

RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN JOÃO PESSOA

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ABSTRACT

Religion and religiosity are human productions that exist within the cultural realm. Considering culture as an integral part of human life, it is deemed a cultural phenomenon occurring within the time and space experienced by each individual. In Brazil, the topic of religion has been garnering increasingly intense interest among researchers who recognize the importance of the sacred in people's lives. Various analyses encompass the diversity of religious phenomena and numerous assumptions to explain the expansion and/or contraction of different religions. Objectives: To examine the meaning attributed to the religious phenomenon in human daily life, especially beliefs and rituals based on scientific criteria. To understand religion as a system of beliefs and practices that determine the worldview of a society or community. Methodology: Thus, we aim to present Religious Tourism as a contribution of religious culture to a culture of peace – recognition of otherness – a basis for dialogue; • Religious principles – recovery of ethical values in society and common well-being. This work was based on bibliographic and documentary research to seek theoretical references and a deeper understanding of the addressed topic. Information was gathered through magazines, newspapers, and the Internet. Result: The purpose is to provide an insight into this important element of human life – religion, pilgrimage, and religious tourism in João Pessoa. Considerations: Paraíba presents a great religious diversity that reflects in its history, culture, and society. According to IBGE data, the predominant "religion" is Catholicism, covering about 78% of the population, followed by Evangelicals, representing about 15%. There are also other minority religions, such as Spiritism, Afro-Brazilian, Afro-American, and Eastern religions. This diverse religiosity influences various aspects of Paraíba's life, including education, politics, art, and popular festivals. Tolerance and respect are fundamental values for peaceful coexistence among different beliefs and religious manifestations in Paraíba and João Pessoa.

Keywords: Tourism. Religion. Religious Tourism in João Pessoa.

INTRODUCTION

Religion and religiosity are human productions and fall within the realm of culture. This, being an integral part of human life, is considered a cultural phenomenon occurring in the time and space experienced by each individual. This religious theme in Brazil has been garnering increasingly intense interest

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among researchers who recognize the importance of the sacred in people's lives.

In sociology, as articulated by thinkers such as Durkheim (2009) and Weber (1974), religiosity is manifested as a way to explain its origins, while from a humanistic perspective, emphasis is placed on subjectivity and the experiences that individuals undergo. Within these various classifications, the diversity of religious phenomena is encompassed, along with numerous assumptions to explain the expansion and/or contraction of different religions and their social groups.

In anthropology, GEERTZ (1989) emphasizes, "Attempting to understand and analyze a culture without knowing its history, without considering geographical realities, socio-political contexts, and others, we enter a delicate terrain where sometimes the boundary between what is truly cultural and what can be identified as a religious phenomenon is thin. Not to mention that in the pursuit of an interpretative theory, we will also face significant challenges, such as ethnocentrisms, fundamentalisms, pluralisms, and others.

Within these various types of analysis, the diversity of religious phenomena is encompassed, along with numerous assumptions to explain the expansion and/or contraction of different religions. Examining the meaning attributed to the religious phenomenon in human daily life, especially beliefs and rituals based on scientific criteria. Understanding religion as a system of beliefs and practices that determine the worldview of a society or community.

The religious experience is the experience of the transcendent and transcendence in the search for the meaning of life, religiosity is the manifestation of the religious experience in a particular group, and religion is the institutionalization of the religious experience.

Geertz defines religion as "a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing

these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (GEERTZ, 2013, p. 93).

Regarding religion, another thinker that should be taken into consideration for the understanding of the historical phenomenon is the German Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). In "The Essence of Christianity" (2013), the author lays the groundwork for the future understanding of another German thinker, Karl Marx (1818-1883), conceptualizing religion as an alienation of human essence. Feuerbach's view does not encompass the social character of religion, as Weber does, but his contribution emphasizes the materiality of the religious phenomenon as a creation of human essence.

In this way, we seek to present Religious Tourism as a contribution of religious culture to a culture of peace – recognition of alterity – a basis for dialogue; • Religious principles – recovery of ethical values in society and common well-being. The development of this work was based on bibliographic and documentary research, in search of theoretical reference and deeper insight into the addressed topic. Information was gathered through magazines, newspapers, and the Internet.

RELIGIONS IN JOÃO PESSOA

The 'Map of Religions,' conducted by the Getulio Vargas Foundation, showed that the majority of the population in Paraíba is composed of Evangelicals and Catholics. Of the nearly 3.7 million people living in the state, more than three million follow the doctrines of the church of Pope Francis, and another 455,000 profess the Protestant faith. Another 245,000 residents either have no religion or belong to still considered minority beliefs. In João Pessoa, there are at least six religions that differ from those preached by Catholicism or Evangelicals, with believers of different religions; some worship Greek gods, others seek divine encounters through herbs, and there are religions that emerged in the Middle Ages, almost extinct during the Spanish Inquisition but resurged in the capital (BENI, 2019).

The most important factor for society was the Church, due to its way of catechizing the people. The main churches that accompanied Paraíba

during colonial times were: The main church of Nossa Senhora das Neves, Church of Misericórdia, Church of Mercês, Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos, Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Mãe dos Homens, and the Church of Bom Jesus dos Martírios.

The origins of Jurema, Umbanda, and Candomblé have assertions and visibility in Paraíba. According to Marques et al. (2019),

To study religions is to be committed to knowledge and free from absolute truths, seeking possibilities and meanings. The historian of religions must be committed to knowledge and not to absolute truths. (MARQUES, et al., 2019).

This is the purpose: to present a perspective on this important element of human life, religion, pilgrimage, and religious tourism in João Pessoa.

Adventism

Adventism emerged from the studies of Guilherme Miller, which began to be revealed in 1831 in the United States of America. He preached that the return of Jesus would occur at a specific time between 1843 and 1844. From 1845, the Millerite Movement split into various groups, and one of them became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The community grew, leading to the need to create a structure to support pastors and missionaries. Thus, they established themselves in the 1860s.

In the next decade, they began sending missionaries to other countries overseas. Adventist beliefs reached Brazil through literature, immigrants, door-to-door preachers, and, finally, pastors in the 1880s and 1890s. Missionary work initially developed in the South of the country due to the presence of many immigrants and later expanded to the North. Only in 1911 did Adventism reach Paraíba, but it only began to develop in the state from 1921 onward.

An interesting fact is that the Northeast was the stage for one of the largest spiritual revivals in the history of the church in Brazil. In 1951, evangelist Roberto Rabello held a series of public conferences in Recife,



Pernambuco, which resulted in more than 5 thousand baptisms in one year. This event became known as the "Pentecost of the Northeast" and marked the beginning of a period of rapid growth for the church in the region (KNIGHT, 2015).

Protestantism

Protestantism arrived in Brazil in the 16th century but faced repression from the Inquisition. The first Protestants were killed in Guanabara Bay in 1557. Protestantism only returned to Brazil in the 17th century with the Dutch colonization of the Northeast, especially in Pernambuco and Paraíba. It was only legalized in Brazil in the 19th century, after the country gained independence from Portugal.

It was a religious movement that opposed actions and rules of the Catholic Church. The main figure of the Reformation was the German monk Martin Luther (1483/1546), who, in 1517, published 95 theses fundamentally criticizing the sale of indulgences, where the "Church granted" divine forgiveness to anyone who paid. This act gave rise to a rupture procedure that seriously shook the Catholic religion.

In the 16th century, a significant reform took place within the Catholic Church, but before that, thinkers were already criticizing the practices of the Church, such as the English theologian John Wycliffe (1320-1384) and the Czech philosopher Jan Huss (1369-1415). Wycliffe wanted the Church to limit itself to spiritual matters, leaving politics to the State.

Jan Huss initiated a movement based on Wycliffe's ideas and opposed the sale of indulgences and the wealth of the clergy. The Baptist Evangelical Church of João Pessoa is one of the oldest and most traditional Baptist churches in the Northeast. It was founded in 1923 by a group of 50 people who separated from the influence of American missionaries. The church offers various worship services, events, news, and content on its website and Facebook page.

Neopentecostalism

Pentecostalism is a Protestant Christian movement that emerged in the early 20th century in the United States and spread worldwide. It is characterized by an emphasis on direct and personal experiences with God, highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit. The pursuit of spiritual gifts, such as divine healing, speaking in tongues, and prophecy, is common.

The term "Pentecostal" comes from Pentecost, the Jewish festival of weeks, which, for Christians, commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles of Jesus, as narrated in Acts. Pentecostals believe that they can receive the same baptism in the Holy Spirit that the apostles received, and this is manifested through visible signs, such as speaking in tongues. Its followers are often referred to as Neo-Pentecostals.

Pentecostalism by incorporating elements of prosperity theology, spiritual warfare, positive confession, among others. Some of the most famous neopentecostal churches include the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, the International Church of God's Grace, the World Church of the Power of God, the "Sara Nossa Terra" Church, among others, with a total of 18,615 followers in João Pessoa.

It is also a religious phenomenon that has impacted society, culture, politics, and the economy in many countries, especially in Latin America and Africa. It offers a message of hope, liberation, healing, and transformation for millions of people facing situations of poverty, oppression, illness, and violence. These beliefs have sparked debates and controversies on issues such as the relationship between faith and reason, religion and science, church and state, ethics and prosperity, tolerance and exclusivism, unity and diversity, tradition and innovation, charisma and institution, spirituality and materiality (LOPES, 2014).

In 1980s Brazil, against the backdrop of neoliberal restructuring and intense unemployment, there was a massive growth of the church preaching

promises of solutions to everyday material issues, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. According to PEREIRA (2020):

(...) With the impoverished population and businesses strangled by the unfavorable economic environment of hyperinflation and recession, the pastors of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) promised the attainment of employment, professional promotion, healing from illnesses, and the end of debts. In other words, a menu that did not take long to seduce thousands of desperate Brazilians (PEREIRA, 2020, p. 20).

Budism

Buddhism is an Eastern religion and philosophy founded in India in the 6th century BCE by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha ("the awakened" or "the enlightened" in Sanskrit). Buddhist philosophy is guided by the teachings of Buddha, which lead the individual to complete happiness through contemplative practices, mind control, and the elimination of suffering driven by desire and ignorance.

Buddhism is based on the Four Noble Truths, which are: 1) the essence is suffering (dukkha); 2) the origin of suffering is attachment (tanha); 3) the end of suffering is possible (nirvana); 4) the path to the end of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which encompasses eight practices: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Buddhism is divided into various traditions, beliefs, and practices, which can be grouped into three broad schools: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Theravada is the oldest and most conservative school, based on the Pali Canon, a collection of scriptures in the Pali language attributed to the historical Buddha. Mahayana is the most popular and comprehensive school, based on various sutras, which are discourses of the Buddha or his disciples in Sanskrit. Vajrayana is the most recent and esoteric school, relying on writings called tantras, which instruct rapid and effective methods to achieve enlightenment, such as the use of mantras, mandalas, and visualizations.

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world, with over 500 million followers, primarily in Asia. In Brazil, there are about 245,000 Buddhists, and in Portugal, there are about 64,000 Buddhists. In João Pessoa, according to IBGE (2022), there are 4,387 Buddhists.

Since then, millions of people worldwide have embraced the pure spiritual path he revealed. The Buddhist way of life—peace, loving-kindness, and wisdom—is as relevant today as it was in ancient India.

Buddha clarified that all our problems and sufferings arise from negative and confused mental states, while all happiness and good fortune emerge from peaceful and positive mental states. He provided methods for us to gradually overcome our negative minds such as anger, jealousy, and ignorance and to cultivate our positive minds like love, compassion, and wisdom. Through this, we will come to experience the lasting peace and happiness we so desire.

Islamism

Islam, which in Portuguese means "submission to God," is a monotheistic religion that originated in the 7th century through its prophet, Ab al-Qsim Muammad ibn Abd Allh ibn Abd al-Mualib ibn Hshim, or simply Muhammad. Embracing Islam, the follower becomes a Muslim, one who converts and embraces the Islamic doctrine. Regardless of ethnicity or social class, anyone can declare their faith. For a Muslim, the religion of Islam entails obedience to the precepts of Allah, as revealed to his final prophet, Muhammad (ADGHIRNI, 2014).

The duties of the faithful are summarized in the five pillars of Islam: Shahada or the testimony of faith, Salat (praying five times a day), Zakat or almsgiving to the poor, Ramadan (month of fasting), and Hajj (pilgrimage to the city of Mecca). "Islam, on the surface, appears to be a simple religion with clear doctrines, obligations, and prohibitions," as described by DEMANT (2009, pg. 27).

The first commandment of every Muslim is to believe in Allah as the only God, who was not begotten nor has begotten, was not created, but created all creatures, the universe, and everything else. Allah cannot be portrayed as trinity; He is the true God, and any other deity is false. It is said of Him: "He is Allah, the One. Allah, to whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is nothing comparable to Him." (Quran, 112:14). The declaration of faith is made as follows: The believer stands facing Mecca, with the index finger raised, and recites the following phrase three times: "La ilaha illallah," meaning "There is no god but Allah" (EL AYEK).

Thus, by affirming that God is one, after this confession of faith, the individual becomes a Muslim. From then on, the new Muslim will seek to fulfill the other pillars of Islam. According to Islam, every human being is born a Muslim. For some reason during their history, they deviate from the paths of Allah. However, upon returning to the presence of the one God, they have performed an act of reversion, not conversion. O Islã tem como regra de fé o seu livro sagrado intitulado de Alcorão ou Corão que transliterado do árabe significa recitação, segundo narra a história ele tem as palavras de Allah confessadas pelo anjo Gabriel ao Jovem Muhammad. O Livro está dividido em 114 capítulos, que por sua vez subdivide-se em versículos conhecidos por Surata, cada Surata tem um título relacionado ao que está escrito.

Surah II, 97 states that "every word of the Quran is the word of God." In summary, the Prophet did not narrate anything that was declared to him but memorized and relayed it to his companions, who, in turn, memorized all the recitations and recorded them in writing. According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet, faced with this fact, reviewed the Quran with the angel Gabriel before his death. The style of memorizing the Quran has been passed down through generations, and this practice is still common in traditional families today, being transmitted from father to children (PALAZZO, 2014).

Islam was conceived as a universal religion, and Muslims believe that the Quran was not written for an exclusive people or a specific group but for

all of humanity. The entire Quran was written in Arabic, and it is the duty of every Muslim, whether Arabic-speaking or not, to pray in this language.

The arrival of Muslims in Paraíba, establishing their first official Quran study location, occurs during a period when Brazil welcomes war refugees from Syria and other countries in the Middle East. However, the majority of Muslims in the capital of Paraíba are Brazilian converts, individuals who embraced the Islamic faith. This is not enough to alleviate prejudice and association with terrorists, a stereotype built over decades by Western media (ARAUJO, 2005; BURNES, 2010).

The presence of women in the mosque is strong and prominent, but in their daily lives outside the mosque, they describe experiences of prejudice, such as difficulty in finding employment that accommodates the use of the veil. There are also reports of social rejection when people avoid contact upon discovering their professed faith, and countless cases of bullying, singing Arabic songs in front of them, calling them 'bomb women,' and so on. The connection between Islam and terrorism will not be resolved overnight, but the fact that Paraíba already has its first mosque is a sign that the message of peace is having an effect (ROBINSON, 2007).

Upon entering the small mosque, there is a room with two large prayer rugs and some inscriptions in Arabic: this is where, with men in the front and women behind, Muslims pray. For those unfamiliar with the religion, it may seem strange that they position themselves diagonally, but followers of Islam always pray in the direction of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, the holiest city in Islam.

Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Religions

Afro-Brazilian religions are those originating from the culture of various African peoples brought as slaves to Brazil between the 16th and 19th centuries, playing an important role in preserving the cultural traditions of different black ethnic groups.

In João Pessoa, there is a religious manifestation called "Jurema Sagrada," which originated from the ancient indigenous people, passed through the descendants of the city of Alhandra in Paraíba, incorporating elements from Christian norms, and finally evolving into its current form and figures present in the "Jurema Sagrada" of João Pessoa.

In the sessions, there are curious and explosive blends of religious manifestations with Afro origins, others with Christian traits, but strongly influenced by indigenous traditions of communicating with ancestors.

The chanting is intoxicating, and its basic instruments include the maraca (of indigenous origin) and African drums. Researchers argue that the trance is not exactly induced by the jurema drink but by this combination of sounds and dances, creating an atmosphere conducive to alterations in consciousness. Similar to African-derived religions, there is the incorporation of entities by participants who enter into a trance and are recognized through gestures and speech. In this case, they are the masters and the departed caboclos. However, there is a great variety in the forms of worship. Originally, though, the juremeiro masters are considered scientists by the community around them, precisely because of their knowledge of the healing powers of plants, the last resort for the most afflicted populations seeking treatment for their physical and spiritual ailments (BORGES et al., 2020).

Speaking of "catimbó" is to speak pejoratively of traditionally indigenous origins. In the common language here in the Northeast, for example, the term means black magic, witchcraft, as well as any devilish manifestation intended to cause harm. According to Guimarães Salles (2011), this cult is linked to the end of indigenous villages in the 18th century, with indigenous people being assimilated by "poor urban" communities as rural workers subjected to large landowners (SALLES, 2011, p.3).

The Sacred Jurema is a religion characterized by the use of tobacco and a drink made from the bark of the tree of the same name. It has the characteristic of "connecting the user to the Master and the enchanted"

through the ecstasy caused by the ingestion of the tea and the "blowing" of its smoke. The ingestion of Jurema is crucial to make contact with the Master (enchanted) who descends from the tree considered sacred. The ritual Always begins with music (drums and flutes) to call the enchanted or Master.

Having originated in the Brazilian Northeast, Jurema has three forms of ritual: Jurema de terreiro (where the "gira" takes place) with African rhythms marked by drums, Jurema de mesa (a session of chants, prayers marked by pipe smoke and the ingestion of the drink, used for consultations or to consecrate Jurema practitioners), and Jurema de chão when practitioners squat, using chants and the "maracá," a musical instrument always used by indigenous people in their catimbó or shamanistic rituals. In these rituals, the influence of Catholicism is significant, as there are representations of "Catholic Saints," rosaries, holy water, and prayers, always repeating the refrain "Praised be Our Lord Jesus Christ" or "God be Praised."

In these rituals, figures such as "caboclos" and "pretos velhos" are also present, as well as the "spirits of the Indians," commonly found in most Afro-Brazilian or Afro-Indigenous religions. In origin, however, Jurema masters are considered scientists by the community around them, precisely because of their knowledge of the healing powers of plants, the last resort for the most suffering populations seeking treatment for their physical and spiritual ailments.

Kardecism

Spiritism, Kardecism, or Kardecist Spiritism is a religious doctrine with a philosophical and scientific approach. Its main belief revolves around the constant spiritual evolution of human beings through reincarnations.

The Spiritist doctrine emerged in France in the mid-19th century. It began with the studies and observations conducted by the renowned French educator Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, also known by the pseudonym Allan Kardec (1804 – 1869).

Kardec initially devoted himself to the scientific study of magnetism and the investigation of the so-called "spinning tables." Later, he became interested in subjects related to the dematerialization of bodies and the journey of the human spirit.

It is a religion without external worship, without organized priesthood, without ceremonies of any kind, without intermediaries between the creature and the Creator, and can be considered a cosmic religion with love and charity as its highest ideal. Spiritism has three fundamental precepts: the evolution of the spirit through reincarnation, the existence of life on other worlds, and the practice of mediumship as a means of communication between the living and the dead. It also believes in doing good as a way to improve spiritual status; therefore, charity is highly valued. One of the mottos is that "outside of charity, there is no salvation." Spiritists also believe in God as the supreme intelligence, the author of the laws of nature, and the creator of the universe. In their view, Jesus Christ is the son of God and an evolved spirit (ZARZALEJOS, 2017).

CONSIDERATIONS

Religion emerged at a certain moment between the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods when the first human groups became sedentary. The main religious manifestations were related to natural events; in other words, natural phenomena were understood as divine manifestations.

Religion is acknowledged to understand the place where people live their values in a culture. It is influenced by culture, but it also influences the culture of those living in its environment. Religion allows for a deeper understanding of the values that encompass a given society, especially its ethical values. It positions itself as a light that illuminates human attitudes in pursuit of the Eternal, and there is no religion in which this eternal is annihilation. It is explained that this path is ethical, well-grounded, allowing an understanding of the path that the society is following to realize itself as a collective in the pursuit of ensuring the fulfillment of the individuals who are part of it.

Religious manifestations formed from one or more sources organize this universe, providing answers to life's concerns. This is reflected in mystical accounts of the events that unfold. Humans have a great capacity to detach themselves from numerous responses to what troubles them. Since time immemorial, biblical times, the interpretation of events through the eyes of faith has brought forth the presence of the sacred as a companion and resolver of difficulties, with the promise of better days, even if they are in eschatological times (a theory related to events at the end of the world and humanity, meaning the last things that must happen before and after the extinction of life on Earth).

Paraíba presents a great religious diversity that reflects its history, culture, and society. The predominant religion is Catholicism, encompassing about 78% of the population, followed by evangelicalism, representing around 15%. There are also minority religions, such as Spiritism, Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Indigenous religions, and Eastern religions. This diverse religiosity influences various aspects of the lives of the people of Paraíba, including education, politics, art, and popular festivals. Tolerance and respect are fundamental values for peaceful coexistence among different beliefs and religious expressions in Paraíba and João Pessoa.

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