

HISTORY, MEMORY AND QUILOMBOLA IDENTITY AMONG THE INHABITANTS OF SÃO JOSÉ DE ICATU, MUNICIPALITY OF MOCAJUBA/PA, NORTHERN AMAZON



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand how quilombola identity is seen by the inhabitants of the quilombola village São José de Icatu in the municipality of Mocajuba-PA, northern Amazon, and to investigate how cultural issues are worked among local residents, verifying whether there is a partnership between the local quilombola association and the black movement for the recognition of quilombola identity. It is a bibliographic study with field research, observation and on-site interviews, in a qualitative approach through the listening process, pointing out that cultural knowledge is alive in the memories of the elders of the community, being passed on to the new generations.

Keywords: History. Memory. Quilombola Identity.

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INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to understand how the quilombola identity is seen by the inhabitants of the quilombola village São José de Icatu in the municipality of Mocajuba-PA, north of the Amazon. It is also proposed to investigate how cultural issues are worked among local residents, verifying if there is any kind of partnership between the local Quilombola Association and the black movement for the recognition of quilombola identity. This is since there is evidence of struggles by local leaders to strengthen the quilombola identity among the residents of this village, who claim rights that have been denied for a long time.

In this way, we elucidate the importance of the role of the social movement and the participation of black movements that, together, fight for the redemocratization of their territory, in order to resize their political and social struggle within society (Gomes, 1987).

To this end, we reconstituted remnants and traces of people who passed through the community or lived in it, which are constantly remembered by the residents of the quilombola village São José de Icatu. Based on the above, Le Goff (1990) asserts that the process of memory works as a source of history itself, since it instigates the person to intervene in the ordering of the traces, in addition to opening paths to make new readings and interpretations of the entire trajectory that remained in the past.

Methodologically, the research for this work was based on the study of works by authors who deal with the theme addressed, in addition to field research based on observation and on-site interviews. It is, therefore, a qualitative research carried out through the process of listening and interviews, through which we intended to collect as much information as possible about the quilombola community São José de Icatu and its inhabitants. The main source of this study is oral history, in the face of oral narratives and life stories collected from interviews with residents of the quilombola village under study.

Oral history, in this article, is used as a methodology to access narratives and memories of the inhabitants of the community under study. As Verena Alberti (2004) argues, oral history goes beyond the collection of reports, configuring itself as a tool that connects social memory and identity. It is through it that the relationships between individuals and broader historical processes are understood. Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu, in the project *Pasts Presents* (2016), highlight that oral narratives are instruments of resistance and historical reconstruction, fundamental for marginalized communities.

From the perspective of Mariléa de Almeida in *Devir Quilombola* (2022), oral history is essential to understand how personal memories are connected to historical processes of collective resistance. In São José de Icatu, the narratives collected reveal not only the experiences lived by the elders, but also their interpretations of the territorial and cultural struggles of the community, which are continuously reinterpreted and transmitted to new generations. These voices are fundamental to understanding quilombola identity as a process in constant construction.

In the same sense, written sources were also used, such as: community and union spreadsheets; birth certificates; marriage; community record book, in which the files of the oldest residents are kept; minutes of meetings; and other types of documents made available, the importance of which allowed the weaving of this article.

In addition, sources from material culture were available, such as remnants of old houses and domestic utensils, such as pestle, flour toasting oven, cassava dough drying windlass, mill, etc., which could carry echoes of other times and various other ways of living and celebrating. According to Le Goff (1990), documents are historical sources that need to be analyzed by historians, in order to collect relevant information for the research that is proposed to be developed, since:

[...] the document is not a simple paper that remained in the past, but rather a product that was developed by a certain population that left its traces, whose objective was to be found and analyzed as a monument document in order to reconstitute the history left by society, and thus build knowledge about its people (Le Goff, 1990, p. 545).

For Malcher (2011), the use of territory "is constituted from the dynamic process that this space has in terms of territoriality" (Malcher, 2011, p. 10). Based on these indications, it is observed that the process of local quilombola territoriality needs to be recognized as a space of struggle and resistance, a symbolic and material space, offering black people conditions of belonging to their ancestral place, marked by conflicts with the public power. This is because, in these quilombola communities, men and women emerge who will continue the struggle for the recognition of their people's territory.

LOCATION AND HISTORICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE QUILOMBOLA VILLAGE SÃO JOSÉ DE ICATU

The quilombola community São José de Icatu is located between the cities of Baião and Mocajuba, and can be accessed by the PA-151, between Mocajuba, towards Baião, in

a trip of approximately 20 to 25 minutes, using car or motorcycle as transportation. Another access route is through the Tocantins River, leaving the municipal pier of Mocajuba to the town of Icatu, in a trip of approximately 40 to 45 minutes, by boat or trail.

The São José de Icatu quilombo was certified as a remaining quilombo territory through Process No. 01420.009023/2010-81, registered with the Palmares Cultural Foundation by Ordinance No. 28/2011, of 40818. This recognition is a milestone in the community's struggle, consolidating its legal and historical legitimacy. According to Mariléa de Almeida (2022), the certification of quilombola territories represents an act of resistance to historical erasure and guarantees the continuity of the cultural and social practices of this group.

Geographically, the community belongs to the municipality of Mocajuba, in the northeast of the state of Pará, a region rich in vegetation, being "agglomerated by the large urban center of the Tocantins River, such as Cametá, Abaetetuba, Igarapé-Miri and Limoeiro do Ajuru" (Costa, 2013, p. 29). Nowadays, in the São José de Icatu community, more than 83 families live, composed of more than 310 people. The process of building its territoriality took place through struggles and permanence. According to Pinto (2010, p. 14), in order to "understand the trajectory and coexistence of this region, it is necessary to search their memories for their personal accounts and listen to them".

In this sense, in the statements of some residents, the village originated from indigenous words, "which by the terminology Icatu means: I, means river", Catu, means Águas Boas, "river of good waters, which occurred as a result of the existence of a small river that flows into the Tauaré, in an easterly to west direction, which borders the tributary Rio de Putiri" (Costa, 2013, p. 35).

Based on the narratives of the people interviewed, the quilombola community would have emerged around 1670, when some enslaved people came to escape from their masters, owners of sugarcane plantations, to inhabit this region, as explained in the speech of Mr. Domingos Flávio:

These captives fled from slave labor there in the region of Cametá and Abaetetuba, they came to stop in part, they arrived last here in Rio, they entered Rio from Mocajuba, which is the Tauaré River, which gives access to Icatu, where they came to be located. There they formed the quilombo called Icatu (Domingos Flávio, teacher and resident of the São José de Icatu community).

It is observed in the speeches, such as that of Professor Domingos Flávio, that the first residents of the community arrived at this place when some entered the forests of the

region, while others went up the Tocantins River. Other people interviewed also narrate, based on an inherited memory, how this community came about, such as Mrs. Maria José Brito:

The first residents came from a part of Igarapé-Miri, which worked in the production of sugarcane and others came from Mola, which is a quilombola community in the municipality of Cametá. The first resident was Mr. Feliciano Rosa, who gave birth to this large family (Maria José de Souza Brito, 55 years old, resident of the São José de Icatu community).

Based on the speech of Mrs. Maria José, it is noted that the first inhabitants of the village came fleeing from the sugarcane farms and other refuges of resistant blacks, going deep into the forests to reach the region. In this sense, Costa (2013, p. 32) reiterates that "the first inhabitants came from other villages", for example, from the quilombo of Mola in the region of Cametá.

Many of these blacks who resisted the slavery process fled through the forests and rivers of this region in search of freedom, whose purpose was to free themselves from the bonds of slavery when they found a suitable place (it should be near rivers and streams), where they "built groups, formed new quilombos" to live away from captivity (Pinto, 2010, p. 23).

Thus, the formation of the quilombo, dated by the local memory as having occurred in 1670, must be analyzed from a critical historical perspective. Flávio Gomes (2002) uses the concept of 'black field' to describe the territories created and sustained by enslaved Africans and their descendants, connecting cultural, political and economic practices. These fields were not only spaces of refuge, but dynamic zones of sociability, resistance, and articulation between different groups.

The memory of 1670 as a milestone in the foundation of the quilombo reflects a process of historical reconstruction that connects the oral accounts of the elders to the struggle for contemporary recognition. However, it is necessary to consider that the construction of the quilombola territory is a continuous process, which includes successive generations of families and collective experiences. According to Munanga (1996), quilombola identity is shaped not only by African ancestry, but also by local interactions, incorporating cultural practices, political alliances and adaptation to socioeconomic changes.

The case of São José de Icatu is emblematic for understanding these dynamics. The initial formation of the community can be situated in the context of the escapes of enslaved

people from plantations in the seventeenth century, but its consolidation as a legally recognized quilombo only occurred in the twenty-first century, after decades of political organization and vindication. Between these two historical moments, the community underwent significant transformations, such as the constitution of expanded family networks, the strengthening of collective agricultural practices, and the creation of community associations.

Thus, quilombola resistance manifests itself in several dimensions: territorial, cultural, political and symbolic. Fanon (2008) highlights that black resistance is a process of cultural affirmation and reappropriation in the face of colonial oppression structures. In addition, Flávio Gomes (2002) argues that quilombos are spaces of collective resistance, where ancestral knowledge symbolizes not only a link with the past, but also a strategy for coping with contemporary adversities. Resistance is, therefore, a multifaceted concept that encompasses historical and sociocultural perspectives.

The blacks enslaved in the colonial period, as a form of cultural resistance, practiced their beliefs within the forest, such as capoeira, rapacity and the dance of the club, practiced far from the slavers, so that the rituals left by their ancestors would not be lost. In line with Munanga (1996), the trajectory of black resistance against slavery was marked by the revolt of enslaved blacks against their executioners, in such a way that they began to organize themselves to try to escape from the slave quarters, while, after being freed, they sought out the minis mocambos to take shelter and seek to rebuild life in freedom and the identity of their people. Soon

[...] The enslaved Africans and their descendants were never bound by exclusionary ideological models. Their practices and strategies were developed within the cross-cultural model, with the aim of forming rich and stable personal identities that could not be structured solely within the limits of their culture. They had an external openness in a double sense to give and receive cultural influences from other communities, without giving up their existence as a distinct culture and without disrespecting what was common among human beings. It aimed at the formation of open identities, produced by incessant communication with the other, and not closed identities, generated by cultural barricades that exclude the other (Munanga, 1996, p. 63).

The survival of these fugitives was due to human reality itself, since, in order for them to survive the challenges of living in nature, they needed to take risks. In the perspective of Fanon (2008), this risk had to be overcome towards his supreme good, thus having the certainty of having his life transformed after overcoming all these barriers, thus asserting his own personal value.

However, in the process of building the quilombo⁴ and valuing black and quilombola identity, it is imperative to highlight the role of the social movement and the participation of the black movement, which together fight for the redemocratization of their territories, which resize the political and social struggle within society (Gomes, 1987).

In this sense, the plurality of quilombola identities must be analyzed at the intersections between class, gender and ethnicity, as suggested by Munanga (1996), showing that black identity is not homogeneous, but constructed in multiple historical and social experiences. In São José de Icatu, women's agency, for example, is central to the continuity of traditions and the leadership of community struggles, demonstrating how diverse and dynamic these identities are.

QUILOMBOLA COMMUNITIES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE POSSESSION OF LAND BY BLACKS

Quilombola communities in Brazil still face major obstacles to ensure the demarcation of their lands, as their remaining populations need to fight for specific policies aimed at their people, in such a way that they delimit the territories that are rightfully theirs and, historically, have been occupied by their descendants. In the view of Simone Silva (2012), "it is necessary to understand the constitution of quilombola identity in the face of the need to fight for the demarcation or reconquest of a material and symbolic territory, as this process of territoriality presupposes tension in the established relations" (Silva, 2012, p. 13).

In this regard, the inhabitants of quilombola communities have been organizing themselves in the struggle for the right to remain in the spaces left by their ancestors, not ceasing to fight for the demarcation of their territories. This is a form of resistance to the attacks faced on a daily basis, while black men and women are still seen with looks loaded with prejudice, victims of racism and genocide, resulting from the macropolitics of the metropolises.

⁴ The quilombo is certainly a word originating from the Bantu-speaking peoples (*kilombo*, Portugueseized: quilombo). Its presence and meaning in Brazil correspond to some branches of these Bantu peoples, whose members were brought and enslaved in this land. These are the *Lunda*, *Ovimbundu*, *Mbundu*, *Kongo*, *Imbangala* etc. groups, whose territories are divided between Angola and Zaire. Although quilombo is an Umbundu language word, according to Joseph C. Miller, its content as a socio-political and military institution results from a long history involving regions and peoples referred to here. It is a history of conflicts for power, of splitting of groups, of migrations in search of new territories and of political alliances between alien groups (Munanga, 1996).

The quilombola territory is a central element for the construction of the community's identity and resistance. For Malcher (2011), it is both physical and symbolic, functioning as a space for cultural reproduction and political confrontation (Malcher, 2011). The historical problematization of the formation of the quilombo also requires attention to internal complexities. It is necessary to understand that quilombola communities are not homogeneous; on the contrary, they bring together historical subjects of diverse origins who, over time, have shaped unique social, political, and cultural practices (Gomes, 2002).

Since the quilombola territory is a space for the construction of one's own black identity, Malcher (2011) states that the permanence of black people within quilombola communities enables the condition of ownership of the space, in which they are and can enjoy their rights, whose lands represent historical symbolism and provide opportunities to develop various forms of social relations among their family members (Malcher, 2011).

In this sense, the process of demarcation of quilombola lands begins to be constituted through the political field, in which quilombola communities outline strategies of struggle, in order to guarantee their people the full right to occupy their territorial and cultural spaces in the face of the self-affirmation of black and quilombola identity. In this regard, Monteiro (2009) argues:

Public policies to combat social inequalities need to overcome the conception of absences and discontinuous actions, which guide several projects, and walk along the path of building inclusive policies for young people and adults, especially in Brazilian quilombola communities (Monteiro, 2009, p. 49).

Currently, the inhabitants of quilombola communities organize themselves to fight inequality, against which they have resisted over time, fighting for the demarcation of territories and, mainly, asserting their rights as citizens, in order to have a dignified life like other Brazilians. Seeking, for example, to guarantee the right to quality education, basic health, the recognition and preservation of their traditions and customs, which ensure the maintenance and preservation of quilombola life and identity.

Therefore, within the São José de Icatu community, the issue of racial prejudice is worked with young people through music, dance and theater, which are developed through projects that exist in the community, such as the "Zumbi Followers Project", which works with issues related to racial prejudice.

In the conception of Domingues (2007), the black movement is based on the "struggle against racial inequality, in order to solve the problems that the community has

been suffering over time, and thus propose an action that can guarantee the right of black people in the struggle for social equality" (Domingues, 2007, p. 101). Through the above, it is possible to observe, in the speech of Professor Rivaldo dos Santos, that the black movement has a relevant role within the community of São José de Icatu, contributing to the inhabitants of this village recognizing what their rights are in society, especially in the fight against racial discrimination, which plagues the black population, as he states:

[...] I believe that the social movement is fundamental in the issue of the struggle for the right, because sometimes we see that we only get educated if we go to a school bench. But I think differently, I think that the social movement is fundamental, because it educates people in a certain way (Rivaldo Antônio Dias dos Santos, 34 years old, teacher and resident of the quilombola community São José de Icatu).

For this reason, the Brazilian black social movement fights for the well-being of quilombola communities, aiming to ensure the full respect of its people, based on the formation of black identity. According to Pereira (2011), the main characteristic of the organization is the "search for the inclusion of blacks in society, with a character of seeking the transformation of the social order. The black front became the greatest expression of this movement in its time, even due to the national dimension" (Pereira, 2011, p. 31)

The process of formation of social movements, which develops within the communities, needs to be heard and visualized by Brazilian society, in such a way that they understand the specificities of the struggle and its demands, allowing the expansion of alternatives in search of solutions to these problems.

With regard to quilombola communities, historians have the mission of sharing this knowledge with society through the light of human existence itself, since the historical process of the black movement does not differ from the "mental understanding of man, but rather from the meaning that these events may refer to the historical context itself" (Le Goff, 1990, p. 42).

Within the São José de Icatu community, these movements, over 250 years of the community's foundation, in the face of much struggle, are managing to bring benefits to the community. According to the residents, these actions are essential for the struggle of their people, who today have legal representatives to act in defense of their own, as stated by Mr. Silvano Rose, a resident of Icatu, about the role of social movements in his community:

[...] It is important these social movements that exist in the community that today is represented by the union, here there is the issue of the union that is present in the community, there is the women's movement, the quilombola association too, even the church, this strengthens a lot when it exists within the community, because we

are always fighting to bring benefits to the residents, and without struggle it is difficult to get these benefits here for us (Silvano Rose, 34 years old, current president of the quilombola community São José de Icatu).

In this sense, local associative networks play a crucial role in the political and cultural articulation of the community. Hebe Mattos and Martha Abreu (2016) state that quilombola movements have as a fundamental characteristic the construction of support and solidarity networks that connect local demands to national movements (Mattos and Abreu, 2016). Quilombola associations and women's collectives in the community have been active not only in the struggle for territorial recognition, but also in valuing local culture, strengthening quilombola identity and engaging new generations.

From this perspective, the history of the Brazilian black movement was not restricted only to submission, since it went through the process of redemocratization of black slavery in Brazil, with various forms of resistance against oppression. This was since "they were revolted against the whippings they took from the farmers, as this caused mass escapes to the mini-quilombos and others who could not escape ended up killing their masters" (Lomba, 2014, p. 20).

In the quilombo of Icatu, the black movement is currently articulating to develop its cultural activities inside and outside the community, in order to preserve and explore the rich knowledge of its people. Becoming, therefore, a way of resisting against the barriers that the local population has faced. In addition, in these villages, there are varieties of cultural expressions from black ancestry. Gomes (2002) points out that practices such as Samba de Cacete⁵, collective efforts and traditional dances are expressions of cultural resistance. Thus, these practices not only keep traditions alive, but reinforce the struggle for the recognition of territorial rights. As narrated by Mrs. Ana Glória Oliveira, a resident of

⁵ Pinto (2013) characterizes Samba de Cacete as a cultural practice found in the remaining villages of former quilombolas in the region, stating that, "although each village has its own particular way of performing, the drums, the rhythm, the lyrics and the way of dancing are similar. It is a kind of batucada with the participation of all those present at that moment, it comes from improvisation, where the songs emerge freely at the moment, or the traditional ones are sung, passed from one generation to another. It receives the name of Samba de Cacete because the only musical instruments are two drums, or tambouros, as it is also commonly called in the region, approximately one and a half meters long, made by the inhabitants of the rural black villages from hollow trunks of resistant trees, such as jareua, acapu, maçaranduba and cupiúba, which are, ritualistically, excavated inside, having at one end a piece of leather tied with vine or curuanã rope, as well as four wooden clubs. At the time of the samba, two beaters, also called drummers or clubbers, sit on top of each drum, who stand with their backs to each other. Those who are on the side that has the leather beat with their hands and those who are on the other end hit with the clubs. The beaters sing the stanzas of the songs while the male and female dancers, in unisonant tones, make the chorus" (Pinto, 2013, p. 33).

Icatu, the people go out on the streets of the cities of Mocajuba and Baião presenting their culture:

[...] Look at the culture, they have the farinhada dance, the feijoada dance, the Samba de Cacete, the group of the band cultura viva, then this living culture is a group that they formed, then the young people have also gone out to present their culture, where the farinhada dance is the most called by the communities (Ana Glória de Oliveira, 51 years old, resident of the quilombola community São José de Icatu).

In this sense, all this cultural knowledge, which the black movement has been developing within the community, is a way of expressing all its sufferings, resistances and persistences. It is a way, according to Ribeiro (2014), of "preserving the memories of their ancestors that are still alive in their memories today, which is why this knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation" (Ribeiro, 2014, p. 160).

The stories and memories of quilombola communities are collectively constructed, since everyone presents themselves, together with their groups, the social and cultural frameworks of their people, preserving ancestral memories and knowledge. It is through these memories that it is possible to reconstruct evidence of the history of this quilombola village and the people who passed through this region, having the possibility of following the daily struggles and those of their descendants.

After the intense struggles of social movements, together with community leaders, the inhabitants of Icatu managed to have their territory recognized as a remaining quilombo area, managing to legalize their lands on November 30, 2002, having their definitive land title legalized by the Land Institute of Pará (ITERPA). This quilombola territory was certified by the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) on February 7, 2011, with a territorial area of 1636.6122 ha, which increased, in 2022, to 3020 hectares (Santos, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the quilombola identity permeates the need for struggles of its inhabitants to remain in their territories. As a result, Malcher (2011, p. 13) elucidates that, in order not to lose the rights to their lands, the inhabitants of these communities "had to declare themselves as black people and quilombolas", as a result of the applicability of article 68 of the Federal Constitution (FC) of 1988 (Brasil, 1988). It is undeniable that, through the 1988 Federal Constitution, quilombola communities were guaranteed the right to possession of their territories, "and the State should give the title to their lands to these people of this community, since this title was an achievement of social movements and black movements" (Lomba, 2014, p. 35).

Ribeiro (2014) states that the quilombola territory is a historical construction, in which the customs of the groups that live or cohabit there are kept, whose political and economic factors are part of their community experience. Thus, after the quilombola community of Icatu obtained the title of possession of their lands, its inhabitants began to receive various types of benefits, which were granted by the government, which were invaluable for the construction of the quilombola identity in this region. For the interviewee Domingos Flávio:

[...] Everyone understood the importance of being a starter, although not all of us had knowledge of what it would be, what benefits we would have. I wasn't sure about that, but after the title was issued, several benefits came here to the community, one of the biggest benefits that came was the construction of the housing complex (Domingos Flávio, 53 years old, teacher and resident of the quilombola community São José de Icatu).

In view of the statements of the people interviewed, it is notable that the post-titling period was marked by several transformations in the quilombola community of Icatu, which were invaluable in the social sphere. In the reports of Mr. Domingos Flávio, it is highlighted that the housing complex, at first, contemplated 50 families and, later, 100 families.

In these circumstances, the process of regularization of the quilombola territory is directly linked to the living conditions and, in particular, to the recognition of territorial occupation, to the extent that "this entire process of demarcation of the quilombola territory is seen through ethnic relations, which permeates the affective, cultural and economic bond of the community" (Ribeiro, 2014, p. 185).

It cannot be denied that it is through struggles and resistance that black men and women affirm their identity, are reborn from their oral traditions and make up the quilombola territory, since the guardians of memory are primordial keys to the transmission of material and social culture. In the view of Batista (2011), "it is from the culture that the community has its ancestral traditions that are told, that they strengthen their identity" (Batista, 2011, p. 24)

In this way, black and quilombola culture are evidenced by their religious acts, their healing practices within the community and by the coexistence of work, artisanal production and all the diversity that surround the quilombola cultural vestiges, acts evidenced in the São José de Icatu community through the speeches of its inhabitants and the different forms of work performed daily (Costa, 2017).

Pinto (1999) states that these memories "told among the residents are rooted through multiple layers of social experience, where this language of memory is passed on in

a way that comes to understand the real meaning of this cultural language" (Pinto, 1999, p. 220). Therefore, the memory of this population echoes within the community, since it is in daily coexistence that the old guardians of memory pass on their teachings to the young, knowledge that fluctuates among the residents so that they do not let them fall into oblivion.

LIVING CULTURE, AFFIRMATION OF QUILOMBOLA IDENTITY IN SÃO JOSÉ DE ICATU

When we talk about culture, we are referring to living in a group, to the way of dressing, to the production of knowledge, that is, "through the representations or imitations that are acquired within its territory, and that are passed on from generation to generation" (Marques, 2012, p. 35). The struggle for the maintenance of black and quilombola culture has to be present in the central debate of articulations and claims for the development of cultural conditions for the younger generations, thus determining both its form of presentation, "and its character that these movements have been developing in society" (Maurício, 2019, p. 10).

Within the quilombola community of Icatu, such cultural practices symbolize their riches and knowledge, acquired on a daily basis and inherited by their ancestors, since "all this knowledge has a peculiar characteristic, which is to preserve in the lives of these people who reside in this community all this knowledge that was kept in memory" (Miranda, 2017, p. 14).

In line with Silva (2012), it is through memory that we are able to understand all their forms of experiences historically constructed by the residents who live in their communities, since, through them, one has the opportunity to reconstitute evidence of the past that serve to imagine and have inspiration for the future.

We were able to have access, through the memory of the residents, to some games and cultural acts practiced in this community, which, currently, lose space to other cultural forms, which the young people develop, as narrated by Mr. José Rose Rodrigues, one of the guardians and stories and memories of Icatu:

[...] Culture has already had a lot of Samba de Cacete, it was night and day, ganzá, seresta, samba circle, there was a broom, now at this time of December, theater that today no longer has, circle play, which was in May. There were a lot of bonfires, processions of saints and other cultures that have already been here in the community (José Rose Rodrigues, 80 years old, resident of the São José de Icatu community).

The interviewee José Rose Rodrigues narrates, in rich detail, that, in his childhood, there were several types of play, which symbolized the culture of his people and still populate the memories of the older inhabitants of this community. Cultural practices, such as Samba de Cacete and community festivals, should not be seen as static or immutable. In the local reality, Samba de Cacete has evolved from a community practice to a cultural expression that is also used as a tool for resistance and identity affirmation in spaces outside the community.

Pinto (2013) argues that these manifestations are continuously resignified to meet the social and political demands of the communities. Samba de Cacete, for example, is intimately related to other aspects of the life of these territories of black origin, played to the sound of drums, while the songs sung portray stories of many of these villages, a space of freedom and resistance against racism and other oppressions that affect black peoples in the region of Tocantins and in Brazil (Pinto, 2013).

From Costa's (2017) perspective, Samba de Cacete, practiced within these communities, is a cultural manifestation of the people of the Amazon and Pará, preserved in the memories and experiences of the inhabitants of quilombola villages, and is currently part of the history of this people (Costa, 2017).

All this cultural knowledge, rooted in the community of Icatu, gives us the possibility of knowing and learning more and more from the knowledge that is related to the daily life of its inhabitants. From the perspective of Borges (2021), this knowledge, built within quilombola communities, is associated with their culture of hunting, fishing, forests and, mainly, the waters of the streams, since they all guaranteed the lives of their people. In such a way that, through this traditional knowledge, they are able to preserve their life in the face of nature (Borges, 2021).

With regard to cassava culture, it is a practice transmitted from father to son, being related to the cultural tradition of the festival of this community, passed on through conviviality and orality, whose main protagonists of this knowledge are the elders, guardians who store, in their memories, these facts, who teach young people, learn from them and show their knowledge in the art of making these productions (Borges, 2021).

In turn, the knowledge that agriculture represents within quilombola territories is mixed and intertwined with regional knowledge, acquired in the daily lives of these people "through conversation circles with the elders, in late afternoon chats with friends and, mainly, in meetings that are developed within the community" (Borges, 2021, p. 103).

In this sense, within this quilombola community, cultural characteristics and moments such as the "guests" or "mutirões", as it is called by the residents, are currently being lost, since they are no longer carried out as they used to be. In the speech of Mr. Ricardo de Jesus, another resident who is the guardian of stories and memories of Icatu, evidence emerges that the guest or collective effort refers to the cultural practice in which many people gathered to work in the "compañero's" swidden, a form of collective work and sharing of experiences, which are disappearing in the community, so much so that:

The question of the guest today is difficult, today they are getting together, making a joint effort, getting that group together to go to work to plant the swidden, and not to make a guest, not to see each other talking about a guest, and at that time I brought the guest, I gave 40, 50 people up to 60 people a day to plant a swidden, but it was a large swidden that put 8 to 10 tasks, the last swidden I put was 13 tasks (Ricardo de Jesus Silva, 83 years old, resident of the São José de Icatu community).

The task forces, in turn, reflect a dynamic of collective solidarity that, although altered by modernity, still preserves the spirit of union and sharing. According to Pinto (1999), "the work developed in the swidden requires a lot of physical effort, to make a swidden the rural worker needs the help of all his family and friends, in planting and mowing, not to mention the delay until the arrival of the harvest, of production" (Pinto, 1999, p. 103),. Therefore, the work of the collective effort ceases to be painful, individual and sacrificial, it becomes, in fact, collective and joyful, enriching the quilombola culture and identity, which has, in its genesis, the sharing of collective experiences, communion and re(ex)sistencies. In this vein, Amorim states:

In the *cunvidado*, the worker has restricted manual tools (hoe for digging and machete for cutting the stem of the maniva), but physical strength is essential, as all tasks are performed quickly. It is considered an efficient family organization, since the work techniques and tools are simple. The festive style that occurs before and during the harvest eases fatigue and the worker, in addition to feeling pleasure when seeing "a spurt", that is, a planted swidden feels like a member of the family group satisfied by the solidarity of the guests in carrying out a difficult and urgent task of the maniva swidden (Amorim *apud* Pinto, 2006, p. 291).

According to the residents of São José de Icatu, the joint efforts were widely practiced in this village, however, nowadays, they are not as common as in the past. This form of collective work, as narrated by Mr. Domingos Flávio, is still used to develop other activities:

The *mutirão* was an activity that was widely practiced in the past, but today not so much, but it is still done today, we don't use the term guest, we use the term *mutirão*, then there is a *mutirão* for mowing, there is a *mutirão* to cut down *coivara*, for

planting and for weeding and in some cases also use a mutirão to make flour when the person is, sometimes in need of help and invites someone or a few people to help you. (Domingos Flávio Lopes, 53 years old, community teacher and resident of São José de Icatu).

It can be seen, from the speech of the interviewee Domingos Flávio Lopes, that, although the task force happens once in a while among the inhabitants of the village, they still continue to gather people to do work on planting and cleaning the neighbors' fields on the occasion of illness or in other situations, which make it impossible for them to work. In addition, people gather in the task force to clean the public roads of Icatu, aiming to better conserve their transit and living spaces.

As Miranda (2019) analyzes, acts of cooperativity, such as those practiced in quilombola communities, to the present day, join forces through joint efforts to contribute to each other in the production of life. This is because it is through the collective efforts that the material production of life, in quilombola communities, is (re)constructed, as well as identity in the constant movement of oneself, for oneself, as a process of the formation of the economic-cultural class.

In view of this, the struggles of the quilombola population of the Tocantins region go far beyond the claim for the right to possess quilombola land, since the task force produces awareness of the need to organize, to fight for the rights of quilombola men and women, since:

The collective effort lives and (re)builds itself in the actions that unite it, by mobilizing to (re)build the shed, clean the terreiro for the saints' festivals, in the actions they carry out in favor of the struggle for rights, by mobilizing to dialogue with the municipal government. Thus, they resist in actions in the community carried out in favor of someone who is sick, when they go to do the services of the latter's swidden; they resist in attitudes, such as, due to death, they remain silent in a collective for many days, they respect the precept (Miranda, 2019, p. 147).

Therefore, "as they become aware of themselves, they realize, through the educational act of the collective efforts, that it is this that humanizes them, that is, it is not the estranged work, configured in slavery and in the various forms of the capitalist mode of production" (Miranda, 2019, p. 150).

The economy of Icatu revolves around cassava and black pepper agriculture, fishing and extractivism, both of which are activities that generate sustenance for the inhabitants of this village. Additionally, some people also receive benefits from the Federal Government, such as: Bolsa Família and defense insurance, which help with the family income of the

local population. Even so, the main economic source of this quilombola population comes from the production of flour and extractivism:

Here in the community there is the issue of cassava flour that we make and also extractivism such as nuts and wood. And other things that are also taken away, but that foster the issue of the economy and agriculture itself. And the sale of flour, corn, rice, and also the issue of fishing that receives a social resource, the Bolsa Família, all this already helps the local economy (Silvano Rose Nascimento, 52 years old, resident of the São José de Icatu community).

The narrative of the interviewee Silvano Rose Nascimento explains very well that the production of cassava flour is the main source of economy for the inhabitants of the village, whose work consists of planting the manioc swiddens and producing flour for consumption and selling the surplus, done within the village itself or in the cities of Mocajuba and Baião.

An aspect that thus strengthens family farming as a teaching-learning process, a strong characteristic of quilombola communities throughout Brazil, through which knowledge is mixed with the knowledge that people acquire through conversation circles, along the path of the fields, through the rivers and streams among the residents, who dialogue on the way through the forest in which the children participate, the young, the adult and the elderly. Everyone is attentive to capture as much information as possible for their teaching about the history of their people (Silva, 2012).

When analyzing the production of flour in the region, Borges (2021, p. 92) states that the "work of cassava flour is a practice that has been transmitted from father to son, and that is part of the cultural tradition, as this moment is where families and neighbors come together to develop the practice of flour production" (Borges, 2021, p. 92).

Therefore, every effort to make flour requires collective work from people, which goes beyond the boundaries of other forms of work, as it "generates an act of friendship that can be extended in daily coexistence with neighbors, in the oven house, where cassava flour is produced" (Santos, 2019, p. 2019). This is because, even before the production of cassava flour, the land, which produces the raw material, the cassava root, goes through the process of conservation, cleaning the land and resting the soil until the moment of planting.

In this context, Ribeiro (2014, p. 138) asserts that this entire process of cassava flour production takes place in small areas, whose "management and preparation of the land is done together with the families and neighbors of the community, using some instruments

such as a hoe, sickle and machete to clean the place where the product will be planted" (Ribeiro, 2014, p. 138).

Life in quilombola communities can be configured as a social example, qualitatively different from the Eurocentric mode, since several cultural elements converge that express a different way of living. Therefore, it is in the historical construction of these territories that many types of knowledge are anchored in various aspects of African cultures, it is this knowledge that makes up a way of life different from the European one, which has not died with the violence that affects these territories and the bodies present in them over the centuries (Pinto, 2007).

Thus, the diversity of experiences and memories contributed to the consolidation of a plural quilombola identity, which dialogues with issues of class, gender and ethnicity. Thus, the historical formation of the quilombo must be understood as a process in constant reinvention, marked by the articulation between resistance, memory and political struggle.

In São José de Icatu, culture is also worked on by music, art, and the June gangs, these are some ways for young people to identify themselves as black people, as stated by Mr. Domingos Flávio, a resident of the community: "it is important to self-affirm, self-declare, self-identify. And it's one of the ways we identify ourselves through music." Santos (2019, p. 25) points out that preserving black and "quilombola culture is keeping alive our history, which for many years was silenced, a consequence of the slavery that punished our people" (Santos, 2019, p. 25). In this context, with the formation of the quilombos, the escaped blacks began to experience the freedom to live their customs, religiosities and cultural practices, to relive their histories of resistance.

The song sung by the residents of the São José de Icatu community is one of the symbols of their identity, whose lyrics bring the struggles and resistance that the black people faced during the slavery process, which symbolize the historical recognition of the steps taken by their ancestors when they occupied this territory. Professor Domingos Flávio points out that it is through these songs that, today, young people self-affirm their identity, in which music is like an instrument of recognition of their experience, as exemplified in the excerpt from the lyrics of the song "Eu sou Quilombola":

[...] I, my quilombo father, I am also a quilombola, my struggle is every day and every hour, hey, my quilombo father, they say that Zumbi died, Zumbi is alive in which he fights like me, quilombo are blacks in a great Union, fighting with strength against discrimination (Excerpt from the lyrics of the song "Eu sou Quilombola", by unknown author).

Domingos Flávio says that this music can be worked both at school and within cultural groups. In his conception, it represents the struggle and resistance that his people had against any type of discrimination. In this perspective, the process of reconstruction of black identity, according to Professor Rivaldo Santos (2019), has been "constituted over time based on the daily life of these people and that today they have been fighting in different ways against the discrimination that young people go through in the social environment" (Santos, 2019, p. 39).

In the struggle for self-affirmation, there are two cultural groups that work on issues related to the valorization and affirmation of black identity with residents, through music and dances, especially in the organization of Samba de Cacete rounds. The first is the group "Cultura Viva" and the other "Os Followers de Zumbi", led by teachers Domingos Flávio and Rivaldo Dias, who recruit the youngest from this community with the aim of strengthening the local culture and keeping it alive, revering ancestral knowledge from the vigor of the new generations.

Since, in quilombola communities, culture is part of the historical reconstruction of its inhabitants, this process, as Cardoso (1977) assures, "opens the way for a historical investigation of the community and this often results in obstacles and problems to be contemplated by the residents" (Cardoso, 1977, p. 221).

In this way, preserving the local culture is an act to keep alive the memory and history of their ancestors, which, for a long time, were silenced, for which, currently, young people have the mission of continuing this process of reconstruction of black identity. In view of this, the young Andrey, a resident of Icatu, emphasizes that "if we let our history die, who will tell our deeds?", showing that his generation and the next ones are committed to caring for their identity practices. In addition, the cultural groups in their community contribute to this process, given that:

I participate in the group cultura viva, we play the Samba de Cacete cultural, the stamp we work a lot with young people, our goal is to maintain, basically, Cultura Viva, we don't let culture die, if we let it, who will sustain it? (Andrey, resident of the São José de Icatu community).

Therefore, culture is an important milestone to affirm the identity of the quilombola population, as it is configured as a place of speech and body expression for people who live in traditional communities, such as São José de Icatu. Through these cultural movements, young people fight in situations of power relations, such as in the struggles "for the

demarcation of quilombola territory and for confronting various forms of subjection and dehumanization that their people are subject to in society" (Costa, 2017, p. 94).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to understand how quilombola identity is perceived and experienced by the inhabitants of the São José de Icatu community, addressing their cultural practices, collective memories and the struggle for territorial recognition. Evidencing the process of black slavery and its occurrence in the Amazon, especially in the lower Tocantins region, in Pará, offering evidence of the historicity of the problems that the communities originating from the former nuclei of black resistance face to the present day. The results indicate that the historical memory of the community is deeply intertwined with the narratives of resistance and the central role played by black movements in the construction of this identity.

Oral history was essential to capture the experiences and memories of the elders, highlighting its function as a political and cultural instrument. Verena (2004) emphasizes that oral history not only recovers silenced narratives, but inserts them in a dynamic of active resistance against historical erasures. From the reports, it was found that the territorial recognition formalized by the Palmares Cultural Foundation, through process No. 01420.009023/2010-81, is an achievement that reflects decades of struggle and organization of the community. Such recognition reaffirms the territory as a symbolic and material space, where identity and belonging are articulated (Gomes, 2002).

In addition, cultural practices, such as Samba de Cacete and collective efforts, revealed themselves not only as elements of continuity of tradition, but also as forms of resistance and resignification. These practices connect African ancestry to contemporary dynamics, allowing younger generations to identify with and continue the historical-cultural legacy. Culture, in this context, is a space of struggle, memory and transmission of values that strengthen the collectivity (Pinto, 2013).

Another central point is the role of the black movement in the articulation of the quilombola struggle. For Mattos and Abreu (2016), these associative networks are crucial to give visibility to the demands of communities and establish dialogues with public policies. In the case of São José de Icatu, the partnership between the local quilombola association and social movements resulted not only in legal advances, such as land titling, but also in a cultural mobilization that reaffirms collective memory as an instrument of resistance.

It was observed that the youth of this community has increasingly assumed the responsibility of carrying forward the culture of their people. Currently, these young people leave their community to present their culture in other locations in the region, making it possible to strengthen the cultural ties inherited from their ancestors. Showing that quilombola identity is not static, but built from the relationships between memory, territory and culture.

This study contributes to the debate on the relationship between memory, identity, and territorial struggle in quilombola communities, reaffirming the importance of listening to the voices of these populations and valuing their contributions to Brazilian history and culture. There is still much to be explored, especially with regard to the relationship between the construction of effective public policies and the continuity of the quilombola memory and culture of Icatu, which presents itself as a living example that resistance and identity are inseparable forces in the struggle for recognition and historical justice.

Finally, according to the analyses of Mariléa de Almeida (2022), quilombola communities are dynamic spaces of reinvention and resistance, where the past is constantly reinterpreted to respond to the challenges of the present. It thus becomes noticeable that, in the case of the quilombola village São José de Icatu, its population descends from an ancestry that undertook many struggles and resistances during the slavery process, taking possession of land in Mocajuba, in the region of Tocantins. A territory where the quilombola identity is worked on daily with young people by social movements, and its inhabitants develop inside and outside their territory. Playing a key role in the process of resistance, by appropriating cultural narratives and practices to keep the legacy of their ancestors alive.

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