



INFLUENCE OF AFRICAN CULTURE ON THE CUSTOMS OF BRAZIL: AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the emergence of Afro-Brazilian culture and its development throughout history. The goal is to show who was responsible for bringing this culture to Brazil, as well as show the development of this culture in what refers to dance, music and cuisine/culinary. To acquire such information, it is necessary to search different sources, thus, this work discusses some historical events from the beginning of the Afro-Brazilian culture until its adoption by Brazilian people. The study explains the emergence of the Afro-Brazilian culture and the different aspects of this culture are pointed out, aspects that shaped the Afro-Brazilian culture that we know today in Brazil. We conclude that this culture has further enriched the different customs in the different Brazilian states.

KEYWORDS: Slavery. Culture. Black People. Afro-Brazilian.

INTRODUCTION

Through the analysis of several texts, this paper intends to discuss how slavery originated in Brazil and how it influenced the different cultures we have today. For this, an analysis is necessary in the most different theoretical references, which will make it possible to obtain information, highlighting the main reason that led the Portuguese people (from Portugal) to bring black slaves into Brazil. Of course, in addition, we must analyze the different cultures brought by the African people, to understand how important they were to build the Brazilian culture. The main focus is the Afro-Brazilian culture, coming from a union between African culture and Brazilian culture. Understanding this culture is important for all citizens living in society.

Also, several authors of bibliographical works have been concerned with reliably raising this historical information and, thus, contributed their ideas to the elaboration of this paper. Among them, it is important to mention Mattos (2007), Silva (2010) and many others who, in some way, provided accurate information that will be discussed here.

The research texts studied reveal that the development of Afro-Brazilian culture throughout history needs to be considered seriously. Several contributions from the African culture were implemented, always nourishing and enriching the traces of Afro-Brazilian culture that we know today. Since everything has its beginning, it will be explained in a clear way the coming of black people to Brazil, because they are the main characters of this history full of struggles and conquests.

Analyzing and understanding the different cultures that surround our country is fundamental, it is the duty of every citizen living in society to be aware of this information. We must also be attentive to the studies of Afro-Brazilian culture in order to understand the origins of the customs, dances and celebrations that were and still

are today.

The history of Afro-Brazilian culture is full of remarkable events; analyzing it and understanding it is one of the main focuses of this article. The fact that this work is directed to Afro-Brazilian cultural aspects explains why such events cannot be excluded from studies on cultural diversity. Understanding diversity is what will make us, Brazilian citizens, able to live with all individuals, regardless of color, gender or speech. The information of this work will contribute a lot to the formation of conscious citizens who are able to accept diversity and the different types of culture that surround it. However, talking about the historical events that marked the emergence of Afro-Brazilian culture is important for the various areas of knowledge and for all professionals who intend to work in the field of education.

1. ORIGIN OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURE

The development of culture is extremely important. It is responsible for building values and for the diversity of customs that exist within society. Several authors of different works help us understand the importance of many cultures, especially those brought by black people in the period of slavery. The mixture of African culture with Brazilian culture originated the Afro-Brazilian culture, marked by many remarkable historical events that contributed to its creation in Brazilian territory.

Understanding these events will help us understand the value of this culture today. Thus, the text *Educação e raça: Perspectivas políticas, pedagógicas e estéticas (2010) (Education and race: Political, pedagogical and aesthetic perspective)*, helps us to understand that:

Afro-Brazilian studies [...] belong to the scope of the African World Studies, which include dissemination and production of knowledge of African roots, directly linked to the African continent and the Diaspora, in their diversity

of territories and contexts. In Brazil, Studies in the African World, in its branch Afro-Brazilian Studies have taken more breath in the last 10 years. (SILVA, 2010, p.37) (Our translation from Portuguese).

As noted in scientific works, the study of Afro-Brazilian culture has evolved a lot in recent years. This explains why this culture is developing and gaining space in the various Brazilian states. Understanding and analyzing it is not only a way of gaining knowledge, but rather a way of following the cultural developments of our country. For this reason, it is necessary to understand that the Afro-Brazilian culture is considered by the set of cultural manifestations of Brazil that suffered some degrees of influence of the African culture from the times of Brazil colony until the present time.

The culture of Africa arrived in Brazil, for the most part, brought by black slaves at the time of the transatlantic slave trade. Black people were brought to Brazil by the Portuguese to carry out slave labor in the great plantations, e.g., the arrival of black people in Brazil reduced the labor expenses. Mattos (2007, 64) explains this in his work *História e Cultura Afro-brasileira* (Afro-Brazilian History and Culture), when he states that "at first the native inhabitant, that is, the Indigenous people, was chosen for this purpose, but was soon replaced by black slaves, becoming one of the arms of this colonial enterprise." (Our translation from Portuguese).

This information shows how the African culture brought by the slaves suffered great influences from European (mainly Portuguese) culture as well as from indigenous culture, so that characteristics of African origin in Brazilian culture are generally mixed with other cultural references.

Strong traits of African culture can be found today in various aspects of Brazilian culture, such as popular music, religion, cuisine, folklore and popular festivities. The bibliographic works that will be cited here help us to understand this.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURE

Nowadays, the Brazilian territory concentrates a really large African population. Because of this, the culture originating from these people exerts a strong influence in our country, gaining prominence in different states. However, beforetime, this was different.

Going back a bit in history, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the customs, cultural manifestations and rituals performed by Africans were totally forbidden in Brazil. It is a sad story, but the African rituals performed at that time were considered outdated cultural expressions that should cease to exist.

The changes began to occur in the twentieth century, when the customs of black people became accepted, gaining space in Brazil. Most of the manifestations, customs and rituals performed by black people began, then, interconnecting with the Brazilian culture. Thus, such customs brought by them became to be considered expressions not essentially African, but genuinely

Afro-Brazilian arts.

Nowadays, Afro-Brazilian culture disseminated a lot that it began to be taught in educational institutions, thanks a Brazilian Law from year 2003, "which made it mandatory to teach African history and Afro-Brazilian and indigenous cultures in public and private schools of basic education" (GOMES, OLIVEIRA and SOUZA, 2010, p.57). The culture of black people stood out with capoeira, dance, music, cuisine/culinary, among others.

2.1 MUSIC AND DANCE

When we analyze music and dance in Brazil, we will be impressed by many African cultural aspects that permeate it. A great example of this is Samba, a great musical style of great consideration and main responsible for making fun at carnival(carnaval)parties and many others. Besides that, there is also Lundu, considered an important musical style. Mattos (2007, p. 180) discusses these musical styles, stating that

Lundu and Samba were marked by introduction of the palms and the movement of the body in a constant way. Lundu, for example, known as an umbilicus [umbigada] - because it was performed in pairs and, at certain times, the bodies of the participants advanced one toward the navel of the other - would have been influenced by a manifestation of the Congo-Angola region. However, because it was more accessible to participation of people from other social strata, particularly Portuguese, who even took it to Portugal; they incorporated stringed instruments, like genuinely guitar. In this same area of influence of the batuque, one finds the samba, words derived from semba, that in Kimbundo and in other languages of region of Angola means pelvic movement. (MATTOS, 2007, p. 180) (Our translation from Portuguese).

But, of course, many were other types of expression that arose from Africans in regards to dances and music in general. In addition to samba and Lundu, Afro-Brazilian culture also comes to prominence in Maracatu, Mozambique, Cavalhada and many others musical styles.

Another musical style - which was not musical style but eventually transformed - is Capoeira. It emerged as a defense sport, being taught to the slaves in Brazilian territory. Then, "to protect from robberies the goods, which they carried in baskets called capoeiras, blackpeople of gain moved the body, in a way that seemed to do a choreography" (MATTOS, 2007, 184).

The name of baskets eventually gave rise to the name of a fighting practice used by the slaves. However, over the years, the movements, which used to be a struggle, became part of African musical rhythms, resulting in a dance game: capoeira.

Today, in capoeira, it is the music that decides the rhythm and style of the game, which is practiced during the course of capoeira that is played in a circle of people. Thus, capoeiristas line up on the capoeira circle clapping their hands in the rhythm of the berimbau (an instrument)

while singing the capoeira music for the two practitioners to play .

2.2 CULINARY/CUISINE

Besides music and dance, there were many cultural aspects brought from Africa to Brazil, aspects that became Afro-Brazilian. As far as food is concerned, one of the best dishes of Brazilian cuisine is included in the menu of Afro-Brazilian dishes: the famous feijoada. For those who want the recipe, feijoada is "prepared with beans, which was already part of the African diet, here added with pieces of meat" (MATTOS, 2007, 177, our translation). This culinary recipe came from the slave quarters and was actually made from leftovers that were not eaten by the slave owner, and, therefore, the slaves ate them.

In fact, you cannot make feijoada without beans. In this view, we cannot fall into the error of believing that the beans originated and were discovered in Brazil. Based on the various researches, it is possible to verify that, before being consumed by the Brazilian people, many other people already cultivated it in the different parts of the world, even before the colonization of Brazil. What changes from one country to another is the way in which this food is prepared, giving rise to different dishes, in the case here: feijoada.



Figure 01: Feijoada prepared with pieces of pork

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Improving knowledge about Afro-Brazilian culture is fundamental. For this reason, we gave examples of Afro-Brazilian culture in dance, music and culinary/cuisine. Such aspects of this culture have substantially developed, further enriching the development of our country.

This shows that the discussion presented in this article is important not only for education professionals who are dedicated to improving their knowledge, but for students and academics, since they need to understand the different cultures of our country.

For example, if a teacher wants to teach their students about Brazilian cultural in the classroom, it will become important to know the story of the different cultures. This will make him/her a more prepared professional.

Not only professionals trained to act in the classroom, but

also all people need to understand the different cultures that surround them. Such studies serve as awareness, so that everyone can discover their role within the environment in which they are inserted. It is the task of all of us, citizens, to take care of our Afro-Brazilian culture and culture, in general, so that they never die and that they develop in future generations.

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1. The Transatlantic Traffic referred to as the slave trade which was carried out with the help of ship transports across the Atlantic Ocean.
 2. To know capoeira, access <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12PpflLFC3E>> In: July 27, 2018.
 3. Access <<http://www.Casabrasileiraplanejados.com.br/cordel-de-ideias/sabor-do-brasil-feijoada->>> In: July 27, 2018.