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BETWEEN MEMORY AND RESISTANCE: AFRO-COLOMBIAN IDENTITY, COLONIAL HERITAGE AND THE VISION OF A MUSEO AFRO

BIANCA CORTES-LEHN

ABSTRACT: The article explores the Afro-Colombian identity as shaped by historical, cultural, and political frameworks, focusing on the intersection of memory and resistance within the Afro-Colombian experience. Highlighting the impact of colonial legacies, it examines how Afro-descendant communities negotiate their cultural identity amid ongoing social and economic inequalities. Particular emphasis is placed on the proposed *Museo Afro* in Cali, which aims to safeguard and showcase Afro-Colombian heritage through the utilization of participatory methodologies, including co-creation laboratories. The article argues that the museum can challenge historical exclusions, promote cultural recognition, and serve as a site for resistance and self-determination. Furthermore, the discussion considers the traveling exhibition *El vuelo de El mochuelo* as a model for integrating local narratives into a national framework of remembrance and cultural visibility.

KEY WORDS: Afro-Colombian identity - Participatory exhibition design - Collective memory - Decolonial heritage - Co-creation methodologies - Afro-Latin American diaspora - Cultural resistance

Since the 1990s, governments across Latin America have recognized the existence of people of African descent as distinct ethnic groups, and some have granted specific cultural, social and territorial rights to communities of African descent (CORREA OCHOA 2019: 5). This recognition also included various anti-racist reforms, from constitutional amendments that became part of national education standards to regional laws that addressed the political and territorial rights of Afro-descendant populations (SILVA 2022: 296). Following the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban from 31 August to 7 September 2001, the concerns of Afro-Latin Americans gained international recognition. Paragraph 33 of the report of the World Conference called upon all countries of the Americas and all other areas of the African diaspora to recognize the existence of their populations of African descent and the cultural, economic, political and scientific contributions of these populations (UNITED NATIONS 2001: 14). It also noted the persistence of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, which particularly affect them, and that in many countries long-standing inequalities in access to education, health care and housing are at the root of the socio-economic disparities that affect them (UNITED NATIONS 2001: 9).

Colombia is one of the Latin American countries with a notable Black population. Colombia's diverse ethnic groups, originating from the Spanish colonial era, have fostered a culture of ethnic diversity, which was formally recognized in the 1991 constitution.¹ The constitution acknowledges Colombia's multi-ethnic and multicultural composition, and provides

1 In the 1991 constitution, the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups were recognized for the first time as "ethnic communities" under constitutional law.

SYNCRETIC RELIGIOSITY IN A BELARUSIAN ORTHODOX MONASTERY PROSHCHA^{1, 2}

BAHDAN SERDZIUK

ABSTRACT: Modern anthropology of religion proceeds from the fact that syncretism is not just a designation of cultural or religious mixtures, but a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, a socio-cultural process. At the same time, this concept is historically, ideologically, and politically conditioned and reflects the interests of those who use it. One modern approach to the study of syncretism is proposed by R. Shaw and C. Stewart. They propose studying syncretism as a process associated with power, identity, and control. This approach to syncretism as a policy of religious synthesis allows for a deeper understanding of social processes in the religious field. In the article, this approach is applied to the study of syncretism in the Belarusian Orthodox monastery Proshcha. The study shows that the interaction of such actors as the media, clergy, and laity in the process of negotiations in the religious field leads to a combination of Christian elements with pre-Christian beliefs and practices, as well as with elements of non-traditional spirituality associated with New Age spirituality.

KEY WORDS: Orthodox Christianity – syncretism – New Age – anthropology of religion – power

Introduction

The title of this article contains the term *syncretic*. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “*syncretism is an attempt to combine or reconcile different or opposing principles or practices, especially in philosophy or religion*” (OED). It was in the sense of combining or mixing religious rites and beliefs that this term was used for a long time in European scholarship, until researchers in the late 20th century drew attention to its methodological ambiguity and ethical dubiousness. Given the controversial nature of the use of the term “syncretism” in modern scholarship, I would like to devote the introductory part of this article to a brief overview of the debates about syncretism in the modern anthropology of religion and to consider what I believe to be one of the most promising theoretical approaches to the study of this complex and ambiguous phenomenon.

Speaking about the historical roots of this term, it is worth noting that the word *syncretism* itself comes from the ancient Greek prefix *syn* (“with”) and *krasis* (“mixture”), forming *syngkrasis* – “mixing together”. The earliest mention of the term *syngkretismos*, the predecessor of syncretism, is found in Plutarch, who described the unification of the Cretans in the face of an external threat. Thus, syncretism initially implied a (profane) strategic alliance and reconciliation (SHAW and STEWART 1994: 3).

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THE SERVICE TREE, A TRADITIONALLY GROWN TREE OF THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF CENTRAL EUROPE

VÍT HRDOUŠEK

ABSTRACT: Southeast Moravia is a region known for preserving traditions. This region is also associated with the unique service tree (*Sorbus domestica* L.), which has played a significant role in the culture of Moravian Slovakia, as evidenced by a number of surviving giants that are 300 years old or more. Traditional use of the tree's fruit and its wood was initially widespread, though it gradually disappeared with the socialization of the countryside. Certain legends and stories have been long been associated with the tree, the fact that some persist shows a continued respect for and interest in it. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the service tree has experienced a renaissance: once again it is being cultivated for its medicinal fruit and decorative appearance.

KEY WORDS: Service tree (*Sorbus domestica* L.) syn. (*Cormus domestica* (L.) Spsch) – cultural populations – old trees – fruit and wood production – Central European fruit growing

The service tree (*Sorbus domestica* L.) is a long-lived tree, unlike the majority of cultivated fruit trees in Central Europe. In the cultural tradition of Europe, it is not only perceived as a fruit tree, but also as a border, ancestral, commemorative, protective and medicinal tree (HRDOUŠEK 2024b). There is controversy about the origins of the species in Central Europe. Some experts, especially in forestry research, see the species as having spread spontaneously after the Last Glacial Maximum (PRUDIČ 1998; ROTACH 2003; RUDOW 2010) or even as an indicative species of the rare thermophilic oak forest especially of the *Quercetum pubescenti-roboris* association (ROLEČEK 2013). However, most botanical taxonomists are inclined to believe that the species is not native, rather it was introduced to Central Europe by humans in several waves, starting in the Roman period (1st to 3rd centuries) together with cultivation of the vine. Due to its large size and the appearance of its fruit, the service tree is sometimes classified in the folk tradition of Central Europe as a pear tree (HRDOUŠEK 2014). This has been partly confirmed by new taxonomic and genetic studies, and the species has been assigned the new generic name *Cormus domestica* (SENNIKOV a KURTTO 2017). Owing to the service tree's rarity, not only in Central Europe but throughout the continent, most research is devoted to its distribution, fruit content, and genetics (GEORGE et al. 2015; ŠPIŠEK et al. 2021). There is only fragmentary information about the tradition of cultivation and the occurrence of current cultural populations in Europe (KAUSCH 2000). Information on its history is based on the publication *The Service Tree - The Tree for a New Europe* (HRDOUŠEK 2024a). Describing how this rare tree was and is used today in the horticultural traditions and local cultures of Central Europe is the main aim of this article.

The first written record of the service tree – as a fruit tree called *Oia* (in Greek οἰα, with its fruit ὄβον) – comes from the ancient period, when, according to German forester and academic Wedig Kausch Blecken von Schmeling (KAUSCH 2000), Theophrastus (371–287 BC) described the service tree roughly as follows: “Service trees are of two sexes: female, which bear fruit, and male, which are infertile. We can also distinguish them by their fruits: their shapes range from round to ovoid. Furthermore, we can distinguish the fruits by their

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