

## **TERNO DE REIS: BETWEEN TRADITION AND AN UPDATE ON IDENTITY IN THE QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITY OF NOVA ESPERANÇA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to analyze how Three Kings day, a cultural expression present in several Brazilian communities, in this case the Quilombola Community of Nova Esperança, municipality of Wenceslau Guimarães, Bahia, keeps tradition regardless of the various cultural influences from contemporary shifting identities. According to the narratives of participants in Terno de Reis, the celebration is an important element in the reaffirmation of local identity and, above all, of the bonds of common ancestry with the founder of the community. When discussing the dynamics that involve the whole celebration of Three Kings day, it becomes pertinent to weigh culture as something dynamic, alive in time and space, capable of (re)acquiring new meanings and re-igniting the memory of the people who have a continuous relationship with both the past and the present. The narratives also show concern for the survival of this celebration in the face of the eminent threats that it suffers as a result of the liquidity of contemporary social relationships.

### **KEYWORDS**

Terno de Reis; culture; identity; Nova Esperança

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## **TERNO DE REIS: ENTRE A TRADIÇÃO E A ATUALIZAÇÃO DA IDENTIDADE NA COMUNIDADE QUILOMBOLA NOVA ESPERANÇA**

### **RESUMO**

O presente artigo busca analisar como a festa de Reis, uma expressão cultural presente em diversas comunidades brasileiras, neste caso, na Comunidade Quilombola Nova Esperança, município de Wenceslau Guimarães, Bahia, mantém a tradição perante as diversas influências culturais oriundas das identidades móveis contemporâneas. A partir de narrativas dos participantes do Terno de Reis, o folguedo é importante elemento na reafirmação da identidade local e, sobretudo, dos laços de ancestralidade comum com o fundador da comunidade. Ao discutir a dinâmica que envolve todo o festejo da festa de Reis, torna-se pertinente pesarmos a cultura como algo dinâmico, vivo no tempo e no espaço, se (re)significando e avivando a memória do povo que possui relação contínua entre passado e presente. As narrativas apresentam ainda a preocupação com a permanência da festa diante das eminentes ameaças que o folguedo sofre face à liquidez das relações sociais contemporâneas.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Terno de Reis; cultura; identidade; Nova Esperança

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## INTRODUCTION

In the present work we are committed to discuss the festivities of Terno de Reis in the Quilombola Community of Nova Esperança, located in the rural area of the municipality of Wenceslau Guimarães, state of Bahia, Brazil, based on the elements that characterize it as a local traditional and cultural activity and the way it coexists with the elements of modernity that affect them.

Realizing that the celebrations in this community present original elements, even if others have been introduced over the years, we seek to analyze how the individuals who compose it relate to the elements of modernity continuously inserted due to the influence of other individuals that move between the community and other spaces, especially the big city, in an obvious relationship between tradition and modernity.

In this paper we present a brief history of the origin of Terno de Reis, and we conclude that it appeared in Portugal around the fourteenth century having absorbed European theatrical elements along the way. It arrived in Brazil shortly after the colonization process in the northeast region of the country.

In order to contextualize the celebration under analysis, we decided to present a brief history of the Quilombola Community of Nova Esperança, as well as a short explanation of the concept of quilombo, both anthropological and from a contemporary legal perspective.

The methodology used was oral history because it was the closest to ethnography, since alongside the interviews events of the festivity were observed and recorded. It is important to highlight that using oral sources allows historically invisible subjects to speak for themselves, as witnesses to the facts, and thus record their memories.

This paper is relevant because it presents and values the existence and (re)existence of traditional communities in Brazil based on memorable cultural elements, in this case, *Terno de Reis*. This happens especially in times of uncertainty for peoples who historically have succumbed to the *statu quo* of those who already somehow have their history officially recorded.

## METHODOLOGY

This is an interpretive work, whose methodology is oral history, namely interviews conducted with members of the Quilombola community of Nova Esperança that are part of the group of Terno de Reis, in order to grasp their understanding of the importance of maintaining the collective as an affirmation of the quilombo's identity. According to Alberti (2005),

Oral History is a methodology of research and constitution of sources for the study of contemporary history that emerged in the mid-twentieth century, after the invention of the tape recorder. It consists of conducting recorded interviews with individuals who participated in, or witnessed events and conjunctures of the past and present. (Alberti, 2005, p. 155)

In this sense, oral history, as a methodological approach, seeks to perpetuate the experiences of individuals who, by sharing perceptions of themselves, also speak of their surroundings, even if unintentionally.

We emphasize that oral history research seeks to find truths and not an absolute, holistic truth. Therefore, by listening to common people one is able to articulate the narratives of a story in which they present themselves and represent other individuals with whom, at some point, they had contact, building and rebuilding collective memory.

The interviews were conducted with four members of Terno de Reis during the festivities in January 2016. To ensure the anonymity of the subjects, they were named “collaborators”. Each collaborator was able to speak freely about their perception of the festivities for 30 minutes to one hour. During the recordings, the researchers did not intervene with questions or directions. Thus it was possible to record not only the statements, but gestures and pauses. For Alberti

prior knowledge of the object of study is a requirement for the formulation of any research project. In the case of oral history, it depends on the first choices that should be made in the following research: which people to interview, what kind of interview to adopt and how many people to listen to. (Alberti, 2005, p. 32)

In short, the methodology and techniques used in the research contributed to the recovery of lived memory and the perception of the effects of contemporaneity in the festivities from the perspective of the individuals who experience the cultural activities in the Quilombola community of Nova Esperança.

### **THREE KINGS DAY IN QUILOMBO: IDENTITY AS RESISTANCE**

Three Kings day, celebrated on January 6th, the day baby Jesus manifested himself to the gentiles and when the coming of the Messiah was revealed, is a symbol of dawn. Terno de Reis, brought by Portuguese settlers, is part of the cultural heritage of the Brazilian people. It is a folk festival kept alive among the traditional communities of deep Brazil, which do not appear in the official writings of history, through tradition and memories. It is important to consider that slavery in Brazil marked history in a negative way, particularly black people who endured the harsh penalties imposed by servitude. To overcome suffering they reached out to communities, such as quilombos, where they resisted all kinds of oppression.

In this context, the quilombo became a place of identity empowerment, reviving political struggles through a process of resistance, ensuring the fundamental right to “exist” of those human beings who were (de)humanized, by a desire of racial superiority.

Quilombos in Brazil are the result of the history of slavery of black people in the country. For Munanga and Gomes (2006, p. 71), the history of slavery is marked by various acts of struggle and courage, and the quilombos are one of those marks of black

resistance. Thus, the quilombos emerged as “opposition strategies to a slave structure by the implementation of a way of life, of another political structure in which all kinds of oppressed people were found”. Having emerged in the colonial period, the quilombo has changed according to the context and relations established over the years. Therefore, it is not only a place for escaped slaves, as recognized for more than a century after the enactment of the Lei Áurea of 1888, which formalized the end of slave labour in Brazil, but also any resistance group against the slave regime. The quilombo symbolizes the expression of class struggle in the slave period against the oppressive system: “both in its economic sense and in its social significance the escaped slave was an element of denial of the established order” (Moura, 1981, p. 269).

Clovis Moura (1981) sees quilombo as a place of resistance from the perspective of the political organization of men fleeing the situation of oppression. For this researcher, a quilombo was any form of grouping opposed to slavery.

The quilombo was undoubtedly the basic unit of resistance of the slave. Small or large, stable or precarious, in any region in which slavery existed, there it was as a wear factor of the servile regime. (...) Wherever slavery came up, there was a quilombo. It wasn't just a topical manifestation. It is often surprising for its organizational capacity, for the resistance it offers; partially destroyed dozens of times to rise again, elsewhere, ... The quilombo was therefore not just a sporadic phenomenon. It constituted a normal fact within slave society. It was an organized reaction against a form of work the subject himself supported. (Moura, 1981, p.87)

The quilombola issue is complex since each quilombo has distinct stories, apart from being a stronghold for escaped slaves. Some are the result of land purchases by freed slaves, others from land inherited from bankrupt former lords.

Despite the various origins, there is a convergence regarding slavery - so there are distinct definitions around the issue as “black lands”<sup>1</sup>, “remaining quilombolas”, “quilombola community”<sup>2</sup> and “black, rural, and or urban communities”<sup>3</sup>. According to Arruti (2008), quilombos are not isolated, not all originate in rebellion, or are defined by demographic density. In this sense, quilombos are “groups that developed resistance practices in the maintenance and reproduction of their characteristic ways of life in a given place” (Arruti, 2008, p. 2).

Quilombos have acquired new meanings over time, thus, the term has also been modified in order to meet current demands. The Federal Constitution of 1988, Art. 68, in the Ato das Disposições Constitucionais Transitórias [Transitional Constitutional

<sup>1</sup> The term is the most used by scholars because they consider it to be a native expression, not a historically imported denomination, among which Alfredo Wagner Berno de Almeida (2006), Renato Queiroz (1983/2006) and Neusa Maria Mendes de Gusmão stand out (1979, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Concept by Almeida (2002).

<sup>3</sup> The term is mentioned in Article 68 of the ADCT (Act of transitional constitutional provisions of the Federal Constitution of 1988)

Provisions Act], considered that the entire area occupied by remnants of the former Quilombos became quilombo.

Almeida stresses that “the new meaning expresses the passage of quilombo, as a historical category and formal legal discourse, to a conceptual plan based on the system of representations concerning social situations categorized as such today” (Almeida, 2011, p. 47). That is, the term quilombo carries deep inside much more than a purely historical definition and represents a broad concept that permeates the subjectivities of each group on the agendas for the search of rights, either of territory, or identity.

Thus, the quilombo concept was extended to meet as many Afro-descendants as possible, and not necessarily to signify a place for those breaking free from slavery, but rather other groups of people who somehow have ties to this period and sought to consolidate themselves in a territory with their own cultural identities and representations. The recognition of communities of remaining quilombolas emerges as a reparation for the historical damage caused to enslaved peoples who still fight for their identity recognition and claim their citizenship. In this context, the Remaining Quilombola community of Nova Esperança in Wenceslau Guimarães, a city in the Lower South state of Bahia, in the Northeast region of Brazil, presents itself as a symbol of resistance of culture and orality of a people that preserves wisdom, experience and love for religiosity in its lips. *Terno de Reis* in Nova Esperança emerges concomitantly with the arrival of the pathfinder of the place, Mr. Faustino dos Santos who, according to the story told orally by the oldest residents, came from far away, Canudos, bringing with him wife, children and the divine patron of blacks, Nossa Senhora do Rosário.

Mr. Faustino dos Santos, though very religious, liked to party. Thus, *Terno de Reis* became an extension of religious rites in order to entertain the revelers (*foliões*) until the dawn of day.

#### **TERNO DE REIS: FROM PORTUGAL TO BRAZIL**

The *Folia de Reis* or *Terno de Reis* is a festivity of “popular Catholicism” that reproduces the history of the Three Wise Men and their journey to Jesus birthplace. The celebrations take place in various locations in Brazil, specifically from December 24th to January 6th.

During these days the revelers visit people’s houses, perform songs, play instruments, pray, dance, including the samba. The *Folia [revelry]* exerts an important influence in various places in the interior of Brazil. In most places, January 6<sup>th</sup> represents the end of the religious ritual with much celebration, the day of *Santos Reis* [Holy Kings].

*Terno de Reis* originated in Portugal in the 14th century, but was reconfigured and disseminated throughout Europe from the 16th century on. It absorbed elements of Portuguese theater, bohemians and medieval students. Based on its colorful character and use of varied musical instruments, it is believed that contact with gypsies also helped promote the celebration as we know it today.

The origins of Folia were attributed to medieval customs: masters, students, bohemians, begging and having fun traveled for three centuries, from the 12th to the 14th, the whole of Europe. In another version, Gypsies are pointed out as possible roots of this cultural practice, not only on account of their nomadism, but also the instruments, banners, ribbons and colorful flowers that characterize them. France, England, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, among others, celebrated the Three Wise Men on Christmas time. The Nativity scene and the Christmas Autos were already known since the 14th century in Portugal, but the first news of Folia, as we know it today, dates back to the 16th century. (Machado, quoted in Gonçalves, 2008, p. 6)

When it comes to these festivities scattered and reinvented in so many places in Brazil, historiographic studies point out that *Terno de Reis* has a traditionally Catholic cultural marker and arrived in Brazil in the same period as Portuguese colonization. In his studies, Pergo affirms:

the tradition of “Folia de Reis” would have arrived in Brazil through the Portuguese in the period of colonization, since this cultural manifestation was carried out throughout the Iberian Peninsula, and it was common to donate and receive gifts from performing songs and dances in the residences. In this line of argumentation, Folia de Reis would have appeared in Brazil in the sixteenth century, around the year 1534, through the Jesuits, as divine belief to catechize Brazilian Indians and later black slaves. (Pergo, s.d., p. 1)

According to the National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage:

Folia de Reis, considered one of the most beautiful popular manifestations in Brazil, is a celebration of Portuguese origin. It arrived in the country around the 18th century, inspired by the Catholic tradition of the visit of the Three Wise Men to baby Jesus. In traditional Brazilian culture, Christmas festivities were celebrated by groups that visited the houses, playing joyful songs in praise of the *Santos Reis* [Holy Kings] and the birth of Jesus. This tradition gained visibility, especially in the 19th century, and remains alive and active in most of the country. (IPHAN)<sup>4</sup>

For Gonçalves (2008), *Folia de Reis* has been present in Brazil since the early days of its colonization. The first evidence is the date of the foundation of the “Forte dos Reis Magos” in Natal (RN): “a proof of this presence is the fact that the Forte in Natal (RN), was founded on January 6th, 1598, marking the introduction of the cult of the *Santos Reis* [Holy Kings] in the sixteenth century” (Gonçalves, 2008, p. 6).

Another evidence is that Jesuits used symbols to catechize the indigenous people.

<sup>4</sup>IPHAN - Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional [National Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage]. Retrieved from <http://portal.iphan.gov.br/pagina/detalhes/989>.

*Folia* [Revelry], such as music and drama, was used by the Jesuits for catechesis. Fathers Manoel da Nóbrega and José de Anchieta used it and other dances in processions and *autos*, many of which written in common language. With the consolidation of colonization, the rituals used to catechize Brazilian Indians spread among Portuguese settlers, black slaves and half-breeds of all sorts, and were incorporated into the patron saints celebrations. (Rios, 2006, p.3)

Over the centuries, *Folia de Reis* in Brazil has reconfigured itself, incorporated new elements, and currently each manifestation of this event has characteristics of each locality. *Folia de Reis* in the community, is fraught with characteristic elements of local culture in an intimate relationship between the sacred and the profane, gathering manifestations of its multicultural universe.

In Brazil, Three Kings day celebrations include visits to the houses by the “*reiseiros*” [revelers] who play percussion instruments and songs of popular repertoire, and who are known as singers of Reis. Lyrics are of easy assimilation, like this one sung during celebrations in Nova Esperança. It is about revelers asking the owner of the house permission to enter:

To anyone inside, to anyone outside  
Maria, go see who it is  
They're the kings' singer(s)  
Who sent them was St. Joseph (encore).

Like this song, others will emerge during the *folia*/revelry, which, repeated infinite times, form a choir to the sound of tambourines and clapping. Over the years, in addition to traditional songs, others were created by the revelers themselves, whose lyrics serve the cultural experiences of the community, such as this one that refers to cocoa growing.

Cocoa is a good crop, I'll harvest it  
In the summer peak, I shall sell it  
Cocoa is a good crop!  
Cocoa is a good crop, the farmer says so  
Cocoa is a crop!  
Cocoa of 150 (one hundred and fifty)  
A lot of men have grown rich!  
Cocoa is a good /crop  
The farmer says so!  
Whoever sells cocoa has money and value.

During the course of the celebration the revelers go from house to house until the owner starts the “farewell samba” signaling that it is time to go and visit other houses. The sign is given by singing:

Our Terno says goodbye  
The Holy Kings are leaving  
God be with you  
We shall follow with Our Lady

The songs address various themes, many of which are religious, particularly catholic, transmitted orally. Some of them were most likely brought by the founders of the community. Others already have local themes, such as work songs on cocoa culture.

They also sing about relationships between men and women like the following:

Woman, woman!  
I'm going to samba, I'm going now!  
If the samba there is good  
I'm going to go and pick you up!

Each place adds characteristics and marked cultural elements to Three Kings celebrations and, in the case of Brazil, it is the junction of Catholicism and the rites of religions of African matrices. In the remaining quilombola communities it has been affirming itself as an intangible asset to affirmative policies of local identities.

When *Terno de Reis* got to Brazil, it gained strength, and is currently a tradition in various places of the country, especially in small towns and its hinterlands, as in the case of the place presented here.

#### **TERNO DE REIS IN NOVA ESPERANÇA**

Nova Esperança is a remaining *quilombola* community, located in the rural area of the municipality of Wenceslau Guimarães, Lower South of Bahia. The community originates in 1929, with the arrival of founder Faustino dos Santos, his companion Antônia Maria de Jesus and their eight children. There they set up house, faced and overcame adversity in the search for better living conditions. As part of this endeavor they brought with them cultural and religious inheritances acquired in the relations built in their past lives.

The community keeps rituals linked to the founding ancestors until the present day, among which *Terno de Reis*. Originating in popular Catholicism, the celebrations of Kings in Nova Esperança add diverse cultural elements, in a relationship between the sacred and the profane. It has an important influence on the resignification of the community as a space of resistance of *quilombolas*.

In Nova Esperança, *Terno de Reis* takes place from December 24th to January 6th, with all the rites directed to baby Jesus' birth, recalling the visit of the Three Wise Men. During these days, services are held in the local church and houses are visited, the highlight being on January 6th, when participants make presentations in the church and later visit the residents. On the last day, residents engage in a theatrical performance, singing religious chants and reading biblical readings.

The *Terno* group consists of 12 singers, four characters representing the religious component, the Three Wise Men and baby Jesus, and a flag bearer. In addition to these typified characters, the participation of the community is mixed up with the celebration, since everyone gets involved, organizing and participating in the festivities.

For the presentation, people use very colorful garments, with ribbons and flags, and food that each resident takes and shares during the event. After this, they sing the first *cantos* with the help of musical instruments such as triangles, accordions, tambourines, fifes and many handclaps. With great joy and round songs, the singers play instruments and dance the samba. In the end, the resident reciprocates the visit with plenty of food and beverages.

After visiting all the houses, the singers (*reiseiros*) finally get to the central square opposite the church, and continue the celebrations with lots of food, drinks, samba and singing, in a festive atmosphere until the dawn of day.

A large table is set underneath the almond tree so that all the people who are present can fraternize. Food is spontaneously cooked by the residents. Each family offers whatever they can and want to. The table consists of sweet dishes such as: canjica, cocadas, cakes baked in banana leaves, corn cakes, mungunzá; at the break of dawn the community *feijoada* (stew of beans), made by women in the neighborhood association, is served.

The celebration is a mix of sacred and profane. As far as the sacred is concerned, the local church celebrates the visit of the Three Wise Men to baby Jesus. The profane happens soon after the religious activity when the members of the group go out to pay visits with their garments and handmade instruments, such as drums, tambourines and accordions. They are then followed by everyone to the houses with nativity scenes, where they ask to enter. After the celebrations, *sambadores* (samba dancers) and *foliões* (revelers) leave while starting the “farewell samba”, and head to the next house.

Three Kings day is closely linked to a sense of belonging of the individuals who live the community. As we were told by one of the interviewees: “for us, *terno* symbolizes the life of our community. Going from house to house we have fun, we dance samba, drink a little wine. There’s always some food. I’ll tell you, for us it’s pure joy” (Collaborator 3, 70 years old, interviewed in 2015).

There is a historic construct around the memory of the older residents of the community. For them, the celebration blends in with the affective history of the place, since it served as a reference for its recognition as remaining quilombolas.

This perception, both historical and affective, reveals some insecurity about the future of the celebration, because, according to the following report, young people have shown no interest in participating because they do not perceive themselves as part of it.

For us, Terno de Reis is a presentation of the religion inherited from our grandparents. Every year after the celebration ... mass, always ended with Terno de Reis. Today “young people” do not want to participate. They say

it's old people stuff. I like it a lot. I like to party. I've always enjoyed dancing. I'm this old and I'm here every year. Today it is something important for the place. After it became quilombola. (Collaborator 1, 86 years old, interviewed in 2015)

Older people perceive youth's lack of enthusiasm for following up the culture inherited from their ancestors. This concern is justified, since there are few young people who show interest in playing the instruments or "starting" a samba; another possible factor is migration to large cities in search for better working conditions and education.

The garments idealize a vision of the sacred with the flag that represents the Trinity. More recently, another banner was included in the set, the flag of "Quilombo", which corresponds to what Wagner (2011) calls an inventive culture when arguing:

(Culture) ... operates through our forms, creates on our terms, borrows our words and concepts for their meanings, and recreates us through our efforts. If our culture is creative, then the "cultures" we study, as examples of this phenomenon of others, must be as well. (Wagner, 2011, p. 16)

Garments are associated with meanings, namely representations about colors, either in the field of the sacred or of local culture. Garments and food contribute to the affirmation of quilombola identity in coping with the symbolic and political threats that traditional communities have been suffering in the current Brazilian political context.

In the view of the following interviewee, the official recognition of the community as a place of quilombo favored a new look over *Terno de Reis*.

Look, I think that, after this place became known as a quilombola community, *Terno de Reis* gained new life. It's part of our culture, right? It has already been included as a school activity. During Black Awareness Week there is a children presentation. I think that's important. (Collaborator 2, 68 years old, interview in 2015)

As soon as the community feels appreciated through the activities taking place at the local school, it also feels as an immaterial part of *Terno de Reis*.

Uncertainty regarding the future of *Terno de Reis* in Nova Esperança comes from the fact that modernity promotes the pursuit of residents' personal wishes, namely new life opportunities offered by the foreign market, with the festivities being reserved for restricted presentations for temporary visitors.

I like the festivities. We come here every year. I'll do anything not to miss it. It looks like we need to come here. It's a pity I can only come on the day of the celebration. We have to work and there are no job opportunities here, but we always find a way to be here every year. The people, right, our family, are resilient. They don't get discouraged. Every year they're here. I also think

sometimes you need to renew the celebration, or else people won't come.  
(Collaborator 4, 27 years old, interview in 2015)

According to Stuart Hall (2006), “identity crises” result from the wide changes that occur in contemporary social structures, with consequent reconfigurations of cultural identity.

The more social life becomes mediated by the global market of styles, places and images, international travel, media images and globally interconnected communication systems, the more identities become disconnected – dislodged – from specific times, places, stories and traditions and seem to “float freely”. (Hall, 2006, p. 43)

Identity is not inherent to birth, but built throughout our existence from the relationships constructed, individualized by the narratives of the self, and continually re-laborated in contemporaneity.

For Hall (2011), “identity results precisely from differences and not similarities”, so identity becomes a “constant celebration” (Hall 2006, p. 13), formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways in which we are represented or want to represent us, the other and the place from cultural models that surround us.

Identity is therefore an endless process of interactions between people that results in borders and proximity in a cultural territory, that is, we build identities in interaction with the other – in contact with the family, the community, culture, in different spaces – hence we acquire information that results in subjectivities. According to Roy Wagner (2011) man “is a mediator of things, a builder, and able to ‘transform’ into the things in his surroundings, to integrate them into his knowledge, action and being” (Wagner, 2011, p. 211).

This is due to the changes that occurred in postmodern social structures in which the identity of the individuals is also modified by the contact with other identities, resulting in hybrid cultures. For Canclini (1997), hybridization results from the mix of cultures, between popular and elite, and between traditional and modern.

Sociocultural hybridization is not a simple mix of discrete, pure social structures or practices that existed in a separate form, and by combining, generated new structures and new practices. Sometimes this occurs in an unplanned way, or is the unforeseen result of migratory, tourist or economic or communication processes. But hybridization often arises from the intention of reconvertng a heritage (a factory, professional training, a set of knowledge and techniques) to reinsert it into new production and market conditions. (Canclini, 1997, p. 113)

Understanding tradition as the past persisting in the present and accepted by those who receive it, will allow it to be transmitted from generation to generation, and therefore

it is not possible to conceive it out of place, because it is closely linked to a historically and geographically identified social group. However, this tradition is not impervious, on the contrary, over time individuals absorb other habits. Cultures are in a constant process of mobility and action.

The subjects who integrate *Terno de Reis* in Nova Esperança move continuously as they are constantly going back-and-forth between the community and other spaces outside of it. For Dubar (1997), identities are constructed from other experiences and are therefore injected into local culture opening possibilities for other elements”, because “identity is never given, it is always built” (Dubar, 1997, p. 104).

In this flow of individuals who have different experiences, Nova Esperança community goes through cultural and ethnic continuity and discontinuity of *Terno de Reis* simultaneously, because it is increasingly being fed by other elements that also feed off each other.

Identity happens within the mesh of cultural relationships imposed by the displacement of the individuals in search for other chances of survival. This results in the plurality of cultural and ethnic movements that intertwine by reifying culture into a continuous mesh between the present and the past, where there needs to be empathy between new and old. In this come and go, *Terno de Reis* resignifies itself to stay in motion. Among the various elements involving this resignification it is the day of the celebration, which was always January 6th. Currently, in order to include young people who work outside the community and who can only come over the weekend, it is being held on the first Saturday that follows the official date.

*Terno de Reis* has also undergone some changes regarding its musicality. In addition to traditional instruments, the microphone was also introduced. The object has, in a way, modified the behavior towards the celebration, because it often inhibits some participants, which interferes with its inherent spontaneity.

What previously ended with a house to house samba, has now been replaced by an outdoor activity entitled to a band playing musical genres more in line with young people’s taste, such as Arrocha, romantic Brega and Axé.

This openness to what is new aims to engage younger people in the event and thus ensure their continuity since many of them left for cities in search of better living conditions, and then returned, realizing that this territory is the basis for their identity.

#### **INCONCLUSIVE CONSIDERATIONS**

*Terno de Reis* in Nova Esperança contributes to the process of identity construction and to the cultural reproduction of the community. Members express satisfaction for being part of the group and are aware of the importance of the event in affirming the history of the place and, at the same time, show concern about young people’s low participation. This cultural manifestation is formally recognized as an intangible cultural heritage of

the community, by emphasizing its importance in the self-affirmation of members of the Quilombola community.

Despite being a cultural representation of religious nature it does not prevent the relationship with profane elements. In fact, it makes the event popular and highly participated. As they say in the community, “as prayer ends, a review starts”. Thus, anything positive is added as valuable and this makes the celebration cheerful and frequented.

According to what was mentioned above, culture is understood as the experiences acquired by individuals as they walk the world. It enables multiplicities of knowledge through a change in local culture and the creation of other identity elements, because culture is ever changing. For Frederick Barth (2000), culture is “made of scraps and patches”, and understood as part of cultural traditions and individual experiences.

Contemporary society is affected by the movement of individuals, often resulting in identity and generational conflicts. In this sense, cultural policies should pinpoint solutions to tensions and, with this, provide new paradigms for traditional cultures, where these groups might see opportunities to revitalize traditions and build up resistance to processes of homogenization and cultural hegemony.

Thus, *Terno de Reis* in Nova Esperança should be used as a path to strengthen local identity, and new identifications seen not as an attack on traditions, but as redefining elements of their culture.

In the end, we emphasize the fact that this paper never intended to account for discussions about the various phenomena involving the festivities of Nova Esperança. We seek to point out the permanence and change of cultural elements that involve *Terno de Reis* given the continuous movement of individuals who participate in it, in the perspective of mentioning possibilities of resignification of the celebration in the face of the identity movements that contemporaneity imposes. Culture is created by understanding the way people create the reality they live in, and how reality itself can create people who make themselves exist through it; that is to say, “in a sense, invention is absolutely not an inventive process, but an obviation one” (Wagner, 2011, p. 240).

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