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Black Men's Rosary Brotherhood of Penha (SP): the body as primary media and resistance form in the rite and in the fest¹

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¹ Popular Catholicism refers to "catholics' religious representations and practices which the faithful adopt regardless of the intervention of ecclesiastical authorities. We specifically call Popular Catholicism the representations of practices of saint worship and transactions with nature, rather than sacraments and formal catechesis" (Oliveira, 1985, as cited in Jesus, 2006, p. 47). Popular Catholicism stems from the maintenance of the beliefs and customs proper to American or African original peoples within Catholicism. If such practices denote forms of resistance, they also point to Jesuits' syncretic conversion strategies – as per Monteiro (1994) – reconstituting the environment of their original contact with the Indigenous peoples in the Piratininga Plateau.

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Abstract

This study investigates how African rituals and festivities have been kept alive in the Black Men's Rosary Brotherhood of Penha, located in the eastern zone of São Paulo, since the 18th century. Based on participatory observation, it uses Harry Pross's concept of the body as primary media to discuss how customs, gestures, and the environment itself supports the preservation of memory and the resistance against the confrontations imposed on the brotherhood for the manifestation of their faith. We also use Peruzzo, Paiva, Baitello, and Downing's theoretical contributions, as well as that from historians and anthropologists, such as Cezerillo, Quintão, Toledo, Eliade, and Bâ.

Keywords

Communication; Mediatic Culture; Primary Media; Body; Brotherhood of the Rosary of the Black Men of Penha; primary media; body

Introduction

Black Catholic brotherhoods have been common in Brazil since the 17th century. Their popularity stems from their significance in the lives of Black people, as they served as a means for them to express themselves and ensure their rights to practice their religion. This was achieved through organizing processions, masses, and festivals. Moreover, these religious institutions provided support for their integration into society. They facilitated decent burials for their members, assisted the sick, visited and protected prisoners from mistreatment, and even provided financial aid to help them purchase their freedom (Cezerillo, 2005, p. 27).

An important aspect of these brotherhoods is that they practiced their traditions and customs during their rites and celebrations, i.e., singing, dancing, preparing food, bathing, among others. The clergy saw such practices as challenging and revolutionary and thus generators of political and religious discomfort in more conservative societal sectors.

In the particular case of this article, the subject of analysis is the bodies that assume a media role in the practices carried out at the Our Lady of the Rosary church, located in the Penha neighborhood, in the eastern zone of São Paulo city, by the Brotherhood of Black Men of Penha. According to the registration book from 1755-1780, available at the Archdiocese of São Miguel Paulista, this brotherhood has had a significant number of members since the 18th century, and continues to this day with uninterrupted activities, except for the period of suspension and consequent adaptations related to the SARS-COV2 virus pandemic.

We will report our observations of the celebrations and festivities held from January to June 2019, analyzing them from the perspective of the body as a founding element of the communication process, its insertion in the cultural environment, and its role as a media. The perspectives brought in the analyses are based on Pross (1980) and Baitello (1999, 2000, 2008) and on the point of view of popular communication as indicated by Paiva and Gabbay (2014), Peruzzo (2004, 2010, 2011), and other authors.

This study is a partial result of a broader research which explores the hypothesis that the body in rite and festivities assumes a central role in the Black Men's Rosary Brotherhood of Penha, resisting time and oppression and preserving their memory and living habits.

Black Men's Rosary Brotherhood of Penha

The bucolic city of São Paulo in the 16th and 17th centuries slowly and timidly grew with several distant and relatively disjointed villages in its center (i.e., with a certain degree of isolation), including the current Penha neighborhood located in the east side of the municipality, whose population (considered poor) originally consisted of Indigenous Peoples and their mixed descendants who quietly and modestly lived their lives under a subsistence economy. Their religious beliefs and practices were based on popular Catholicism¹ rites which were subjected to the colonial order, represented by the figure of the *sesmaria*² owner (Jesus, 2006, p. 36).

In 1850, coffee plantations occupied western São Paulo, lending prominence to its economy and

1 Other parishes in places with a strong historical presence of Black people, such as the Bexiga neighborhood, perform similar rituals, originated in the context of valuing African culture in contemporary Brazilian society. In the Church of Our Lady Achiropita, famous for its eponymous feast organized by the Italian community of São Paulo, the Pastoral Afro conducts activities in honor of St. Benedict, the Black Mother, and Our Lady of Aparecida, in addition to inculturated Baptism. These religious celebrations include offerings carried by Black women dressed in white, the typical clothing of African religions (see: <https://www.achiropita.org.br/a-paroquia/pastorais-e-movimentos/pastoral-afro>).

2 A brightly colored rectangular fabric which is usually adopted as the clothes of filhas de santo in African-derived religions. The term "da Costa" refers to what originates in Africa, more precisely on the Slave Coast, a region which currently includes Nigeria, among other countries.

exponentially increasing its population both by the arrival of enslaved Black people and, later, of European immigrants. Due to its urban density, the capital grew by forming new clusters between its distant villages and its center, drawing previously peripheral villages “nearer” to its foundation site. However, their social and cultural distances remained enormous, as Santos (2003) points out:

Residents of more distant areas – Penha, Nossa Senhora do Ó, Santana, Santo Amaro, Guarulhos, among other localities – came to sell their agricultural, medicinal, handcrafted, wood, and other artifacts to the residents of the most central regions of paulicéia. These social subjects, present in São Paulo at the turn of the century, became known as ‘rednecks or caboclos,’ partly due to the distance from their homes, partly because of their Indigenous origins and physical and behavioral characteristics linked to the national poor population. (...) Their walk is heavy, and they have a rustic and clumsy air. City dwellers have little regard for them (p. 101).

Given the social and cultural context of the city, woven from intense and ostentatious Indigenous enslavement (Monteiro, 1994), the arrival of the Black population (enslaved or enfranchised) failed to bring differential elements. Peripheral residents’ difficulties were also felt by Black people who, prevented from attending the already constituted churches, erected a chapel to Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks in downtown São Paulo, within its “Historical Triangle,” in 1720.

Its construction indicates both the imposition of Catholicism on the enslaved and the need to break up social groups — along the lines of what happened in Bahia and elsewhere in Brazil, in which Black people ended up combining Catholicism with ancestral African beliefs. Thus, Toledo (2003) describes some of the practices taking place in São Paulo: “there were rites in which Catholic rosaries were joined by lizard or frog skins, guinea fig signs, goat eyes, and crow feet. There were also fests in which the ‘tambaque’ was danced and the congada was staged” (pp. 243-245).

On one hand, scenes like the one mentioned above indicated that even though they were separated, to some extent, Black groups integrated themselves into São Paulo society – including their regular presence in urban spaces. On the other hand, the economic growth resulting from coffee production led to the perception that such practices (considered uncivilized) did not align with the image of progress and modernity associated with the new São Paulo.

At that time, a process of Europeanization was engendered from the French matrix, which designed a city for the exclusive use of its emerging elite via urban reforms, public gardens, cultural equipment, cafes, and elegant shops. In 1904, in line with the urban reform actions led by Pereira Passos in Rio de Janeiro and following the principle of making the Black presence less visible in the Brazilian city, as pointed out by Sodré (1988), the then-mayor Antônio Prado expropriated the buildings surrounding the church. He expanded and remodeled the area, renaming the square from Largo do Rosário to his own name. The religious building was relocated from the city center to the outskirts of the urban fabric, to the present-day Largo do Paissandu.

Following this ambiguous model, many peripheral villages welcomed these and other Black people who, after the abolition of slavery, settled in cities to seek small or temporary jobs as delivery men, bricklayers, washerwomen, etc. Although we have not found any sources of evidence, we have indications that Mayor Antônio Prado’s hygienist act contributed to strengthening the church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks and St. Benedict of Penha, since its office was renovated precisely in the year in which the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, in downtown São Paulo, was demolished (Jesus, 2006, p. 96).

The Chapel of Penha was originally erected out of rammed earth with only a nave, apse, side gallery, and sacristy, and was located just behind the Church of Our Lady of Penha. This implies that since it was in the back, it was set opposite the Church to which it was linked. This positioning, in a way, hid it from the sight of those who observed the village from the center, i.e., with its back to the then Church

of Sé. With its doors facing the periphery, Black people used the Chapel due to the prohibition of their entry into the main temple. It is said that the founders of the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Penha, which replaced the chapel out of rammed earth, asked for alms for five years to gather the money needed for construction: “Their poverty was attested in 1838 when the chapel belongings were inventoried. In it, there was only a silver cross weighing two pounds” (CONDEPHATT - Council for the Defense of the Historical, Archaeological, Artistic and Tourist Heritage of the State of São Paulo, 2001).

Already at that time, therefore, popular Catholicism and syncretism were very strong in social relationships and in the daily life of the Penha village and distant villages. Such localities had no fixed and regular parish priest, which implies understanding that the responsibility to daily conduct the religious context fell, in most cases, to women who, simultaneously teaching the Lord’s Prayer to children and praying the rosary, offered charms to arrange marriages and protective blessings (M. Santos, 2006, p. 31).

Unsurprisingly, thus, the Redemptorist German priests who arrived in Penha in 1905 came into conflict with the local religious practices. Moreover, the attrition between Order clerics and brotherhoods is common, as Quintão points out (2002, p. 90).

Since Redemptorists knew of the devotion of Black people to St. Benedict, they used the trick of creating the St. Benedict Brotherhood, transferring the Masses and other events of the Our Lady of Penha’s church to the Rosary Chapel, and claiming reforms in the temple (Oliveira, 2014, pp. 14-15) to destabilize and weaken the Black Men’s Rosary Brotherhood of Penha. In 1937, the St. Benedict Brotherhood was transferred from the Rosary Chapel to the church of Our Lady of Penha, forcing many of its members against it to quit the brotherhood. This conflict, caused by Redemptorist priests, failed to extinguish the brotherhood’s rituals and celebrations but weakened their strength and notoriety (p. 17).

The so-called *igrejinha* (little church) was listed by both the municipality and the state (Res. 05/1991 CONPRESP and Res. nº 37/1992 CONDEPHAAT), but this failed to prevent the chapel from being banned in 2000 due to its impending collapse. This fact was of paramount importance for a group of people to, in 2002, mobilize itself to not only reform the chapel but to organize a fest in honor of the 200th anniversary of its foundation. Thus, the Commission of the Black Men’s Rosary of Penha of França was established, and the fest became annual, taking place throughout June. Its high point occurs during the coronation of the fest kings, along with congada, Moçambique, and maracatu groups and revelries from São Paulo and other localities.

With the success of the fests and the strengthening of the community, from 2013 onwards the celebration of the Rosary begins following the liturgical orientations of Rome, but using elements of Afro-Brazilian culture in its rites, such as rue, lavender, atabaques, popcorn, flowers, and the colorful clothing and turbans used by many of its regulars³.

Participatory observation

The interest in the object under analysis arose while conducting research on the black and peripheral population of the city of São Paulo. By seeking information on the community’s communication processes, we discovered the meetings, celebrations, and fests of this population which had been taking place for 200 years in the same place. Rather than out of academic pretension, our first visits took place due to our curiosity and desire for personal experience. Soon, our experienced observation began to make sense from the perspective of the theoretical contributions of communication, making the investigative approach inevitable. Thus, by reducing the distance between object and subject, theory and the concrete, we began to methodically record our experiences to then analyze the phenomenon.

To investigate the object under analysis, we used Círcia Peruzzo’s (2004, 2010, 2011) *popular*

³ A brimless fabric hat from Nigeria.

communication and Raquel Paiva and Marcello Gabbay's (2014) *community communication*. In addition to these, we sought to further our understanding of how relationship-focused communication processes take place based on Harry Pross' (1980) *primary media* but without identifying a specific emitter since a collective phenomenon occurs in the assessed festivities. This study is also anchored in John Downing's (2004) *active hearing*.

In the empirical and field context, as is the case here, emphasis was placed on sensory experiences: seeing, hearing, and allowing oneself to feel. According to Peruzzo (2011, p. 133), in participant observation, "the researcher becomes part of the researched group, participating in all their activities, experiencing (to a greater or lesser extent) the concrete situation that encompasses the subject of their investigation." However, the researcher must also set some boundaries while engaging in this practice.

The group or any element of the environment does not interfere in the research, both in terms of formulating objectives and other stages of the project, and in the type of information recorded and the interpretations given to what was observed (Peruzzo, 2011, p. 133). Thus, during the visits there was no mention of the research and no other data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires, or audiovisual production since we aimed to observe and participate, enabling, as an integral part of the collective, to experience the phenomenon as an adjunct to such manifestations.

The Church

January 6th, 2011: the first Sunday of the year. In the distance one can see the colorful little lights adorning the church. Atabaque and agogo sounds seem to reverberate throughout the neighborhood as the shops of this predominantly commercial region are closed. The closer we get, the more intoxicating the scent of rue and lavender, herbs used for the ceremonial washing of its staircase. The nearby movement denounces that the mass in this humble little church brings together more people than that in the main local temple. Ladies in round skirts and white turbans and men with colorful ones and guias around their necks welcome all who arrive with a smile on their faces and sometimes with a strong hug.

Before entering this small and simple church, some participants take off their shoes, stepping on its old wooden floor with their own feet and walking on leaves stretched out like a carpet to the altar.

The environment and the rite

Unlike a usual Catholic celebration in which music and silence refer to an introspective movement, Afro celebrations have songs, laughter, and dance before, during, and after the rite.

Before it begins, a kind of ceremony leader greets attendants, makes announcements regarding upcoming festivities and celebrations, and gives news about community members' health status, among other issues. When the church doors open, the assembly rises and participants' clapping follows *the atabaques, rattles, agogos, and berimbaus*. The songs resemble *sambas de roda* and Umbanda and Candomblé *pontos*. Some women wearing *pano da Costa*⁴ cross the small nave dancing and carrying the colorful towels which will cover the altar, *alguidares* full of lit coal and incense, and a Paschal candle. Only after readers and acolytes have entered, celebrant José Morelli very discreetly come in, the only white person to lead the rite, wearing a *filá*⁵.

The music and clapping, which had remained until then, make room for the speech of the priest. He

4 A female figure venerated as a saint and heroine in Brazil for supposedly operating miracles. The Catholic Church refuses to recognize such deeds and historians diverge on her very existence due to lack of materiality.

5 In the original: "toda comunicación humana comienza en los medios primarios, en los que los participantes individuales se encuentran cara a cara e inmediatamente presentes con sus cuerpos; all human communication will return to this punto." Our translation.

begins the rite by greeting the assembly and invoking Olorum, the Creator God in Afro-Brazilian religions. The music resumes and the community enters with Our Lady of Aparecida and St. Benedict statuettes and posters with images of Zumbi dos Palmares and the enslaved Anastácia⁶. During the penitential act, many speeches refer to Black people's exploitation and genocide and brotherhoods' ancestry and struggle, lending a more reflective tone to the celebration.

Soon, instrument sounds fill the environment again. Three ladies enter sweeping the floor with straw brooms and carrying pots in which aromatic herbs are burned, preceding the entrance of the Bible, brought by the hands of a fourth lady dancing. After reading the gospel, the celebrant discusses the social problems suffered by all excluded victims of prejudice, not just racial based. In the offertory, many participants enter dancing, carrying wine, fruits, slices of bread, cakes, grains, and scented water (the latter is sprinkled in the faithful at the end of the celebration).

During the consecration, the community sings *Cálix Bento*, a song in public domain which became a success in the voice of singer Milton Nascimento. *Cálix Bento*, with variations in the lyrics, is also sung during the *giras of caboclos and boiadeiros* in Umbanda and Candomblé sites. Before the Eucharist, children are called to the altar to receive cheese bread and grape juice as if they were the host and the wine. On this occasion, the community sings a *ponto de ibejada*, a chanting also recurring in *giras de erê* and Saints Cosmas and Damian fests: "I want sweets, I want candy, I want honey to pass in your face."

Just before communion, it is time for the embrace of peace, in which many participants leave their seats and greet all present. The celebration heads to an end with final announcements. The priests say an emphatic "Axé!" which the assembly repeats. People are directed to the exit to the sound of *Canto das Três Raças*, a hit by Maurício Tapajós and Paulo César Pinheiro in the voice of Clara Nunes. Outside the church, the offered and consecrated food are already arranged in a large table at the Rosário square, in which the celebrant, brotherhood, and assembly share and fraternize with homeless people and part of the local Bolivian immigrant community who organized a fest which would then take place during one of our visits.

The fest

Fests are common at the location and, in June, take place to celebrate the recognition of the church as a Catholic temple, with an extensive program. The festivity begins by lifting the mast, attracting brotherhoods from all over São Paulo and Minas Gerais States to stage *congadas, jongos, maracatus, samba lenços, rodas de capoeira, terços cantados, and rodas de samba*, among others.

The Our Lady of the Rosary square is full of devotees and curious people who are attracted by the music, the colorful ornaments in the external area of the church, and the stalls selling *acarajé, cocada, cachaças*, clothing, and much more. Inside the church, the seats are removed, giving space for free movement and group performances. An altar is mounted outside, with a structure similar to a stage, to celebrate the mass which closes the celebrations and crowns the king and queen, a common tradition for centuries in Brazilian Black brotherhoods which alludes to the coronation of King Congo, which gave rise to *congadas*.

There are records of coronation festivities like these dating back to the 18th century when the king and queen paraded during the annual celebrations of the brotherhood's patron saints. They were accompanied by a court, usually consisting of musicians and dancers dressed in luxurious clothing and sometimes even wearing jewels borrowed from their masters, along with robes, scepters, and crowns.

They would parade through the most noble areas of the city, culminating in a blessing from the

⁶ This passage refers to Father Toninho, who celebrated inculturated Masses in the Church of Our Lady Achirópita, which we addressed in a previous note. He is currently the Provincial Director of Congregação Padre Orionitas.

priest⁷ (Souza, 2005). Even today, during the festivities, there is a procession of the court and reenactments around the square.

The body

Analyzing the observed phenomena via communication shows the intersection between popular Catholicism and popular communication since we may understand the latter as “collective practices with a critical or hegemonic character, committed to the production of an alternative speech” (Paiva & Gabbay, 2014, p. 46).

Popular Catholicism was and still is, as explained, disseminated through gestures, music, dance, and prayers, largely through oral tradition, constituting mimetic rituals (Contrera, 2014; Gebauer & Wulf, 2014). These rituals establish processes of transmitting behaviors across generational cycles, making elements of Brazil's colonial past present and active.

Such communication, centered on primary media, i.e., the body, is typical of the African tradition, in which orality is the main means of transmitting knowledge and memory. Amadou Hampâté Bâ, an African oral tradition master, says that shepherds in the Malian savannah count their cattle daily to avoid losing it. They do the same with stories, since repetition is a culture survival movement in oral tradition. That is the reason why, since childhood, the Fulas (as the residents of this region are called) are trained to attentively listen and look to the narrator's gestures, pauses, and intonations to ensure the narrative in its essence (Bâ, 2003).

In Western societies, especially European ones, oral tradition is mistakenly owned by the pre-literate peoples, i.e., who have no writing. However, outside this Eurocentric perspective, writing is seen as an incomplete means of communication since, according to Bâ (2003), it dispenses what he calls the vital energy in interpretation, singing, intonation, and dance. In other words, it is wrong to think that secondary media, in this case written media, annuls or replaces primary media.

This reflection on media processes shows that, in addition to social issues, we find a communication conflict between Redemptorist priests and the poor Penha population, adept of a popular Catholicism and member of the Black Men's Brotherhood. While for Black people, the sacred is manifested in the concrete world, in nature, and involves sensory experiences – the contact with the divine is embodied and primarily communicated through direct means – for the Redemptorist priests, the sacred is abstract and exists on a plane beyond this world. It requires an apparatus that facilitates the mediation of this relationship, such as the Bible, consecrated wine, the Eucharist, or any other related element.

Beyond that, Catholic rituals are based on an *emissiocentric* premise. This assumption is centered on the transmission of information by an emitter – the priest – responsible for choosing the theme to be addressed during the ritual of mass, recovering some biblical excerpt and elaborating, in the homily, his preparation about the horizon he wishes to explore.

As Souza, Silva, and Piza (2022) points out, even though it is made up of recurring cycles (the Mass follows a pre-established pattern from its beginning to end), the word – therefore information – constitutes the fundamental core of the event. Even during the ritual, the importance of processes supports the value attributed to the biblical text or to the phrases believed to have been said by Jesus at the dinner prior to his passion, subordinating the rituality of the performed acts to the information given by the emitting part. In this context, considering Beth and Pross' (1987) proposed media classification, we find that the Catholic ritual consists of a process instituted from the emitter, which tends to obtain greater reception as the strategy in primary media (body) moves to secondary (book) or tertiary ones (radio, television or internet).

In turn, the music, dance, clothes, foods, and hugs we observed are in line with a corporeality

⁷ This study was conducted with funding from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education – Brazil (CAPES – Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior), funding code 001.

incapable of subordinating itself to the word. Thus, by avoiding adhering to the emitting pole, it seems to be unable to adjust to the complexification of means capable of scale gains. On the contrary, retrieving Souza, Silva, and Piza (2022) considerations on the roles of emission and reception in the Umbanda and Candomblé cults, the ritual processes associated with African ancestry seem to resist transforming themselves to the point of transgressing corporeity.

The cohabitation of body and word in the observed ritual implies considering – instead of the simple thematic arrangement of Catholic rituals which substitute the host by food, Gregorian chant by the batuque and other elements seen as adaptations – the possibility of a coexistence between two diverse ritual processes superimposed on simultaneous layers, indicating the imbrication of two epistemes, instead of only one. Sodr  points to the fact that in the Brazilian society constituted from the centrality of Europeanizing values, African cultural traits are often indistinct and unobservable, as if the colonizer’s gaze were unable of identifying what is placed before one’s own view, deceiving one’s own gaze (*trompe l’oeil*) (Sodr , 1988, p. 33). Thus, the values, practices, and rituals from European culture and those Sodr  calls *arch *, which originated in Africa and were maintained and transformed in Brazil, can only be seen by initiates’ eyes.

A subtle but equally important aspect of this coexistence lies in considering that the priest’s word ultimately aims to change the behavior of the faithful, removing them from the paths of sin toward virtue, a way of life which – according to Christian belief – is the only way to attain eternal life in *heavenly paradise*. From a communication perspective, this design fits the propositions of the early days of modern communication theory, as elaborated by authors such as Wiener, Shannon, and Weaver. The word is conceptually equated with the notion of information since, once received by the faithful, it produces the meaning of changing its previously presumed behavior. In this perspective, it is irrelevant whether what presents itself to the rite is a *host* (ultimately a piece of bread) or an *amal * (a dish made from okra, shrimp powder, and palm oil) since the centrality of the sense lies in the priest’s speech, its understanding, and the adoption of a behavior. From the Christian perspective, the consumption of the host or its substitute will imply the ascension of the spiritual character of the faithful to the high levels on which Jesus is placed.

This perspective is unable to observe, however, that African tradition is sustained by its exact obverse. The sense of bringing the food to the fest lies in the fact that Orix s presents themselves in the environment. Thus, everyone sings and dances in jubilation for the opportunity to share food with them. Belonging takes place by sharing presence (rather than the word) in the same environment, which implies that the body occupies the central place in communication processes. Such a relation has paramount importance to understanding the intersection between rite and feast, sacred and profane, which permeate the activities of the celebrations of the Black Men’s Brotherhood of Penha.

The centrality of the body in the ritual highlights the proposition of Beth and Pross (1987), for whom “all human communication begins in primary media, in which individual participants meet face to face and are immediately present with their bodies; all human communication will return to this point”⁸ (p. 128).

Baitello Jr. discusses the difference established based on Pross’s media theory, indicating that in the primary realm, it translates into a sort of complex presence, as it does not separate from the environment in which it appears. The body cannot be considered restricted to a mere information emitter, even if by information one understands the amalgam of meanings in speech in conjunction with gestures, clothing, and many other possibilities of manifestation. Moreover, corporeity cannot be distinguished from the very environment in which it manifests itself, incorporating meanings present in the luminosity,

8 "Sesmaria" was a term used in colonial Brazil to refer to a large land grant given by the Portuguese Crown to settlers, known as sesmeiros. The sesmeiros were usually individuals or families who received the land for agricultural purposes and were responsible for cultivating and developing it. The sesmaria system was a way for the Portuguese Crown to encourage settlement and economic development in the newly discovered lands of Brazil (translator’s note).

acoustics, odors, and ultimately – in an informational perspective – in the receivers themselves. Thus, communication in primary media “requires the presence of emitters and receivers in the same physical space and at the same time – it is, therefore, the media of the present time and its tensions and surprises, its multiple sensorialities, and its potential sensuality” (Baitello, 2000, p. 4).

It never seems necessary to abstract to achieve the sacred. On the contrary, the sacred manifests itself in the body: “Black people pray dancing and dance praying because they celebrate not only with their heads but with their whole bodies. When atabaques are played, the body moves and wants to praise God”⁹ (Borges, 2013, p. 213)¹⁰.

Another important trait, perceived from our observation, is the impossibility of distinguishing divisions between rites and fests. Catholicism establishes the ritual in a procedurality marked by defined events which indicates its beginning and end. It tends to consider that fulfilling the greetings suggesting the sharing of the embrace together with the word – *the peace of Christ* – ends the space-time of the sacred, causing the food, even if consecrated, to be shared in the profane environment outside the church. The African perspective implies considering that the change of environment fails to impose any kind of finalization since the rite is based on the continuity of music and dance and, above all, on sharing food. Thus, people on the streets and members of the Bolivian community, who the Christian perspective tends to see as individuals outside the ritual since the word failed to reach them, begin to integrate the rite since participation fundamentally takes place due to the bodily presence in the environment, an integration promoted by participating in the fest and food sharing.

This implies understanding that the communication processes founded on primary media resist ending in the discrete delimitation of the space-time of the ritual. This perspective amounts to saying that communication not only occurs during emission/reception but also lasts as long as the established bonds between the agents persist, making the bodies prevail (understood as a bio-psycho-social-cultural complex). Thus, the body not only communicates during rite emissions but also in feasts, habits, and customs.

Note that this type of popular communication shows phenomena tending to stretch time, which implies reconsidering the body in the emitter and receiver figures as a kind of functional device. In the context of primary communication, an extended, recurring time is understood, more akin to the concept of *kairós* than *kronos*.

Thus, the devotion to Our Lady of Penha established in the church and involving brotherhood members formed an environment which, despite the social, cultural, and economic transformations by which the city and the country managed to bring to the present elements specific to the *arché* culture of which Sodré is treated. Its ability to aggregate disparate individuals around a common purpose is noticeable from its origin: Toledo (2003, p. 207) says that, at the height of measles, dysentery, and especially smallpox epidemics, São Paulo councilmen asked the then bishop of the city, D. Manuel da Ressurreição, to transfer the image of Our Lady of Penha to the Sé Cathedral, giving her the title of the patron saint of the city in the 18th century. The transfers of Our Lady of Penha took place in long and crowded processions and all of September was marked by feasts to the patron saint, gathering thousands of the faithful, from the humblest persons to authorities, enabling all sorts of activities, including commerce and gambling (Basílica de Nossa Senhora da Penha, 2021).

We now show what Hillman (1993) calls a *meeting place*. For the psychologist, “A meeting is not only a public meeting; it is a meeting in public, people meeting each other.” (p. 41), which indicates that communication exchanges are constituted based on the environment that configures the sand-time

⁹ Apparently, these practices were tolerated and sometimes even appreciated by white landowners as they were seen as a desire for and subordination to enforced local power customs and referred to the history of the Portuguese empire, which led the main chiefs in the Congo to accept Catholicism in 1491. For Black people, on the other hand, it referred to native Africa, and its syncretism represented a symbolic, theatrical, and subversive reversal of roles (Souza, 2005).

relations encompassing these interacting bodies.

The above indicates that the social and economic life of Penha residents revolved around religiosity as if it were the pulsating center of the local culture and social relations. African and Indigenous peoples and their descendants preserved their traditions and habits by inserting these elements in local religious and festive activities. This is the meaning Monteiro (1994) points out when he exposes the difficulty natives had in integrating themselves with new social forms and maintaining their traditions and culture: “once slave trade relations were established, Indigenous, unable to fully reproduce pre-colonial forms of organization, sought to forge their own spaces within the colonial society” (p. 170). Thus, by manifesting themselves within a religious and social context other than their own, Black people also altered the beliefs and manifestations of those watching them.

For Baitello (2005), the body changes according to the culture and society to which it belongs, causing them to also change since “. . . far beyond being a media, the body is also a text which has recorded an enormous amount of information in itself, from the history of life in the universe to the cultural history of man” (p. 4). Thus, primary media communication, observed here in the rite and the fest, blurs the established boundaries for the roles of issue and reception culminating in the process Downing (2002) calls an active audience, in which the present bodies tend to be neither spectators nor receivers but participants “who themselves elaborate products, instead of only passively absorbing the messages disseminated by the mainstream media” (p. 14). Thus, an active audience constitutes “a qualitative mass of people who maintain a dynamic relationship with certain social movements, thus constituting something like an alternative public sphere” (p. 15).

The brotherhood’s resistance (their rites and fests) is largely due to their adaptability and resilience. Even in the face of the 1904 gentrification, which pushed the poorest to the edges of the city, or in the face of the prejudice from the other residents of the neighborhood, the Rosary community remained and adapted itself, strengthening the bonds that reinforce their identity traits. Such a movement would be impossible individually, its strength depended on the collective, the community, which is “the sharing of intentions, worldviews, desires, needs, and affections; in a sense, the being-in-common, the collective experience itself” (Paiva & Gabbay, 2014, p. 47).

In the collective experience, in the absence of the coronation of a king and queen, via the symbolic, participants renounce their individuality and assume places previously occupied by those who preceded them. Thus, as Eliade (1992) points out, such a recurrence is an archetypal gesture of regeneration of life and the world, stretching the limits of space and suspending time since it “allows the return of the dead to life, and keeps the flame of hope of the faithful in the resurrection of the body burning” (p. 65). Conceiving archetype as an exemplary, primordial, and archaic model (p. 10), we may claim that the roles and activities Rosary brotherhood members play are archetypal since, when they emerge, they bring forth the sacredness of their ancestors leaving aside individuality and personality, because “archaic consciousness does not give importance to personal memories” (p. 48).

The importance of the archetypal gesture is also perceived from its absence since, when the brotherhood lost the ability to hold its celebrations, their material heritage, i.e., the church deteriorated and suffered an interdict. Thus, as per Jung (2000), “once the mythical inheritance is lost, this lineage dissolves and succumbs as a man who lost his soul. The mythology of a lineage is its living religion” (p. 156). Thus, there are indications that the brotherhood resisted the collective, communicating between generations from the body – through gestures, rites and habits – not only memory in the narrative sense, but the set of elements that make up what can be designated as tradition, which corresponds to Peruzzo’s statement (2004) that dealing with popular communication implies talking about culture, relationship and, therefore, interdisciplinarity.

Final remarks

We conclude this article by retrieving the idea of the body as a primordial media to verify that the Black people of Penha, in the case of the Black Men's Rosary Brotherhood of Penha, remain and resist because they retook their center and made themselves present there. More than concern and zeal for material heritage, they have placed themselves as spokespersons for their history, struggles, and traditions over these nearly 220 years. Thus, in this case, bodily experience sustains the community. Being together in the same space-time preserves its center.

This perspective points to the need to understand the communication processes beyond the functionality of emission and reception, formulation, message coding and decoding, inserting the body as an agent of culture and transgressing the delimitations often observed in media analysis models. Thus, we suggest that more studies and research with other groups be done in popular communication and primary media since a substantial part of the bibliography on the subject focuses on observing secondary and tertiary media channels and messages.

Finally, also regarding complementary studies, we should say that although currently, no persecutions prevent the holding of festivities and celebrations in the church of Our Lady of the Rosary, society still maintains prejudice and misinformation, and we should further develop our understanding of the phenomenon either from comments published on the internet, in the observation of passers-by, or traditional Catholics of the neighborhood.

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