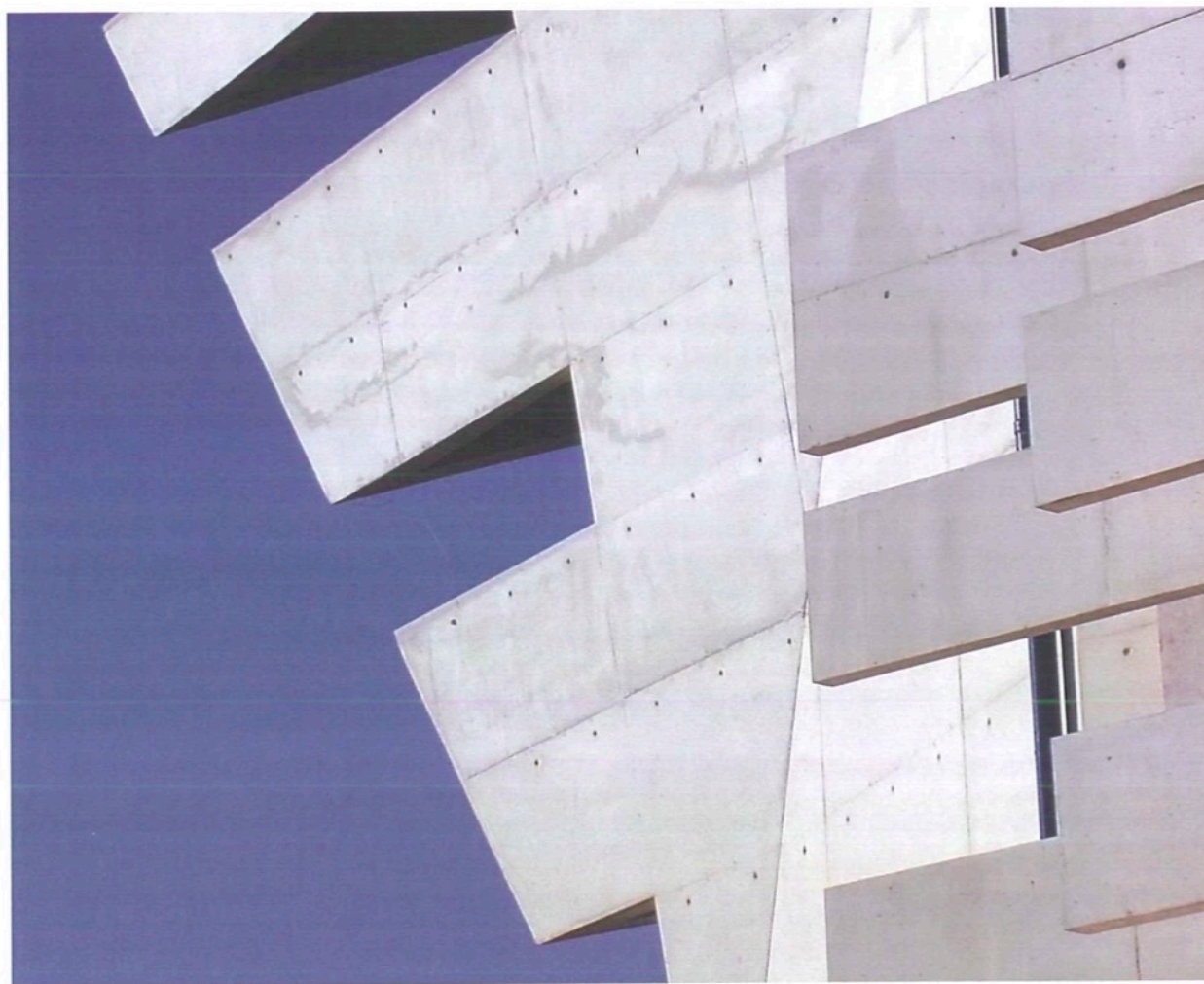


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1. Miguel Moniz is a researcher on the FCT project, *Ritual, transnationalism and ethnicity: A comparative study (North America)*, a comprehensive study conducting longitudinal field research on the widespread socio-religious and ethnic ritual of the Festa do Espírito Santo among Portuguese migrant communities in New England, California and Canada.

**AZOREAN IDENTITY IN BRAZIL AND THE UNITED STATES: ARGUMENTS ABOUT HISTORY, CULTURE AND TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS, JOÃO LEAL (2011)**

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*Azorean Identity in Brazil and the United States: Arguments about History, Culture and Transnational Connections* is the latest contribution among an expanding list of key studies examining Azorean migration and Diaspora community formation by anthropologist João Leal, providing important ethnographic information that engages with processes of instrumental and innovative forms of contextual group belonging.

The ethnography examines expressions of Azorean identity among communities in two divergent local contexts, comparing Southcoast in New England with the south of Brazil. Despite the geographic distance among the locales and the fact that Azorean migration to each destination occurred in distinct and far-removed historical periods, the Azores are nonetheless at the centre of manifestations of ethnic identity that have prominent sociopolitical implications in their respective community contexts.

In considering how transnational identity and constructions of ethnicity exist across multiple locations, Leal explores the contours of *Açorianidade* (articulations of Azorean identity) and more broadly how transnational and migrant ethnic identity constructions that share a common point of geographic origin are created and evolve to serve particularly local ends.

Migrants from the Azores have been living along the Southcoast, and more broadly throughout Southeastern New England for more than a hundred years, with subsequent cycles of newer migrants fomenting continuous contact between North America and the Atlantic islands over this period. The *cortejo etnográfico* (a ritualized procession) of the *Grandes Festas do Divino Espírito Santo* (Grand Festas of the Divine Holy Ghost) in Fall River, Massachusetts provides a point of departure in Leal's analysis of local constructions of Azorean ethnic identity as they emerge through the *Grandes Festas*, a unique community wide festival held annually in the heart of Southeastern New England's Azorean communities and embedded in the Espírito Santo *feita* cycle.

Mirroring similar village *festas* in the Azores, there are more than 60 Espírito Santo celebrations in New England every year, with each festival held by an Azorean socio-religious cultural association of predominantly lay parishioners. Ritual aspects of the feasts usually run for 40 days, culminating in the *Sopas*, a highly anticipated and ritually structured public community party that gathers hundreds of participants around a free soup meal on final weekend of the feasts.

Leal describes the *Festas do Divino Santo* as 'one of the primary means through which members of the Azorean-American community identify themselves as a unified group'. During the *Grandes Festas*, held towards the end of the Espírito Santo festival cycle in August, around fifty of the *Irmândades* (community lay socio-religious Associations) and related churches that sponsor and celebrate the feasts in the region come together for a five-day festival

that includes auctions, concessions, live music and an important parade that runs through the centre of Fall River's Portuguese community, accompanied by folklore groups, secular Portuguese clubs and cultural associations, Portuguese-owned businesses and *arruadas* (street performances) by local and sometimes Azores based *filarmónicas* (brass marching bands) along with others brought from the islands specifically for the occasion.

Leal examines how the Espírito Santo feasts and community *Irmândades*, along with the other socio-ethnic organizations participating in the *Grandes Festas* celebrations, provide the community with an important means for the expression of in-group ethnic identity. Leal analyses the feasts as an example of what Tololyan (2000) calls 'the "civil-society" of immigration', which seeks 'to respond to the needs and interests of significant sectors of the community', as they provide 'important opportunities for Azorean-Americans to interact with one another and form relationships and a sense of community'. Leal points out that the feasts and the *Grandes Festas* represent an Azorean community that has 'emerged through an active dialog with the host society' rather than passively transposing older cultural forms. The complexity of the community's post-migration re-creation of Espírito Santo feasts and rituals brought from local villages in the Azores is examined, as 'homeland folk culture' is juxtaposed and integrated in New England with local, regional and national discourses around US identity construction in the service of 'new forms of belonging'.

Although folk culture is central to the Espírito Santo feasts, with the parade of the *Grandes Festas*, 'folk culture is a symbolic device through which Azorean-Americans articulate a new and previously unknown form of (ethnic) identity'. The feasts are embedded in a prominent transnational social field that links the Azorean communities in Southeastern New England with the homeland archipelago through personal and familial contacts, which gain force through economic and political interests on both sides of the Atlantic.

Despite the prominence of these transnational links, Leal points to a rupture between traditional expressions of Azorean identity and the fact that there are diminishing numbers of 'Azoreans' who have actually come from the Azores as migrants. Leal argues that whatever ties these migrants maintain with their homeland are tempered by subsequent generations, who are 'Azorean in the process of becoming an ethnic American', and whose lack of command of native Portuguese will lead to an end of their identification as Azorean. To understand their situation, the argument uses Herbert Gans' 1979 formulation of symbolic ethnicity to argue that their expression of Portuguese ethnic identity is one 'characterized by a "nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour"' (Gans 1979).

Gans' symbolic ethnicity serves as a departure point for arguments in the second cross-cultural example in the book, an examination of the formation of ethnic identity in southern Brazil. Unlike Southeastern New England, the history of Azorean contact with Santa Catarina has a much earlier origin, dating from the period 1748-56, when 6,000 couples from the Azores were given homestead rights by the Portuguese Crown in order to settle southern Brazil and to solidify land claims in disputes with Castile. Differing from patterns of Azorean migration to New England, which began in the last decades of the 1800s but has been continuously renewed through to the present, the Azoreans who went to Brazil in the eighteenth century had no further contact with the islands after the eight-year period of initial colonization.

Leal recounts an interesting example of identity formation, analysing how discourses of Açorianidade emerged in the south of Brazil in response to political exigencies in Santa Catarina among competing ethnic factions jockeying for local political power. In more recent manifestations, Leal also examines how Azorean identity has become commoditized in strategies to compete for tourist dollars.

Historical accounts and public opinion in Santa Catarina prior to the mid-twentieth century evaluated the eighteenth-century Azorean settlers as failures, given that they were unsuccessful in their attempts to cultivate the land, with popular stereotypes characterizing them as lazy and superstitious. These attitudes underwent a transformation, however, as a result of a 1948 historical congress linked to the bicentennial of Azorean settlement, in a project intended to document the genealogical origins of various cultural elements in Florianópolis and Santa Catarina in respect to their possible Azorean origin. Local artists also began to adapt what they took as elements of Azorean folk culture in their contemporary work, as part of a process through which the Azoreans were celebrated after the bicentennial.

The founding of the Federal University of Santa Catarina in 1960 would shift the intellectual preoccupations of the researchers away from Azorean topics, but other projects that sought to recuperate Azorean identity in Santa Catarina would be undertaken in the ensuing decades. Leal argues that by claiming aspects of Santa Catariense and Florianópolis culture as specifically Azorean, 'younger and more dynamic sectors of the middle class', along with business people and politicians, were able to create political space for themselves in the region by invoking a connection to a shared identity with the original Azorean settlers in Santa Catarina's multi-ethnic social landscape (including newer migrant settler communities of Italians and Germans and their descendants).

Interestingly, in the act of recuperating public forms of Azorean identity, contemporary connections to the islands have actually come to be forged with Santa Catarina, predominantly among a group of contemporary elites in both locales.

Making a distinction between the two forms of ethnic identity construction in each of the respective geographic locales based on their distance from tangible connections to the Azores, Leal points out that just because the New England communities share a closer link to the islands, their replication of what they perceive as traditional culture is itself 'decidedly innovative and associated with the creation of new senses of community and new forms of belonging.'

Discussion of this innovation is important, because it elucidates the dynamic nature of sociocultural rituals around the Espírito Santo Feasts, as the Grandes Festas serve as an important public demonstration of Azorean/Portuguese ethnic in-group identity in Fall River, cross-regionally, and transnationally. Leal's analysis of the two cross-cultural ethnographic examples leads him to make a distinction between what he considers as more authentic and traditional forms of Azorean culture used to define ethnicity, against aspects of culture writ as identity that conform to Gans' definition of symbolic ethnicity. The implication is that migrant expressions of ethnic identity are seen as different among Azorean-born and American-born generations in New England, or when compared to Azorean identity in Santa Catarina, through which connections to the Azores have largely been constructed from whole cloth.

The ethnography stimulates a discussion around how these symbolic forms of ethnicity engage with what are considered by some social actors as more 'traditional' and authentic cultural forms. The implications of these distinctions and the reliance on Gans' formulation, however, would seem to attenuate Leal's important argument about dynamic innovation in establishing new modes of belonging. If the Grandes Festas and other rituals are a conduit through which communities can re-purpose cultural features for the public expression of identity in the service of political and instrumental ends, does not the migrant generation also manifest what could be considered symbolic ethnicity as well? The migrants are also choosing from an always context dependent array of cultural features to express public ethnic identity, many of which are constituted through nostalgia and that do not necessarily form a daily part of their lived cultural experience. Additionally, in the New England case, is it so easy, or even possible, to separate migrant expressions of identity from those among the third and fourth generation when the context in which these ethnic identities are produced is also shared? Another point for further discussion about symbolic ethnicity is the fact that these very discourses have led American-born generations along with some in Santa Catarina to themselves participate in tangible cultural contact with the islands and the islanders. Expressions of these identities are not binary (ie. American or Azorean), but rather are a part of on-going, and ever-changing links across the transnational social field, through which contemporary cultural practices—whether cast as traditional or symbolic—together inform the public articulation of ethnic and political identity. The ethnography provides examples leading to a deeper understanding of these processes.

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