

Storytelling in the Bean Threshing: A Form of Struggle and Resistance for Tradition and Ancestral Memory

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Abstract— *Storytelling in traditional communities is passed on through orality from one generation to the next, connecting the past with the present by recalling the latent memory of their ancestors. It is a magical and playful moment, told and narrated during the bean threshing, awakening the awareness of aspects related to the care for life and the environment, while establishing the feelings of collectivity, union, and collective organization, making these moments a process of struggle and resistance to keep their traditions alive. Thus, the present study aims to analyze how the ancestral knowledge perpetuated in storytelling contributes to the processes of struggle and resistance of the*

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sociocultural identity of the quilomba community Sítio Veiga, in Quixadá, Ceará. To this end, the production of this article had as its methodological apparatus the exploratory-descriptive typology with a qualitative approach making use of semi-structured interviews whose guiding modality was ethnographic and participant observation, which are fundamental methods for a greater approximation and interaction with the social subjects of the research. The results of this study point to the relevance of these social subjects narrating their stories from their own point of view, placing themselves as the protagonists of their stories, with this place of speech permeated by struggle and resistance, forming a web of meanings that unites them in favor of social organization and by the stories narrated from one generation to the next.

I. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling involves the oral teachings transmitted to storytellers and perpetuated among generations. Generally, storytelling brings the history of their ancestors closer to the present, giving new meaning to their culture, their knowledge, beliefs, and values, as well as their relationship with the land and the territory, their struggle and resistance processes to keep alive their traditions, the memories of their ancestors, and their own quilombola identity.

In the storytelling narrated by several generations of the Quilombo Sítio Veiga, in Quixadá, Ceará, the act of telling stories refers to the memory, to their ancestors Francisco Ribeiro Bessa, known affectionately as Father Xigano, along with his wife, Maria Fernandes, also known as "Mãe Véia". They symbolize the strength of keeping their memories alive in the transmission of knowledge inherited and perpetuated among the quilombola generations, being in the sacred ground of Veiga for more than a century.

Thus, the knowledge inherited by their ancestral roots in storytelling remains present in their customs and daily practices, whose orality makes the connection with the land and the territory, such as: the threshing of beans from native seeds and their agricultural practices, the devotion of the dance of São Gonçalo and its sacred rituals, interacting with the dimension of faith and spirituality around a good harvest, but also in the possibility of healing diseases.

In societies characterized by oral tradition, storytelling has a fundamental importance, to the extent that it is constituted as a strong source of knowledge and wisdom and, above all, as a form of transmission of these that, combined with memory, show us and teach us much about the meanings and social significance present in these societies, such as the worship of deities and ancestors, the

relationship with time and nature, phenomena that are crossed secularly and taught from generation to generation. [1].

These are very precious moments, because the different generations come together, that is, the elders recalling the memory of their ancestors, sharing their daily experiences, talking about their struggles for survival, the territory, the physical fatigue, and their dreams. While the children and teenagers wait for someone to tell the old "haunting" stories. In this way, they grow up listening to the stories of their ancestors, which are perpetuated through orality.

It can be observed, therefore, that storytelling is not only playful, magical, and creative moments, but that it also contributes, from a very early age, for the children to learn the craft of farming native seeds through stories, since at these moments they are being socialized; the little fingers help threshing the beans, in the daily activities, contributing to the social organization of the group itself, the lessons of collectivity and belonging, the relationship of caring for the land, the environment, and the territory, with the ancestral beliefs and values.

Thus, this research is justified by my interest in deepening my knowledge about ancestral knowledge and its influence on the storytelling that is intertwined with their way of being and living, their struggles and resistance to keep alive the very memory of ancestral knowledge.

Based on the above-mentioned interests, the following objective was elaborated to guide the research: to analyze how ancestral knowledge perpetuated in storytelling contributes to the processes of struggle and resistance of the sociocultural identity of the quilomba community Sítio Veiga, in Quixadá, Ceará.

The present study is a part of a larger research project entitled: ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE CULTIVATION OF CRIOLA SEEDS: A STUDY IN THE QUILOMBO SÍTIO VEIGA, QUIXADÁ-CEARÁ.

Given the relevance of the various findings collected and the discussions raised throughout the research, we found some narratives that situate the issues inherent to storytelling and the socialization process itself experienced by the social subjects of the research, in addition to the contribution of the book *Contos de antigamente*, written by the Quilombola Rádlei Eugenio Dóroth, from the Quilombo Sítio Veiga, whose plot recalls her childhood experiences and learning, linked to the stories told during the bean threshing by her ancestors.

It is important to emphasize that we will use fictitious names to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewees' speeches, choosing those that make reference in this article to the several varieties of native seeds cultivated in the agricultural activities and perpetuated through ancestral knowledge in the telling of stories in the Veiga Quilombo, such as: 1) Sempre Roxo beans; 2) Pingo de Ouro beans; 3) Fava beans; 4) Espírito Santo beans; 5) Ibra corn; and, 6) Red corn.

Regarding the methodology used, this article followed the exploratory-descriptive typology with field research in primary sources. The prevailing approach is qualitative and the collection/generation of data occurred through semi-structured interviews with the modality of participant and ethnographic observation, which occurred in August 2019, in the Quilombola Community of Sítio Veiga, municipality of Quixadá, Ceará. As for the technique of data interpretation, the critical sociohistoriographical discourse analysis was employed. [2]; [3].

Given the above, the Quilombo Sítio Veiga is a space of ancestral knowledge lived by older and current generations, which needs to be recognized and valued. In this sense, to record the storytelling of these families is to recognize and value their journey inside and outside the territory. It is also to make sure that these memories are not lost through time, not that orality has contributed to the loss of these memories, but to also record them in writing so that this knowledge can reach the walls of universities and society in general.

II. THE STORIES OF BEAN THRESHERS: A PERPETUATED ORALITY FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

For Haerter; Barbosa Júnior; Bussoletti [1], the act of telling stories in traditional communities is usually brought by those who have a commitment to the memory of their ancestors, who know their roots and traditions of African influence, representing a way to keep alive their customs and tradition. This act also establishes a way to resist and fight for their stories, their culture, and the way of being of that community, with the transmission of knowledge being

shared and socialized orally, bringing the members of the group and the bonds of collectivity and belonging closer together.

But storytelling in these communities was also, and continues to be, an expressive form of resistance, to the extent that, culturally and historically speaking, the quilombolas resisted through memory and the preservation and re-signification of their beliefs, customs, civilizational values markedly African. [1].

According to Benjamin [4], he emphasizes how worrying is the role that science has played on the state of art, since the rationality of reason establishes a certain distancing from the orality of narratives, putting at risk the very extinction of storytelling, the figure of the narrator, and the communicability of shared experiences.

The aforementioned author [4] emphasizes that the threats to the extinction of storytelling emanate from capitalism itself and from the relations of production that turn human value into capital, materializing social, political, and cultural relations, belittling the old forms of work, as well as their values, customs and tradition, such as the storytelling that has been replaced by the novel, writing, printing and journalistic content, which are more concerned with reporting the facts that most of the time come to us without explanation being poor in surprising stories, or as the author emphasizes: "... In other words: almost nothing that happens is at the service of narrative, and almost everything is at the service of information. Half the art lies in avoiding explanation." [4].

This makes reflect the words of Souza; Silva; Silva, Rosana; Diniz [5], when they state that the act of telling stories for many quilombola communities is a political act and an act of resistance, to reaffirm the role of collective memory, present in the struggle for territory, and the feelings of subjectivities that belong to that place, to the teachings left by their ancestors, the orality that resists time, resignifying their struggles.

The process of narrating stories of those communities is a political act, which reinforces the relationships between people and the territory, through a collective memory, forming an unlimited network of subjectivity, of belonging to that place. Memory that, besides rebuilding the past, prepares the subjects for a political construction in the whole process of land occupation, of belonging to that territory. Memory as actualization and political struggle, materialized in oral narratives. [5],

The aforementioned authors also elucidate that it is in the territory that one finds the expressions of the quilombola communities' feelings of belonging, of their way of being and living, at the same time that it is configured as the fundamental pillar for the construction of the feeling of ethnic identity, a space where these social subjects think about their ancestors (grandparents, parents, ancestors) but also about themselves as a collectivity, (parents, ancestors), but also about themselves as a collectivity, about how they organize politically and socially, about how they create their resistance strategies, such as the storytelling told from one generation to the next, from the past with the present, making effective memory, as to address, Feijão Pingo de Ouro (2019):

It is extremely important the knowledge passed on by the elders, holders of wisdom through experience in the land they inhabit, because I believe it is a constitution of knowledge, opinions, tastes, and values of the people who came before me, my bisá, grandmother, and so many other ancestors. We are results of knowledge, cultures, beliefs, customs, civilizing values, and even this identity belonging passed on by the elders [...].

In the Quilombo Sítio Veiga there is no way to talk about storytelling without remembering the memory of their ancestors, especially their process of fighting for the territory. Thus, the Sítio Veiga quilombo remnants have ancestral roots, permeated by bonds of collectivity and belonging, being in their sacred soils for over 100 years, being the sixth quilombola generation, where its members set their roots, as well as started their relationship with agriculture, planting their native seeds and perpetuating their ancestral knowledge between generations, as emphasized Fava Espitito (2019) when recalling the process of struggle and resistance for the occupation of the territory.

It was a legitimate occupation process, therefore, it is a territory that by right is ours, because we have been there since 1906. It is in it that we plant, sing, and dance. It is in it that we resist and face all possible difficulties so that we can have, above all, the territory. So, I reaffirm that this land, this territory is legitimate; this space is ours. [...] we are the owners of the land; those who claim to own the land are the invaders. [...]. The space is ours and we prove that it is ours through our struggles, our permanence, insistence, and resistance in the territory, [...].

Therefore, the farming activities of native seeds and bean threshing told in storytelling are of great importance for the preservation of biological and social aspects. Farming with native seeds contributes to the development of a sustainable agriculture, environmentally balanced, in addition to the preservation of memory and cultural identity, leading the various knowledge and techniques of traditional communities not to be lost and/or become excluded or dependent on new technologies, arising from changes in the capitalist mode of production,

which contributed to the disruption of old ways of life and work, habits and values, such as the cultivation of native seeds.

That said, it was in the soil of Sítio Veiga that the memory of their ancestors materializes their oral narratives in storytelling, forming the basis of collective organization throughout the historical processes and that until today is present in the political spaces of decision making; in the occupation of their territories; in the relationship with agriculture and their native seeds, in the daily struggles to stay alive, included and recognized as quilombola communities; of the celebrations of their sacred rituals, as [6] emphasizes:

Territory and territoriality are of utmost importance for our families, since the roots of these families are rooted in the ground through past generations, understood as sacred ground, a place of enchantments and disenchantments. Fertile land where postpartum women bury the umbilical cords of their children, at the request of midwife mother Luzia, under the most beautiful and strong trees in order for the newborns to grow healthy, and in a mystical soil, in which we plant and harvest food, medicine for us and our animals.

Seen this way, the titling of the territory is of utmost importance for these peoples, as it is in this soil that they continue to sow the various native seeds, aiming to maintain their lives and the lives of those around them. It is also a way to keep alive and active their customs and traditions, such as the dance of São Gonçalo, transmitted with the symbolism of the 12 native seeds, which represent life, knowledge, and orality, that will be perpetuated by the next generations as continuity of the quilombola existence.

Saint Gonçalo is a very miraculous saint. Each person who makes a promise with Saint Gonçalo always makes us realize how happy these people come to pay their promises. Look, it is very difficult for a

person who has faith not to get his grace; if he makes it with faith, he really succeeds. Here we have our ancestors, they are close by, they taught us never to lose faith. The dance was left for us to believe that there is faith, there is healing, there is a way to achieve grace. [...]. We dance and sing with São Gonçalo and our promises are achieved. [...]. (MAIZE IBRA, 2019).

In the Veiga, the socialization of ancestral knowledge occurs spontaneously, in the daily conversations during the bean threshing, recalling the memory of their ancestors where customs and beliefs establish the interaction among countless generations. These moments are ritualized by narratives told in circles, bringing the community members closer together and that can be understood by all who are part of these moments, as emphasized by Ana Eugêni da Silva, a storyteller from the Sítio Veiga community, when recalling her childhood moments, as we will see below:

At night, during harvest time, we would sit in a circle to thresh beans and listen to the stories of *trancoso*. [...] That moment made us forget the moments of drunkenness and hunger that took away our peace. (SILVA, A., 2018, p. 25-26) [6].

About the above aspects, understanding the relations and meanings of storytelling in the socialization process of these communities is of fundamental importance, because its meaning establishes relations of an identity historically built by African people who left their legacy and teachings to their descendants in the world. A history marked not only by the struggle for a space to be occupied, but also by the love for the land, the agricultural activities, the cultivation of their native seeds left by their ancestors and perpetuated in the reminiscences of their memories, as we will see below:

[...] always when we go to plant, we are remembering our ancestor. Wow! How I remember that my father loved to plant these seeds so much; he never let them run out. Then we take care to keep them in bottles [...]; only you have them, you plant them, as our ancestor used to do, and then it is spread around the world that you have those seeds, and people go around picking them up and asking: 'So-and-so, do you have those bean seeds? I don't have any more [...]. Can you get a liter or half a liter? Then he'll get that seed for him; he'll plant and plant again, and increase the seed that he didn't have anymore. (FAVA, 2019).

Given the above, in the quilombola community of Sítio Veiga the storytelling remains alive and perpetuated from one generation to the next. The memory of their ancestors is recalled at these moments, articulating the various aspects that complement each other, for example: the appreciation and the struggle for the territory and the way of organizing the families that live there; family farming; and the strong relationship with the land and the environment. These legacies left by the ancestors remain alive as forms of resistance of the families, strengthening the quilombola identity of Sítio Veiga.

III. TALES OF YESTERYEAR: A NARRATIVE THAT HARKS BACK TO QUILOMBOLA ANCESTRAL MEMORY

The stories surrounding the bean threshing are perhaps one of the most creative and playful aspects, leading the children of the Sítio Veiga quilombo, from the earliest age, to connect with their ancestors, learning this craft. Thus, the writer Rádlei Eugenio Dóroth emerged from within the Sítio Veiga quilombo, her ancestors being her greatest source of inspiration. A source of memory remembered in her writings, in her childhood memories, in the little fingers that were threshing beans while listening to the old stories inherited from her ancestors, as we will see below:

Memories

The stories told here, / I've heard them everywhere, / Of our ancestors, / Who will be remembered here, / It was in the quilombo that I heard them, / And the pleasure I felt, / And the privileges. / And about the dance of the trees, / About the cold I felt, / Of the visions of the past, / And the fears I used to have, / It's talking about the past, / All will be restored, / Our books of fantasies. In the threshing of beans, / Stories were told, / Bringing much emotion, / Happiness and memories, / I have nothing to declare, / I'm here to tell you, / How good it is to hear stories.

In *Tales of yore*, [7], highlights four stories: "A velha chata e o pé de pião-roxo", "O alto da Pelele", "O cachorro que comia ata", and "O homem que não vai ao burial até o fim". In these stories, the author highlights the strong connection she has with her grandfather, an ancestor she considers the inspiration for her characters. She highlights that the haunting stories would be those most appreciated by the children of the quilombo. Furthermore, Dóroth

articulates the teachings of her ancestors with the characters of her daily life in the quilombo, thus giving greater emphasis to animals, plants, and the supernatural.

In societies characterized by oral tradition, storytelling has a fundamental importance, to the extent that it is constituted as a strong source of knowledge and wisdom and, above all, as a form of transmission of these that, combined with memory, show us and teach us much about the meanings and social significance present in these societies, such as the worship of divinities and ancestors, the relationship with time and nature, phenomena that are crossed secularly and taught from generation to generation. [1].

That said, in the story "The boring old woman and the purple spinning top", [7], is very emphatic about her grandfather's memory, alluding initially to his customs and daily practices of the tradition of creole seed cultivation present in storytelling, in which families thresh beans, select their seeds, feed on them, plant them, and save them for the next generations. About this, it is worth bringing what the author says: "My grandfather told many stories in the bean threshing [...]" [7], bringing the young narrator closer to her grandfather and the transmissions of knowledge passed on by him, as we can see in the elucidated work:

The Boring Old Woman and the Purple Lion's Foot

My grandfather told many stories in the bean threshing. The haunting stories were the most appreciated by all. One day he told how there was a very, very bad woman, a nagging old woman who denied everything to everyone, everything that was asked of her was denied. One day this woman got sick and died. Since no one liked her, there was no one who wanted to bury her. But, since the old woman couldn't stay smelling bad in the house, some drunks were called to take her to the cemetery, which was far away. They took the net, put a tree trunk on it, and set off. But there was one problem: the old woman was very fat and the drunks couldn't stand her, so they dropped the old woman on the ground and took a purple top and stomped her until the last leaf fell off. They said that the purple top was sacred and removed the feathers that the old woman had to pay for. The bad smell bothered them a lot, so they took a drink of cachaça and went

on their way. This way the old woman became more mannerly and the drunkards shook the net to and fro and continued on to the cemetery. [7].

In the aforementioned work, the author establishes the relationship between plants and their supernatural power, drawing attention to the dimension of the sacred when referring to the pine-nut tree and its power to remove evil spirits, evilness, to obtain a cure, and to soothe and relieve suffering. The plot of the story shows the drunks taking the branches of the physic nut tree and beating the body of the old woman, a way they found to remove the evil spirits from her body, which overloaded the coffin, allowing it, after this ritual, to be lighter and thus be buried.

From this relationship, one can see the strong role and power that plants and seeds have in the backyards of these families, which are used for food and for sacred rituals. The branch of the pinhão-roxo plants is still a frequent practice that is used with the prayers, serving to remove the quebranto, the evil eye, establishing the approximation with the magics, the supernatural phenomena, substantiating the words of Milho Vermelho (2019):

Well, I know many plants; I learned from my parents. Some are used to cure some diseases [...]. You get sick, you go to the bush, get a wood bark, make a tea and you get cured [...]. Quinaquina is a very good remedy for scars and strengthens the bones [...]. There you learn and pass from generation to generation to strengthen the history of our ancestors.

Thus, it is in the telling of stories and sacred rituals and the dimension of the supernatural that the authenticity of the history of traditional quilombola communities and their African cultural roots is allowed, resignifying their lives and the elements of their original culture, the latent history of their ancestors.

According to Haerter, Barbosa Júnior, and Bussolletti [1], storytelling contributes significantly to the children's teaching and learning process, awakening countless experiences, emotions, and values, such as fear, respect, responsibility, and moral values. Such fact refers to the speech of the interviewees, according to whom the relationship of ancestral teachings about the cultivation of native seeds establishes a relationship beyond planting, awakening the values of respect for ancestral knowledge, the passing on of this knowledge to other generations, the preservation of the environment, and the care at each stage of seed planting, as we will see below:

We were born knowing about seeds [...]; since childhood we were raised learning

from our parents and grandparents. They told many stories of these seeds and said: 'That one is for keeping; that one is for eating,' and that's how we were raised [...]. (FEIJÃO SEMPRE ROXO, 2019).

Following the narratives of the author Dóroth, in the story "O alto da Pelelé" the emphasis is given to the supernatural phenomena, calling attention, once again, to the dimension of the spirits, the field of the unknown and enigmatic. The tale speaks of the crossroads, as well as of the respect and care that we must have with that which we do not know, raising some of those characters existing in the community itself, like the godmother Nena, severely punished when transgressing the supernatural narrated in O Alto da Pelelé.

He said that once upon a time there was a haunted high place, the Pelelé high place. It was common during the day, but when midnight came, anyone passing by would see a pestle roll up and down behind them. People had to run very fast, because whoever didn't run, the pestle would run over them and rip their legs off. Whoever had to go through there had to go before or after midnight. One day, godmother Nena had left in the afternoon and only returned at night. She forgot that it was forbidden to walk at that time. When she arrived at the crossroads on top, she looked both ways and started to run. She ran, she ran a lot, until she got tired. When she looked back, there came the pylon almost in front of her. She went into the house, locked the door and told everyone what happened. When she opened the door, she saw the pestle up there. She ran her hand over her eyes and looked again, then she saw nothing more. [7].

The relationship with the supernatural emphasized above is also perceived in the story: "The man who wouldn't go to the funeral until the end". The author's narrative shows a man who did not comply with the funeral rituals, being left with the curse and punishment of having his body heavy after death, not being able to be carried and being necessary a beating of pine kernels to bring lightness to his body and thus be able to be buried.

Once, my mother told me why we should always go to the funeral all the way to the end and never just halfway. There was a man who always went to the funeral, but never to the end. When he got to a certain place, he would stop and always say that he

had to come back. He invented many reasons and in every funeral this man stopped in the same place and with some pretext returned home. Years went by, and this man was getting old and always doing the same thing. People paid attention to his behavior. One day, the man died and everyone went to bury him. When they got to a certain place, the coffin was so heavy that no one could hold it and it fell to the ground. No one could get up anymore. An old lady who knew the man's behavior understood what was happening and said: - It's no use you trying to lift the coffin, because it won't come out! Do you remember that this man went to all the funerals, but always came home from the same place? He won't go any further. So the experienced old lady told them to bring a purple topiary [sic] and they did, she stepped on it until the last leaf fell off and only then did they lift the coffin to the cemetery and bury him. [7].

It is in this space, therefore, that the storytelling narrated here establishes a relationship with the mysteries of life, the supernatural, and the sacred rituals, the relationship with nature, whose oral teachings transmitted by ancestors to storytellers establish the link between the living and the dead, resignifying their cultures, knowledge, beliefs, values, and memories.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

A conclusion section must be included and should indicate clearly the advantages, limitations, and possible applications of the paper. Although a conclusion may review the main points of the paper, do not replicate the abstract as the conclusion. A conclusion might elaborate on the importance of the work or suggest applications and extensions.

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