



Quilombola Aesthetic as a Political Articulation

Bárbara Hilda Crespo Prado de Carvalho^{1*}
and Wania Amelia Belchior Mesquita¹

¹Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro, Brazil.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author BHCPD collected the data, analyzed and wrote the text. Author WABM contributed to the theoretical discussion and methodological approach. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Based on a doctoral ethnographic research, this article analyzes the discussion on the mobilization of cultural elements and aesthetic resources by the leaders of the Remnant Community of Quilombo da Rasa, Armação dos Búzios, RJ, as a form of ethnic signage in a context of territorial disputes. Thus, this work considers the centrality of the expansion of the sociability network to provide the necessary actions in the political articulation by differentiated identity.

Keywords: Ethnic identity; quilombo remnant; quilombo of Rasa; political articulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article is part of the discussion elaborated in the doctoral research [1] and demonstrates the use of the quilombola aesthetic expression as a tool for political articulation, through the mobilization of the bias of cultural plurality recognized and guaranteed in the Federal Constitution of Brazil, in 1988. For this, the process of ethnic recognition of the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa, located in Armação dos Búzios, Rio de Janeiro, which presented changes in clothing and re-appropriation of cultural elements that were once abandoned throughout its legal trajectory was investigated, as the quilombola leaders became involved with the political articulation for a differentiated identity.

In Brazil, the process of legal recognition of quilombolas represents the expansion of social heterogeneity in political disputes in public arenas and a means of establishing access to constitutional rights [2]. The remnants of quilombos come from coincident moves of two different social movements, the black and the agrarian [2,3], which were legally recognized in the Federal Constitution of 1988, in article 68, of the Provisional Constitutional Provisions (ADCT), "To the remnants of quilombo communities that are occupying their lands, it is recognized the definitive property, and the State must issue them the respective titles" [4].

However, the legal recognition of quilombo remnants, through the constitutional text, does

*Corresponding author: Email: barbarahcpc@pq.uenf.br;

not require details that specify who these agents are in the country, as a result, public policies can be developed that act in accordance with the group's constitutional right. In addition, there is a long trajectory that goes beyond the concept of the term "quilombo", from criminalization to disclosure that mobilizes exclusive territorial rights to guarantee the identity of this group regarding the Brazilian culture.

At the same time, the legal recognition of this identity is virtually linked to the slavery historical past in relation to the present context of these communities, without imposing the reproduction of ways of life built in remote times [5]. In this process, the quilombola's social category came to be managed by the bias of ethnic recognition constructed by an anthropological perspective that demarcates ethnicity by the limits of identity [6] and for this operationalization:

[...] both institutional and symbolic resources and devices are mobilized in the articulation of networks, where diverse political and institutional alliances are supported. They allow giving certain visibility to the demands of the groups, even though the definitive title of their territories, the main claim in most cases, is not always carried out [2]

Thus, due to the need to differentiate the group in relation to the environment to articulate quilombola rights, these individuals start to mobilize cultural attributes capable of signaling the territory as ethnic. The mobilization of these diacritical signs - idiosyncratic expressions capable of signaling a group as an ethnic group [6] - in favor of political articulation in the remaining quilombo communities is described by Mota [7] as being "quilombies", that is, a way of collective engagement in which individuals appropriate a pre-established idea of the quilombo.

These cultural references that signal the quilombola have been built since colonization and have undergone changes according to Brazilian socio-political contexts. In the beginning, the quilombo was criminalized, understood as an isolated space of resistance against slavery, up to the present moment that it legally recognizes this identity and attributes rights related to it.

Thus, quilombies are public expressions used as a resource through the quilombo in contemporaneity, which is marked by uncertainties that drain unpredictability in the

results of actions taken by the remnants. Having the territory demarcated or having a certificate issued by the Palmares Foundation, which recognizes the remnant of a group as a quilombola, does not guarantee quilombo remnants the institution of differentiated rights provided for from the 1988 Constitution. In the national reality it is not enough to recognize oneself, it is necessary to be recognized by those who come together with the means of political articulation of the remaining quilombo communities: researchers, the State, ethnic agents, anthropologists and civil society.

Under this conjuncture of recognition of the quilombola identity, the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa is located on the mainland, peripheral and non-touristy part of the city of Armação dos Búzios, which has expanded to encompass the territory of the quilombola community.

Currently, the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa has its territorial extension demarcated by INCRA (National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform), but does not have the definitive title of land ownership. This marks everyday territorial disputes between the quilombolas and local real estate entrepreneurship or with migrants from different parts of the country, who, through the urban expansion of the city, arrived in search of work in civil construction and settled in areas with a lower cost of living in the area, forming the neighborhood of Rasa. Thus, aesthetic signage is an important resource in the case of these threats as it is a way of establishing boundaries and delimiting space.

My contact with the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa was established three years after the beginning of the community trajectory towards territorial titling, in 2008 during graduation and extended to master's degree (2013 to 2015) and doctorate degree (2016 to 2020). During this period of research, behavioral changes were observed regarding the use of cultural expressions of African origin, which were once abandoned by the group.

Between 2008 and 2020, people who articulate themselves politically by ethnic identity in Rasa significantly changed their relationship with cultural expressions of African matrix, from silencing and denial, they started to create actions aimed at rescuing these previously abandoned practices, such as the Jongo dance

and the Capoeira martial art. They even changed their form of public attire, now they present themselves in activities created by the quilombola Association with turbans, ornaments, t-shirts and skirts with ethnic prints. In addition, they established a musical repertoire for moments of ethnic signaling - such as the parties in celebration of Black Awareness Day in November - aimed at cultural cosmogony with an African origin.

However, despite the exaltation of cultural expressions of African origin, the Rasa community has more than 400 quilombola families, and even though it is recognized that over the years there has been a growing adherence of quilombolas to the Association's political actions, it is verified that most of this mobilization is concentrated in the leaders.

From this perspective, political articulation gains centrality in the motivation of these leaders to depart from silencing to exaltation of Afro-Brazilian cultural signs, not only aiming at territorial rights but above all to portray their own collective past under an evaluative perspective. Thus, through the idea that society is a total of interactions between pluralities and that it is constantly being built by the way people interact [8], we seek to address this behavioral change of the quilombola leaders of Rasa under the perspective of socialization developed by Luckmann and Berger [9].

In the Brazilian trajectory, the quilombo gains an ethnic dimension and, in this way, the contemporary construction of the quilombola individual is problematized based on what this political recognition mobilizes in the lives of those who articulate themselves through a differentiated identity bias. Thus, the Weberian perspective in "Ethnic Communities" [10] of political units is in accordance with Barth's [6] notion of ethnicity, the political unit constitutes an ethnic group as the individuals mobilize themselves politically: the cultural elements form diacritical signs that show the delimiting borders of this group, as an ethnic group. Diacritical signs are used by agents as a means of political articulation, resembling political unity to ethnic.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data exposed in this article were collected during the master's [11] and doctoral [1] research, through life trajectory techniques, semi-structured interviews, field diary and

participant observation, during the social activism of the leaders of the Association of the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa. For the analysis, we adopted the Weberian interpretive perspective of the facts, in order to elucidate the motivations of these agents regarding the aesthetic use of cultural elements.

The entire leadership is the Association's management team, which has maintained few changes since its creation in 2005, narrowing the interest of observation in four specific people, the same people present and active since the beginning of the quilombola political articulation in Rasa. In addition, for further analysis references there was the collection of secondary data related to the Quilombolas of Rasa, such as census data and other surveys carried out at the site [12,13].

The investigation takes into account the history of the Quilombola community of Rasa, which has undergone transformations in recent years, from the exacerbated expansion of the Rasa neighborhood by a contingent of migrants from different parts of the country, to the recognition of the group as a subject of right by differentiated identity. This group has a very low degree of autonomy in the management of its territory, so the recognition of the community as a remnant of a quilombo brings both new possibilities of physical permanence in the face of territorial and symbolic threats, as well as new forms of existence in the face of the world.

It was also observed that there is a multiplicity of factors that involve the problem of recognizing the Quilombola Community of Rasa, determining the analysis of the motivations that govern the actions of leaders in social interactions, such as the precariousness of the neighborhood they occupy, the verticalization in the relationship with the local government, the setbacks in the community trajectory in various national contexts, religiosity, the notion of kinship, the feeling of affection inherent to the group, the process of construction of the quilombola identity in Brazil and also the black skin color in a racist country.

Thus, this work considers that the quilombola community of Rasa is inserted in a complex reality and, in order to analyze the motivations of community leaders, a sociological perspective associated with a multidisciplinary approach is necessary. I sought considerations from disciplines related to Geography, Urbanism and History to demonstrate the context that forms the

territorial tensions that the quilombolas of Rasa manage.

the past as a means of signaling the group as an ethnic unit:

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the Brazilian historical trajectory, it is possible to observe changes in the meaning of quilombo since its first conceptualization. If before it had a negative connotation, object of State repression, over time, the quilombo became a source of pride and a symbol of identity for the black movement, guiding the actions of the quilombola movement until they are recognized as subjects of ethnic rights in direction to territorial title, that is:

The fact that the legal presupposition refers to a possible set of individuals or social actors organized in accordance with their current situation allows us to conceptualize them, from a more recent anthropological perspective, as ethnic groups, which exist or persist throughout history as a “organizational type” according to exclusion and inclusion processes that allow defining the limits between those considered from within and without. This, without any necessary reference to the preservation of inherited cultural differences that can be easily identifiable by any external observer, supposedly produced by the maintenance of an alleged geographic and/or social isolation over time [5].

In order to understand the processes involving the remnant communities of quilombos, we have to consider that the term “quilombo” has been re-semanticized, as, instead of the reductionism of an archaeological condition, it refers to groups that share the peasant way of life as common characteristics. , the common use of land, a harmonious relationship with nature, resistance to maintaining their territories and a movement to politicize identity in the process of quilombola self-identification [14].

Ethnicity is guided by the differentiations explained in the diacritical signs of a group to the detriment of others and, in this process of differentiation, it is self-attribution that will say who is or is not part of the group. Thus, sharing the same culture is not the cause or condition that determines ethnicity, but the consequence, ethnic individuals must assume their attributes in the interaction process: “Ethnic groups are descriptive and identification categories, which are used by the actors themselves and, therefore, have the characteristic of organizing the interaction between individuals” [15].

Arruti [3] points out that there is a relationship of the black movement in the construction of an ideal of quilombo, comparing it to micro Africas in Brazil with the objective of referring the essential freedom of the black people in reference to a period prior to slavery. This symbolic construction is also a factor capable of determining the diacritical marks that signal a community as a remnant of a quilombo.

Ethnic groups, according to Barth [15], are categories that regulate and organize social interaction in the midst of these contrasts that are manifested, or not, according to the context. The greater the interaction these groups establish, the greater the contrastivity, as a result, sharper the boundaries between them and others. Thus, it is important to emphasize the role that the other, through the context that is formed from the interaction, has in this process of formation of ethnic groups, determining that there is no ethnic unanimity.

Recently, from article 68 of the 1988 Constitution, the term quilombo refers to predominantly black groups, inserted in different local contexts, which have a secular relationship with the common use of the territory they occupy, either by the peaceful or resistant permanence of ex - enslaved who amount in the place after the abolition of slavery and also by the purchase of land by freed blacks.

The notion of ethnic self-attribution combined with territorial rights corresponds to the nuance that constructs the conceptualization of the quilombo contemporaneously, which becomes a means of representative political expression that is necessary to fix relevant cultural differences to the group that calls itself quilombola, which will guarantee rights to this population and which articulates as a political tool the previous constructions of the term quilombo, either denying them or joining them as:

In this context, which defines the subjects of rights by evoking the quilombola differentiated identity, another form of conceptualization of quilombos is articulated, understood from an anthropological bias of ethnicity, such as the constitution of identity limits elucidated by Barth [6]. At the same time, public policies operate based on this concept, which does not necessarily need to be committed to reproducing

[...] forms of collective mobilization, through which actors get involved and engage in disputes, demanding in the public space (as well as in non-public arenas) access to rights and recognition based on claims of differentiated identities [7].

The movement in relation to a reminiscence common to quilombolas in Brazil refers to a rearrangement of the past, a reappropriation of habits and customs. The recognition of this identity is to know again the identity elements under a bias that deconstructs blacks as an element of cultural contamination, and reconstructs them as valuable in the national frame of reference, adding them in its process of political emergence translated into the institutionalization of rights " [...] the past serves as a repertoire of symbols, rituals and exemplary characters that until then could have been unknown to most of the community" [3].

Quilombola demands are not limited to a matter of redistributing public goods based on the recognition of a certain identity by the State. It is observed that the social insertion of quilombolas through the struggle for recognition represents a step towards the realization of the individual beyond the material sphere, in which the human being can be identified and positively identified in the context in which the individual is inserted. Thus, it can be understood that the public recognition of the quilombola identity in a pluralized and racist society goes beyond material access, it is part of the formation of subjectivities, in the projections of themselves in the world by a group that was marginalized in much of the legal recognition, institutional, Brazilian.

However, even though the perspective that considers plurality for structuring a democratic political plan in the 1988 Constitution has been adopted in Brazil, recognizing the value of different ethnic groups and operationalizing the rights of these groups through self-attribution, it is observed that in the practice of remaining communities of the national quilombo it is not enough that there are these theoretical elements to transform these people into political subjects and have their rights assured. It is important to highlight the need for quilombo remnants to get involved, to appropriate the public space for the collective cause.

In these terms that signal the need for public engagement by the remnants of quilombos, in

this process of seeking to realize the freedom of existence provided by the idea of social equality, there is a need to deal with the limits of this movement, it is necessary to have a plasticity of identity quilombola to act in the contexts of political articulation, it is also necessary to exercise a format, which I attribute to aesthetics, to be recognized. Quilombo remnants need to represent, in a not only political but theatrical sense this new role operated from a change in the dominant ideology [17], so that ethnic identity can be articulated through differentiation.

Thus, public occasions, such as festivities, are used by Brazilian quilombolas as opportunities for self-assertion in the local context. This was evident during the research in the Remnant Community of Quilombo da Rasa [11,1], as well as in the Remnant Community of Quilombo da Marambaia [7] and also in the Remnant Community of Quilombo do Grotão, as described by Ribeiro [16]:

The samba circles in the Grotão quilombo and its interaction rituals, therefore, fulfill a pedagogical function with regard to body gestures and behavior considered appropriate, leading to the learning of certain rules associated with the aesthetic and sensory experience. There are also conventions shared by those who usually attend the samba circles, not always evident to the uninitiated, which involves knowing the songs to be potentially played, what are the limits for the physical approximation between people, among other codes that govern face-to-face interactions in these environments. [16]

The term quilombola remnant encompasses a series of preconceived ideas of what a quilombo would be, in which the trajectory of this construction goes beyond the 1988 constitutional context, with culturalist influence from the black movement, and the anthropological elaboration that strengthens the bonds of this community with the territorial possession.

This frame of reference that forms an ideal of quilombola identity is not totally disconnected from an image of the quilombo linked to all conceptions crossed over time, remounting the idea of land's rights, Afro-Brazilian cultural resistance and also as a space that refers to old isolated refuges, a romanticized and exotic environment, where no breaks in time would be observed.

In the practice of quilombola communities, aesthetic signage is an important resource in the

case of communities that suffer external threats such as legal disputes around the territory or invasions due to urban expansion and real estate speculation. Quilombo remnants want/need to look like quilombolas and establish ethnic limits, that is, to create non-geographical boundaries through marked forms of behavior to establish limits between quilombolas and non-quilombolas.

Quilombos are public expressions used as a resource through the quilombo in contemporaneity, which is marked by uncertainties that drain unpredictability in the results of actions taken by the remnants. Having the certificate, issued by the Palmares Foundation, which recognizes the remnant of a group or even the demarcation of the territory by INCRA, does not guarantee in any way the preservation of the territory and the rights of current quilombola communities.

The quilombola's social identities are determined according to a game between elements more or less able to form, the "[...] game of selections of social identities is related to the game of power systematically elaborated and developed by the social domains of a society" [7].

In this regard, the identity of the quilombo remnant can be understood as an "open work"¹, in which its elaboration is built through the other and social conjectures in an interaction movement. There is not a unique way for quilombolas to be able to dedicate themselves to their political demands, and at every moment these individuals can use other articulations according to the contextual nuances in the axis that this category represents.

This degree of fluidity in the construction of form and aesthetics that determines the quilombola is possible through the conception that the construction of identities does not come from a single origin [18], as well as the genesis of the quilombola category. The remaining quilombo communities are a social creation and this identity is not formed from universalization and generalizing this process infers to serve a logic that does not necessarily represent the needs and interests of the individuals in question, in addition to focusing on the denial of multiple

¹The term "open work" refers to Umberto Eco (1962) a concept of thinking about 20th century art, in order to understand it as something unfinished, which requires the active participation of the receiver in order to perceive in the work of art a range of interpretive possibilities. Thus, the work of art is built with each new interaction.

ways to identify and express the quilombola identity in the Brazilian context.

Thus, it is possible to conclude that the ethnic identity of the quilombo remnant is built in the movement of the projection of an eminent future based on an evocation of the collective past by the quilombolas. When the 1988 Constitution was created, at a time of institutionalization of rights, individuals were also institutionalized. The term quilombo is capable of re-elaborating old social groups based on the State's recognition of these individuals, that is, as a way of getting to know the quilombo again in the national context and in its relocation within the instituted political project.

In the reality of the Remnant Community from Quilombo of Rasa, quilombola political actions are aimed at the exaltation of cultural expressions of African origin. This is manifested due to the deep involvement of leaders with political articulation by ethnic identity, which have expanded the social network, providing opportunities that are different from what the local context offers, such as ethnic-racial political and cultural events, introjecting a critical repertoire in relation to the slavery past, the black culture and the social differences because of it, expanding the content of individuals and changing their form of sociability in the act of being in society.

When analyzing the motivation of action choices of the Quilombola community of Rasa, I use society as a reference as a concept that translates the interaction between pluralities and is in a constant process of construction, by the way people influence each other [8].

In this way, the framework of interactions experienced by the quilombolas shows who this group is at the interface to the other and to itself, how they are recognized and how they recognize themselves, considering that this dynamic of recognition is linked both to freedom in the course of expression and action and to pre-established symbolic frameworks. The people or groups that interact can choose their form of action while being delimited by a pre-established frame of reference that limits this process, the individual has at the same time a determining capacity, is also determined. Any change in the frame of reference has the potential to change the content and thus the way in which these individuals interface with the world.

Berger and Luckmann [9] demonstrate that the socialization of individuals is changeable to some

degree, when categorizing them into two, primary and secondary. According to them, primary socialization is a permanent reference, the frames of reference for the world and for ourselves formed in childhood and which remain through the emotional link with the experiences in the process of interiorizing the world. It is at this stage that the individual perceives himself in the objective reality and begins to understand the typifications of socially objectified conduct, "Primary socialization is the first socialization that the individual experiences in childhood, and by virtue of which he becomes a member of society" [9].

In this way, the quilombola political agents of Rasa, who share an exclusionary trajectory as a social group in the local and Brazilian context, form their primary sociability from this place of exclusion and negative stereotyping of their past, phenotype, culture and social condition, which it can be a determining point of reference in the reasons that drive the actions of these people, whether to get out of this typification aimed at in society or even to assimilate. I interpret that, in the case of the quilombola leaders of Rasa, these negative characterizations relevant to the group are the main motivation for the course of community actions, in the sense of deconstructing, through political articulation and sociability based on it, such signs that limit them in representation of the self in associations and thus achieve a degree of autonomy in social reality.

4. CONCLUSION

The Federal Constitution of 1988 recognizes the territorial right of remaining quilombo communities in Brazil, as well as assigns symbolic value to this identity by guaranteeing the safeguarding and patrimonialization of cultural expressions linked to the theme of African and quilombola culture. The constitutional text legitimizes these rights, but does not explain exactly who the holders are or how to carry out such considerations. Thus, an institutional apparatus was created to make the quilombola demands viable, articulating anthropological perspectives to operationalize the concept of the quilombo, such as the idea developed by Barth [6] of ethnicity as identity limits, capable of distinguishing groups that coexist in society, demarcated by diacritical marks.

This process of recognition and operationalization of the rights evoked by the

ethnic identity of quilombo remnants in Brazil collides with heterogeneous local realities that sometimes erupt in conflicting cases with the collectively shared worldview. In that regard, it was observed during the years that I followed the remaining quilombo community of Rasa (2008-2020) that there has been a significant change in the relationship with cultural elements of African matrix, previously silenced and currently mobilized as a resource for political articulation.

This change in the perspective of managing the future and carrying out the projects begins with the recognition of the ethnic identity by the State and the self-recognition of this identification by the Quilombola agents of Rasa, since in addition to making citizenship effective and giving positive attributes to this group in the public space, it places the Rasa community in contact with external agents (political, cultural, universities, NGOs, State, private companies) that represent new possibilities for improving living conditions, thus influencing the issue of material goods, self-esteem and belief in one's own capacity in manage the future.

Ethnic identification gives the possibility of action to the remaining quilombolas of Rasa and creates new political agents capable of articulating in favor of the community's demands. There is an importance in cultural elements that refer to an Africanity, as they are re-signified as a resource for political mobilization, which unveils a range of possibilities in the way these individuals know, produce and reproduce the world, as they shift the gaze of quilombo remnants beyond their reality itself, building support to manage the present and project the future.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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