

The Feast of the Divine Holy Spirit and the Sacralization of Spatiality in Manicoré-AM / Brazil

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Abstract— *The purpose of this article is to study the spatiality of the Divine Holy Spirit Festival in Manicoré/Amazonas through the symbologies of the festival and the devotees' spatial relationships with the place. In this way, the aim is to understand the affective relationships, the diversity of perceptions gauged and present significant points, addressing the relationship of the subjects in their living space. From a phenomenological perspective based on Relph (1978), the study was carried out through fieldwork and interviews, which formed part of the research methodology. Thus, the Divine Holy Spirit Festival can be understood as more than just a festival, but as resistance to the popular tradition that holds it, a sense of the sacred and of life itself.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Amazon is constantly represented by an imaginary of dense forest and historically exploited by the stereotype of "exotic", but its characterization cannot be restricted to this imaginary, leaving aside ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity.

From this perspective, human geography, in characterizing place as an experience, is similar to what phenomenologists attribute to the concept of the world, which would be the set of subjective experiences of the subjects, the essence, that is, "that which first appears to consciousness" (Neto, 2009, p.112).

In this context, the aim of this text is to study the spatiality of the Divine Holy Spirit festival in the municipality of Manicoré, in the state of Amazonas, in the northern region of Brazil, the Amazon (Fig. 1). It seeks to interpret the symbolic meanings of the festival and its importance for the devotees and the relationships of the subjects in their living space.

When the Folia do Divino Espírito Santo takes place, as a cultural manifestation, the resistance of the popular

tradition that holds it, the sense of the sacred and of life itself are also present.



Fig. 1: Location of the Community of Divino Espírito Santo Municipality of Manicoré/AM

Source: Google Maps satellite image, 2023.

II. METHODOLOGY

The work was based on a qualitative, bibliographical approach and field research. The method used was Relph's (1978) phenomenological method. This method allowed

the research to transcend objective analysis, making it possible for the research subjects to participate with their perceptions and experiences. This method has currently been used in geographical science as a way of understanding social, cultural and other phenomena whose analysis is subjective and phenomenologically based.

In this research, the method allowed us to participate in the moments relating to the festival of the divine, with a phenomenological look at space and symbolism, listening to people and their narratives as part of the research, considering the lived world.

The methodology was based on fieldwork that took place in July 2022 and July 2023, when the festival took place, where it was possible to apply the techniques of conversation circles, interviews, questionnaires, recordings and photographs.

The fieldwork took place by river, using a recreational boat that runs weekly between the municipalities of Porto Velho, Rondônia, and Manicoré, Amazonas. It was a quiet trip, lasting two days, and it was possible to appreciate the diversity of the Madeira River landscape, as well as the riverside communities that live on its banks.

III. THEORETICAL REFERENCE

The celebration of the Divine Holy Spirit takes place in different places and each location presents new realities, symbolologies and rituals. Each festival has its own identity and specificities spread over time and space, but they all have a common basis: popular resistance in the face of a contradictory and unequal reality.

The tributes to the Divine Holy Spirit, in a general context, were introduced to Brazil during the process of Portuguese colonization, establishing popular ties, with a strong influence from the Catholic religion and its festivities. Along with Portuguese colonization came contributions from other ethnic groups such as the first indigenous inhabitants and Africans.

In some places, more recently, and in others with greater antiquity and not necessarily in a continuous way, the Feast of the Holy Spirit remains a tradition, not only in Portugal (Tomar, Soure, Azores, Madeira, for example) but also in other territories of Portuguese domination and colonization, which is the case in Brazil, in addition to those localities that went through the Azorean immigration process (Mariano, 2020, p 58).

In the Brazilian tradition, the Divine Holy Spirit festivities take place in an annual cycle, which escapes the logic of modern reproduction, and strengthens the bonds of affection, emotion and faith, not only among the organizing revelers, but the expansion of the sacred that

involves everyone who participates and interacts. In this context, we understand sacred space based on Rosendahl:

Sacred space as a field of forces and values that elevates the religious man above himself, that transports him to a different environment from the one in which his existence takes place. [...] it is the result of a manifestation of the sacred, revealed by a spatially defined hierophany (2002, p.81).

Within this context, the space of the sacred is understood as the representation and symbolic appropriation of a defined territory, its materiality being a network of human relationships much more associated with the faith employed in the symbols and rituals of the festival than with the materialism used to bring the festival to life.

Relph (2014) explains that the concept of place emerged as a concern for study in geography in a period called the "spatial turn", due to the epistemological changes that occurred in geography because of its past dedicated to describing and mapping the diversity of places on Earth, due to colonization from the Greeks and Romans to the Europeans. Place in geography, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, became an alternative to the flattening of the discipline, justified by the authority of philosophers of science. Relph considers that place is the phenomenon of experience, which would make understanding this experience more assertive if it were explained by the approach developed by Husserl and Heidegger, which underpinned the work of Yi-Fu Tuan, David Seamon, Anner Buttmer, Relph himself and others. So this perspective came to be called humanist geography (Relph, 2014).

By the 1990s, interest in the study of place was restricted to humanistic geography and some strands of environmental psychology and architecture, and according to Relph, it was a small field of study. However, the study of place emerged in an "intellectual movement that sought to move away from the universalist propositions of modern thought and design towards postmodernism and the celebration of difference, whether racial, sexual, political or architectural" (Relph, 2014, p. 20). And in this context, the study of place has become an interest of various disciplines.

Geography as a study of place refers to particular observations in order to understand the ways in which human beings relate to the world. For Relph, this is presented as aspects of place and among the aspects listed by Relph we highlight spirit of place, which refers to "an idea that derives from the belief that certain places were occupied by gods or spirits whose supernatural qualities were evident in the setting" (Relph, 2014, p.23).

Nowadays, the term "spirit of place" refers to places that have a very strong identity. Relph believes that all places have their own physiognomy, but the spirit of place is characteristic of exceptional places.

Based on these fundamental concepts, we reflect on how the religious celebration of the Divine Holy Spirit is apprehended in the context and experiences of Amazonian riverside communities, with the meanings and attitudes that ordinary people build about the space and environment in which they live and the relationship that permeates the sacralization of the space lived during the days of celebration.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Brazilian Amazon has a cultural wealth that has been suppressed by historically constituted disputes. Furthermore, this region is constantly associated with its fauna and flora, and is recognized as one of the most outstanding regions in terms of biodiversity. However, these narratives presuppose the region as an infinite and available source of natural wealth to meet economic needs in a geopolitical context of the international market, making the existence and experiences of local populations unfeasible. Following this perspective, Tuan:

A large region, such as the nation-state, is beyond the direct experience of most people, but it can be transformed into a place - a location of passionate loyalty - through the symbolic medium of art, education and politics" (Tuan, 1995, p. 149).

The Festejo do Divino Espírito Santo, in the municipality of Manicoré, Amazonas, presented in this text, has its spatiality in the countryside and in the city. Through field research and bibliographical research, aspects of place and sacredness are highlighted, as well as the relationship of belonging and collectivity in the riverside communities of Manicoré, especially Barreira and Igarapezinho.

Barreira de Manicoré/AM, started the festival far from the current region, in Alto Madeira, Lake Acará in the 1940s, through Mr. Antônio Procópio and Mrs. Luiza, residents of the place, who made a promise to benefit the health of their son, a six-year-old boy at the time, who was shot in the leg.

As it was a community far from the municipality's headquarters and with few economic resources at the time, the parents committed themselves to holding prayers and get-togethers in honor of the Divine Holy Spirit if the child was cured, and so they did. When the boy turned 15, the couple brought him to be baptized in the city of Manicoré, and when they got to know the place called Barreira de

Manicoré, they felt welcomed and decided to live in the community. With them also came the tradition of devotion to the Divine Holy Spirit for the community.

"The Divine is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. He is God himself, king of the universe. There are several people who accompany the festival and form the committee: we have the Mantenedor, the Cacheiros, the Judges and the Foliões. We have those responsible for the litany (prayer sung in Latin), the box of the Divine (zabumba), the Andor, the Mast and the flags, a tradition that has continued since the time when the Divine traveled in procession in small Igarités (canoes) in the communities".

An account given in a conversation with Deacon José da Silva Carneiro, a resident of the city of Manicoré and a regular devotee of the Divine festival in the community.

After the accident, the family, who had recently arrived in the community, began to hold two (02) days of festivities every year in their own home, in honor of the Divine Holy Spirit, with the praying of the litany (in Latin) and a grand banquet, where all the families who lived there were invited to take part. At one of the festivals, the town's priest was invited to take part and suggested that the residents build a chapel so that the community could come together to pray. Gardin expresses this relationship of sacralization of space as:

The land, in turn, was given a sacred meaning, in other words, it was blessed and recognized first and foremost by the Church, in a presence that was felt in every nook and cranny. As the sacralization of the land preceded the other acts of administration, the names given to places of agglomeration were always preceded by the name of the saint who protected each place (1999, p. 120).



Fig. 02 and 03: Chapel of the Divine in the community of Barreira de Manicoré

Source: Manicoré Barrier Community Secretariat, 2022

Describing the feelings involved in a community's devotion to the Divine, using phenomenology, helps us to understand how the faithful construct and (re)construct symbolic spaces. The history of the festival in both the Barreira community and the Igarapezinho community was made possible through documents and interviews with members and devotees, in which participation was fundamental. The importance of recording part of this history in detail is highlighted in the words of one interviewee:

"The Divine Holy Spirit of the city is the main Divine Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity. The Divine Holy Spirit of Barreira, on the other hand, is the Divine Holy Spirit of the innocent. We need to recover the history... it's a tradition that if you don't build up these documents will be lost, the old people will die and so will we, and then our generation, what will they answer?"

In the Old Testament of the Catholic Bible, the figure of the dove appears as a symbol of God's peace and forgiveness, when Noah releases the dove into the sky and returns to the ark carrying an olive branch. In the New Testament of the Catholic Bible, the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove at the Baptism of Jesus. The halo of three rays on his head signifies that the Holy Spirit is part of the Holy Trinity. And in the passage of Jesus' baptism quoted by John the Baptist, we have the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit revealing themselves as Trinity to humanity.



Fig 04: Scaffold with the image of the Dove for the festive procession.

Source: Field research collection in 2023

Regarding the post-coronavirus pandemic festivities (COVID-19), teachers Angelita Ferreira and Angelica Ferreira, daughters of one of the founding couples of the Barreira community, Mr. Pedro Ferreira and Mrs.

Raimunda Cabral, told us in an interview about the satisfaction and commitment of the whole family in participating in the festivities since they were organized, even though they no longer live in the community.

"Devotion to the Divine has been passed down to us since childhood, it's the heritage our parents left us and it's a joy to be able to take part in every detail of the festival with the whole family."

Still on the subject of this year's festival, Mrs. Antônia do Socorro Ferreira told us how thrilled she was to return to the community for the four (04) days of the festival, having been suspended for two years due to Covid-19.

"On the last day of the festival, the coordinators organized a procession to the home of Jaime Cunha, a former resident who recently lost his sight and was unable to attend the festival, a tradition he had always kept over the years. At that moment, everyone was moved by the prayers and his words of thanks".

According to Claval (1999, p. 115) "Sharing the same religious or metaphysical beliefs and taking part in the same rites that bring believers together constitute very solid social foundations".

The festival involves the entire local population and nearby communities, with rites performed in the churches, as well as itinerant events, where the devotees' homes are visited. The itinerants are welcomed into the homes, in a relationship of welcome and belonging with great spiritual and cultural significance. The families who are visited make all the preparations, such as the logistics of sleeping, guarding the ark of the divine, food for the members of the organization and visitors, and the celebratory service. The family sees itself as having received a visit from the divine.



Fig 05: Committee decorating the altar for the celebration of Holy Mass

Source: Manicoré Barrier Community Secretariat, 2022

The days of the festivities begin with the procession at around 6:00 p.m. At this time, it is possible to see a large movement of people, pick-up trucks with people in the back of the vehicle, which is a common practice during the festivities. The procession ends at the church, where it begins with praises, a festive Mass and then the auction of gifts and food to raise funds.



Fig.6: Gifts (roast chickens) for the Auction

Source: Manicoré Barrier Community Secretariat, 2023

In the procession it is possible to arrive and take part, the welcome is widespread, and this moment also represents reunions between distant family members and friends, in which emotional ties and a sense of community are strengthened, everyone knows and recognizes each other.

It is important to emphasize that the relationships involving the populations of this region are left out of the analysis, mainly because natural resources play a leading role and there is an obligation, even if utopian, to save the planet. Another question could be raised about "non-places", which could be those where there is no understanding of their meanings for various reasons such as ruptures, construction and the "excesses" of super modernity or globalization. Even with the "standardization" imposed by postmodernity, there are characteristics of existence, of being-in-the-world that are independent of a superstructure, because, although they are influenced, they don't have the "power" to dissolve sensations (Tuan, 1980).

Human places vary greatly in size. An armchair by the fireplace is a place, but so is a nation-state. Small places can be known through direct experience, including the intimate sense of smell and touch. A large region, such as a nation-state, is beyond the direct experience of most people, but can be transformed into a place - a location of

passionate loyalty - through the symbolic medium of art, education and politics (Tuan, 1995, p. 149).

In this way, Tuan does not refer to the static nature of space, but aims to highlight the materialization of experiences in their dynamics, something common in the subject's relationships. From this perspective, place is the "fixed" point of the common meeting of different experiences, in other words, "experience" as the foundation for the constitution of "identity" for that group. Experience means the ability to learn from one's own experience. And in this process, thought and feeling are involved as elements of their modification and insertion into the world (Tuan, 1983).

The festivities in honor of the Divine Holy Spirit in the Igarapezinho community began with the family of Mr. Eugênio Rodrigues Pinheiro and Mrs. Maria Rodrigues Pinheiro, who prayed the litany in their own home and who, from 1938 onwards, began the religious walk in honor of the Divine with the participation of the community.

After a few years, Mr. Agnaldo Ramos Ferreira was chosen as the community's president and began building a little wooden chapel covered in straw to be used for the community's festivities. However, in 1961, the chapel caught fire, so the community got together again to build a new chapel. In 1970, they began their evangelization journey, which consisted of visiting nearby communities.



Fig 07: Chapel of the Divine in the community of Igarapezinho – Manicoré

Source: Field research collection in 2023

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In 2001, the Divine Holy Spirit commission was set up, responsible for visiting families in the municipality and the pilgrimage culminates in the celebration of the feast of

Pentecost and precedes the four nights of festivities of the Divine Feast in the community



Fig 08: Commission of the Divine Holy Spirit, responsible for visiting families in the town center

Source: Field research collection in 2023

In an interview, Celia Belolo, a community member from Igarapezinho, told us how they created the history of the community's Divine Feast and the tradition of sharing food on feast days, especially during the pilgrimage of the image of the Divine to visit homes.

"I went to Mr. Quintino's house, to other people's houses, Aunt Raimunda passed by and then we were able to gather the information and that history was made... because when people ask us... right now at the Manicoré quadrilha festival [Folkloric Festival of Quadrilhas in Manicoré-AM] there are going to be two groups with the theme of the Divine, which is Manicorezinho and Santa Luzia... so it's a tradition that if you don't build up these documents we're going to lose."

About the itinerary of visits of the image of the divine to the houses, she says:

"In Manicoré they visit all the neighborhoods... here people prepare from one year to the next, they kill pigs, because it's a lot of people so in the house where the revelers [people who take part in the festival] sleep there are a lot of people... and so it's that joy of people preparing that food.... once a priest came and said 'I think you're doing the wrong thing by giving the food, you're giving the money' and we said 'Father, we're happy to give the food'.... because we see them when they leave (for the pilgrimage) ... during the morning they go about their business and in the afternoon they visit... and it's such a fervent tradition that out of 200 families here in the community only 1 doesn't take part".

In this account we can see the confluence between the community and the sacredness of the space, presenting another aspect of the place, the sense of home and belonging "where the roots are deeper and stronger, where one knows and is known by others, where one belongs" (Relph, 2014, p. 24).

Still on the importance of the Divine festivities for the municipality of Manicoré, Kartegiane Moraes, presenter of the folkloric group Juventude da Roça, said in an interview with the Secretariat of Culture and Tourism - SEMCULT - that the theme of their Junina 2023 was, "all the devotees of the Divine Holy Spirit are being honored, the expectation strengthens us, to speak of the Divine in an authentic way for us will be to portray the community of Igarapezinho, and I'm sure that this will be the differential in the presentation".



Fig 09: Juventude da Roça folklore group with the theme "Divino - Devotion, Culture and Tradition".

Source: Municipal Department of Culture and Tourism - SEMCULT 2023

The Festa endures, in a symbolic space, with greater intensity in the days of the annual cycle, but it is also present in everyday life, whether in the waiting or in the preparations. This is a character that represents a break from everyday life to pay attention to the potential of one and all, under the essence of spirituality and, above all, faith.

V. CONCLUSION

In this text, it was possible, through the science of geography with a humanistic bias, to understand how cultural and religious manifestations present an aspect of

the sacredness of lived space. Thus, we reflected on the way in which the relationship between people, space and religion presents aspects that bring a greater understanding of the connection between people's spirituality and the changes caused in their geographical space (Costa, 2017).

The Festival is a get-together in which everyone plays an important role, so all the rules and systems of the Festival of the Divine are in tune with something inexplicable and superior, and which contradicts all the rational logic of the modern world. It is important to maintain the traditional manifestations and pass on the organizations to future generations. And so, through annual repetition, tradition is built into a new territoriality.

Therefore, based on fieldwork with the support of phenomenology, we understand that even though it is immersed in Catholicism, it expresses African and indigenous ancestry through various elements of the festival, constituting a unique spatiality, which makes the festival a link to the sacredness of space and the strengthening of interpersonal and community relations, in the dissemination of religiosity, culture, memory and the temporality of Amazonian populations.

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