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## COMMUTER MIGRATION IN THE JUÇATUBA QUILOMBO IN SÃO JOSE DE RIBAMAR-MA

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**Abstract:** This paper analyzes the quilombo of Juçatuba, which today is looking for alternatives to live with the departure of its residents, given that the quilombo's residents make a commuter migration every day, since this spatial cutout is susceptible to the evasion of its residents, because it is close to a large center - São Luís - MA. It is from this perspective that we must discuss territoriality in quilombola territory and the forms of resistance in this territory, such as the struggle for land, which is being taken over by the process of accelerated urbanization on the large island of Maranhão, and this has changed and interfered in the quilombo's social and cultural processes. The community is located twenty-seven kilometers from the city of São José de Ribamar, and twenty-four kilometers from the center of the city of São Luís, the capital of the state of Maranhão, and its organization is based on highly constructed socio-territorial spatialization. The community is close to the urban environment, drastically changing its culture and customs and mainly causing it to lose its traditional characteristics.

**Keywords:** Migration, quilombo, territory.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Benedito Filho (2015), "in the past, Quilombo was defined as a social and territorial unit and also as a warrior institution. In the present, the notion of quilombo retains this understanding of territorial unit, but has come to mean a political and socio-cultural category referring to ethnically-based elements. Among these aspects, the quilombola territory is undergoing major socio-cultural and socio-environmental transformations as a result of urban expansion on the island of Maranhão, increasing migratory displacement to the capital São Luís-MA for the job market and to sell vegetables.

According to (CASTRO, 2006, apud ARAÚJO 2009,) the term migration can be understood as a large movement of people from one place to another, such as from a rural area to an urban area, from one region to another, among others. It occurs definitively in such a way that it does not require people to live there. In this sense, migration has always been a movement of people from one place to another, whether over a long or short distance, temporarily or permanently. As Beaujeu Gamier (1971) points out in *Geography of Population*, "Man is a mobile creature, capable of investigation, susceptible to suggestion and endowed with imagination and initiative, which is why he has the perception that his needs can be met elsewhere, and so he migrates in search of better conditions" (MAX SORRE apud DAMIANI, 1991, ) in "Population and Geography", he says that "migrations appear as a permanent characteristic of the human species (... mobility is the law that governs all human groups, so the study of movement occupies an important place in human geography." Commuter migration refers to the daily or regular movement of people between their home and their place of work or study, usually between urban and rural areas.

In the context of quilombos, where there is often a close link with agricultural or traditional activities, commuting can occur in various ways, such as quilombo members working in urban areas during the week and returning to their communities.

This migration can be influenced by urban growth, as urban areas expand and offer more opportunities for employment or education, attracting residents from rural communities, including quilombolas, depending on how they are affected by urbanization and the supply of jobs and services in the cities, the process of commuting is a recurring factor in the dynamics quilombola community of Juçatuba in São José de Ribamar, causing daily migration and consequently a loss of socio-cultural characteristics.

## COMMUTER MIGRATION

The concept of commuter “migration” is an old one in Geography. It appears in the analyses of BEAUJEU-GARNIER (1980) and DERUAU (n.d.), among other classics of Human Geography with an emphasis on Population Geography - a specialty of Geography within which this discussion has been developed for a long time. However, the geographer’s perspective of analysis differs from that of the demographer, above all because of the nature of Geography’s concern with the spatialization of phenomena. Among the classic studies, there is a certain understanding that migratory movements vary in terms of duration and scale and that those of a daily nature must be understood in their context, which is predominantly urban.

The urban form of metropolitan agglomerations, consisting of a core of tertiary activities and a residential periphery typical of the industrial city of the early 20th century in advanced economy countries, will generally characterize the metropolitan agglomerations of other countries in the mid-20th century. However, in the latter, the expansion to the periphery occurred with the location of industrial areas and low-income housing, due to the precariousness of the urban infrastructure, the dynamics of the land market, access to the labor market, among others (ABREU, 1987; CORRÊA, 1989 and 1997; ANTICO, 2004). The fragmentation of the political-administrative units of the peripheral areas is also a characteristic of the territorial configuration of these metropolitan units.

The intensity of commuting reveals the extent of the urban phenomenon in the territory and is an indicator used to define large urban areas, especially by statistical research institutes. The US Census Bureau bases the definition and delimitation of large metropolitan areas on information about commuting to work (RATCLIFFE, 2001). Currently, in France, the Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes

Economiques (INSEE) uses commuting data to identify the polarization of an urban area (JULIEN, 1998). The identification of the London agglomeration, using commuting in the 1950s and 1960s, was based on the number of rail passengers, vis-à-vis the percentage of people from other counties working in the county of London (SOARES, 1968).

Among these aspects, commuter migration has intensified in quilombos close to large urban centers such as the Juçatuba quilombo in São Jose de Ribamar - MA, which is close to the capital São Luís - MA. Many of the community’s residents travel to these centers to work and return to the community at the end of the day. Commuting in the quilombo causes problems such as the loss of cultural traditions and structural changes to traditional customs.

## QUILOMBO

These communities of former slaves were organized in different ways and had very different proportions and durations. There were small quilombos, made up of eight men or a little more; they were practically armed groups. In the depths of the forest, fleeing captivity, they were often recaptured by professionals who hunted down fugitives. A specific profession was created for this. In Cuba they were called *rancheadores*; *capitães do mato* in Brazil; *coromangee ranger*, in the Guianas, all using the most inhumane tactics of capture and repression. In Cuba, for example, the *rancheadores* used to use trained dogs to hunt down escaped black slaves. As we can see, the *marronagem* in other countries or the *quilombagem* in Brazil were the fruit of the structural contradictions of the slave system and reflected, in their dynamics, at the level of social conflict, the denial of this system by the oppressed (Moura 1987: 12-13).

The expression “remnants of quilombo communities”, which emerged in the 1988 Constituent Assembly, was not only a result of

the demands for land titles, but of a broader discussion within black movements and among parliamentarians involved in the anti-racist struggle. The quilombo was brought back into the debate to deal with a type of claim that, at the time, alluded to a “debt” that the Brazilian nation owed to Afro-Brazilians as a result of slavery, not just to talk about land ownership.

These studies also introduced the first formulations that would underpin the view of the group as a closed unit in itself, cohesive, as an isolated culture, thus contributing to an idealized view of the collective life of these populations, considered no longer “primitive”, but “traditional”. Also frozen in a static vision of tradition and history, they were defined mainly by a supposed harmony, cohesion and absence of conflict. It was only in the 1980s, with the theoretical turn in studies on ethnicity, inaugurated by Fredrik Barth’s (1976) critique of the static concept of culture, that some of the theoretical models used until then were considered outdated, requiring anthropologists to reposition themselves in relation to them.

The Brazilian Anthropology Association (ABA) Working Group on Quilombo Land (O'DWYER, 2002) states that, at the same time, the term quilombo has been resemanticized to designate the current situation of various black communities in different regions of Brazil:

The term no longer refers to residues or archaeological remains of temporal occupation or biological evidence. Nor are they isolated groups or a strictly homogenous population. Likewise, they were not always built from insurrectionary or rebellious movements, but, above all, they consist of groups that developed daily practices of resistance in order to maintain and reproduce their characteristic ways of life and consolidate a territory of their own... (O'DWYER, 2002, p. 18).

The “remaining quilombo communities” are therefore social groups whose ethnic identity distinguishes them from the rest of Brazi-

lian society; their identity is the basis of their social organization, their relationship with other groups and their political action. But this is a legal-formal category that both portrays social reality and constructs it, by classifying the social world in the legal system. According to Eliane Cantarino O'Dwyer (2011):

The definition of social units made by legislation, according to general normative criteria, represents a way of conceiving social reality and is partly responsible for social actions guided by legal categories. The legal semantics that relate social units to distinct territories constitutes a classification system produced within the national state and acquires its full meaning in the context of the rights in force in Brazil after the 1988 Federal Constitution. These current classifications inscribed in the Constitution make it possible to “manage difference rather than eliminate it” (Geertz 1999: 325), replacing the previous legal uniformity with a specification of social and cultural situations within certain categories defined by legislation (O'DWYER, 2011, p. 111).

In terms of social reproduction, it must also be considered that societies are built in interaction with each other. In this sense, there are elements that unify and others that differentiate, highlighting contrasting characteristics, and the persistence of boundaries between groups would not be placed in terms of the cultural contents that enclose and define their differences, but from the processes of exclusion or inclusion that make it possible to define the boundaries between those considered “insiders or outsiders” (BARTH, 2000, p. 31).

For Barth (2000), the criteria and signs of identification imply the persistence of “ethnic groups” and also a “structure of interaction” that allows cultural differences to be reproduced by “isolating” certain segments of the culture from possible confrontations and, at the same time, maintaining their interaction with other sectors.

## THE JUÇATUBA QUILOMBO

The 1988 Constitution formalizes rights that had already been put forward by representatives of organized social movements, who were active in subcommittees on their demands. In this way, the political forces of the organized black movement won the creation of a specific foundation to deal with the issue of the presence of Afro-descendants as a shaper of the plurality of the “Brazilian nation” - the Palmares Cultural Foundation.

According to Benedito Filho (2015, p. 85), “in the past, quilombo was defined as a social and territorial unit and also as a warrior institution. Nowadays, the notion of quilombo retains this understanding of a territorial unit, but has come to mean a political and socio-cultural category referring to ethnically-based elements.” The Juçatuba quilombo community was recognized as a quilombo remnant by the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) in 2007, together with the Ministry of Culture, in accordance with art. 68 of the ADCT and article 216, 1 to V {1º and 5º of the 1988 Federal Constitution}.

According to Munanga (1996), a quilombo is:

The word quilombo has the connotation of an association of men, open to all without distinction of affiliation to any lineage, in which members were subjected to dramatic initiation rituals that removed them from the protective ambit of their lineages and integrated them as co-warriors in a regiment of super-men invulnerable to the weapons of enemies (MUNANGA, p. 59, 1996).

With this in mind, the concept of territory must be used to understand and identify the territorialities of the Juçatuba quilombo in São José de Ribamar - MA. In this sense of territory, Souza (1996, p. 78), inspired by the ideas of Raffestin (1993), asserts that “territory is a space defined and delimited by, and based on, power relations”.

Reinforcing the idea of the authors mentioned above, Haesbaert (2006) brings up an interesting concept about this category of analysis, in which he assimilates this concept with access to land, linking it to its use and control:

[...] when a society appropriates a territory, it is accessing, controlling and using both the visible realities and the invisible powers that make them up, and which seem to share control of the conditions for the reproduction of human life, both their own and that of the resources on which they depend (HAESBAERT, p. 37, 2006).

Santos (2011), in his book “Território, territórios: ensaios sobre o ordenamento territorial” (Territory, territories: essays on land-use planning), conceptualizes territory as “the place where all actions, all passions, all powers, all strengths, all weaknesses end up, in other words, where the history of man is fully realized from the manifestations of existence” (SANTOS, 2011, p. 13). In this way, the author analyzes territory from the point of view of the relationship between society and nature in its most diverse meanings.

It is possible to say that the community's biggest struggle is demarcation and titling by the bodies responsible for the agrarian issue, in this case more precisely the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), which is responsible for access to land, and the Palmares Cultural Foundation, which is responsible for titling and recognizing these territories.

The quilombo of Juçatuba is currently looking for strategies to deal with the departure of its residents, given that the quilombo's residents make a commuter migration every day, since this spatial area is susceptible to the evasion of its residents, as it is close to a large center - São Luís - MA. It is from this perspective that we must discuss territoriality in quilombola territory and the forms of resistance in this territory, such as the struggle for land, which is being taken over by the process of accelera-



ted urbanization on the large island Maranhão, and this has changed and interfered in the quilombo's social and cultural processes.

It is understood that the families the Juçatuba quilombo use various ways to produce, differentiating themselves from other social classes.

based on techniques and forms of use that aim to minimize the degradation soil and vegetation, always respecting nature, fauna and flora, because they are seen with affection and with connections more centered on the mutual interactions between the two (ACEVEDO; CASTRO, 2004).

As Leite (2000) emphasizes, the reason for a new configuration of the quilombo concept is the fact that the reorganization of the Brazilian economy in the period after slavery gave a new order to the ownership of the so-called "black lands", in which not only Afro-descendants are involved. This requires a definition that broadens the possibility of analyzing the dynamics related to ethnic-racial and territorial issues.

In this study of quilombola territory, it will be possible to understand the practices of territoriality in the quilombo of Juçatuba in the municipality of São Jose de Ribamar, and in this way understand the forms of struggle and what they do to survive.

Martins (2010) describes the relationship between the countryside and the city in Brazil as asymmetrical,

[...] it occurs through a set of activities that have come to be developed in these environments, in which in the city we have the materialization of the production of material goods linked to the cycle of the land with urban agriculture, and in the countryside activities linked leisure, provision of services and non-agricultural work have taken root (MARTINS, p. 36, 2010).

According to Acevedo & Castro (2004, p. 60) the territory that is being claimed by a given social group is made up of a set of resources that it desires, and there is the possibility for exploitation, which is configured in the space in which the members of a given group have full rights, effectively, to use and control the resources and their availability at a certain time.

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Although it has been explored for around three centuries, the notion of territoriality was only explained in 1920 by H.E. Howard, who defined it as: "The characteristic behavior adopted by an organism to take possession of a territory and defend it against members of its own species" (Howard *apud* RAFFESTIN, 1993).

It is from this perspective that it is important to study quilombola territoriality in order to understand the safeguarding of a certain territory or property in which a set of regulations or laws is established for the care of that space, the regulation of certain actions or the restriction of the entry or exit of certain people, their forms of resistance and struggles for land.

Quilombola territory has always been an important factor in Brazil's history, as have cultural and social factors. Brazil was discovered in the 1500s by the Portuguese, who

encountered the Indians, the native peoples of the area. The Portuguese in a number of slaves through the slave trade, to work in the sugar cane plantations. In this historical process, these Africans left and leave their marks rooted in the social, cultural and territorial process, such as the quilombos, a place endowed with ancestry and territoriality, where they practice their experiences, their forms of struggle and resistance.

Migratory movements have been present in the daily lives of these residents. Being close to an urban center, local residents make daily migratory movements to the capital in search of work and also to work. In the quilombo, the process of producing vegetables is a means of family subsistence, where these vegetables are sold in São Luís - MA.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maranhão was one of the last states in Brazil to abolish slavery. Nowadays, recognition and appreciation of those who lived through social injustice is minimal, especially when it comes to quilombola communities. With this in mind, the concept of territory must be used to understand and identify the territorialities of the Juçatuba quilombo in São José de Ribamar - MA. In this sense of territory, Souza (1996, p. 78), inspired by the ideas of Raffestin (1993), asserts that "territory is a space defined and delimited by, and based on, power relations". Reinforcing the idea of these authors mentioned above, Haesbaert (2006) brings up an interesting concept about this category of analysis, in which he makes an assimilation between this concept and access to land, linking it to its use and control. The quilombo was formed as a result of the historical process since the colonial period. In this respect, the quilombos had various forms of organization in many different ways, and all had the function of escaping from the slave system organized during slavery

It is important to emphasize that the quilombo is no longer just an environment of torture or of the slavery process, but a place of recognition, of conquests and also of resistance. To highlight the importance recognized by enslaved blacks is to think of the cultural and religious aspects established and experienced within the quilombos, a place of struggle and knowledge that makes it one of the places of ancestry and economic importance.

Among these aspects, the organization of the quilombos was very varied according to the spaces occupied by the population, the quality of the land that stabilized the forms of resistance, and production with the use of natural regional resources and industrialized these resources, this can be identified in the quilombo of juçatuba in São Jose de Ribamar-MA the production of vegetables is a reality of production not only in the colonial period, but also in the quilombola communities of today such as the sale of vegetables in the center of São Luis.

Thinking of the system as an output, the quilombo is a real stage for cultural manifestations, such as tambor de crioula, capoeira, reggae, bumba meu boi, the latter of which is manifested by the quilombos of Maranhão and Juçatuba, the output which refers to the system's output, bumba meu boi, generates income for the community's players, generating capital which returns to the quilombo, bringing in income. The labor of the community's residents is intensified given the proximity to the capital São Luis-MA, which is also established in the output, since the vegetables produced organically and naturally are sold in the capital by the residents.

Commuting is a type of daily migration that refers to moving around every day, either to work or for voluntary purposes, the main question is how this migratory process is intensified by the young people of the communities, whether to study in the capital or to

work in stores, fairs or in certain commercial environments, causing a change in the relationships of experiences and recognition. The great problem experienced today in the quilombos of Maranhão is the self-identification of being a quilombola by the young people of the community, today it is known that the

quilombo was formed by historical issues since the slavery period, linked to ethnic issues of color and resistance, these people left their marks their forms of struggle and cultural and religious traditions leaving their traditions cultivated by the residents of the quilombos until today.

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