

“WE ARE AZOREAN”: DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES OF FOLK CULTURE IN SANTA CATARINA (BRAZIL)

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The development of the Azoreanist movement is a major feature in the contemporary cultural and political scene of the state of Santa Catarina (southern Brazil). Aimed at the rediscovery and celebration of the Azorean roots of the island of Santa Catarina and other coastal areas of the state, the Azoreanist movement dates back to the 1940s and, having remained an elite endeavor for several decades, recently became a very influential movement. This paper seeks to investigate the prominent role played by folk culture in the activities and identity claims of the movement, contrasting its ethnogenealogical thematicizations on Santa Catarina's folk culture with more "autochthonous" visions of local folklore.

In 1993, an ambitious project called *Mapeamento Cultural da Cultura de Base Açoriana* ("Cultural Mapping of Azorean-based Culture") was launched in Santa Catarina by the Núcleo de Estudos Açorianos (NEA, "Group of Azorean Studies").¹ This group, based at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), is currently one of the most active organizations in the Azoreanist movement of Santa Catarina and works to discover the Azorean roots of the state, which date back to 1748 when 6,000 individuals from the Azores settled in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina.²

The *Mapeamento* aimed to survey Azorean culture in Santa Catarina by collecting information through high school teachers and municipal cultural activists. A survey questionnaire based on the guidebook developed by NEA was distributed in the context of an introductory course on Azorean culture and history.

Besides the actual collection of questionnaires, the *Mapeamento* was linked to more ambitious objectives. Its first aim was to enlarge the popular influence of the Azoreanist movement, which, until then, was basically an endeavor restricted to the cultural and political elites of Santa Catarina. The second objective was to develop the movement outside Florianópolis and the island of Santa Catarina, giving it an expression coincidental with the area of Azorean colonization. The third objective was to organize a network of

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² For a general overview of the Azoreanist movement of Santa Catarina from 1948 to the present, see Leal (2002). For more specific aspects of the movement in the island of Santa Catarina, see Fantin (2000).

organizations committed to Azorean culture, thus strengthening the Azoreanist movement.

The *Mapeamento* project eventually came to engage more than thirty municipalities and 3,000 activists and is a major development in the process of rediscovering the Azorean roots of the state's coastal areas. Given its importance, one of the aims of my research is to analyze in some detail the results of the 4,000 questionnaires.

One of the issues that puzzled me most when reviewing the replies to the questionnaires was evidence of very different interpretations of the idea of "Azorean culture." In several questionnaires, for example, Azorean culture referred to cultural elements such as the Holy Ghost Festivals, usually perceived as "survivals" of Azorean folk culture in Santa Catarina. In this case, the idea of Azorean culture was synonymous to cultural practices that actually originated in the archipelago of the Azores. However, in other questionnaires, "Azorean culture" was applied in a looser manner. In some cases, it was used to identify aspects of folk life whose Azorean origins, NEA's activists admitted, were in doubt such as *boi de mamão*, a theatrical performance centered on the death and resurrection of an ox. In other cases the use of the idea of Azorean culture was even looser and included cultural items, such as local seafood gastronomy, that have originated locally and have no known parallel in the Azores. Finally, a number of responses labeled all local expressions of heritage – from an early 20th-century cemetery to a *polenta* recipe (*polenta* is, of course, an Italian traditional dish) – as "Azorean." In this case, the idea of Azorean culture was applied to anything perceived as being old.

I initially ascribed the divergence of these responses to the inexperience of activists who were new to the Azorean cause. But, on further thought, I came to the conclusion that these different notions of "Azorean culture" were instead related to a more general and interesting pattern: the polysemy of the idea of "Azorean culture" among Azoreanist activists. The objective of this paper is to investigate the various meanings of "Azorean culture" among activists and organizations of the Azoreanist movement of Santa Catarina. In the first section, I analyze the role played by folk culture in the thematicization of Azorean culture. The second and third sections lay out the two main perspectives of folk culture that have been hegemonic in the Azoreanist movement: an ethnogenealogical perspective, connecting the different folk traditions of the coastal areas of Santa Catarina to the folk culture of the Azores; and an autochthonous perspective of folk culture, based on the prevalence of a territorial principle of analysis of culture over genealogy and ethnogenesis. In the conclusion I discuss the importance of this autochthonous perspective of folk culture for the recent development of the movement.

Azorean culture as folk culture

Despite significant divergences in their understandings of Azorean culture, all Azoreanist activists and organizations agree on one point: the Azorean culture they talk about is basically defined as folk culture, i.e. – according to the more widely used *emic* expressions – it is defined as folklore, or as *cultura da gente* or "the culture of the people."

This consensus that Azorean culture is folk culture dates back to the origins of the Azoreanist movement at the First Historical Congress of Santa Catarina, in 1948.³ Thus, one of the sections of the Congress entitled "Language and Folklore" was specifically dedicated to folk culture and featured six papers on topics related to folklore.⁴ The Portuguese scientific community was represented by Paiva Boléo, a folk linguist from Coimbra University, and Silva Ribeiro, an important Azorean ethnographer, who, although not able to attend the Congress in person, sent a paper on topics of folklore. In the documents produced at the Congress, folk culture was a topic of major importance, such as in the proposals suggesting the creation of a Folk Museum in Santa Catarina and the launching of linguistic and ethnographic inquiries.⁵ Folklore and traditional culture also played an important role in the exhibitions and cultural performances of the Congress' cultural program.

The role folk culture played in the Azoreanist movement became even more important in the years following the Congress, mainly through the activities of the *Comissão Catarinense de Folclore* ("Committee for Folklore Studies of Santa Catarina"). During the 1950s, the Committee regularly published a journal called *Boletim da Comissão Catarinense de Folclore*. Besides several articles by local scholars devoted to the study of Santa Catarina's folk culture, the journal also published several ethnographic papers by Azorean scholars, such as José Agostinho, Silva Ribeiro or Carreiro da Costa.

In the 1970s and 1980s, folk culture played again an important role in the resumption of the Azoreanist movement, which had come to a halt during the 1960s. In 1971, the Ribeirão da Ilha Eco-Museum, located in a small traditional hamlet on the island of Santa Catarina, was created with the objective of "storing the memory of the Azorean culture of the island of Santa Catarina, [which is the] foundation [and] bedrock upon which the culture of Santa Catarina rests" (Pereira 1996: 4). Franklin Cascaes, an important local artist whose Azoreanist work was close to *art brut* or *outsider art*, also favored folkloric themes and particularly emphasized local beliefs and stories of witches. His collection, composed of hundreds of drawings and clay sculp-

³ On the First Historical Congress of Santa Catarina, see Flores (1998: 113-141). For further details see also Falcão (2000).

⁴ Cf. *Actualidades*, 11, November 1948, p. 10.

⁵ Cf. *Actualidades*, 12, December 1948, p. 12.

tures, was central to the launching of the Ethnographic Museum of UFSC, in which folklore plays a major role.⁶

The Azoreanist movement in the 1990s also emphasized the importance of folk culture. First of all, folklore played a major role in the activities of NEA. As has already been stressed, the *Mapeamento Cultural* focused on the identification of different aspects of Azorean folk culture in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina. Among the nine different fields outlined in the *Mapeamento* guidebook, seven are devoted to ethnographic topics such as “folklore,” “arts and crafts,” “gastronomy,” “folk religion,” “folk literature,” “children’s games and toys,” and “traditional means of transportation.”

NEA’s other activities are also strongly linked to folk culture. That is the case of the *Açor*, a huge annual festival that takes place on a rotating basis in different municipalities of the coastal area of Santa Catarina. The festival is now in its ninth year and has become a major event in Santa Catarina’s cultural life, attended by thousands. According to the organizers, the main focus of the festival are the “local gastronomy, folklore, religion and traditional customs of the Luso-Azorean culture” of Santa Catarina.⁷ The program also includes folk music and dance, *boi de mamão* performances, traditional cuisine, and the display and selling of folk artifacts.

NEA has also organized conferences and other initiatives aimed at fostering discussion of ethnographic investigations of Azorean culture. That is the case of the First International Congress on Holy Ghost Festivals (1998), where the Holy Ghost festivals were featured as one of the main expressions of the Azorean heritage. In the First Southern Brazilian Congress of Luso-Azorean Communities (1996), folk culture was again very important, both in the scientific agenda and in its artistic and cultural program.

The role of NEA’s activists in the ethnographic research on Azorean cultural topics must also be stressed.

Among other organizations active in the Azoreanist movement, folk culture is also a major trend. In the island of Santa Catarina, for instance, since the 1996 election of Florianópolis’ present mayor, the Franklin Cascaes Foundation has adopted an Azoreanist agenda. The Foundation actively supports the promotion of folk culture by local communities and organizes cultural events that emphasize Azorean folk culture. Among these events, the most important is the annual ethnic festival *Encontro das Nações* (“Meeting of the Nations”) which features folk dance groups, traditional artisans, *boi de mamão* troupes, and restaurants specializing in menus inspired by traditional recipes.

⁶ On Franklin Cascaes, see, for instance, Araújo (1978), Caruso (1997) and Espada (1997).

⁷ Quoted from the *Açor* bylaw distributed among the participating municipalities.

Outside the island of Santa Catarina in the several municipalities of the coastal areas of the state, the Azoreanist movement also promotes Azoreanist festivals, performances by folk dance groups or *boi de mamão* troupes, the revitalization of Holy Ghost singing groups, the production of traditional crafts, and the establishment of local museums.

The Azores in southern Brazil: ethnogenealogical perspectives of folk culture

Although generally equating Azorean culture with folk culture, the activists and organizations within the Azoreanist movement have nevertheless distinct notions of what is Azorean in the folk culture of Santa Catarina. For some, Azorean culture is viewed in strict ethnogenealogical terms (Smith 1991). According to this perspective, Azorean culture is the fraction of Santa Catarina's folk culture which can be ethnogenetically linked to the folk culture actually existing in the Azores. Although observed in the ethnographic present, folk culture is thus viewed as a set of survivals through which continuity with the cultural background of the Azoreans who settled in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina can be established.

This ethnogenealogical perspective was dominant in the First Historical Congress of Santa Catarina. Although the proceedings of the "Language and Folklore" section were never published, some of the titles of the papers suggest the importance of this approach: "Azores: Heart and Soul of Southern Brazil" (Walter Spalding); "The Azorean Feeling in the Folk Poetry of Santa Catarina Island" (Almiro Caldeira); "Some Folk Superstitions Common to Brazil and Azores" (Silva Ribeiro); and "The Azorean Element of Santa Catarina's Folklore: the Holy Ghost Festival" (Mariza Lira). The simultaneous reference to the Azores and to Santa Catarina or southern Brazil illustrates the prevalence of a comparative perspective based on the exploration of the historical links between the folklore of Santa Catarina and the Azores.

The ethnographic articles published in 1948 by the local magazine *Atualidades* in relation to the Congress, show the same ethnogenetic pattern. In one of these articles, Lucas Boîteux, one of the few intellectuals from Santa Catarina who had actually visited the Azores, wrote about the island of São Miguel:

I was strongly impressed by a number of uses and customs of that humble and kind people. Many of their habits were familiar to me; and you have already understood why. You all know that both our island [of Santa Catarina] and almost all the coast of Santa Catarina have been settled by immigrants coming from the Azorean islands. One can thus observe *an extreme likeness of uses, customs and language* between the people of São Miguel and our own people: *Azorean life was fully transplanted to our beaches* (Boîteux, 1948: 24, emphasis added).

In another article, Oswaldo Cabral wrote in a similar vein about the potter's wheel: "*What exists there [in the Azores], exists here [in Santa Catarina]. The same wheel, the same legs, the same dish, the same clay ball, from which is produced the pottery that can be bought in the beach by a small amount of money*" (Cabral 1948: 23, emphasis added).

Ethnogenealogy was also a recurring motif in the various speeches at the official receptions of the Congress. For instance, at the Florianópolis Municipal Council, one of the councilors stressed that,

The Azorean people who have settled Santa Catarina [...] were able to preserve the particularities of the language, sonorous and singing, the rhythm of the poetry, the emotions of the legends and folk festivals; the attachment to the same religious feelings; the devotion to the same saints; the same way of working the land; the same kind of property of the land; the same taste and the same reaction to aesthetic values; and the same rigorous repetition of the same customs and systems of social life. [...] We keep alive the same traditions and the same domestic arts [from] lace [...] [to] primitive and rustic pottery [...] [to] fishing canoes and other folk crafts (*Actualidades*, 12, December 1948: 4).

In the 1950s, the ethnographic research organized around the *Boletim da Comissão Catarinense de Folclore* developed this ethnogenealogical perspective into a more rigorous research agenda. Indeed, in the Congress, the definition of Santa Catarina's folk culture as an Azorean legacy was mainly a rhetorical device, based on ideology and affective connection, rather than on facts established through extensive ethnographic research. In order to move from ideology to research, it was, as Oswaldo Cabral wrote, "necessary to collect [folk] traditions, and to organize Santa Catarina's *folklore* for a comparative study" (Cabral 1948: 23).

This "comparative study," based on the establishment of ethnographic parallels between Santa Catarina and the Azorean islands, became the main task of the local scholars who published their ethnographic research in the *Boletim*. Through that research, folk culture was gradually transformed from an expression of local ways of life in fishing and rural communities into an expression of the Azoreanness of Santa Catarina to be reclaimed by the cultural and political elites of Florianópolis.

In the first issue of the journal, two out of six papers drew specific comparisons between Santa Catarina and the Azores. In an article on traditional children's songs in Santa Catarina, for example, Oswaldo de Melo stressed that "[e]very comparative study of folkloristic material collected in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina will show us that its origins go back to the peasants [of the Azorean islands who settled Santa Catarina]" (Melo 1949: 11). Almiro Caldeira emphasized even more enthusiastically the Azorean back-

ground of Santa Catarina's folk culture when he noted that "[t]he Azorean element left strong marks in the psychological make-up of our folk. The collective sub-conscious of the folk is full of remembrances that are part of the Azorean collective memory" (Caldeira 1949: 15). His comparison of a local tradition concerning the image of Our Lord of the Stations of the Cross who resisted leaving Desterro (the original designation of Florianópolis) to a similar belief in Vila Franca do Campo in the island of São Miguel firmly supported the ethnogenealogical thesis.

In subsequent issues of the *Boletim*, various authors tried to further document the purported Azorean origins of several aspects of Santa Catarina's folk culture. In a paper on *farra do boi*, Walter Piazza, for instance, argued that this ritual, this local type of bullfight that takes place during Holy Week was a survival of a specific type of Azorean bullfight called *tourada à corda* (Piazza 1951: 71). The same author, writing about traditional pottery in Santa Catarina, stated that "this craft, which links us so strongly to the people of the archipelago, has originated in the islands of Azores" (1952: 23). In the same issue of the *Boletim*, Henrique Fontes also addressed the Azorean roots of the *pão-por-Deus*, a local custom of writing a love poem in a cut paper, often in the shape of a heart, and offering it to one's beloved. His conclusions were cautious but sought nevertheless to establish an ethnogenealogical link to the Azores. In spite of the fact that the ritual itself did not exist in the Azores, he argues that its name was of Azorean origin (Fontes 1952: 20) and that it might be "possible that the São Miguel islanders were [its] creators in Santa Catarina" (*id.*: 22). Oswaldo de Melo viewed *Abrenúncia* – one of the main characters of the theatrical performance *boi de mamão* – as a result of "the Azorean unconscious tradition" (Melo 1953: 85). There was vigorous debate around the origins of *boi de mamão*, given its strong resemblance to similar Afro-Brazilian rituals in northeastern Brazil. As the *Abrenúncia* character, however, appeared only in Santa Catarina, the area of Azorean settlement, it was possible to connect the ritual to the Azores. Other elements of local material culture, such as lace (Lira 1950, Soares 1957) and bird cages made of reed (Salles 1953) were also presented in the *Boletim* as important survivals of the Azorean motherland.

By 1956, the research focusing on the ethnogenealogical links of Santa Catarina's folk culture was so fully developed that Walter Piazza was able to provide a comprehensive list at the Second Exhibition of American Folklore of the main ethnographic elements of the "Luso-Azorean contribution" to the folk culture of Santa Catarina. Among them were *pão-por-Deus*, folk pottery, Holy Ghost festivals and Holy Ghost singing groups, *farra do boi*, folk architecture, folk dance and several other local religious festivals.⁸

⁸ Cf. the "News" section of the *Boletim da Comissão Catarinense de Folclore*, 23/24, January 1957 to January 1958: 147-148.

Besides local folklorists and scholars, Azorean and Portuguese ethnographers associated with the Azoreanist movement of Santa Catarina also supported the ethnogenealogical perspective. If the former had a specialized ethnographic knowledge of the Azorean legacy of Santa Catarina, the latter were experts on the original configuration of that legacy and could thus ratify, on behalf of the motherland, the allegedly Azorean origins of Santa Catarina's folk culture.

Dating back to the participation of Paiva Boléo and Silva Ribeiro in the 1948 Congress, this "transnational" dialogue between Santa Catarina scholars and Azorean and Portuguese ethnographers was later pursued in the pages of the *Boletim da Comissão Catarinense de Folclore*. The main objective of these contributions was to explore the "folkloristic parallels" between the folk culture of Santa Catarina and its purported Azorean origins. The Azorean ethnographer, José Agostinho, for example, illustrated the "affinities" between the Azores and Santa Catarina through examinations of the *pésinho* (a folk dance), *pão-por-Deus*, and aspects of folk language (*Boletim...*, 5, 1950: 15). In another paper, he extended folkloristic parallels between Santa Catarina and the Azores to the *chamarrita* (another folk dance) and drew less plausible analogies between the *quicumbi* folk dance of Santa Catarina and folk dances of Terceira (*Boletim...*, 20/21, September/December 1954: 92).⁹

After having played a particularly important role during the initial years of the Azoreanist movement, this ethnogenealogical perspective of Santa Catarina's folk culture can also be found in the subsequent phases of the movement's development. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s, references to the Azorean origins of Santa Catarina's folklore were common in Franklin Cascaes' ethnographic and artistic work. In the first volume of his anthology of folk tales, *O Fantástico na Ilha de Santa Catarina* (1989), Cascaes defined some witch stories as pages of "an Azorean book of thoughts" that the colonizers "[had] brought in their cultural luggage, and that were passed on to their heirs" (Cascaes 1989: 19). In the aftermath of Cascaes' trip to the Azores in the 1980s, this ethnogenealogical orientation became even stronger in his work (Caruso 1997).

In the 1990s, ethnogenealogy continued to play an important role in the Azoreanist thematicization of Santa Catarina's folk culture. This orientation was particularly relevant in the activities of NEA. In the *Mapeamento* project, for example, after the introductory course on the geography, history and culture of the Azores, the emphasis was on an ethnogenealogical approach to the Azorean legacy of Santa Catarina:

⁹ Carreiro da Costa (1950), A. C. Pires de Lima (1950) and F. C. Pires de Lima (1952) were other Portuguese ethnographers who published on the ethnographic affinities between the Azores and Santa Catarina.

[after this general introduction] we talked about the people who came [from the Azores], the way of life they brought with them. [...]. [Afterwards] we tried to show [...] what is still alive in the different communities [...], the legacy of 1748. [We tried to] show the architecture, [we] arrived at a house [built in the Portuguese style] and showed that Azoreans brought that style to Santa Catarina [...]. These dances, these folk tales that we still have, these legends, were brought by the Azoreans. And the same goes for local gastronomy, etc.

This ethnogenealogical perspective is also evident in the larger initiatives organized by NEA. In the First Southern Brazilian Congress of Luso-Azorean Communities (1996), the very pretext for the event was, as had been the case with the 1948 Congress, the evocation and celebration of the Azorean roots of Santa Catarina. The rationale for the Congress was "the presence of [Azorean] cultural traits [...] especially in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, where they constitute the prevailing cultural expression." In the same vein, several events of the Congress stressed the Azorean origins of Santa Catarina's folk culture: one of the round tables gave an overview of the "Luso-Azorean Culture in Southern Brazil;" one of the courses for activists was on "The History and Culture of the Azores;" and one of the most successful workshops was on a comparison between traditions and practices of folk dance in the Azores and in southern Brazil, including Santa Catarina.

In the First International Congress on Holy Ghost Festivals (1998), this ethnogenealogical agenda was even stronger. Indeed, the objective of the Congress was to consecrate the Holy Ghost Festivals as an overall trait of Azorean culture, uniting the Azorean motherland and the several subcultures of Azorean ancestry both in southern Brazil, especially in Santa Catarina, and in the USA and Canada.

In the writings published during the 1990s by activists connected to NEA, ethnogenealogy was again a main trend. The case of Wilson Farias, one of the former directors of NEA, must be stressed. In his two volume book, *Dos Açores ao Brasil Meridional: Uma Viagem no Tempo* (Farias 1998, 2000), which was widely circulated among Azoreanist activists, Farias addresses issues pertaining to the folk culture of Santa Catarina from a perspective often inspired by ethnogenetical concerns. He stresses the alleged Azorean origins of several aspects of Santa Catarina folklore such as: folk dance (*ratoeira*, *pau-defita*, *chamarrita*, *quadrilha*) (Farias 2000: 367); folk performances and festivals, from *boi de mamão* (*id.*: 380) and *farra do boi* (*id.*: 394-395) to Saint John's (*id.*: 397) and Holy Ghost festivals (*id.*: 434-440); folk gastronomy, with emphasis on seasoning and dishes such as *peixe seco* and *cozido à portuguesa* (*id.*: 449-452); and, finally, myths and legends (*id.*: 490).

Outside NEA's activities, ethnogenealogical concerns are also evident. The case of *farra do boi* is a very interesting one. The ritual was banned in 1998

by state authorities leading to a vigorous debate between those supporting the ban and those opposing it. Supporters of the ritual argued to preserve tradition and strongly emphasized its alleged Azorean origin.¹⁰ The feast of Our Lord of the Stations of the Cross (Florianópolis), which is often compared to the Santo Cristo feast of Ponta Delgada, as well as traditions related to witches, the condiments of folk gastronomy, manioc mills, have been presented in several ethnographic studies as representative of Azorean culture, thus broadening the list of objects and customs ethnogenetically defined as Azorean.

During the 1990s, the ethnogenealogical narrative was also appropriated by the local media and promoters of tourism. The media coverage of the First Southern Brazilian Congress of Azorean Communities (1996) was, in this respect, particularly significant. In the newspaper *A Notícia (Capital)*, for instance, one of the articles about the event stressed that the Congress had furthered “the acknowledgment of the Azorean contribution to the formation of Santa Catarina’s cultural identity,” and noted that “the coastal areas of Santa Catarina are experiencing a process of ‘reoxygenation’ of its *original culture*” [*A Notícia (Capital)*, 30/08/1996: 5, emphasis added]. In the newspaper *O Estado*, the coverage of the Congress included an article listing some of the Azorean “cultural survivals” in Santa Catarina, such as the *ratoeira* and *pau-de-fitas* folk dances, *boi de mamão*, Twelfth Night celebrations and *farra do boi* (*O Estado*, “Magazine,” 20/07/1996: 3).

In the same vein, references to the 1748 Azorean settlers and to the Azorean origins of local folklore have also become common in tourist marketing. In the tourist magazine, *Mares do Sul* (literally “South Seas”), the Azorean origin of several municipalities of Santa Catarina’s coast is frequently stressed. Sombrio, for example, is characterized as a small town in the southern part of the state which “keeps intact its traditions in a true open air museum, where looms and decorated streets tell the people of the colonization of the town and glorify Azorean culture” (*Mares do Sul*, 32, June/July 2000: 11). In the tourist publication, *Florianópolis: Ilha Açoriana*, which was written by two important Azorean activists with a preface by the mayor of Florianópolis, one reads that “the Azorean man left significant traces [...] [in the island, such as] the singing accent, architecture, religious feeling, habits, uses and customs, folklore, arts and crafts, fishing activities, and, above all, a simple and friendly way of being and welcoming strangers” (*Florianópolis: Ilha Açoriana*: 45). In the tourist leaflets produced by different municipalities, references to the Azorean legacy are also usual. In Laguna, “the friendly

¹⁰ On this topic, cf. Lacerda (1990), Bastos (1993) and Flores (1998). Although produced by social scientists not directly connected to the Azoreanist movement, these studies accept, without reservations, the purported Azorean origins of the ritual.

population of Azorean descent" is considered one of the tourist attractions of the town. In Penha, the influence of Azorean culture in local "religion, gastronomy, architecture and [again] in the simple and gentle way of welcoming those who visit the town" is also stressed. In Imbituba, the Argentinean tourists who visit the municipality are invited to participate in a tour centered on Azorean culture.

The ethnogenealogical paradigm of Santa Catarina's folk culture is also central to the current cultural exchanges between Santa Catarina and the Azores. These have been coordinated by the Azorean Regional Government through the Office for Emigration and Azorean Communities and, more recently, through the Regional Office for Communities.¹¹ This has allowed for direct contact between Azoreanist activists and the Azorean motherland, mainly through summer courses that take place every year in the Azores. From a remote and distant entity, known mainly through academic literature, the Azorean motherland thus becomes a more tangible reality.

The Azorean Regional Government's support of the Azorianist movement has also made the direct presence of the Azores in the different activities of the movement more effective. Both in the larger international initiatives organized by NEA, or in events like the *Açor* or the Florianópolis Meeting of the Nations, participation of Azorean scholars, artisans and folk dance groups has become commonplace. The Azoreanist organizations have also a very easy access to Azorean regional dresses and arts and crafts, and to posters, leaflets and books on Azorean topics, sent by the Azorean Regional Government.

The recent establishment of the *Casa dos Açores* ("Azores House") of the Island of Santa Catarina, promoted by a group of activists connected to NEA and supported by the Azorean Regional Government, is an important part of this process of strengthening the direct presence of the Azorean motherland in Santa Catarina. One of the objectives of the new organization is specifically to promote a more sustained exchange between the Azores and Santa Catarina and to facilitate the direct knowledge and positive image of the archipelago among the general public.

The ethnogenealogical paradigm is also central to what, following Cantwell (1993), may be termed an ethnomimetic approach to Azorean folk culture that has prevailed in certain groups and organizations within the Azoreanist movement. The most prominent example is the ARCOS folk dance group, which, instead of performing local folk dances of presumed Azorean origin, works with a repertoire based on actual Azorean folk dances. The group is thus frequently invited to act as a sort of Azorean cultural embassy

¹¹ On the support given to the Azoreanist movement by the Azorean Regional Government, see Leal (2002: 241-243).

in Santa Catarina. Besides ARCOS, other groups have adopted this ethnomimetic approach to Azorean culture, combining performances based on local folklore with actual Azorean folk dances. That is the case of the Florianópolis Group of Folk Dances and Songs or of Rancho Açoriano folk dance group from Criciúma. Finally, the case of the restaurant of Ribeirão da Ilha Eco-Museum must also be mentioned. Established in 1997, the restaurant has a menu with some ten to fifteen traditional dishes from the Azores.

To summarize, both the celebration of the Azorean roots of Santa Catarina's folk culture and the enhancement of the direct presence of the Azorean motherland have helped maintain the importance of the ethnogenealogical paradigm within the contemporary Azoreanist movement.

Difficulties and predicaments of the ethnogenealogical paradigm

The ethnogenealogical paradigm is characterized by several key traits. Its strong connection to a folkloristic agenda is guided by "spontaneous" diffusionism, based on an interpretation of Santa Catarina's folk culture as something primarily produced through the migration of cultural traits from the place of origin – the Azores – to a context of diffusion – the coastal areas of Santa Catarina. According to the diffusionist theses, in the process of migration, cultural continuity is considered to overshadow cultural innovations resulting from adjustment to new contexts and contact with other cultures. The process, from an ethnological point of view, is thus characterized as one of cultural "transplantation."

Given the temporal remoteness of the original migration and the lack of written records, it is through comparative work based on "parallels" between contemporary Azorean cultural elements and contemporary Santa Catarina cultural elements that the genealogical "affinities" between the two cultures can be reconstructed. Although conducted in the present, ethnographic observation supporting the Azoreanist narrative is aimed at the historical reconstruction of a process that actually took place several hundred years ago. Despite differences in the economic, social and cultural development of Azorean and Santa Catarina's folk culture over the last two hundred years, the comparison focuses exclusively on the formal affinities between elements of the two cultures, irrespective of their wider contexts of circulation and recreation.

The final results of this comparative work are uneven. In some cases, notwithstanding the systematic under-assessment of context and differences, the links established between the Azores and Santa Catarina are plausible. It

is indeed highly probable that the presence of Holy Ghost festivals in Santa Catarina's folk culture, in spite of the actual differences between them and their Azorean counterparts, is historically connected to the Azorean settlers. Some folkloristic parallels within folk literature or traditional dances are also quite reasonable. In the realm of traditional technologies, one can also admit an Azorean origin for certain technical procedures, namely in agriculture and in arts and crafts.

However, in other cases, Azoreanist scholars have had difficulty in establishing in a convincing way the genealogical links between the Azores and Santa Catarina. Such is the case with *boi de mamão*, folk architecture, or *pão-por-Deus*, to give just a few examples of folk culture whose Azorean origin is problematic, especially for some activists more familiar with Azorean folk culture.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, these difficulties were downplayed and three major strategies were developed to overcome them. The first strategy was to emphasize the part over the whole. When a cultural complex as a whole could not be considered of Azorean origin, Azoreanist scholarship focused on ethnographic details in order to make connections to Azorean traditions. That was the case with the prevailing interpretation of *Abrenúncia*, one of the characters in *boi de mamão* performances. Given the improbability of linking the whole of the performance to Azorean origins, one element of the ritual was connected to the Azores. The same goes for the *pão-por-Deus* ritual. As the ritual does not have any known Azorean parallel, emphasis was put on the Azorean origin of its name or in its connection to the Azorean tradition of cut papers.

A second strategy was to elucidate the presence of some aspect of folk culture in the area colonized by the Azorean as instantaneous proof of its Azorean origin. *Abrenúncia* serves again as an illustration of this approach. As it was only recently introduced into the ritual, the Azorean origin of this cultural element could only be substantiated through its coterminous presence in an area that "coincided with the [...] area of absolute Azorean colonization" (Melo 1953: 85). Similarly, although Urbano Salles did not have "the documents to prove" the Azorean origins of Santa Catarina's reed bird cages, "given the areas in which they occurred, there is enough evidence to defend its [Azorean] origin" (1953: 112).

A third strategy was to replace the folkloristic parallels with the Azores, when these were not solid enough to support a presumed Azorean origin, with more generic comparisons with Portuguese folklore. That was the case with the *pau-de-fitas* folk dance, which, according to Oswaldo Cabral, could have been "brought by people from [the Portuguese] continent" (Cabral 1953: 42). In this case, the emphasis on strict Azorean origin was replaced by a more general reference to Portuguese ethnogenesis.

From ethnogenealogy to autochthony

More recently, the weaknesses of the ethnogenealogical narrative have raised increasing reservations and paved the way for the gradual development of a new perspective on Santa Catarina's folk culture. Adapting the concept proposed in Nicole Loraux's (1990) study of Greek mythology, this new approach can be termed autochthonous.¹² According to this perspective, the idea of Azorean culture is less and less dependent on the establishment of specific links with the Azorean motherland. Instead all folk cultural elements occurring within the area of Azorean colonization in the state of Santa Catarina, including the cultural adaptations and hybrids developed by the Azorean descendants, are designated as "Azorean."

The impact of this new perspective on Azorean culture on recent developments in the Azoreanist movement is diversified. One of the results is the gradual weakening of the ethnogenealogical paradigm. In the case of architecture, it is nowadays obvious that Santa Catarina's folk architecture is not specifically Azorean, but, more generically, Luso-Brazilian. A NEA activist emphasized this point to me:

We all know that what we have here is colonial Luso-Brazilian architecture, [...] and that this type of architecture is common in all of the Portuguese empire. The same architecture that we can find here in Brazil, is also to be found in Macao, in Guinea Bissau, anywhere in the world [...]. So, obviously, our folk architecture is typical colonial Luso-Brazilian architecture. It is not specific [to Santa Catarina or to the Azores]. It is typical Luso-Brazilian architecture.

In the case of *boi de mamão*, there is also an increasing acknowledgment of the weakness of the traditional Azoreanist narrative. Besides not having any known parallel in the Azores, the performance has also strong affinities with similar expressions of African-Brazilian culture. Thus, for the director of the Franklin Cascaes Foundation, "*boi de mamão* is not an Azorean dance. *Boi de mamão* is a theatrical performance centered on the death and resurrection of an ox, with Bantu origins, it's African [...]. Although lots of people say 'Well, it's an Azorean [dance], let's dance the *boi de mamão*', [it is not an Azorean dance]." Although less categorical, a NEA director has the same skeptical opinion on the Azorean origins of *boi de mamão*:

The more apparent basis of our culture is Azorean, but [...] besides Azores, there are other influences: the Indigenous one, [...] the Black one, the Euro-

¹² On this topic, see also Juaristi (2000) and Detienne (2003).

pean one [...] There are many things that we have here which do not exist in the archipelago [of Azores]. And [at NEA] we try to emphasize that in the courses of the *Mapeamento Cultural*. We try to give a number of examples of aspects [of local culture] that a lot of people say: 'oh, that's Azorean, we were colonized by the Azorean, so that's Azorean [...]'. *One of classical examples is boi de mamão, everybody says that boi de mamão is Azorean and it is not* (emphasis added).

Thus, for a growing number of activists, not everything in the folk culture of Santa Catarina is ethnogenealogically Azorean. As an activist from Iatajaí told me,

There is a great confusion surrounding this story, a great confusion. And it has become more and more complicated to convince people that one thing is the Azorean tradition, another thing Brazilian folk culture, for whom several ethnic groups, several races, several cultures have contributed, and that have also produced several cultural practices and values. You cannot turn everything into Azorean. [...] Some people have already begun to realize that. But there is also a great confusion still going on.

This does not mean, as we have seen before, that Azorean ethnogenetic references have been completely abandoned by the Azoreanist movement. But its current influence is not as hegemonic as it used to be in the past.

Simultaneously, in relation to aspects of folk culture with more plausible Azorean origins, a stronger acknowledgment of the differences between Santa Catarina and the Azores has developed. Holy Ghost festivals provide a good example. The director of the Ethnographic Museum of UFSC, for instance, definitively notes that:

The Holy Ghost Festival that I attended [in the Azores] had nothing to do with the Holy Ghost festivals we have here. So I believe that the way we do those things [here] comes from a more remote and archaic background, dating back to the late Middle Ages [which cannot be found any more in the Azores].

One of NEA's activists conducting ethnographic research on Holy Ghost festivals analyzed general affinities between the Holy Ghost festivals in Santa Catarina and the Azores, but also emphasized specific differences between them. Thus, while "in the Azores the *bodos* tradition is still intact [...] here in Santa Catarina [that tradition] is completely lost" (Clétison 2000: 436). Similarly, in contrast to the Azores, "here in Santa Catarina Holy Ghost Brotherhoods do not have [...] any importance at all in the organization of the festival" (*id.*: 437). The important roles played by Holy Ghost *folias* and by "images of Saints in Holy Ghost parades" (*id.*: 438) in Santa Catarina are other

differences stressed by the author, who replaces the emphasis on parallels with an emphasis on divergent modes of evolution of the same ritual.

In some cases, this increasing acknowledgment of difference is, ironically, a paradoxical result of the enhanced direct contacts with the Azorean motherland. Indeed, while providing in some cases a context for the acknowledgment of affinities between the Azores and Santa Catarina, these contacts also allow for an inventory of differences between them. Thus, after traveling to the Azores, a NEA activist came to the conclusion that actual Azorean culture has only survived in the shores of Santa Catarina and does not exist any more in the Azores:

What we have here in Santa Catarina is stuff that is similar [...] to the stuff that was brought by the Azorean settlers [...] In the Azores, after the contact with the North American Air Force basis and after intensive emigration to the United States, they have already discovered another cultural universe. [...] So it is here [in Santa Catarina] that we can find ways of thinking, religious habits and superstitious beliefs that don't exist any more in the Azores, that the Azores have lost...

Another NEA director who has lived for two years in the Azores is also very sensitive to differences:

The first impression I had in 1995 when I arrived to the Azores, was that the Azores were really very much like Santa Catarina, for instance in terms of the look of the town [of Ponta Delgada], etc. [...] But then I was very impressed by the fact that people there are very different from people here. [...] [There are many] differences in behavior, [...] on [interpersonal] communication, on interpersonal relationships. [...] They are very formal, very cold [...]. Both the lifestyle and the way of thinking are also very different. [...] Holy Ghost festivals, for instance, or any other religious feast, the way that people behave, the relationships, communication, everything is different.

Simultaneously, among some activists there is also a growing awareness of mixture, adaptation and fusion between Azorean and other ethnocultural elements. One of the activists whom I interviewed was very clear on this point:

All [...] we know is that there is here [in Santa Catarina] an important cultural background of Azorean origin. But technically, we also know that we have cultural contributions from the Portuguese – not only Azorean, but Portuguese – from the Indigenous groups who inhabited the land, and that left a strong imprint in our culture, and from Black groups [...]. We also know that the first Azorean who came here had to adapt to the land. So there was, and I am very much aware of that, an adaptation of Azorean culture.

Speaking about the presumed Azorean origin of traditional children's games in Santa Catarina, an activist from Imbituba also told me that,

All the traditional children games that we used to do, when we consult the available researches we find out that they were brought by the Azorean, although they are now very different from the original ones, because, you know, each region changes the tradition [...] and people modify the culture.

As to manioc mills or to traditional dishes made of manioc, many activists are now ready to admit the importance of processes of creative adaptation and of Indigenous contributions.

From Azorean culture to Azorean-based culture

It is mainly through the concept of "Azorean-based culture" (*cultura de base açoriana*), initially proposed by NEA, that this autochthonous perspective on Azorean culture has come to develop within the Azoreanist movement. This concept has been mainly argued in the writings of Wilson Farias. For him, Azorean-based culture "rests upon a set of values transplanted from the archipelago of Azores," to which were added the values "of *vicentista* culture [...], as well as the values of Indigenous, Black and other minority cultures," such as that of Germans and Italians (Farias 2000: 98). The Azorean-based culture of Santa Catarina must, he argues, be conceptually distinguished from "Azorean culture," or "[the culture] of the Azores" (*id., ibid.*). The differences between them can be found,

in gastronomy, as well as in folk dances and performances, religion, traditional technology and agricultural products. [...] *It is necessary to stress these differences in order to avoid the mistake of rendering similar what is in fact different.* We cannot forget that 250 years have passed since the first Azorean colonizers settled in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina. We cannot forget either that the inhabitants of the Azorean archipelago have also introduced, during this period of 250 years, major changes in their way of life (*id.*: 98-99, emphasis added).

Thus defined, Azorean-based culture extends its influence beyond the descendants of the Azorean settlers of Santa Catarina. Having mixed with other local cultures, Azorean-based culture is also the cultural reference of many "descendants of other cultures [who] adhere to [Azorean] values with the same intensity that the Luso-Azorean descendants do" (*id.*: 99).

The concept of Azorean-based culture can also be found among many other activists of the Azoreanist movement. Thus, for a NEA director, not everything in Santa Catarina's folk culture is Azorean:

We are completely aware that is not so. That's why we use so often the term [...] "Azorean-based culture." We are saying that the most apparent cultural basis of our culture is of course the Azorean one, but also that [our culture] [...] is not only Azorean, it is also Indigenous, it is also Black, it is also European.

The director of the Ethnographic Museum of UFSC has the same opinion when, for instance, he mentions the importance of *boi tatá*, a mythological motif of Indigenous origin, in Santa Catarina's folk culture:

That's why we always use the expression Azorean-based culture. Azorean culture has come from Europe to the Azores and there a new cultural form developed [...]. Here, in Santa Catarina, Indigenous and Black culture were added to that cultural form. That's why we define Santa Catarina's culture as having an Azorean basis: because it's more than Azorean, since it adds Indigenous and African [elements].

Freeing Santa Catarina's folk culture from the constraints of a rigid Azorean ethnogenealogy, which tended to reduce it to a mere sum of replicas of actual Azorean folk culture, the concept of Azorean-based culture allows also for a more comprehensive and diversified inventory of cultural items encompassed by the Azoreanist narrative.

This expansion of the Azoreanist narrative is particularly clear among NEA's activists. For instance, in his book *Dos Açores ao Brasil Meridional* (2000), Farias lists items of alleged Azorean origin along with items whose Azorean origin is not mentioned or which have even other ethnic origins. In the first case, there are dances such as *fandango* (*id.*: 355) or *mastro de São Sebastião* (*id.*: 356), performances linked to the Twelfth Night celebrations (*id.*: 385), folk literary expressions such as *pão-por-Deus* poems (*id.*: 417) and folk stories (*id.*: 426), religious traditions like *coberta d'alma* (*id.*: 446), etc.¹³ In the second case, there are dances such as *sarrabalho* (*id.*: 359) and *cacumbi* (*id.*: 360), folk architecture (*id.*: 464) and *boi tatá* (*id.*: 495).

This enlargement of the concept of Azorean culture can also be found in the activities of other organizations besides NEA. The Ribeirão da Ilha Eco-Museum, for instance, rather than presenting a strict inventory of Azorean folk culture in the island of Santa Catarina, displays a very heterogeneous set of objects all related to the traditional way of life in the island.

¹³ Ironically, Santa Catarina's *coberta d'alma* has strong affinities, unexplored by Wilson Farias, with the Azorean tradition of the *missa do vestido de alma*. Cf. Leal (1994) for a description of the latter tradition in the island of Santa Maria.

The Azorean “label” has gradually become a generic label for local folk culture – including many elements without links to the Azores, such as witch stories, Twelfth Night celebrations, pottery, or lace – instead of a specific label attached only to local folk culture of actual Azorean origin.

It is in this context that suspicions of displays of contemporary folk culture from the Azores can be understood. An ex-director of NEA, for instance, expressed his strong reservation regarding ethnomimetic approaches to Azorean folk culture:

There are two groups here that perform actual folk dances of the Azorean archipelago: ARCOS and the Azorean group from Criciúma. The rest of the groups have repertoires based on local folk dances. And, so far as Azorean-based culture is concerned, our interest is *of course to build a bridge with the Azorean archipelago, but without changing our own cultural pattern here in Santa Catarina*. Santa Catarina’s cultural pattern is typical of Santa Catarina. And we don’t want to change it (emphasis added).

The launching of a *Casa dos Açores* in Santa Catarina has also stirred up controversy and division within the movement. One of the critics told me he was not committed,

to the preservation of the culture from the Azores. I am concerned [...] with the defense of Santa Catarina’s culture. [But] the *Casa dos Açores* [...] emphasizes actual Azorean folk culture. However, Azorean folk culture from the Azorean archipelago is one thing and folk culture from Santa Catarina’s coastal areas is another thing. I have been stressing this all the time. We do not need a *Casa dos Açores* to defend Santa Catarina’s culture. [...] So I am against *Casa dos Açores*. There is a Portuguese consulate here that does the same job... A *Casa dos Açores* is meant to safeguard the values of Azorean culture among actual Azorean individuals. [But] there are no Azoreans here! We are ninth generation Azorean descendants. Ninth generation! It does not make any sense.

Another activist had a very similar opinion:

People here run to the Azores [...], but I do not agree. I believe, I still believe, that what has to be done is to record the cultural legacy that is still alive here! It is here, in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina that this work has to be done, because in the Azores things have already changed a lot, because the Azores are not the same anymore. I believe that the fundamental work has to be done here.

Conclusions

The Azoreanist movement has evolved from a strong ethnogenealogical orientation towards a perspective in which ethnogenealogy increasingly coexists with an autochthonous interpretation of folk culture. The label Azorean culture, which initially was applied only to actual Azorean folk culture and to its presumed survivals in the coastal areas of Santa Catarina, now includes all cultural expressions perceived as typical of the area of Azorean colonization in the state of Santa Catarina, independently of its actual Azorean roots. "Azorean" is no longer an exclusive ethnogenealogical label, but constitutes a more comprehensive category for all folk culture, including autochthonous folk culture, within the area of Azorean colonization. Like the Black Caribbean activists in the UK mentioned by Stuart Hall, Azorean activists in Santa Catarina are becoming aware that "culture is not an archaeology," but also "production" (1999: 16). For them, too, the question is not only "what traditions make of us but what we make of our traditions" (*id.*, *ibid.*).

The gradual emergence of this perspective has been accompanied by a simultaneous and significant enlargement of the popular support enjoyed by Azoreanism. Initially restricted to the cultural and political elites of Florianópolis, the movement has become, in the 1990s, a conspicuous presence in Santa Catarina's political and cultural landscape. One of the most visible expressions of this enlargement is the impressive number of shops, restaurants, tourist resorts and even luxury apartments, which have been named after the Azores. This profusion of Azorean signs is quite recent and can be seen as an expression of what we might call, adapting Michel Billig's (1995) concept of "banal nationalism," an Azorean "banal" ethnicity. Simultaneously, "Azorean" has also become a usual expression for the self-identification of individuals and groups. When asked to explain if they are natives of Santa Catarina island or of certain coastal municipalities, people will spontaneously declare that they are "Azorean" meaning that they were born "here," "in the island," etc. Many local communities also tend to define themselves as Azorean. As are the Azorean signs, the important role played by the Azoreanist paradigm in the self-definition of individuals and groups is very recent. Four or five years ago it would not only have been impossible to find so many examples of such a spontaneous self-identification but, in most cases, the very idea of "Azorean" would have been incomprehensible to many people.

These developments are a result of important changes that have taken place in the approaches to Azorean culture. Indeed, the expansion of the Azoreanist movement is structurally linked to the diversification of the instruments and tools successively used by the "Azoreanist cause." The former elitist nature of the movement cannot be separated from the empha-

sis on folkloristic scholarship as the sole instrument initially used by Azoreanist activists. Conversely, the recent expansion of the movement is strongly dependant upon a diversification of approaches which stress, for instance, the connections between the "Azorean cause" and the protection and preservation of local cultural heritage or link it to the commodification of culture associated with tourism and contemporary arts and crafts (cf. García Canclini 1998). In both cases, these new approaches have secured new audiences for the "Azorean cause."

Simultaneously, the democratization of the Azoreanist movement is also part, as I have shown elsewhere (Leal 2002), of a more general pattern of ethnicization of the culture and politics in the state of Santa Catarina, integrated not only by the Azoreanist movement, but also by identity movements linked to German, Italian and Gaúcho immigration. The role played by the Azoreanist movement in the cultural and political resistance to Gaúcho immigration is especially important and a major factor in its increasing presence in the areas of Azorean colonization in Santa Catarina.

Although these two reasons for the success of the Azoreanist movement are certainly very important, I am convinced that it is also strongly due to the development of the autochthonous paradigm of Azorean culture. Weakening the "straight-jacket" of ethnogenealogy, the gradual autochthonization of the idea of Azorean culture has turned it into a more open entity within which several cultural and political agendas can converge: from heritage preservation to identity politics based on inter-ethnic competition, from contemporary artistic creation to tourist marketing based on "reconstructed ethnicity" (MacCannel 1992).

It is also against this background that a paradox I encountered during my fieldwork can be solved: the fact that many Azoreanist activists, besides not being actual Azorean descendants, were often of recent German, Italian or Polish ancestry. While showing the importance of forms of ethnicity which subvert the primordialism often inscribed in ethnic ideology, these cases of ethnic switching also stress a major consequence of the processes of autochthonization and enlargement of the concept of Azorean culture. Because Azorean culture tends increasingly to evoke the place where one was born and where one lives, rather than the distant place from where some remote ancestors have come, the appeal of the Azoreanist discourse outside the strict circle of "Azorean descendants" tends to increase in a significant way.

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João Leal

“NÓS SOMOS AÇORIANOS”: DISCURSOS E PRÁTICAS DE CULTURA POPULAR EM SANTA CATARINA (BRASIL)

Um dos aspectos principais da cena política e cultural contemporânea do estado de Santa Catarina (Sul do Brasil) é o desenvolvimento do movimento açorianista, que tem como objectivo principal a redescoberta e celebração das raízes açorianas da ilha de Santa Catarina e de outras áreas costeiras do estado.

Remontando à década de 40 do século XX, o movimento teve durante muitos anos uma expressão reduzida, até que, recentemente, se tornou bastante mais influente. Este artigo procura examinar o importante papel desempenhado pela cultura popular nas actividades e reivindicações identitárias do movimento, contrastando as suas tematizações etnogeneanealógicas sobre a cultura popular de Santa Catarina com representações mais “autóctones” do folclore local.

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