Alcântara a singular importance either by the representation of the royalty and its aggregating force in Republican times, or by the social hierarchy that is perpetuated and is symbolized in the paper of the characters during the celebration. From a methodological point of view, a bibliographical review was carried out, followed by the observation in the field and the testimony of the festivity participants. As part of a larger study on this festivity, the paper proposes to discuss the construction of a collective memory about the origins and the actuality of the party with regard to the reappraisal of a past lived and reflected in the current reality of the community.

Copyright © 2019, Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento and José Alves Dias. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento and José Alves Dias. 2019. "Ethnographic narratives of the divine holy spirit festival in alcântara-ma: memory and tradition", *International Journal of Development Research*, 09, (04), 27011-27017.

INTRODUCTION

In the city of Alcântara, in the Maranhão State - Brazil, a cultural and traditional celebration is held in honor of the Divine Holy Spirit. According to historical records, this celebration takes place in the locality since the arrival of Portuguese in the region in the middle of the XVIII century. Despite some changes over time, the central symbolic elements of the celebration have survived and are revived through the memory of the local population and especially those who participate directly in the festival. This article, part of a wider research on the theme developed in the Memory Program: Language and Society of the State University of the Southwest of Bahia (UESB), It discusses the ways of preserving a popular festival in the some cities of Maranhão State with an emphasis on memory of its participants on the

*Corresponding author: Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento

Master in Memory: Language and Society by the Post Graduate Program of Memory: Language and Society from the Southwestern State University of Bahia – UESB – Brazil. Permanent Teacher of Basic, Technical and Technological Education of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Maranhão, Campus Alcântara, Maranhão, Brazil

rite, a field of discussion that helps to understand the construction and reproduction of a secular tradition. In spite of the various studies carried out on the celebration, there is no record of the use of the field of memory as an essential element in the accomplishment of ethnographic narratives, in order to perceive its importance for the formation and preservation of a local cultural identity. In this way, it is taken into account that in the production of beliefs, festive and religious practices are the modes of individual and group representation and understanding that are sustained by memory, which is revived in places, discourses and practices. According to Le Goff (2013, page 435), "memory is an essential element of what is commonly called identity, individual or collective, whose pursuit is one of the fundamental activities of individuals and societies today." Thus, memory becomes of fundamental importance because of its ability to act on the present and to contribute to the affirmation of the identity of a people. For Moraes (2016, p.11): The Memory is a content, strategy or discourse instituted and instituting the reality and the senses that it is

intended to attribute to a reality or to the relations of society. The memory bearer influences the knowledge and domains of techniques capable of producing a truth or revelation, concentrates on his person and knows different powers, influences the imposition of norms, recognizes desires and subjectivities, etc. However, the memory rewrites and produces discourses about space and time from motivations that they aren't committed to the real world or history, although it is contextualized or referred to in them. It and its discursive record make possible the understanding of the encounter and of multiple forms of sociability and production of meanings. It is especially in the traditional festivals that the encounter of the individual memory and of the collective memory occurs, having an intrinsic relation between both. According to Maurice Halbwachs (2006), individual memory and collective memory feed on and store important information for individuals, ensuring group cohesion and sense of belonging among their members, because memory always has a social background. Thus, the study of the cultural tradition, as well as the memory of the Divine Festival of the Alcântara city - MA become significant for the registration of this celebration, making possible to those involved with the party and researchers interested in studying it, information about the as a way of maintaining this tradition, as well as providing new research on the celebration of the Divine Holy Spirit in Alcântara.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological aspects of the research were qualitative / descriptive, based on the authors Chizzotti (2006), Appolinário (2011), as they aimed to delineate the characteristics of a particular population or phenomenon, involving the use of data collection techniques such as observation and interviews. These observations were made during the observation of the celebration of the Divine Festival held in 2017 and 2018 and served as a basis for the perception of the memory of those involved in the research, since according to Reis and Schucman (2010: 390), "nobody can't deny the importance of oral memory, because it is in the narrative of facts lived by the rememberer, we can find the point of intersection between History and the lives of its protagonists. Still in this field, the definition of Amado and Ferreira (2006, p.16) was used when clarifying about oral history:

It establishes and orders working procedures - such as the various types of interviews and the implications of each of them for research, the various possibilities for transcription of testimonials, their advantages and disadvantages, the different ways the historian relates to his or her interviewees and the influences of it on his work - functioning as a bridge between theory and practice.

Since the written sources on the subject are almost non-existent, we look for semi-structured interviews with the Caixiras¹ - whose group currently consists of five women - and with the other participants of the festival, highlighting the organizer, master of ceremony and the people participate the festival like an emperor, mordomorigio and mordomobaixo. These people revive the Portuguese imperial period of the 19th century. Through these testimonies, it was sought to deepen

the study in the attempt to reconstruct the history of the celebration of the Divine as a support for understanding the origins of the rite, changes, influences, as well as the participation of women in the celebration and its importance for the preservation of a cultural identity in the Alcântara city. However, the research identified important records of the festival in other written documentary sources, such as nineteenth and twentieth-century newspapers, photographs, documents of the House and State Government, in order to amplify the evidence on the importance and possible changes that occurred in the festive ritual over time. Many of these documents were found in the Public Archive of the Maranhão State (APEM), in the Public Library of the Maranhão State, Divine's House Museum and the periodicals available in the database of the Digital Library of the National Library. It was also sought to understand the popular cultural manifestation without, however, losing sight of the interconnections with other dimensions of the historical process such as the economic and the social in order to enable a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the proposed object.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The City and the Festival: Located in the north of the Maranhão State, between the bays of Cuman and São Marcos, Alcântara was, in its origin, at the beginning of century XVII, inhabited by Tupinambás Indians of the village Tapuitapera. Some time later, on December 22, 1648, the village of Santo Antônio de Alcântara was elevated. At that time, it acquired importance in the export sector of agricultural products, mainly rice and cotton for the European market, "thus living a brilliant phase of the economic life of Maranhão" (Viveiros 1977: 58). At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the process of economic decay occurred in the agro-export and social sector of the rural aristocracy, resulting in the abandonment of the city by a large part of the population. With the influence of the Portuguese colonization, an imposing architectonic set was made up of mansions and churches, which, in the majority, are in ruins. In 1948, Alcântara was registered as National Historic and Monumental City by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute and in 1974, the city's headquarters was listed as Architectural and Urbanistic Complex of the Alcântara city. Among the various religious cultural manifestations in the locality, the Divine Holy Spirit festival is considered as a ritual of popular Catholicism that is kept in the official Christian calendar through the celebration of Pentecost², always occurring fifty days after Easter. It is marked by a lot of dedication, expressing an act of great sacrifice in the form of work and surrender. Most of the time it is related to the attainment of some grace, to the fulfillment of some promise and devotion to the Holy Spirit, through the healing of illnesses or other evils, causing their participants to give themselves spiritually in the form of gratitude to the Holy Spirit. With a strong influence of the Catholic Church, the festival acquires an importance for the members of the Alcântaracomunity, not only for the perpetuation of the catholic Christian doctrine, but mainly for the realization of a secular tradition that contributes to strengthen the identity, profane and sacred bonds of the community local. The Divine Holy Spirit Festival in Alcântara

¹Black women who are responsible to praise the Divine Holy Spirit through their songs and touches of their instruments, the drums, in an act of faith and devotion to the sacred.

² On the day of Pentecost is celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles of Jesus Christ and his mother Mary with the iconographic representation of a white dove and tongues of fire. It is always celebrated 50 days after Easter Sunday.

follows closely a centuries-old tradition, which makes it a high-value cultural heritage. In it, it is intrinsic the mixture between worship and celebration. In the sacred are the values that are defined by the 'things of the beyond', the inexplicable and the religious commitment of the components to the divinity in question. In the profane is the party itself. There is a commitment of the devotees to preserve the legacy in terms of the profane and sacred experiences of the African ancestors (Gomes, Gastal, Coriolano, 2015, 98). Of Portuguese origin, records indicate that the first celebrations date back to the 17th century promoted by the Azorean settlers who already knew tradition on the Atlantic island (Lima, 1988) and according to scholars, "the festival was re-signified by the mixture of the populations that lived there, arrived there or were taken, incorporating other senses and musicalities". (Barbosa, 2009, p.24).

The Divine Holy Spirit Festival happens in various parts of Brazil and despite the common elements of religious ritual, they keep their specificities. In Alcântara it is considered a popular manifestation with expressive participation of black descendants of quilombos, highlighting the Caixeiras, unlike the celebrations held in the capital and in other cities of the State in Terreiros de Tambor de Mina³. The presence of the descending population of enslaved Africans at the festival is one of the most important aspects of the ritual and shows the insertion of elements of the black culture that, together with the cult of Portuguese origin, dimension the historical and cultural significance of the celebration. As Lilia Schwarcz (1998: 399) observes, since the colonial period there was the involvement of the black population enslaved in different festive rites and consequently their adherence to Catholicism:

the civic celebrations, coronation ceremonies, and imperial courtships were also greeted with batuques and congadas, manifestations barely predictable on the court's label. Finally, it was difficult to separate worlds: Catholicism of the Portuguese kings mingled with the religiosity of the African slaves.

The Divine celebration has 12 days of duration, it has different moments (script) marked by the presence of the Caixeiras in all of them, leading them. This itinerary stands out for a diversity of actions that are part of the ritual of the feast having its own meaning, including processions of the Emperor's mast⁴ - Survey of the mast, solemn Masses, prisoners of the master of ceremony, courtship of the mast of Mordomo Régio - Survey of the mast, visits of the Mordomo Régio to the Empire, visit of the Empire to the master of ceremonies, ascent of the Ox, distribution of alms with basic baskets to the elderly, procession of the Divine Holy Spirit in the streets of the city, reading of the Pelouro⁵ and delivery of the stations to the new participants the festival for the next year. Among the characters of the rite are the Emperor or Empress, Master of ceremony and the Caixeiras. The procession simulates the representation of an imperial court which has the figure of the

³The Tambor de Mina is the denomination of the Afro-Brazilian religion that emerged in the 19th century, spread by blacks who were enslaved in the Maranhão State (Ferretti, 2008).

⁴ Tree trunk of 4 to 5 meters tall adorned with fruits and with the flag on the red tip symbolizes the mast of the emperor and green symbolizes the mast of the Mordomo Régio. It is an ancestral tradition, of pagan origin, originally celebrated in several countries of Europe, symbolizes masculine strength and virility.

⁵ List containing the names of people who will participate the festival for the next year.

emperor (chosen in odd year) or empress (chosen in even year) that depicts a whole symbology of the Portuguese king or queen by means of his vestments, accessories (crown, cedar), gestures. As the main character, it is the responsibility of the emperor / empress of the Divine to promote a luxurious feast and to lead his "subjects" into a royal entourage for the celebration of the Divine Holy Spirit. The representation of this imperial figure may have been due to the fact that D. Pedro II, from the time of his father's resignation, it had been considered an analogy between the myth of Dom Sebastião⁶ and Emperor of the Divine, a "divine, but Brazilian monarch, who embodied the hopes of the people." (Schwarz, 1998, p.389).



Source: Unknown, 2017.

Figure 1. Poster of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival – 2017

During the festival, the people in charge of the representation of the Empire wear characteristic costumes of this period and during the days of the celebration, enjoy the privileges and privileges of the characters that revive.



Source: Nascimento, I., 2017.

Figure 2. Emperor of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival and his vassals on the throne - 2017

⁶He was a Portuguese king of the sixteenth century who disappeared in the battle of AlcácerQuibir, in Morocco and reappeared as legend in lands of the Maranhão State.

The presence of an imperial court has a striking and symbolic factor, holding a prominent position throughout the festive period. The patrons of the festival, denominated as festeiros and they are the representation of the Portuguese monarchy that enjoy powers referring to the king and the queen. Due to the presence of a symbolic reign, there are some beliefs about the origin of the Divine Festival in Alcântara. One of them believes that the rite stems from the unfulfilled promise of Dom Pedro II to visit all the provinces with a view to strengthening his reign in the second half of the nineteenth century. After preparing the city for the long-awaited royal visit, came the frustration. According to Lima (1988: 21): "It is said that the dissatisfied blacks would have organized and brought to the church a procession and crowned an emperor, creating the festival." And Schwarcz affirms that (1998, pp. 360-361):

This fact is evident in the speech of the Emperor of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival of the year 2017 when he discusses about it:

the trips of the imperial family generated such a stir that cities often prepared even before the visit was formalized. This is the case of Alcântara, who adorned itself for the reception, but escaped the itinerary, or of several other accounts talking about visits that, in fact, there isn't. In this case, it seems that the representation was moving in front of the monarch himself.

When speaking about the past, the predominance of the black descendant African presence is present and thus enabling the reconstitution of the Portuguese court and the mixture of values, giving a new meaning to the celebration of the Divine, but still possessing a character submissive to the precepts of monarchy whose purpose was to exercise their power through the use of the feasts, including the nuns who served as support for this purpose. In this way, the festival would be "a privileged space for the construction of a representation of the monarchy, the feasts became strategic instruments in the almost daily affirmation of the royalty" (Schwarcz 1998, p. 389).

The preservation of the royal precepts takes place in the preservation of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival by the communities that celebrate it, especially in the Alcântara city, as a legacy of cultural patrimony, it is recognized as a cultural tradition of Maranhão, revealing a moment of renewal of faith and the confirmation of the fear of the Divine. All tradition can be considered as a set of symbolic systems that have emerged somewhere in the past and passed on from generation to generation through a repetitive character that denotes their actualization, that is, it is linked to the past and the present, reinventing it. Thus, the "symbolology referring to the past" refers to material objects and often to the immaterial sensations present in the memory and history of a given society.

[...] in traditional societies, the past is venerated and symbols are valued because it contains and perpetuates the experience of generations. Tradition is a means of dealing with time and space, inserting any particular activity or experience into the continuity of past, present and future, which in turn are structured by recurrent social practices. (Hall, 2000, p. 37-38)

The celebration of this festival in the Alcântara city, one can understand the interest of preserving the tradition, especially among the new generations. This fact is noticed in the account of the coordinator / organizer of the Divine Festival, Mr. Moacir Brito, considered by many as the guardian of the memory of every festive ritual. He reports on some changes suffered over time.

I have worked at this festival since I was twenty years old. Years ago, it was a festival of Alcântara, in the sense that it was only the people of Alcântara who participated in this festival. I hardly saw anyone outside because it was not disclosed. With the spread of the Divine Festivals in other states, even outside of Brazil, the competition was very great. Today there are people from different places of Brazil and even from outside Brazil. With that the festival there was a change. We can not deny that there was no change, there was! Now we work so that this change is not a very different change. May we still preserve a little of the tradition.⁷

The celebration is the moment in which the local population is recognized in the symbolic elements that constitute it. The social and economic hierarchy is reproduced in the representations of the court and its subjects. The population accompanies with enthusiasm and curiosity the passage of the royal family, which is blessed by the Church, grounding the unity between them. The black women who play the boxes – their musical instruments follow their course in chanting melancholy songs and placed at the head of the procession. The updating of the past reaffirms the place of social groups today, in spite of the changes that have occurred over time. Del Priore and Horta (2010, p.7) point out:

Memory is built by people and "places" and identity is defined by points of identification of the historical culture, formed by the time lived (past and present) by a certain society, that is, memory and identity come from the same point of view origin and are interrelated.

The devotion to the Divine Holy Spirit in Alcântara is linked to the experience and the transmission of traditions that, updated in each Festival, it delineate the identity and culture of the Alcantarenses. In this way, the artistic, linguistic, social and behavioral manifestations of the social group are evidences of the experiences lived and renified in the present time.

Memory and Tradition in celebrating the Divine: When asked about the celebration of the party, the protagonists of the ritual reaffirm the unity of the group from a memory that refers to the experiences of the collective. However, these individuals have varied differences whose memories were constructed in a dynamic and selective way and anchored in social frameworks that served as reference points for the construction of their collective memories.

All memory is structured in group identities: we remember our childhood as family members, our neighborhood as members of the local community, our working life in the community of the factory or the office and / or a political

⁷ Interview with the coordinator of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival performed by Cláudio Farias present in the documentary *Divine Alcantarenses people*. Posted on Mar 21, 2016 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N XAU5b0JZcs>.

party or a union, and so on; that these memories are essentially group memories and that the memory of the individual exists only to the extent that this individual is probably the unique product of a certain intersection of groups. (Fentress, Wickham 1992, p. 07)

For Maurice Halbwachs (2006), there is not memory in the empty. It is constitutive of a set of social relations that leave imprints impregnated on individuals, who have their individual memories that will always be determined by belonging to the group that are part, not just a remembrance or reconstitution of the past lived. James Fentress and Chris Wickham (1992, 57) clarify that "the memory expresses the connection of our spirit to our body and our body with the social and natural world that surrounds us." In this way, it can be affirmed that individual memory, in spite of the particular relationship between body and spirit, becomes Social Memory resulting from what has been acquired in the different social groups integrated by the individual (family, school, religion, groups of belongings, etc.). The collective memory that expresses about the culture, the experience of a group, it is based on the common similarities existing in the memories of the individual and his / her similar, on the other, belonging to the same society, thus making memory also become a tradition. Thus, as it becomes a tradition,

make tradition count the memories not only of a subject, but of a group, a community, a city, a region, a country, a continent, a planet. So we tell the story-memory of all mankind. Thus, we access and construct historical memory (memory that reconstructs the facts of everyday life projected on the past) from group to group until we arrive at that of homo-sapiens (HALBWACHS apud LEAL, 2011, p.66)

Through the use of orality and the exchange of experiences, memory can be reformulated, becoming different, something of reflection and modification. It contains cultural values present in the social practices essential to group living, it's being responsible for the maintenance of ideological, economic and even cultural references, constituting itself as a selective and referential system for the preservation of these elements in the present. One of the characteristics that guarantees particularity in the worship of the Divine in Maranhão, especially Alcântara, it is the female presence in participating in the ritual with the function of play the drums in praise of the sacred, differing from other places that have as determinant in this function for the men. This fact is evidenced by Barbosa (2006, p.21), when she affirms that "they are the only known experience of women conducting the cult of the Divine and are a rarity if we consider the presence of women in conducting religious rituals, playing drums ". They are considered "priestesses" in the worship of the Divine Holy Spirit, reverencing it, singing and playing their instruments in an act of faith and devotion, renewing their promises. (Barbosa, 2006).

In Ferreti's point view the Caixeiros (2005, p.15):

[...] constitute an essential and typical element of the Divine Festival in Maranhão. They are old ladies with the burden of playing boxes and singing songs, repeated or improvised, in praise of the Divine Holy Spirit. They usually do this by promise throughout their lives and are linked to a group of six to ten or more people, who

annually plays in several houses, under the leadership of the CaixeiraMor, aided by the CaixeiraRégia.

The Caixeiros possess the authority to praise the sacred while expressing a social difference in the symbolic representations of the rite that refers to the past:

In my family are three Caixeiros that already have, she - my sister Maria, the oldest, Anica ... I learned with her playing drum ... with her, with the other Caixeirathat God already has ... I grew up At the festival ... I was born at the festival. (Marlene Silva)⁸

The emergence of the celebration of the Divine in Alcântara, the information is repeated and denote the importance of shared memory for the survival of the rite.

I grew up and I already had this Festival. This festival ... It is already many years ago ... I was born inside the Festival ... I did not know my mother, but the old ones said that my mother was a Caixeira ... so ... now I ... from what I've heard back then ... she was sunk by the Portuguese, by the slaves. The Portuguese left when they left. [...] (Marlene Silva)⁹

These black women who hold a knowledge responsible for opening the communication between the land and the divine dedicate their personal lives and their devotion to the celebration to Divine Holy Spirit.

Speaking of the peculiarities that exist in the Divine Festival, Heidimar Guimarães Marques reports that:

I think my grandfather, and especially Mother Calu who knew this Festival many years earlier than me. They said that the Divine Festival was programmed, expedited by the slaves, when this Festival began here the acceptance was of the slaves, and of course, they did so a syncretism. They sought to involve the entities known and believed by the nobles, by the social caste of that time, and with this, the party became very popular, very public and the lords were placed in their honorable positions, they invited the sons of the lords to represent them at ceremonies. That's why there are Empress, Vassals, Butlers, rebuilding a court. (Maranhão, 1997, p 124). Mother Calu had already explained to me how she was, and because the Divine Festival in Alcântara ... here the feast of the Divine they sought to reconstitute a Portuguese court, in that it referred to the titular of the court, to the queen Isabel [...] here in Alcântara, with little understanding of the people at the feast of the Divine, but they try very hard to rebuild a court during the feast of the Divine, and a court that Mother Calu sought to identify with the court Portuguese (Maranhão, 1997, p.166)

Anonymous popular traditions are transmitted by oral history that belong to a collective memory that has been handed down from generation to generation, it was given the anchorage used by the character in reporting this fact, returning to what his grandfather and Mother Calu (ex-slave who was a mistress of Heidimar Guimarães's milk) always told him. Thus, it is

⁸Interview with the Caixeiros of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival held by Ilanna Maria Izaia do Nascimento on April 20, 2017.

⁹Interview with the Caixeiros of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival held by Ilanna Maria Izaia do Nascimento on April 20, 2017.

emphasized that "our experiences are collective experiences and group anchors" (Halbwachs, 2006). From the reports mentioned above, one can perceive the marked presence of the crossing of the individual memories that are anchored in the group to which the memory refers, presenting the relatives and members of the same social group as sufficient capable in the articulation of the mnemonic activity and its narrative form. Thus, according to Maurice Halbwachs (2006), individual memory and collective memory feed on and store important information for the subjects, ensuring group cohesion and the sense of belonging among its members, since memory always has a social background.

Currently some people participate the Festival like The Emperor (odd year) or the Empress (even year), MordomoRégio, MordomoBaixo and only five Caixeiros, They are distributed among the empire's clerks. All of them have quilombola descendants, three of them living in the rural zone of Alcântara - Quilombola communities.

Of these, stands out Dona Irene de Jesus, a resident of the community of Itamatatua, who affirms:

I wanted to play the drum. It is five years that I have played for the Divine of Alcântara. I was already the Caixeira of Santa Tereza D'Ávila, there in the quilombola community of Itamatatua, but I had to leave to work, I had to work. Then I retired and now I dedicate myself to being a treasurer of the Divine. It is a tremendous gratitude to be able to have that function and to continue with that tradition.¹⁰

And Mrs. Romana, resident of the community of Cajual. She reports on how she learned to play the drum:

I learned to play drum some years ago with my aunt Margarida. Today deceased. I kept watching how she did it and did it too. I always wanted to learn and she was instrumental in this with all her experience and dedication to the Divine.¹¹

According to the Empire's Master of ceremony for 25 years ago, Mr. Antônio Barbosa, "one of the functions of the Caixeiros at the festival is to praise the Divine Holy Spirit through their songs."¹²

The Caixeiros have a representation regarding the Africans and their enslaved descendants, a form of remembrance of episodes lived by the slavery period in Maranhão. Due to this view, their participation is present as the affirmation of reliving the episodes of festive celebration of a past period that had as purpose to perpetuate the figure of the king and of the religion, building a force in the alliances of the colonizers (Del Priore, 2000) and thus promote the construction and support of a propulsive memory in support of legitimizing those involved in the process, since "the reference to the past serves to maintain the cohesion of groups and institutions that make up a society, to define their respective place, their complementarity, but also the irreducible oppositions" (Pollak, 1989, p.07).

¹⁰Interview with the Caixeira of Divine Holy Spirit Festival held by Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento on April 20, 2017.

¹¹Interview with the Caixeira of Divine Holy Spirit Festival held by Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento on April 20, 2017.

¹² Interview with master of ceremony of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival held by Ilanna Maria Izaías do Nascimento on February 23, 2017.

Through the use of orality and the exchange of experiences, memory can be reformulated, becoming different, something of reflection and modification. It contains cultural values present in the social practices essential to group living, being responsible for the maintenance of ideological, economic and even cultural references, constituting itself as a selective and referential system for the preservation of these elements in the present. However, without the presence of memory in a given society, one has the loss of its cultural references, its traditions, the process of belonging to a specific group, an element of identification and representation. For the participants of the Divine Festival, the use of orality is frequent in the interaction between the actions lived, apprehended and shared, presenting themselves in latent movements in the memories of their cultural practices.

Final Considerations: When addressing manifestations of popular culture, represented in beliefs, festivals and habits becoming constituents of Brazilian cultural heritage, it must be considered that all space has a meaning of existence that makes it unique, defining an identity. In addition to being considered a theatrical expression of a social organization, the festival is also a political, religious and symbolic fact as Mary Del Priore (2000, p.10) pointed out. In the evocation of the past, the memory of some individuals often calls for the remembrance of others, resorting to events lived indirectly and widening through contact with new information. However, the evocation of traditions retains only that which is still alive or capable of living in the consciousness of the group, which keeps the memory of events that only interest them. During the researches, observations and interviews, it became evident that the memory of the participants of the Festival is mixed with memories of narratives, their experiences and references and relation to this celebration. These treat as a tradition that refers to the cultural goods, values, customs that were inherited and added to the cultural and social identity, being transmitted from generation to generation. According to Giddens (1997, 81):

The tradition is linked to memory, specifically what Maurice Halbwachs calls "collective memory"; involves ritual; is linked to what we will call the notion of formulating truth; has "guardians"; and, unlike custom, has a force that combines moral and emotional content.

From the use of memory as a source, the characters involved in the feast of the Divine Holy Spirit are based on the cultural heritage left by their history perpetuated by language and highlighting their subjectivity in relation to the cultural legacy, which ends up being faced with plurality of present differences. Thus, the Festival re-actualizes the memory of various groups, which in spite of their interaction, reproduce the hierarchy of local society full of fundamental meanings in the process of preserving the identities of its participants as the affirmation of reliving the episodes of festive celebration of a period past. It is worth emphasizing that this re-updating had the purpose of perpetuating the figure of the king and of the religion, building a force in the alliances of the colonizers (Del Priore, 2000) and thus promoting the construction and support of a propulsive memory in support of legitimizing those involved in the process, since "the reference to the past serves to maintain the cohesion of groups and institutions that make up a society, to define their respective place, their complementarity, but also irreducible oppositions" (Pollak, 1989, p.07)

Thus, registering the participants of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival of the Alcântara City, it aims to enhance the "cultural references" of this celebration, especially the participation of black women as an expression of the African presence in the lands of Maranhão with emphasis in the vision they have of their black ancestors and the forms of resistance through the songs and religious ritual during the party, in addition to highlighting and valuing the importance of maintaining this cultural tradition.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Federal Institute of Maranhão (IFMA) and the State University of Bahia and Southwestern State University of Bahia – UESB for the financial area and academic support in the construction of the research.

REFERENCES

- _____. ; HORTA, Maria de L. P. "O baú de ossos": história como parte da memória & memória como parte da história. In Memória, Patrimônio e Identidade – Salto para o Futuro/ TV Escola. Disponível em: <http://www.tvbrasil.org.br/fotos/salto/series/145632MemorialPatriIdent.pdf>. Acesso em: 26 de janeiro de 2017.
- _____. *Caixeiros do Divino de Alcântara: no bater da minha caixa, estou convidando as foliões*. São Luís: Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, 2009.
- AMADO, J.; FERREIRA, M. M. (org.). *Usos & abusos da história oral*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2006.
- APPOLINÁRIO, Fábio. *Metodologia da Ciência: filosofia e prática da pesquisa*. São Paulo: Cengage Learning, 2011.
- BARBOSA, Marise. *Umás mulheres que dão no couro*. São Paulo: Empório de Produções & Comunicação, 2006.
- CHIZZOTTI, A. *A pesquisa qualitativa em ciências humanas e sociais*: Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2006.
- DEL PRIORE, Mary L. *Festa e utopias no Brasil colonial*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2000.
- FENTRESS, J.; WICKHAM, C. *Memória Social: Novas perspectivas sobre o passado*. Ed. Teorema. Lisboa. 1992.
- FERRETI, Sérgio. *Festa do Divino no Maranhão*. Texto publicado no Catálogo da Exposição Divino Toque do Maranhão. Rio de Janeiro: Centro Nacional de Folclore e Cultura Popular /IPHAN / MEC, 2005, p 9-29.
- Geo UERJ - Ano 13, nº. 22, v. 2, 2º semestre de 2011. <http://www.e-publicacoes.uerj.br/index.php/geouerj>. Acesso 12 de fevereiro de 2017.
- GIDDENS, Anthony. *Modernidade e identidade pessoal*. Oeiras: Celta Editora, 1997.
- GOMES, Cristiane M., GASTAL, Susana; CORIOLANO, Luzia N. *Hospitalidade na Festa do Divino: Seu Festejar em Alcântara e São Luís do Maranhão*. CENÁRIO, Brasília, V.3, n.5 | 87– 104 | Dez. 2015.
- HALBWACHS, M. *A memória coletiva*. São Paulo: Centauro, 2006.
- HALL, S. *A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2000.
- LE GOFF, J. *História & Memória*. Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2013.
- LEAL, A. *Cultura e Memória: percepções das lembranças re-existent no temp*.
- LIMA, Carlos. *A festa do Divino Espírito Santo em Alcântara*. Brasília: Fundação Nacional Pró-Memória/ Grupo de Trabalho de Alcântara, 1988.
- MARANHÃO, Secretaria de Estado da Cultura. Centro de Cultura Popular Domingos Vieira Filho. *Memórias de Velhos. Depoimentos: Uma contribuição à memória oral da cultura popular maranhense*. São Luís: LITHOGRAF, 1997.
- MORAES, Nilson A. *Discurso, Análise de Discurso e Memória*. Disponível em: <<http://nilsonmoraes.pro.br/nm/NM-1pdf.pdf>>. Acesso em: 30 de mar. de 2016.
- POLLACK, Michael. Memória, Esquecimento, Silêncio; IN: *Estudos Históricos*, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 2, n. 3, 1989, p. 3-15.
- REIS, A. C.; SCHUCMAN, L. V. A constituição social da memória: lembranças de uma testemunha da II Guerra Mundial. *Psicologia em Revista*, Belo Horizonte, v. 16, n. 2, ago. 2010.
- SCHWARCZ, Lilian M. *As barbas do Imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos*. São Paulo: Companhia da Letras, 1998.
- VIVEIROS, Jerônimo de. *Alcântara no seu passado econômico, social e político*. São Luís, Fundação Cultural do Maranhão, 1977.
