

Feijoada and Samba contextual analysis: in an association in a suburb in Rio de Janeiro

Feijoada e Samba: análise contextual em uma agremiação no subúrbio carioca

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Abstract

The study aims to analyse the sociocultural context of the dyad feijoada and samba in Cacique de Ramos, an association with 54 years of tradition in disseminating the traditional samba in the suburb in Rio de Janeiro. The study has drawn upon Depth Hermeneutics (DH) of Thompson (2011) with a view to the development of socio-historical analysis (SHA). Data were collected by means of free observation, formal and informal interviews, and internet searches. The elements that compose SHA were organized and treated as analytical categories, based on an adaptation of content analysis of Bardin (1977). The results pointed out that Cacique is a symbol of resistance and dissemination of samba carioca (from Rio), and it is the pride and joy of people who participate in and live next to the club. Shrouded in mysticism, the tamarind tree has become a symbol of identity, taking on the meaning of an almost sacred element, respect, blessing and good luck. The interactions among club-goers, neighbors, traders and Cacique de Ramos reveal the several power relations and the transmission of values among these subjects. Feijoada not only adds symbolism, but also serves as a resource of dissemination of cultural tradition, and helps to keep alive the samba circles and the association.

Keywords: Qualitative Research. Food. Culture. Music. Hermeneutics.

Resumo

O estudo tem como objetivo analisar o contexto sociocultural do binômio feijoada e samba no Cacique de Ramos, agremiação com 54 anos de tradição na propagação do samba de raiz, no subúrbio carioca. O estudo se valeu de uma aproximação com a Hermenêutica de Profundidade (HP) de Thompson (2011) com vistas à construção da análise sócio-histórica (ASH). Os dados foram obtidos a partir da observação livre, de entrevistas formais e informais e de pesquisas na internet. Os elementos que compõem a ASH foram organizados e tratados como categorias analíticas, a partir de uma adaptação da análise de conteúdo de Bardin (1977). Os resultados apontaram que o Cacique é um ícone de resistência e divulgação do samba carioca, sendo motivo de admiração e orgulho para seus frequentadores e vizinhos da quadra. Envoltos em misticismo, a tamarineira tornou-se um símbolo de identidade, assumindo significado de elemento quase sagrado, de respeito, bênção e sorte. As interações entre frequentadores, vizinhos, comerciantes e o Cacique de Ramos revelam as mais diversas relações de poder e transmissão de valores entre esses sujeitos. A feijoada, além de agregar simbolismo e servir como recurso de difusão da tradição cultural, também contribui para manter vivas as rodas de samba e a agremiação.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa qualitativa. Alimentação. Cultura. Música. Hermenêutica.

Introduction

Samba (an African-Brazilian musical genre and dance style) was influenced by the culture of the different ethnic groups that make up the Brazilian people. It began to be reproduced in Brazil in the city of Rio de Janeiro after the arrival of former slaves, mainly from the state of Bahia, in the city.¹⁻³

Samba, which in the first decades of the twentieth century would be played only in the black people strongholds of the city, especially in the region of the port dock and the house of the “Bahia aunts,” women who had great respect from the community, would gain prominence around the 1940s with the popularization of radio and the rise of composers like (Brazilian songwriter, singer, and guitar/mandolin player) Noel Rosa, who would take the rhythm to the more affluent classes of the Rio de Janeiro society.^{3,4}

Brazilian cuisine, as well as samba, was also built by the miscellany of European, Brazilian Indigenous peoples and African habits. Câmara Cascudo⁵ provides several examples of how the culinary practices of these diverse ethnic groups have been forging meals in the country since the beginning of its colonization.

Feijoada (a stew of beans with beef and pork), today considered a typical dish of Brazil,⁶ would also be rebuilt over time by influence from Portuguese cuisine and other communities from different ethnic groups that lived in Brazil and by ingredients found in the country.⁶

In Europe, white bean stews with vegetables and pork were common. However, when arriving in Brazil, stews would have originally used white beans replaced by black beans, which were more easily found locally.^{6,7}

According to Elias,⁶ the slaves, because they were influenced by the Muslim religion, could not consume pork, which, according to the author, would call into question the origin of the feijoada in the (large dwellings for slaves in sugar cane mills and farms in Brazil between XVI and XIX centuries) *senzalas*. But according to Câmara Cascudo,⁵ cassava flour and black beans, which began to appear at Brazilian tables in the 18th century, were the basic ingredients in slaves' meals in Rio de Janeiro.

In more affluent families' farms, slaves' diets would consist of (white variety of corn) canjica, black beans, bacon, dried meat, cassava flour, oranges and bananas, which perhaps may be considered as the beginnings of feijoada as we know today. But the practice of cooking food mixed together, such as beans and meats, seems to be the result of Portuguese influence, since neither Brazilian Indigenous peoples nor Africans used to cook mixed foods.⁵

Recently, by joining rhythm and food, several clubs in Rio de Janeiro have been seeing their carnival street bands fill with samba and feijoada fanciers. It is the case of (Brazilian carnival street band) Cacique de Ramos, founded in 1961, which provides samba dances in its headquarters accompanied by feijoada every third Sunday of a month.

In the present study, we have sought to understand the sociocultural context of the relationship between feijoada and samba at Cacique de Ramos, which has been established as a reference in defense of traditional samba and *partido alto* (a type of samba in Brazil) becoming an emblematic icon in Rio de Janeiro suburbs.

Methodology

In order to achieve the investigation purpose, we approach Thompson's Depth Hermeneutics (DH).⁸ DH consists in understanding meanings attributed to the object studied, which can be

revealed through interpretation of speeches, actions, texts and other symbolic forms and the way they are conveyed and received by subjects.⁸

DH application is based on the development of phases, which are not necessarily consecutive. Socio-historical analysis consists of studying the environment, institutions, social structures and fields of interaction in which symbolic forms are produced/transmitted. Formal analysis implies procedures of organization and treatment of empirical material from an analytical reference indispensable to understanding the field-object. And interpretative analysis, which is the analysis itself, that is, the understanding of symbolic forms, also based on a dialogue with literature. In this perspective, each of these phases corresponds to research movements that must occur in a complementary and articulated way.⁸

For this study we have chosen to highlight a socio-historical analysis (SHA) in order to reveal its potential for understanding the sociocultural context of the phenomenon studied: feijoada at Cacique samba dance. We have sought to reconstruct the social, cultural and historical conditions in which texts, speeches or actions (symbolic forms) are produced and transmitted among the subjects of the field-object studied.⁸

The SHA design took into account the elements that should be part of its scope based on re-reading Thompson's⁸ and an adaptation of Bardin's Thematic Content Analysis.^{9,10}

Thus, SHA has been defined as some topic and the elements making it up as analytical categories, namely: the environment: space and time, because symbolic forms are conveyed and received within some specific context; the field and its interactions, some set of situations, positions and trajectories that define or facilitate the relationship between subjects and institutions; rules, conventions and schemes that are part of daily activities and aim at divulging and maintaining culture; resources and means by which messages conveyed are encoded or decoded so that they make sense to the subjects involved.⁸

The analysis has evidenced meanings that were agglutinated with a view to interpretation and final writing of the text.

In order to obtain empirical data supporting all the analyses, initially the principal researcher contacted the association board members in order to obtain permission to carry out the fieldwork. Later, she would attend the samba dances with feijoada every third Sunday of a month during the period of one year.

The researcher had to be aware of situations and interactions taking place in the field in order to understand the phenomenon and not to isolate the symbolic forms of its production and transmission contexts.

We start from the premise that some phenomenon meaning is understood by reference to its context and vice versa, which is also shared between the whole and the part and between researcher and subjects of the study.⁹

Thus, careful observation was carried out focusing aspects of the club site and scenario, the people attending the events held there, the local residents and merchants, the daily interactions between the surrounding institutions and those unfolding during the events, the rules and transgressions, the rituals and beliefs. In addition to observation, free interviews were conducted with people who frequented the samba dances and with merchants and residents settled around Cacique de Ramos.

In order to complement and deepen the data, a script with key issues of study interest was also applied to key subjects. Such formal interviews would be scheduled at convenient time and place for the interviewees.

Observation data were recorded in a field notebook and interviews were audio recorded (and also recorded in a field notebook, when audio recording was not possible). There was no established number of events to be observed or interviews to be performed and these would be considered sufficient when the redundancy of meanings apprehended would be reached in order to meet the study objectives.

The researcher's plunge in the field made it possible to internalize ideas of familiarity and estrangement. The moment of familiarization would be due to encountering the object through impregnation and naturalization. After such moment, it would be necessary to exercise some distant and strange looking. Understanding a social group "inside" and "outside" is also a requirement to understand the logic that escapes.¹¹

The study is an excerpt of the research titled "Symbology and Meaning of Food in the Context of Rio de Janeiro's Samba," approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) at Brazilian *Hospital Universitário Clementino Fraga Filho/HUCFF-UFRJ (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro)* document no. 862993 of October 9, 2014.

The authorization, both for observation of the scenario/context and for the formal and free interviews, was expressed through an Informed Consent Form (ICF), recommended for human subject research by Resolution no. 466/2013 of Brazilian government National Health Council (CNS, in the Portuguese abbreviation).¹² The researcher asked about any questions that each participant might have and clarified them before the beginning of the interview/observation. The subjects who participated in the study were guaranteed anonymity.

Results

The spatial and temporal environment

Cacique de Ramos and Ramos and Olaria city districts

Cacique de Ramos is a samba association that was created on January 20, 1961, the same date when people celebrate (early Christian saint and martyr) Saint Sebastian, the patron saint of the city of Rio de Janeiro and also of the carnival street band. Since its creation, it occupies a building at Uranos street, one of the main ones in the (region of the Northern Zone of Rio de Janeiro) Zona da Leopoldina. However, ironically, Cacique de Ramos is not located in the city district of Ramos, but rather in the city district of Olaria, being close to the border between the two districts.

Due to being neighboring city districts, Ramos and Olaria have very similar characteristics. They are both part of Zona da Leopoldina, which in turn is part of Rio de Janeiro suburbs (economically distressed areas), the most remote areas of the city, with their old quarters, which have contributed to the history of samba and have great importance and value for cultural movements in Rio de Janeiro.¹³

In Rio de Janeiro, the word suburb is commonly used to designate districts served by rail networks and where the financially disadvantaged portion of the city's population resides.¹⁴ Therefore, the suburb of Rio de Janeiro, whose districts are in the northern part of the city, are all “cut” by “train rails,” dividing two not always equal sides. Madureira, Méier, Engenho Novo, Engenho de Dentro, Del Castilho, Pílares, Barros Filho, Rocha Miranda, Jacarezinho, Cascadura and districts in Leopoldina, such as Olaria, Penha, Ramos, Bonsucesso and Brás de Pina.¹⁵

The origin of the Ramos district dates back to the arrival of the railroad in 1886, more precisely the so-called North Railroad, future Leopoldina. The train rails needed to pass inside some estate which had belonged to Brazilian captain Luiz José Fonseca Ramos and his children only allowed it by building a station on the spot, which was called *Parada do Ramos*. With that, Ramos began to gain sanitation and urbanization.¹⁶ The decade of 1910 was one of the most important for the district because Ramos was leaving behind the status of rural village and becoming more metropolitan.

In 1914, the first movie theater of the region of Leopoldina was inaugurated, Cinematógrafo Ideal, located at Uranos street, the main one in the district until today. In this same year, theater Teatro Ramos Clube was created. Others emerged in the years that followed, such as Cine Ramos, Rosário, Cinema Bonsucesso, Cine Leopoldina, Paraíso, Mauá and São Pedro, which served as the main means of entertainment for residents, integrating the “two sides” physically separated by the train rails but with much in common.¹⁷

Ramos was also the only district in the extension of the railroad that possessed a beach, raising its charm. Known as “Copacabana of the Suburbs,” Ramos beach, today unfit for bath due to

pollution of Baía de Guanabara (Guanabara Bay, an oceanic bay located in Southeastern Brazil in the state of Rio de Janeiro), inspired many samba songs such as the famous “Praia de Ramos” (by Brazilian authors Ivany Miranda, Oswaldo Melo and Afrânio Melo, recorded by Carlos Alberto de Oliveira, or Dicro, in 1980), which would tell in a humorous and picturesque fashion about a Sunday at the beach of the district.

Olaria has approximately 58 thousand inhabitants and wide coverage of water supply, electricity and basic sanitation. The Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.78 and 20.17% of the population have income from governmental income transfer programs. As for Ramos, it has an HDI of 0.60 and 20% of its residents have 50% of their income from government income transfer programs.¹⁸

It is a densely populated area, with many shops of all sizes, from large supermarket chains to stores with decades of existence in the same place. Although they include a great amount of commercial establishments, both districts retain strong residential characteristics. Most of their streets are strictly residential, with houses, secondary street houses and small buildings, where we often find neighbors talking on the sidewalks, sitting at their gates in chairs and children playing with kites and balls. Several tree-lined squares with playground facilities, benches, small tables, kiosks, street food stalls and bars with decades of existence contribute to a seemingly quiet and welcoming atmosphere. Many of their residents were born and raised in these neighborhoods, which makes them the residence of whole families who preserve great affection for the place.

In the early days, the samba in the area was not yet exactly what we call samba but rather some very representative street carnival. The first clubs created in the 1910s – *Prontos de Ramos*, *Ameno Heliotropo* and *Endiabrados de Ramos* – would be the forerunners of famous carnival street bands between 1930 and 1950, such as *Sai como Pode*, *Razão de Viver*, *Paixão de Ramos* and *Paz e Harmonia*. And also the one that had the greater prominence in the region, *Recreio de Ramos*, whose name was replaced by *Cacique de Ramos* by brothers Ubirajara, Ubirany and Ubiracy, Walter Tesourinha and Aimoré do Espírito Santo.

There was also *Bafo da Onça*, great “rival” of *Cacique* at the time, which would cause real “battles” among partygoers from both carnival street bands.^{13, 16} In the 2015 carnival, something unusual happened. *Cacique de Ramos* and *Bafo da Onça*, rivals in the suburban carnival street parties, paraded together for the first time on downtown Graça Aranha avenue.

The traditional Brazilian Indigenous peoples costumes referring to North American Indigenous peoples, which *Cacique*’s members would wear, were some great novelty at the time and from them derived the colors that represent until today the association: white, black and red. In the beginning, even board members would wear costumes dressed as Brazilian Indigenous peoples. However, from 1964 the directors started to parade in shorts and striped shirts with the colors of the carnival street band and the image of a *cacique* (chieftain, leader of indigenous groups) on the back.¹³

“An association at the service of Brazilian popular music”

The sentence above is prominently painted on the headquarter inner wall. It demonstrates the intention to reinforce some value that is necessary to highlight Cacique de Ramos in the context of samba. Being “at the service of Brazilian popular music” is a way of distinguishing, maintaining and resisting the site.

Cacique de Ramos headquarters occupy a large lot in the main street of the region, where there is an intense flow of cars, buses, vans and pedestrians. Densely inhabited, with houses that go back to the creation of the neighborhood and also more recent buildings, the surroundings also have a great variety of commercial establishments, from warehouses, clothes shops, stationery shops, bars and auto mechanic workshops to markets of great brands.

When entering Cacique’s headquarters, there are photos of the first parades, which took place on Rio Branco avenue, exposed to public appreciation. The land has a large open space, where two tamarind trees are planted, and a covered part, where the tables and the stage for the samba dances are set up, as well as a bar, kitchen, rest rooms and facilities for employees and management.

Pennants hanging on the facilities bear photos of big names who have passed by Cacique and also the image of Saint Sebastian. But the image of the patron saint, offered by the archbishop of the city of Rio de Janeiro, is exposed just at the entrance, highlighted and under the shade of an almond tree, protected by a glass dome. Also, under a glass dome and next to one of the tamarind trees, there is an image of (Roman soldier of Greek origin and officer in the Guard of Roman emperor Diocletian) Saint George.

Since its foundation, big names in Rio de Janeiro’s samba music scene have been revealed at Cacique, such as Brazilian musicians Zeca Pagodinho, Almir Guineto, Arlindo Cruz, Jorge Aragão and the Fundo de Quintal group. Even today Cacique de Ramos is very respected in the world of samba, having had a tribute by (Brazilian so-called samba school or samba club) Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba Mangueira, which told its story in the 2012 Brazilian carnival celebration. Cacique even inspires other samba associations. Its president Bira Presidente (real name Ubirajara Félix do Nascimento) has been honored by a carnival street band in the city of Duque de Caxias in 2016, the same year when samba school Arrastão de Cascadura, belonging to the (samba school ranking) series C, presented a parade called “Arrastão announces: Every day is Cacique de Ramos’ day!” Also the carnival street band led by Brazilian singer Elymar Santos invited Bira Presidente to lead the partygoers.¹⁹

Such deference with which Cacique de Ramos is treated by other associations seems to reveal that it occupies an outstanding position in the world of samba. It is what, according to Bourdieu,²⁰ one may call some social distinction, an acquired symbolic capital that distinguishes it from other associations.

Another fact that proves Cacique's importance is that the Brazilian transportation system station BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) closer to the association headquarter has been identified with the name of the association^{a, 21}

There had been some concern that the facilities would need to be expropriated for completion of this exclusive bus corridor construction work but, to the relief of all, the layout of the road was modified and spared the association as well as houses and businesses in the neighborhood.²²

It is possible that the position that Cacique occupies within the imaginarieness of samba, of being a community held as some keeper of traditions, conveyed in a symbolic way but that become some social capital, is what contributes for it to obtain some achievements, making Cacique de Ramos' distinction to be perpetuated in this context.²⁰

Nowadays, through the use of the expressway, participants from other neighborhoods served by the system have it more easily and quickly to reach Cacique. After the BRT inauguration, the board noticed an increase of people attending the events. "(...) This was very helpful for the attendants (...). This BRT was the best thing! And the station is Cacique de Ramos." There is pride in the interviewee's speech not only because the club has been honored with its name at the station but also because of improved access.

Street art movements exalt the presence of Cacique de Ramos with Brazilian Indigenous peoples themed graffiti stamped on the district walls, reminiscent of the costumes worn by its followers during carnival parades on Rio Branco Avenue downtown, revealing the value attributed to the association by different society groups in Rio de Janeiro.

On the Internet, Cacique de Ramos also stands out. In a simple search for its name in search sites on the network it is possible to visualize about 540 thousand results, among them its official page and other pages bringing its history and events, newspaper articles, videos and photos.

In 2011, the association received the (Brazilian government awarded) Tiradentes medal granted by the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro as homage to its 50 years of foundation, being recognized as responsible for maintaining the tradition of carnival in Rio de Janeiro and as a bulwark of notorious names' careers in Brazilian popular music. This award makes it legitimate and capitalizes Cacique's position within the context of samba because it raises it to some class of prominence in this universe, incorporating a symbol of power, authority and social and cultural distinction.²⁰

a The BRT Transcarioca system consists of an exclusive bus route, with stations connecting the Aeroporto Internacional do Rio de Janeiro-Galeão – Antônio Carlos Jobim (Rio de Janeiro–Antonio Carlos Jobim International Airport, popularly known by its original name Galeão International Airport) at (the largest island in Guanabara Bay, in Rio de Janeiro) Ilha do Governador (Governor's Island), in northern Rio de Janeiro, to bus station Terminal Alvorada, in Barra da Tijuca, in the west zone of the city, covering a total of 39 km and connecting 27 districts, with stops at 47 stations along the route.²¹

The association headquarter has already been visited by politicians such as the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, famous actors and actresses and even religious authorities, such as the city's archbishop. All these visits were duly documented in photos and videos made available on the association's official website,²³ which increases its visibility and legitimizes its importance.

Cacique is an entertainment option for Sundays. Locals emphasize the importance for the districts image to have an icon of the Rio de Janeiro samba as an "inhabitant." According to some interviewees, the neighborhood has more to offer, being able to "be recognized for something joyful, which is samba." It is something positive for a region which is often cited in newspapers police pages and on television by violence, which weighs and marks the lives of the people who live there.²⁴

The field and its interactions

Coexistence with the neighborhood, although considered peaceful, sometimes causes some friction, especially due to the loud sound coming from the facilities. Some residents reported feeling uncomfortable with the noise. Many people enjoy Sunday, considered as a day set aside for rest, to sleep late, stay home with family, watching some movie on TV. Because it is open and does not have sound insulation, the sound coming from Cacique's facilities can be heard from the street, which leads to complaints about noise.

A board member interviewed minimizes the issue and states he says to the residents who complain about the sound: "Man, you've bought this house (...) When you bought it, didn't you see that there was a carnival street band around? Why haven't you bought a house next to the cemetery? Out there it is silent, there is no noise... (...) Instead of complaining, come here and party!" In this sense, according to the interviewee, to live near the club it is necessary to have flexibility, willingness to bear the noise and enjoy samba, revealing that the neighbors have to conform and adapt and not the association. An incident in which a resident made a more compelling complaint about excessive noise was also reported by the board member. As a form of negotiation, the association offered free access on the days of the event, with table and drinks offered free of charge to the resident, who has since no longer objected to the sound coming from Cacique. This story reveals possible forms of interaction according to collective and individual interests. Mentioning his situation as a resident, when claiming his right to silence and rest the neighbor obtained a benefit. At the same time, Cacique, having the power to open its doors and offer drinks free of charge, got rid of a possible conflict. This form of interaction and negotiation between the institution and the subject demonstrates an asymmetry "in terms of distribution and access to resources, power, opportunities and possibilities of realization" (p. 367).⁸

Cars parked on the sidewalks and often at the gates of houses and buildings around the club also raise complaints.

Next to its headquarters there is a Pentecostal Church of God (PCG). According to one interviewee, some church members complained that because of the numerous cars parked on the sidewalk in front of the building there would be some difficulty in leaving the service, which also occurs on Sundays. The problem was remedied by Cacique itself which hired a security guard to prevent car parking in front of the church. In this sense, every effort must be made to ensure some more harmonious coexistence and to preserve the interests of each institution.

When the night comes, street food stalls are mounted outside, selling the most diverse products: candies and sweets, drinks, hot dogs and barbecue, which are marketed until the end of the night, when samba ends at Cacique. But what brings joy to many is also an annoyance for others. Some residents report that after the removal of the stalls, garbage improperly thrown on the sidewalks generates bad smell and contributes to clogging manholes, which is especially harmful in a region that suffers from flooding on days of heavy rains.

This parallel trade, off the headquarter, is some source of irritation in the association, evidenced in the interviewee's speech, because it probably competes with the feijoada and other foods and drinks sold at Cacique:

That... we have nothing... nothing to do with what happens out there, unfortunately... We can't take them out... we haven't put them mas we can't take them out either. This is a problem for the city hall! There are complaints because we finish it here at eleven-thirty p.m. and the people leave here to go and play there at the street food stalls (...) Then they stay until 2 a.m. There are complaints but there is nothing we can do... The street will be the street! If it is outside the headquarters...

Local formal trade seems to be unaffected by events in the headquarter. Due to happening on Sundays, most of the establishments are closed to the public at the time of feijoada and samba dances. Therefore, merchants do not criticize Cacique. On the contrary, many are residents of the neighborhood and neighborhoods nearby and have attended the club sometime.

The rules, conventions and schemes

Cacique and the tamarind tree: shadow, mysticism, protection

On reaching the headquarter, one of the tamarind trees receives the visitor with its imposing appearance and shade. Shrouded in mysticism, the tree has caught fire once, but resisted and rebounded. The incident occurred after a barbecue on the premises when someone deposited charcoal remains at the foot of the tree which eventually caught fire but then recovered again.

According to the board member, the person touching the tamarind tree trunk shall receive good vibrations, citing as an example: “(...) The guy writes a song, a composer... If they don’t go there with the song under the tamarind tree, it won’t work, it won’t be a hit.” He mentioned a fact that has taken place when the Brazilian Fundo de Quintal samba group would be choosing samba songs for their CDs at Cacique headquarters:

(...) Some guy... he came here (...) Then this guy arrived... – Gosh, bro, I’ve got a samba here... – Wait for your turn. What’s the name of the song? – Everything for 1.99 (Brazilian reais). Gosh, bro, I’ve got to be in this music CD. I’ve got to be in this CD because my samba’s gonna be a hit! Then I said: Here’s what. Go down there under the tamarind tree, over there, and ask the (spirit who reflects one of the manifestations of the supreme divinity in Yoruba religion) orishas over there to place your samba song in the hit parade! Are you strong? Go there and ask. Promise anything and maybe you will get it.... Then he brought a CD, lay against the tree over there, lay the paper with the lyrics... Then, summing up, his turn arrived. He went there to sing and placed the CD on the player over there. (...) Then when he called Fundo de Quintal to get the musical instruments to play and he would sing live there, together with Fundo de Quintal (...) He also recorded it for the CD... He comes here, asks to be blessed by my hand, does this, does that, does everything, thanks me, hugs me, kisses me, does everything that is possible!

The song “Everything for 1.99 (Brazilian reais)” was recorded by the Fundo de Quintal group and released in 2003 on the CD *Festa para a comunidade* (Party for the community).

Also in relation to mysticism, despite the presence of images of Catholic saints, such as Saint Sebastian and Saint George, Cacique de Ramos also worships orishas from African religions.

In both tamarind trees planted in the land and in the wall there are amulets related to Oshosi. Oshosi is an orisha known in (syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion) Umbanda as a hunter and protector of forests, syncretized in Catholicism as Saint Sebastian. According to the Núcleo Umbandista São Sebastião (Saint Sebastian Umbanda Center), Oshosi is represented in the terrestrial plane by (people of mixed Indigenous Brazilian and European ancestry) caboclos (cabloke), Brazilian Indigenous peoples and African warriors.²⁵ In this way, we can see the relation of these symbols within Cacique’s headquarters: Oshosi, syncretized as Saint Sebastian, the patron saint for the association foundation day, saint protector of the woods (the amulets are on the trees) and his envoys would be caboclos and Brazilian Indigenous peoples. Only two board members can remove and place again the amulets, since they have been “prepared” for this.

Regarding Saint George, annually there is a party in the headquarters in honor of the Warrior Saint. At Umbanda, Saint George is (orisha) Ogun, an orisha protecting against wars and spiritual demands.²⁶

In addition, it was also revealed during an interview that there is a site devoted to the [folkloric and spiritual character in Umbanda and (specific set of magical-religious activities, originating in

Northern Brazil) Catimbó traditions] Zé Pelintra, an entity that appears in the religion services in southeastern Brazil, symbolizing “*malandro*” (bad boy), considered by some as the protective spirit of bars and game sites.^{27,28}

The tamarind tree has already become a symbol of protection within the association, so much is the symbolism that it carries. At the feet of the tree, a plaque was placed with the following quote: “All the people who come here who are good-hearted and have special gifts shall reap.” It is possible to see several people touching and reverencing the tree upon arriving or leaving the place. The tamarind tree cult began and was perpetuated within the group with the rebirth of the tree after the fire.

As pointed out by Thompson⁸ on transmission and reception of symbolic forms, rules and beliefs are conveyed in speeches and gestures, which are repeated and interpreted, in this case, as some sign of good fortune, blessing and sociocultural maintenance of the group.

Resources and means of symbolic transmission

Feijoada at Cacique de Ramos

Before beginning the feijoada tradition, in 2011, Cacique de Ramos would serve pea soup. However, as the club still had no cover, on rainy days few people would appear on the premises, large quantities of soup would be left over, which would be taken home by the members themselves or distributed among street people to avoid waste. In that period, there was talk about making feijoada but without an adequate cover of the place the risk of loss was very great.

In 2011, with the help of some local politicians, reform and placement of the cover were obtained. Thus, Cacique started serving again an accompaniment to its already known samba dances. The pea soup was put aside and replaced by the feijoada since, according to one interviewee: “(...) Feijoada is a tradition, it is everywhere! There is even a feijoada championship...”

By taking on feijoada as the main dish for its samba dances, Cacique incorporates a symbolic element to enhance its image as a keeper of traditions, since to feijoada are attributed symbolisms related to food culture and Brazilian identity.⁶

Every Sunday is samba day at Cacique with its traditional samba dance starting at 5:00 p.m. However, on the third Sunday of each month there is feijoada, which attracts samba and dish lovers. On this day in particular the association opens its gates at 1 p.m. Visitors can rent a table with four seats for BRL 15.00 and pay BRL 20.00 per person for the feijoada (amounts referring to 2015).

The ambiance is diverse: men, women, young and old, even children, can be seen inside the headquarter. They are regular visitors, new visitors, from neighboring districts, guests from the

board of directors and also from other Brazilian states. All along Sunday, several buses can be seen bringing people in search of a lot of excitement, music and food. While some sit at the tables placed under the premises roof, others lean against the walls or stand by. Two bars provide the most varied alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks that can be bought. Beer, always well chilled, and soft drinks are the preference of most.

If on Sunday the feijoada is ready to be served, this is the result of work that begins on Friday with the purchase of ingredients, according to the person in charge of the feijoada organization since 2012.

In all there are 140 kg of meat, including sausage, dried meat, loin and ribs. Of these, 20 kg are pork foot, ear and tail, plus 30 kg of bacon to make the bacon rind that accompanies the feijoada. There are 30 kg of beans. And also 30 kg of rice, 25 kg of cassava flour, 130 heads of kale and approximately 20 kg of orange to complete. These quantities are planned for an average of 400 to 500 people.

Preparation begins on Friday itself, when someone in charge puts the meats in water to remove the salt. On Saturday, a team of four people goes to the kitchen, set up in the facilities, to start the preparation of the meats and cooking the beans. According to the interviewee, the feijoada served at Cacique “is a noble one, with all the meat separated.” The board acknowledges that not all people appreciate all types of meats used in making the dish. That way, people can choose what to eat.

The organization so that the feijoada is tasty and impeccably served is great. Uniformed employees are accustomed to dealing with the attendants. Preparation time is calculated so that at 1 p.m. the pans are already set with the components that are part of the feijoada.

The hustle and bustle that precedes the opening of the gates is great: assembling the tables and chairs, sound testing, settling the feijoada table, while some members are already positioned near the entrance to welcome visitors. Whoever visits Cacique feels safe there: employees with metal detectors try to prevent any malicious people from getting in.

As soon as the club opens, visitors begin to arrive, mainly families, who come to turn the Cacique feijoada into their Sunday lunch. Gradually the place is occupied by more people until around 3 p.m. the club is already full, with sounds that mix samba and lively conversation among the regulars.

The feijoada is widely served until around 5 p.m., when it is removed to give way to the snacks that accompany the samba dances, such as *pastéis* (Brazilian crust pie with assorted fillings), French fries and soup, but the excitement continues through the night. There are days when around 7 p.m. there is no more space for anyone inside the club. The queue that is formed for entrance goes around the block. According to the interviewee, Cacique is arranging to have entrance turnstiles to control access to the club so that, as the regulars leave the site, whoever is outside can enter more peacefully.

All feijoada preparation and distribution are the responsibility of a third party company. In spite of being different from what usually happens in other associations, of being people of the community who are responsible for preparing the feijoada, Cacique's regulars do not seem to know or care about it. This fact could be seen as an aspect contrary to the sense of tradition perpetuated by Cacique but probably does not hinder anything for there are other more notorious symbols sustaining the social and cultural traditions.

Even locals who do not like samba attend or have already attended the association because of the feijoada. And many feel like going someday to try the dish because they know someone who has tried and praised it.

The idea that samba and food are elements that can not be separated seems to be recurrent among Cacique's regulars. However, according to one interviewee, "once they've started this feijoada craze, it's just feijoada." In this sense, some elements seem to contribute to diffusion of feijoada with samba and also at Cacique. According to some interviewees, just like samba, feijoada is associated with black people culture in Brazil and symbolizes Brazilian cuisine. It is very appreciated and therefore attracts many people. It is considered some "heavy food," necessary to withstand the intense rhythm of samba. It refers to abundance, being appropriate for large events where commensality is present. Although it is considered "heavy," even children can eat it if only beans without meat are offered to them.

Conclusion

If once Cacique de Ramos would be followed by tens of thousands of 'Brazilian Indigenous peoples' in their parades on Rio Branco avenue, today it is no longer possible to say that. For one interviewee, the audience attending Cacique today is different from that of its golden age. It is an audience that "does not want to party at carnival," an audience that "likes samba dancing and (Brazilian musicians) Zeca Pagodinho, Almir Guineto." This change in the way Rio de Janeiro carnival is celebrated today, with carnival street bands followed by crowds, at the waterfront or downtown, but which do not belong to traditional samba names in Rio de Janeiro, can explain the decline that Cacique carnival street band has experienced in recent years. However, although carnival street bands no longer have so many followers on revelry days, samba dances take place at clubs every Sunday.

Feijoada, which is eagerly awaited by the regulars every month, tops samba dances and adds symbolism to Cacique de Ramos. It also serves as a means of conveying symbolic forms, contributing to the material and symbolic maintenance of the association.

Religiousness, as well as the tamarind tree worshipping, can also be interpreted as an expression of the manifestation of rules and beliefs that, in a way, unite people. Interactions between the community and the regulars, the club neighbors, the district residents and merchants reveal the existing power relations and the transmission of values that are developed among the subjects.

The interviews conducted, as well as the observations and the making of the field diary allowed the researcher to unveil some aspects of this group, the interactions among subjects, between the subjects and the field. Analyses and interpretation of these data have allowed greater understanding of the relations that permeate samba and feijoada at Cacique de Ramos.

The universe of samba in Rio de Janeiro opens up a range of study possibilities that should be explored in order to better understand its formation and role within society as conveying and keeping traditions.

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