

AFRO-BAHIAN RELIGIOUS IMAGERY: THE JARÊ OF LENÇÓIS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,
PERFORMANCES AND RITUALS

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The photographs in this essay were taken as part of the research of the project “Memória das cantigas do jarê”, made with Aldir Blanc Law’s financial support. I was invited by the president of the Associação dos Filhos de Santo do Palácio de Ogum e Caboclo Sete Serra to collaborate on a project funded by the law’s aid. The municipality of Lençóis was unable to transfer this funding, so in order to help the jarê’s religious leaders to access this support it was necessary to draw on state funding from the Bahia Secretariat of Culture.

Thus, we developed this digital archive of religious songs aiming at preserving them and also at valuing these leaders and their terreiros. The municipality, whose economy is based on tourism, has suffered from the beginning of the pandemic with resources shortages, which affected even the income of people not directly related to the local tourism. As a result, since 2020 there has been a migration to the “roças”, small rural properties far from the urban center of Lençóis, where the cultivation of cassava, corn, string beans and chickens, as well as fishing in the Marimbus wetland and its tributaries, provides the staple foods.

The local spiritual communities have suffered severe losses. Daso, also known as Pai Gil de Ogum, passed away during the course of research. His terreiro is one of the most actives in the region and has inducted more filhos de santo than any other. Daso’s departure was felt throughout the city. Another Pai de Santo confessed to me that “some fundamentals that only he knew are going with him”. Milton, known as Cachacinha, a



famous filho de santo of Pai Gil de Ogum, and Alfredo Alcântara, a member of the church and one of those responsible for organizing the festival of Senhor Bom Jesus dos Passos¹ have also died during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Nine leaders were interviewed and photographed in their terreiros between February and March 2021. The digital archive has more than four hundred songs in audio and transcripts, as well as biographies of the leaders, photographs and a brief history of jarê. During the interviews we had the privilege to photograph the leaders and particular details of their terreiros and pejis. These elements were carefully selected to compose the opening collage of the site².

For this essay, we chose photos that praise the religious leaders of Lençóis, revealing their care and dedication in the decorations of each of the Pejis. These photos also bring out elements of the aesthetics typical to jarê, its colours and the typical clothing of this religion.

1. Popular Catholicism and Jarê are not opposed. Daso was a devotee of Senhor dos Passos and fulfilled his obligations during the festivity: he carried the patron of the miners and took part in the washing of the church's stairs.
2. www.cantigasdojare.com.br



FOTO 1
Ensaio dedicado à memória de Pai Gil de Ogum, liderança religiosa do jarê e curador, falecido neste ano em decorrência da pandemia de Covid-19.



FOTO 2
Peji de Pai Gil de
Ogum



FOTO 3
quarto destinado
a receber filhos de
santo em processo
de iniciação ou
aqueles que
buscam o terreiro
para curar as mais



FOTO 4
Pai Gil de Ogum mostra sua mesa de jogo, é no processo divinatório e por meio dos caboclos guias que se revela a natureza e a causa da doença.



FOTO 5
Mesa de jogo



FOTO 6
Guias. Pai Gil teve muitos conhecimentos transmitidos de seus antepassados: de um lado da família sua avó era indígena e seu avô rezava animais. O seu outro avô era o curandeiro Justo Canela. Assim, quando a mãe de Pai Gil se torna evangélica e se desfaz das imagens e atabaques na beira do rio, Gil as recupera e passa a cuidá-las no quintal de casa, continuando os festejos de Cosme e Damião e até rezando algumas pessoas.



FOTO 7
Gildásio Batista de Oliveira é conhecido na cidade por Daso, mas no jarê é chamado de Pai Gil.



FOTO 8

Daso é também devoto do Senhor dos Passos e por 34 anos carregou o andor durante a festa do padroeiro dos garimpeiros de Lençóis. Sua mãe fez uma promessa ao Senhor dos Passos para que ele sobrevivesse à febre tifoide. Soma-se à promessa da mãe a sua própria promessa: quando foi graduado para ser Pai de Santo, Daso pediu ao Senhor dos Passos para conseguir fazer o próprio terreiro. Desde então lavava as escadarias junto com as baianas na abertura da novena.

KEYWORDS

Afro-brazilian
religion; Jarê;
Chapada
Diamantina; Law
Aldir Blanc; Ditty.

ABSTRACT

This photographic essay was carried out in the context of the project “Memória das Cantigas do Jarê”, a website created between January and April 2021. The photographs present the main religious leaders of jarê from Lençóis, Bahia, and their Pejjs.

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