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TRAVELLING RITUALS: AZOREAN HOLY GHOST FESTIVALS IN THE UNITED STATES¹

This article analyses the Holy Ghost festivals organized by immigrants from the Azorean island of Santa Maria (Portugal) in the US city of East Providence, RI. The article stresses the diasporic dimension of the festivals and the way in which they combine tradition and innovation, faithfulness to roots and adaptation to a new social and cultural context.

Keywords: ritual, migration, ethnicity, Portuguese-American

The scene is a large room. There are two laptop computers and a printer on a table between piles of printouts of lists and photocopies of maps downloaded from "Yahoo". Two cell phones can also be seen. The two computer screens have an Access file open with names, addresses, more names and credits and debits in English. Three men sit at the table; two of them are unshaven and blurry-eyed as if they had been up all night. The third has just come out of the shower – his hair still wet – and looks freshly shaven. Laid out on nearby tables are rows of raw meat hygienically sealed in transparent plastic bags, different types of breads and biscuits on small plastic plates and bottles of wine. This food is being loaded onto pick-ups and will be delivered door-to-door by teams of two men, who, equipped

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with lists and maps, will sort out with the cell phones problems they might have about finding the way.

In this hectic scenario with dozens of people rushing about, orders and counter orders, cars coming and going, the most surprising element is the way in which these visible signs of technology and modernity blend with practices and representations linked to tradition and roots.

Indeed, what I have just described is the general atmosphere surrounding the distribution of *pensões* – the Portuguese name given to a gift of raw meat, sweetbread, and red wine – that are part of the *Império Mariense*, a Holy Ghost festival organized by Marienses – the Portuguese name given to the Azorean immigrants from the island of Santa Maria² – who live in East Providence, a city in the state of Rhode Island, where 35% of the population have an Azorean origin. The sophisticated and ultra-modern equipment mentioned – computers, data basis, cellular phones – is thus used within the framework of a ritual, the Holy Ghost festival, which aims at recreating a rural tradition saturated with ethnographic references.

Continuity and change, tradition and innovation are indissolubly entwined here. This article seeks precisely to explore the dialectics between continuity and change, between tradition and innovation, between faithfulness to roots and adaptation to a new socio-cultural context, as demonstrated in the Mariense Holy Ghost festival of East Providence. After presenting some historical and current aspects of Azorean immigration to the US, the paper addresses these dialectics of ritual continuity and change as reflected in the formal structure of East Providence Mariense Holy Ghost festivals. The next section of the paper links these dialectics to the transnational and bifocal identities of *Mariense* immigrants, which also affect, it is argued, the socio-cultural meanings of the ritual and its connections to the cyclical assertion and reinforcement of networks of social relationships. In the concluding section, I turn to Stuart Hall's characterization of diasporic identities as anchored both in Tradition and Translocation as a way of understanding the hybridity of Mariense Holy Ghost festivals in the US.

The Azorean immigration to New England

Azorean emigration to the USA developed in two major phases.³ The first dates back to the final decades of the 19th century. The states of Massa-

² The Azores are an archipelago of nine islands in the mid-Atlantic belonging to Portugal. Approximately 240,000 inhabitants live on the islands. Santa Maria, a small island with an area of 97 km², has a population of approximately 5,000. Throughout the paper I will use the Portuguese adjective "Mariense" to refer to people (or things) originally from the island of Santa Maria.

³ Azorean immigration to the US constitutes the overwhelming majority – sometimes estimated at 90% – of the Portuguese immigration to the US. Unless stated to the

chusetts and Rhode Island, on the East Coast, and of California, on the West Coast, were the main destinations of the immigrants, who were mostly active in whaling. After the decline in whaling, at the end of the 19th century, Azorean immigrants shifted to other activities. In New England, besides some small groups active in fishing and agriculture, they started working in the textile industry, especially in New Bedford and Fall River, cities that then became leading textile centers in the US. In California, apart from small communities working in the fishing industry, the immigrants have established themselves mostly in agricultural activities, especially in dairy farming.

This first wave of migrants continued in large numbers until the Great Depression in 1929. While in 1870 there were only 9,000 Azorean immigrants in the US, in 1930 the number had risen to about 280,000 (including first and second generation immigrants) (Williams 1982:52). Approximately 35% of these immigrants lived in California and 40% in the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island (ibid.).

Despite the scarcity of qualitative studies focused on this first wave of migration, existing information suggests that the Portuguese immigrants – who also came from the Cape Verde Islands – seem to have been ethnically and socially marginalized. For instance, Donald Taft (1969 [1923])⁴ described the Portuguese of New England in a very negative tone:

With a candor that would be politically incorrect nowadays, Taft (...) emphasized "the ignorance and illiteracy of the Portuguese", their "lack of interest and meager attainment in education, low wages and economic exploitation, superstition and fatalism, cheap amusements and unrestrained fecundity" (Mulcahy 2001:1).

The anthropologist Estellie Smith, who did research among the Azorean immigrants of New England in the 1970s, also stressed that the Portuguese were often given the derogatory name of "*Portygee*" (Smith 1978:64) and that – mainly because of the Cape Verdean immigrants – "many (...) considered the Portuguese to be at least partly black" (ibid. 1975:64).

As a reaction to this initial marginalization, the immigrants worked hard to join the US "melting pot". As Smith wrote about the Portuguese in Textport:⁵ "The Portuguese seemed ready to acculturate and embodied the traditional New England virtues by being industrious, penny wise and aware that 'good fences make good neighbors'" (ibid.:63). The Americanization of Portuguese last names, whereby Rodrigues became Rogers,

contrary, the expressions "Azorean", "Portuguese", "Azorean-American" and "Portuguese-American" will be used in this paper to speak of the Azorean immigrants in the US. The information used in this section comes mainly from Williams (1982) and Mulcahy (1998, 2001). For further information cf. Pap (1981) and Baganha (1990).

⁴ On Taft's study, see also Almeida (1998).

⁵ Textport is the name given to a fictional city, a combination of Fall River (Text) and New Bedford (Port). I would like to thank Onésimo Teotónio de Almeida for valuable information on this point.

the *Silvas Sylvias* and the *Ferreiras Smiths*, is one of the best known examples of the kind of voluntary invisibility Portuguese immigrants were striving for.

The flow of Azorean immigration was interrupted by the Great Depression, which resulted in about 24,000 Azoreans returning to the Azores in the 1930s. It picked up again after the volcanic eruption at Capelinhos (Island of Faial) in 1957-1958 and reached particularly high numbers after the 1965 Immigration Act, which opened the US to a new wave of migration.

This resulted in a large number of Azoreans immigrating in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. According to the trend of migratory waves to the US (Portes & Rumbaut 1996:28-56), these new immigrants settled in the traditional areas of the "first immigration": New England and California. Whereas immigrants coming from the central and eastern islands of the Azores settled in California, immigrants from the island of São Miguel – the most important and populated island of the Azores – settled in New England, where it is also possible to find smaller groups of migrants coming from the islands of Santa Maria, Faial, Pico, Terceira, Graciosa, and Flores.

There are no exact figures concerning both the dimension of this second wave of migration and the actual size of the Azorean communities in the USA. However, it is usually assumed that the Azorean migration to the US between 1960 and 1980 reached at least 182,000. The size of the Portuguese-American community in the US, according to the 1990 Census (cf. Mulcahy 1998, 2001), is of 900,000 individuals of Portuguese ancestry, of which 80 to 90% are usually assumed to be of Azorean origin. Of these 900,000 individuals, 232,000 were born in Portugal. Thirty percent (approximately 275,000) lived in California and 35% (approximately 317,000) in the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.⁶ While dairy farming is still the most important activity in California, the Azorean immigrants in New England tend to concentrate in industry, construction, as well as in other occupations requiring semi-skilled labor. There has been, however, some upward social mobility in the second and third generations. Thus, according to Mulcahy, in 1990, in Southeastern Massachusetts, while 50% of first generation Portuguese-Americans worked in factories, in the second and third generation this figure declined to 20%. While the majority of these Portuguese-American has jobs in the trade retail sector, some of them are also moving to liberal professions (Mulcahy 1998).

In New England, the Azorean immigrants settled in three main areas: in Cambridge and Somerville, on the outskirts of Boston; in Southeastern Massachusetts; and in the state of Rhode Island. Cities with particularly large numbers of Portuguese immigrants are Fall River, with 46,000 Portuguese-Americans, who make up 50% of its population, and New Bed-

⁶ The exact figures for each of the states are 241,173 in Massachusetts and 76,773 in Rhode Island.

ford, with 45,000 Portuguese-Americans who make up 45% of its population. In the state of Rhode Island, especially in East Providence, Pawtucket, etc., there are some 76,000 Portuguese-Americans, approximately 10% of the total population of the state.

This second wave of migration has been relatively better studied than the "first migration". For instance, we know that the new immigrants, besides benefiting from the fact that there was already an established Portuguese community in the US, also benefited from the new multicultural environment that had developed in the US since the 1960s. It is also known that there were some initial clashes with the first Portuguese immigrants, who were distrustful of the newcomers. The anthropologist Estellie Smith, who studied this conflict, described it as follows:

The old Portuguese, who had tried hard to join the melting pot and become American, refusing their Portugueseness, were distressed and embittered (...) because they perceived that the same ethnicity that had worked against them and, especially, in their first years in this country, had made their lives so difficult, was now a Good Thing (Smith 1978:68).

It is also known that the new immigrants defined themselves basically as "Azorean", meaning that they lived in communities composed almost exclusively of fellow Azorean and made little effort to integrate into the US society, at the same time that they maintained strong ties with the Azores.

The most emblematic characterization of the Azorean "ethnic enclaves" (Portes & Manning 1999) was provided in 1987 by Onésimo Teotónio de Almeida:

One can live in a completely Portuguese L(USA)land: work in a factory with Portuguese bosses, go to Portuguese shops and supermarkets and buy all kinds of Portuguese products; go to mass said in Portuguese (...); the whole week's program can be taken up entirely with Portuguese social, sports, religious or cultural events; parties, weddings and baptisms of Portuguese relatives or friends; have dinner and listen to the *fado* at a dozen Portuguese restaurants; keep up with a Brazilian or Portuguese TV serial; watch a LASA soccer game (...) or listen to it on the radio as well as watch the highlights of the match on the Portuguese TV evening news; join in all kinds of dinners, tributes, birthdays, parties given to celebrate incoming directors of associations with everything taking place in a Portuguese club room with music played by Portuguese groups; have a coffee in a Portuguese café; have his (or her) children in a school where they learn sciences in Portuguese in a bilingual program; get the photographs of a Portuguese wedding taken by a Portuguese photographer; buy a car from a Portuguese salesman and have it insured by a Portuguese insurance agency; buy a ticket for the Azores from a Portuguese travel agent and even fly on a plane chartered by a L(USA)land company (...); go to a Portuguese bookshop and buy Portuguese books and newspapers (...); be seen by a Portuguese doctor or then get a lawyer who also speaks Portuguese (...) to handle the di-

voice; even be embalmed in a Portuguese funeral house (...) (Almeida 1987:21-22).

In recent years, however, as a consequence of the decline of Azorean immigration to the US, a tendency towards more effective assimilation in US society and culture developed. As Almeida wrote about Azorean immigrants in Rhode Island, "the community is slowly integrating with the mainstream, without alarm, without much noise, without great exploits or publicity" (Almeida 1995:535). As a result the Azorean communities in the USA are increasingly less "Azorean" and more "Azorean-American".⁷

"Back Home": Holy Ghost festivals and tradition

Holy Ghost festivals have played an extremely important role in the processes related to the construction of identity among Azorean immigrants. This role must be seen as a result of the great importance that these festivals have in Azorean religious, cultural and social life.⁸ Holy Ghost festivals are celebrated in every parish of the Azorean archipelago and are indeed a central element in the religious and social lives of the Azorean population. They are also a ritual which has been central to the identity of individuals and groups in the Azores.

Re-created in the USA, Holy Ghost festivals have played an important role in the maintenance of symbolic ties between the immigrants and the homeland. They have also been an active element in the construction of a sense of community among the immigrants and an important symbol of Azorean and Azorean-American ethnicity.

The figures available show the importance of the Holy Ghost festivals in the Azorean Diaspora. According to information provided by the directors of the *Grandes Festas do Divino Espírito Santo* of Fall River – an annual festival that brings together Holy Ghost brotherhoods from all over New England – there are seventy Holy Ghost brotherhoods active in the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Holy Ghost festivals are celebrated every weekend between Holy Ghost Sunday and the beginning of September in both states, and in several weekends there are Holy Ghost festivals taking place at three or four different neighborhoods.⁹

This re-creation of Holy Ghost festivals in the US, which began during the first wave of migration and reached its peak during the 1960s and 1970s, has followed certain patterns.

The most important of these patterns is connected to the segmentary nature of the process. In fact, in the Azores, group identity is structurally linked to two major geographical and social units: the parish and the

⁷ On hyphenated Americans, see, for instance, Walzer (2000).

⁸ For further information on this topic, cf. Leal (1994).

⁹ Holy Ghost festivals are also of great importance among the Azorean immigrants in California. Cf. Goulart (2002).

island. Although people also identify themselves as Azorean, this more general level of identification is somehow recent and coexists with a stronger sense of loyalty towards the island and the parish. Immigration has reinforced the importance of these loyalties. Indeed, both the access to the American Green Card and settlement in the US were greatly dependent on pre-existing social networks which were operative at the level of the parish, or, in the case of smaller islands, at the level of the island.



The "imperador" and his wife, East Providence Império 2001.

It is precisely this segmentary logic that presides over the re-creation of Azorean Holy Ghost Festivals in the US. Apart from the recently created pan-Azorean *Grandes Festas do Divino Espírito Santo* of Fall River, Holy Ghost festivals in the US have been re-created as festivals organized by groups of immigrants coming from specific Azorean islands and/or parishes.

Mariense *Impérios*, or Holy Ghost festivals organized by immigrants coming from the island of Santa Maria, are a good example of this trend. The first Mariense *Império* in the US was founded in 1927 by immigrants from Santa Maria who had arrived during the "first immigration". It was founded in Saugus, which is currently a northern suburb of Boston, by a group of immigrants from Santa Maria who had settled in Cambridge (Boston, MA). Other *Impérios* were launched during the "second immigration" in other towns of New England: in Hartford, CT, in 1976; in Hud-

son, MA, where the Mariense represent 80% of the local Azorean population, in 1978; and, more recently, in Bridgewater, MA.¹⁰

The East Providence Holy Ghost festival is part of this pattern of re-creation of Mariense *Impérios* in New England towns with significant groups of immigrants from Santa Maria. Indeed, among the East Providence Azorean population of 15,000, who come mainly from the island of São Miguel, there is also a small group of 1,000 immigrants from Santa Maria.

Initiated in 1986, the *Império* was founded by some of the more active members of the Mariense community in East Providence. One of its founders, Manuel Braga, wrote a detailed account of the foundation of the *Império*:

On the day of the *Império Mariense* in Connecticut [in 1986], José P. Cunha and José M. Resendes [two immigrants from Santa Maria living in East Providence] went out to have some Holy Ghost soup, and were nostalgically recalling the Mariense Holy Ghost festivals of the past. As they were talking to one another, they suddenly came to the conclusion that they too could also organize an *Império* in East Providence. Although the Mariense population there was rather small, all that was needed was good will.

José P. Cunha spoke to John Medina, who thought that the idea was a good one, and then they both spoke to Manuel F. Braga, João F. Braga, João L. Marques, José M. Braga and Manuel S. Braga. They had a first meeting but were too few to be able to appoint a committee. They decided then to appeal to all the Marienses in East Providence and surrounding areas to see if they could set up a committee to start off the project they had in mind.

As a result eighteen people (...) turned up and a committee was appointed. (...) The committee (...) held a general meeting in which 38 people took part and approved a plan for the launching of the association they intended to form. The association was registered so that they could take the first steps towards organizing a Holy Ghost festival. While some people thought that the first festival should be held in 1987, others insisted that the *Império* should take place that very same year, which was 1986. This issue divided both the committee and the general meeting. Voting took place and the majority decided that the first *Império* should take place that year (Braga s/d:1).

The association – which currently has 200 members – was named Mariense Holy Ghost Brotherhood. First, the *Império* took place on the premises of other Holy Ghost Brotherhoods in East Providence, but in 1998 the Mariense Brotherhood moved into its own premises, located at the Mariense Cultural Center. As well as organizing other activities, such as dinners based on traditional Mariense menus, the Brotherhood also rents

¹⁰ There are also records of a Mariense *Império* taking place in Taunton, MA in the 1970s, but this festival has apparently come to an end.

out the premises for a number of events, such as weddings, showers, etc., organized by Azorean immigrants who live in East Providence.

However, the main activity of the Brotherhood is, of course, the *Império Mariense*, which, has taken place, since 1998, on the first weekend of July.



An aspect of the parade, East Providence Império 2001.

The structure of the East Providence festival is directly inspired by *Impérios* back home.¹¹ Thus, as in Santa Maria, the Holy Ghost is symbolized by a silver crown, topped by a dove, which is part of a ceremonial kit, also composed of a scepter and a tray, both in silver. The main protagonist of the festival is the *imperador* (literally "emperor"), who is helped by some twenty to thirteen *ajudantes* (literally "those who help" [the emperor] or "assistants" [to the emperor]). Among those *ajudantes* are the so-called *ajudantes grados* (literally "major assistants"): the *trinchante* (literally "carver"), the *mestre sala* (literally "master of ceremonies") and two *briadores* (from *vereador*, literally "councilor"). One of the more important *ajudantes* of the *Império* is the *pagem de mesa* (literally "table page"), who is a child, usually an *imperador's* son, nephew or grandson. During the festival, music is provided by the *folia*, a traditional musical

¹¹ Since the specific contents of *Impérios* in the five parishes of the island of Santa Maria present some diversity, the East Providence festival uses as its main source of inspiration the *Impérios* of the parish of Santo Espírito.

group composed of three musicians. In the East Providence festival, the *folia* is backed by one or two Portuguese-American brass bands.

As in Santa Maria, the most important occasion of the *Império* is the so-called *dia de Império* (literally "the day of the *Império*"), which takes place on a Sunday. Among the ceremonies that take place on *dia de Império*, the most important one is the *coroação* (literally "crowning"). This ceremony, which is preceded and followed by two processions, usually takes place at the end of mass and consists in the crowning of the *imperador* by the priest. After the mass, and throughout the day, a number of distributions of food, open to all who wish to join the celebration, also take place. Inside the premises of the Mariense Cultural Center, *Sopas do Espírito Santo* (literally "Holy Ghost Soup"), a soup made of beef and wheat bread, is served. Outside, the *ajudantes grados* are in charge of distributing, throughout the day, slices of *massa sovada* (sweet bread) and glasses of red wine to anyone who asks for them. In the morning, usually before the mass, Holy Ghost Soup is also delivered door to door to some 20 to 30 old or sick people who cannot attend the *Império*. Finally, just as in Santa Maria, the celebrations of *dia de Império* also include musical attractions and several stalls with food and drinks.

Besides *dia de Império* celebrations, East Providence Holy Ghost festivals also include, as in Santa Maria, a number of preliminary ceremonies and celebrations. In the week prior to *dia de Império*, the rosary is prayed each night at the *imperador's* house, where the crown is kept on a decorated altar. Meals are also offered to the assistants, especially in connection with the preparation of the food at the Mariense Cultural Center. Finally, on the eve of *dia de Império*, a procession carries the crown from the *imperador's* house to the Mariense Cultural Center.

Every Mariense involved in the celebrations insists on how scrupulously the ritual sequence of the *Impérios* back home is replicated by the East Providence festival. This idea was strongly emphasized to me by the directors of the Mariense Holy Ghost Brotherhood during our first conversation, in May 2000, at the Mariense Cultural Center. In a room decorated with nostalgic photographs of wheat threshing, maize harvest and *Impérios* of the 1950s, I was told that the aim of the *Império Mariense* was to produce a copy of the *Impérios* of Santa Maria. One of the directors even suggested that in East Providence the Mariense *Império* was more faithful to Mariense tradition than most of the *Impérios* in contemporary Santa Maria: "perhaps we are better organized than they are there". This idea, which is recurrent in other diasporic contexts, was constantly repeated to me during my fieldwork: "it is here, on this side of the ocean, that tradition is alive", "tradition in Santa Maria is coming to an end", "*Impérios* here are more complete [than in Santa Maria]", etc.

The traditionalist claims of many Marienses in East Providence emphasize, on the one hand, the alleged fidelity of the general sequence of the festival to the original sequence of *Impérios* back home. Simulta-

neously, the authenticity of the local *Império* is also argued by pointing out how certain specific sequences of the original Mariense Holy Ghost festivals, viewed as more typical or traditional, can be found in the US. That is the case with a ceremony called *provimento da mesa* (an expression that can be translated as "opening the meal"), which, in *dia de Império*, initiates the distribution of slices of sweet bread and red wine. Many people gather to watch the ceremony, which is minutely regulated, and their comments stress the way in which the whole ceremony is performed according to the traditional requisites. That is also the case with the so-called *caldo da meia-noite* (literally "midnight broth"), a distribution of Holy Ghost soups that takes place at the eve of *dia de Império*. Viewed as one of the most picturesque sequences of the *Impérios* back home, its performance in East Providence becomes a means for claiming authenticity and fidelity to tradition for the local *Império Mariense*. The debates about the genuineness of the flavor of Holy Ghost soups, the comments about the musical performance of the *folia*, whose members sometimes come from Santa Maria, are further proof of this strict and constant monitoring of the authenticity of the ritual, both by the organizers and by the audience. What seems to be at stake is the way in which several meaningful details of the ritual are able to reproduce the "genuine tradition of the *Impérios* of Santa Maria", thus enhancing the authenticity of a ritual which is viewed as a faithful facsimile of the original *Impérios* of Santa Maria.



Watching the parade, East Providence Império 2001.

This traditionalist discourse is also the driving force behind some small changes that have been introduced in the East Providence festival in order to make it look more authentic. An example of this authenticity can be found in the decorated arches that are put on top of the pick-ups that are used to distribute the *pensões*; these arches are inspired by similar arches which, in Santa Maria, decorate the ox carts which are prominent in some *Impérios* processions. This is also the case with the small Holy Ghost flags that the assistants carry with them when they distribute the *pensões*. Although these small flags are also used in Santa Maria, they are used in a different ritual context. Thus, in both cases, actual transformations in the ritual are legitimated by recourse to tradition.

The continuation and future of tradition is also one of the main concerns of the activists involved in the organization of the East Providence Holy Ghost festivals. As in other contexts, there are constant complaints that "youngsters no longer want to have anything to do with tradition" and the musical program of the *Império* is directed towards young people, in an effort to contradict the so-called "law of the second-generation", according to which assimilation into US society and culture and the consequent distancing from the homeland is the prevailing tendency among the children of first-generation immigrants.¹² To this effect, younger musical artists and groups, whose repertoires have little in common with Portuguese music, are usually invited to perform. A special celebration directed and performed by children has been also launched in 1998 as part of the festival in order to "teach them so that they may continue the tradition". Inspired on the *Impérios de Crianças* (literally "Children's *Impérios*") that take place in Santa Maria on Saint John's day,¹³ this celebration is a kind of small-scale *Império*, in which children themselves carry out all the preparations and ritual sequences of an *Império*.

"Away from Home": innovation in the Holy Ghost festivals

Despite all the emphasis put on tradition and on fidelity to the original ritual, East Providence Holy Ghost festivals are strongly affected by change, innovation and cultural creativity. Hidden behind the purity that the participants demand for the ritual, one can also find contamination, impurities and transformations.

First of all, these transformations affect the organizational structure of the celebrations. One of the major changes relates to the weakening of

¹² One of the canonical formulations of the law of the second-generation was proposed by Hansen. According to him, the second-generation immigrant "wanted to forget everything: the foreign language that left an unmistakable accent in English speech, the religion that continually recalled childhood struggles, the family customs that should have been the happiest of all memories" (Hansen 1996, 1938:204). Cf. Kivisto and Blanck (1990) for a reevaluation of Hansen's thesis. Cf. also Portes & Rumbaut (1996:232-268 and 2001) for current debates on the second-generation.

¹³ Cf. Leal (1984:58) on Mariense *Impérios de Crianças*

the role of *imperador* as the main organizer and sponsor of the festival. In Santa Maria *Impérios* are the direct result of individual promises made to the Holy Ghost, which exchange the favor solicited and granted to the individual for an *Império*. Although the community also participates actively in the funding of the festival, it is the *imperador* who assumes the basic responsibility for its organization and funding. Indeed, the share of the *imperador* in the financing of an *Império* represents between 40% and 70% of the total expenses, which in the 1980s amounted to Euros 150,000. Through the appointment of a special assistant known as the *copeiro* (literally "butler"), the *imperador* also has a decisive role in the organization of the festival.

In East Providence, however, this twofold role of the *imperador* as the sponsor and the main organizer of the festival has substantially weakened. His role becomes basically a ceremonial one and his organizational and funding responsibilities are transferred to the board of the Brotherhood. In financial terms, while the *imperador* usually pays for the meat needed for the preparation of the Holy Ghost soup, the bulk of expenses of the *Império*, which can amount to some \$30,000, is borne by the Brotherhood. It is also the board of directors of the Brotherhood that chooses and supervises the assistants of the *Império*, except for the *ajudantes grados* and the *pagem de mesa*, who are generally chosen by the *imperador* among close family members. Finally, in the event that no prior promises have been made, it is the Brotherhood directors who choose the *imperador* from among their members.

A second group of transformations is related to the ritual sequence of the Mariense *Impérios*. Apart from some minor alterations, the major change has been the introduction into the sequence of the festivals of the so-called *domingas* ("domingas" is the feminine plural of "domingo", the Portuguese name for Sunday) This is the name given to a set of preliminary ceremonies that precede the actual *Império*. These ceremonies take place during each of the seven weeks prior to *dia de Império*. Each *dominga* has its *mordomo*, who keeps the Holy Ghost crown at his house for one week. During the week, a number of rosary devotions take place at the *mordomo*'s house, and, on Sunday, after the mass, a lunch is usually held at the Mariense Cultural Center. This lunch is attended by 50 to 150 guests and, besides other courses, must also include Holy Ghost soup. At the end of the meal, items offered by the guests are auctioned. The profits, which may amount to \$3,000, revert on behalf of the Mariense *Império*. *Mordomos* are usually chosen among those who volunteer for the job and the expenses associated with the *domingas* are usually supported by the respective *mordomo*.

Another major change in the ritual contents of the *Impérios* is the introduction of the distribution of *pensões* mentioned at the beginning of this paper. This distribution consists of a door-to-door distribution of a *pensão* composed of raw beef (5 lbs), wheat bread, sweet bread, biscuits, and a bottle of red wine. These *pensões* are given in return to all those who

have previously made gifts of \$25 to the *Império*. These gifts, which can at times be as many as 700, represent an important part of the revenues of the *Império*. Besides these standard *pensões*, there are also the *pensões grandes* (literally "large *pensões*") usually numbering from 30 to 40. These *pensões grandes*, which also include a bigger piece of raw beef and one *pão leve* (a kind of sponge-cake), are given in return to those who have made gifts of over \$250 to the *Império*. The distribution of *pensões* takes place one week before *dia de Império* and, as we have seen, is carried out by groups of two assistants carrying a small Holy Ghost flag.¹⁴

Finally, a third group of changes relates to some ritual forms of the *Império*. These changes are particularly relevant in connection to the organization of processions. New figures, such as the *rainha da festa* (literally the "festival queen"), and her maids of honor, have been added. Local authorities are also represented in the processions. More Holy Ghost silver crowns, as well as several Holy Ghost banners and flags, have also been introduced into the ritual. Underpinning this series of changes, is the desire to add a more spectacular tone to the *Império* processions. As a consequence, they now have their own organizing committee directly appointed by the board of directors of the Mariense Brotherhood.

Transnationalism and bifocal identities

To sum up: Mariense *Impérios* in East Providence are as much about tradition as they are about innovation. This apparently contradictory anchorage in both tradition and innovation reflects the ambiguous and contradictory status that characterize Mariense migrants in the US. As in the case of other Azorean communities in New England, the Mariense community can indeed be seen as an ethnic community, unstably located between the country of origin and the host country. It is a transnational community in the sense that Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994) use this concept, through which they characterize the structural ambiguity of the identity of migrants, and the way in which they are as involved with the host country as they are with their country of origin, maintaining multiple relations and identities that cross national borders.

As the Mexican immigrants studied by Roger Rouse, Mariense immigrants have thus become:

skilled exponents of a cultural bifocality that defies reduction to a singular order. Indeed, in many respects (...) they [too] have come to inhabit a kind of border zone, especially if we follow Américo Paredes in recognizing that a border is 'not simply a line on a map but, more

¹⁴ Although there is a similar distribution of food in Santa Maria, both its name – *irmandade* [literally "brotherhood"] – and its main characteristics are very different from *pensões*. In East Providence as a result of the introduction of *pensões*, *irmandade* has lost its former importance; the same occurs in the Mariense *Impérios* of Bridgewater, Hudson and Saugus.

fundamentally,... a sensitized area where two cultures or two political systems come face to face" (Rouse 2002, 1991:163).

The traditionalist dimension of *Impérios* is connected to the importance that the homeland has for the identity of Mariense migrants, viewed as bifocal transmigrants. Celebrating tradition, they try to recreate the homeland in the host country, thus injecting a dose of Azoreanness into the lives of people and groups who, despite living in the US, also live in the Azores. The innovative side of *Impérios* is about creating ties with the host country and adjusting a traditional discourse to a new socio-cultural context, to its codes and representations. It is about that other side of the transnational condition of migrant communities constituted by the links to the country where the immigrants have chosen to live. In that sense, East Providence *Impérios* – like the stories that the immigrants mentioned by Svetlana Boym tell about the diasporic objects they have at home – "reveal more about making a home abroad, than about reconstructing the original loss" of home (Boym 2001:328).

Thus, some of the changes introduced in the ritual sequence of *Impérios* can be seen as a means of adapting them to the constraints, expectations and codes of the larger Azorean-American community the Mariense immigrants have joined. In fact, as I have mentioned before, the Azorean-American community in New England is dominated by Micaelenses, i.e., by immigrants coming from the island of São Miguel, which is the most important island of the archipelago of the Azores. As a consequence, Micaelenses control most immigrant organizations and the majority of local political leaders are also recruited among them. The ritual and festive calendar of the Azorean-American community is also strongly influenced by distinctive aspects of Micaelense folk culture, such as *Romarias Quaresmais* (Lent processions which exist only in São Miguel) or the cult of *Senhor Santo Cristo* (Holy Christ, the Lord). In the case of the Holy Ghost festivals, the Micalense influence means that the Micaelense variant is the dominant variant of Holy Ghost festivals all over New England.¹⁵ This means that not only the majority of New England Holy Ghost festivals are organized by Micaelense brotherhoods according to the São Miguel variant, but that Holy Ghost festivals organized by immigrants coming from other Azorean islands are strongly influenced by the Micaelense variant.

That is precisely the case with the Mariense *Impérios*. Indeed, some of the changes that have been introduced to the *Impérios* can be seen as the direct result of the influence of the Micaelense way of celebrating the Holy Ghost. That is the case with the changes that have affected the organizational structure of the *Impérios*. In fact, the increased importance of the Brotherhood in the organization of the festival to the detriment of the *imperador*, the introduction of *domingas* and *pensões*, are all changes

¹⁵ For a presentation of the Micaelense variant of Holy Ghost festivals, cf. Leal (1994:182-185).

that reflect the importance that these three aspects have in São Miguel Holy Ghost festivals.

So, while reflecting tradition and preserving specific Mariense characteristics, the *Impérios* have also undergone transformations that tend to adapt them to the new ethnic context in which they are now performed.

Besides being dominated by Micaelense immigrants, this new ethnic context is also a context where an active dialogue with US culture is often engaged. It is from this point of view that the changes concerning the processions can be analyzed. These changes can indeed be viewed as a result of a process of adoption of the conventions and norms surrounding the "parade", viewed as an US specific genre of marching.¹⁶ The influence of this pattern is particularly evident in the presence of the Portuguese, US and Azorean flags at the head of the parade, closely followed by several representatives of local political authorities such as state representatives, the mayor and other members of the City Council, and members of the School Committee. The introduction of new characters, such as "the festival queen" and maids of honor, also reflects the influence of the US pattern of the parade.

In this case, innovation in the *Impérios* reflects how Mariense immigrants, as other sub-groups of the Azorean-American community, while using fundamentals of their traditions in order to celebrate their country of origin, have also entered into an active dialogue with their host country.

Other aspects of the festival also illustrate the importance of this dialogue with US culture. That is the case with the choice of artists invited to perform at the *Império*. Along with folkloric groups, who are supposed to perform and enact Portuguese or Azorean tradition, American pop music and rock and roll artists are also invited. The assortment of "homeland flavors" and "fast food" in the stalls is another example of this coexistence between the cult of roots and innovative cultural blending. Alongside the *malassadas*, *caçoila*, smoked sausage and other Azorean traditional dishes, one can also find hot dogs, hamburgers and other US snacks.

To sum up, behind tradition, which connect the immigrants to their country of origin, lies innovation, which relates them to the new ethnic context and to American culture. *Impérios*, as the immigrants themselves, are unstably located at the intersection of distinct cultural universes between which their protagonists and their audience move. The same bifocality that characterizes the migrant condition also characterizes Mariense *Impérios*.

¹⁶ On the "parade" as an American genre of marching, see, for instance, Ryan (1989).

Kinship, neighborhood, work and community: old and new forms of sociability

I have demonstrated elsewhere (Leal 1994) that *Impérios* in Santa Maria are an important ritual tool for the cyclical assertion and reinforcement of networks of social relationships. This dimension of *Impérios* is strongly connected to the language of gifts and reciprocity. It is through gifts and counter-gifts of food, through meals and other forms of food-sharing that *Impérios* in Santa Maria contribute to the reassertion of social ties within family, kin, neighborhood, and larger social units such as the parish or the island.

Mariense Holy Ghost festivals in the US maintain this vital sociological dimension. However, their role in the cyclical reassertion of social ties is also strongly affected by the dialectic between tradition and innovation that I have been addressing.

Thus, in the US, *Impérios* continue to have – just as in Santa Maria – a fundamental role in the reinforcement of family and kinship ties.

Kinship is indeed central to the understanding of the social dynamics of the Mariense Brotherhood. The Brotherhood is directed by two main bodies: the executive committee and the board of directors. The first has five members elected for one year and the second has nine members who serve two-year mandates; four of the mandates in the board of directors are renewed during even-numbered years while the other five are renewed during odd-numbered years. Whereas the executive committee is in charge of the executive administration of the Brotherhood and, most of all, of the organization of the *Império*, the board of directors is a kind of fiscal council with great authority in financial areas.

One of the most relevant aspects in the composition of these two bodies is the fact that the majority of their members belong to one of three "extended" Mariense families, usually designated by their respective last names: the "Amarals", the "Sousas" and the "Bragas". As a result, these families are viewed as essential to the very operation of the Mariense Brotherhood and of the *Império*.

The language of kinship is also important for the annual organization of the *Império*. Indeed, although his actual functions in East Providence are less relevant than in Santa Maria, for the accomplishment of his ritual duties the *imperador* is also strongly dependent on the language of kinship. Some of his assistants are chosen among his close relatives, especially in the case of the major assistants of the "festival queen" and her maids of honor. Female members of the *imperador's* family play an important role in the preparation of food for the festival. *Impérios* are also important occasions for the reunion of relatives of the *imperador* living in different areas of the US and Canada.

Finally, the language of kinship is also important in the *domingas*. On the one hand, many of those who help to prepare the food for the

Sunday lunch are relatives of the *mordomo* in charge of the *dominga*. On the other, most of the guests at these Sunday lunches are also relatives of the *mordomo* or of his wife.

Thus, as in Santa Maria, the East Providence *Impérios* continue to provide a relevant context for the cyclical strengthening of kinship ties. From this point of view, they do not only share strong similarities with the *Impérios* "back home", but also show the enduring importance of kinship among Mariense immigrants.

Mariense *Impérios* in East Providence are also strongly linked to the ritual assertion of the island as a major social unit in Azorean social life. Besides the fact that the majority of the members and directors of the Mariense brotherhood share a common Mariense background, several other aspects of the *Império* also show the importance of Marienses in the organization of the festival. The participation of Mariense immigrants, both through *pensões* and through *pensões grandes*, is also of great importance.¹⁷ Finally, in the door-to-door distribution of Holy Ghost Soup that takes place in the morning of *dia de Império*, the majority of soups handed out were for Marienses.

The importance of Santa Maria is also stressed by the policy of inter-visits of the East Providence brotherhood. Holy Ghost brotherhoods in New England usually send delegations, consisting of board members and the *imperador*, to a selected number of Holy Ghost festivals with which they have a more close relationship. In the case of the East Providence *Império*, this inter-visit policy gives preference to other Mariense *Impérios* in New England, such as the *Impérios* of Hartford, CT, and Bridgewater, MA.

Finally, the importance of Santa Maria in the East Providence *Império* can also be found in the way in which the celebrations of *dia de Império* bring together Mariense immigrants from several areas of the US. In the past, when there was only one Mariense *Império* in the US; that *Império*, which took place in Saugus, MA was the rallying point of the Mariense Diaspora in North America. But, even today, with a total of five Mariense *Impérios* taking place in the US, Mariense *Impérios* in general and the East Providence *Império* in particular, continue to be attended by hundreds of Mariense immigrants living in the US who join to celebrate their common ties to homeland. Bus excursions to visit the different *Impérios* are often organized, and, in some cases, the realization of an *Império* provides an occasion for more formal gatherings of Mariense immigrants in the US. An example was seen in 2002 with the third "Bairos"

¹⁷ Ten percent of the number of *pensões* – 84 out of a total 700 in 2001 – come from Mariense immigrants. The contribution of Marienses is of even greater importance in the case of *pensões grandes*; in 2001, out of a total of 27 of these *pensões*, 21 came from individuals born in Santa Maria.

meeting¹⁸ in the US, which brought together over 200 people and took place in Hudson, MA on the same day as the local Mariense *Império*.

Thus, like in Santa Maria, *Impérios* keep, under the new immigrant conditions, a strong localist dimension, reasserting the importance of the island as a pivotal framework for individual and group identity. They can thus be viewed as a celebration of the deterritorialized Mariense community in the US.

But, at the same time that they maintain strong connections to social ties and groups related to the country of origin, Mariense *Impérios* have also been affected by the new sociological environment in the host country.

The most relevant modification in this respect is the decline of the importance of the parish in the organization of Mariense *Impérios*. Indeed, in Santa Maria, the parish is one of the fundamental social units for the promotion of Holy Ghost festivals (cf. in particular, Leal 1994:107-127). However, in the US, due mainly to the low figures of Mariense immigration, the home parish loses its importance as a main locus for the social identification of individuals and groups. The decline of the importance that the language of the neighborhood has in *Impérios* back home must also be noted. Indeed, both *vizinhos de perto* (close neighbors) and hamlet neighbors are fundamental to the working of *Impérios* in Santa Maria (cf. in particular, Leal 1994:77-104). In the 1960s and 1970s, when Azorean immigrants used to concentrate in densely populated ethnic enclaves, neighborhood relations retained some importance in the social networks of the Mariense Diaspora. But with the recent suburbanisation of a large number of immigrants, the neighborhood has lost its importance. As a result, the influence of the language of the neighborhood in Mariense *Impérios* in the US has also substantially declined.

At the same time, new social networks, closely linked to the new American social and cultural environment, have acquired an important role in East Providence Mariense *Impérios*. That is the case of social networks based on the workplace, which are absent in *Impérios* in Santa Maria, but have become very important in the US *Impérios*. This importance of the workplace is particularly evident in *pensões*. Indeed, outside the Mariense circle, the great majority of *pensões* – almost 500 out of a total of 700 – circulate among the Azorean workmates of the directors and other activists of the Mariense *Império*.

The importance of the workplace reflects the sociological importance of industrial and post-industrial forms of work: besides being a means for earning a living, work has also become, in the US and other countries, a major focus for personal identity and social relations (cf.

¹⁸ "Bairos" is a very common last name in Santa Maria and there are many people who argue that it is a last name that can only be found in Santa Maria or among people of Mariense ancestry.

Sennet 1999). In the case of Mariense immigrants, this sociological importance of work is reinforced by the close relationship between ethnicity and work (cf. Portes & Manning 1999:88-96). Indeed, a number of jobs in the Azorean Diaspora are ethnically oriented. For example, there are many small firms owned by Portuguese-Americans in sectors such as construction, gardening, garages, restaurants, which basically employ Portuguese-American workers. There are also some US companies that recruit an important part of their employees from the Azorean community as, for instance, the American Insulated Wire Corporation, based in Pawtucket (RI). Although owned by North Americans, the company employs so many Portuguese that it sends representatives to Portuguese-American events such as Portugal Day or the Fall River *Grandes Festas do Divino Espírito Santo*.

Finally, Mariense *Impérios* in the US also reflect the importance of a larger Azorean identity in the social lives of individuals and groups in the Diaspora. As we have already seen, the importance of this large Azorean framework, under Micaelense aegis, is evident in some formal changes that the *Impérios* have undergone (*pensões,omingas*, etc.). But it can also be seen in the participation of non-Mariense Azorean in *pensões* and in the celebrations of *dia de Império*.

This Azorean dimension of the Mariense *Impérios* results, on the one hand, from the mixing of Mariense immigrants with other Azorean immigrants in the workplace. But it is also a result, on the other, of increasing inter-marriage between Mariense and non-Mariense Azoreans. This last tendency is clearly reflected among the East Providence Mariense *Império* activists. Although the Mariense are clearly dominant among these activists, there is also a significant number of non-Mariense directors and assistants who actively participate in the *Império* because they are married to people from Santa Maria. That is the case of one of the 2000 Brotherhood executive committee members, who is also one of the major financial contributors to the *Império*. Although he was born in São Miguel he is married to a woman from Santa Maria.¹⁹

Concluding remarks

To sum up, *Impérios* are both a ritual where homeland identities and social networks are reflected and a ritual open to new social ties and identities resulting from immigration. Like their formal sequence, the sociological meaning of *Impérios* also reflects the way in which they speak simul-

¹⁹ This Azorean dimension of the Mariense *Impérios* and also of the Mariense community is again under Micaelense aegis. The most common relations both in the workplace and through inter-marriage are those that the Mariense tend to establish with the numerically and culturally dominant group within the New England Portuguese-American community, the Micaelense.

taneously about continuity and change, about fidelity to tradition and active accommodation to a new cultural environment.

Addressing the contemporary "fragmentation of identities", Stuart Hall (1992:274) – following Robins – has stressed the way in which globalization has "a pluralizing [and contradictory] impact on identities" (ibid.:309):

While some identities gravitate towards (...) Tradition, attempting to restore their former purity and recover the unities and certainties which are felt as being lost (...) [O]thers accept that identity is subject to the play of history, politics, representation and difference, so that they are unlikely ever again to be unitary or pure; and these consequently gravitate to what Robbins (following Homi Bhabha) calls "Translation" (ibid.:310).

Impérios reveal the importance in the Mariense ethnic community of these social and cultural identities, rooted both in Tradition and Translation.

(...) Identities (...) which are not fixed, but poised, *in transition*, between different positions; which draw on different cultural traditions at the same time; and which are the product of those complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly common in a globalized world (ibid.:310).

At the same time that they engage in a dialogue with Tradition, these "formations of identity" – in particular those linked to diasporic cultures – are engaged in the work of Translation:

[They] Cut across and intersect natural frontiers and which are composed of people who have been *dispersed* (...) from their homelands. Such people retain strong links with their places of origin and their traditions, but they are without the illusion of a return to the past. They are obliged to come to terms with the new cultures they inhabit, without simply assimilating to them and losing their identities completely. They bear upon them the trace of the particular cultures traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped (ibid.).

We hope to have shown the ways in which the East Providence Mariense Holy Ghost festival is, indeed, a good example of this dialogue between Tradition and Translation characteristic of contemporary diasporic identities.

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PUTUJUĆI RITUALI: AZORSKI FESTIVALI SVETOGA DUHA U SJEDINJENIM AMERIČKIM DRŽAVAMA

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SAŽETAK

Festivali Svetoga Duha odigrali su važnu ulogu u procesima konstrukcije identiteta među azorskim imigrantima u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama. To je zbog toga što su ti festivali veoma važni u azorskom religijskom, kulturnom i društvenom životu. Nanovo stvoren u dijasporijskom kontekstu, festival Sv. Duha postao je središnjim čimbenikom u održanju simboličnih veza između imigranata i domovine i u nastajanju osjećaja zajednice u azorskoj dijaspori.

U članku se analizira Império Mariense, festival Sv. Duha koji organiziraju azorski imigranti s otoka Santa Maria nastanjeni u gradu East Providence u državi Rhode Island. U tome je gradu 35% stanovnika azorskoga podrijetla. Na primjeru tog festivala u članku se istražuje dijalektika kontinuiteta i promjene, tradicije i inovacije, odanosti korijenima i prilagodbe novomu društvenokulturnom kontekstu.

Nakon što je predstavio neke povijesne i suvremene aspekte azorske imigracije u SAD-u, autor propituje kako se navedene dijalektike odražavaju u formalnoj strukturi festivala Sv. Duha u East Providenceu. One se povezuju s transnacionalnim i bifokalnim identitetima imigranata podrijetlom sa Santa Marie. Bifokalni identiteti migranata utječu na društvenokulturna značenja festivala i na njegovu ulogu u potvrđivanju i jačanju društvenih mreža. Da bi objasnio hibridnost azorskih festivala Sv. Duha u SAD-u autor se na kraju poslužio Hallovom karakterizacijom dijasporijskih identiteta – usidrenih i u tradiciji i u prijevodu.

Ključne riječi: ritual, migracija, etnicitet, američki Portugalci