

Michel Macedo Marques

Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto (1926-1936): Utopia in Northeast of Brazil

Abstract: José Lourenço was a religious leader who, in the interior of the State of Ceará, Brazil, organized intentional communities, formed by peasants, who practiced cooperativism based on primitive Christianity along the lines of the Jesuit missions. The Community of Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto, in particular, was home to around 2 thousand people who produced their own food, clothes, tools, among other things, and shared everything according to each person's needs. The community was attacked and destroyed under the accusation of being communists and representing a danger to the Republic recently installed in Brazil.

Keywords: Intentional Communities; Utopia; Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto; Beato José Lourenço; Primitive Christianity; Cariri.

MICHEL MACEDO MARQUES

Universidade do Porto, Portugal
Universidade Regional do Cariri, Brasil
michel.macedo@urca.br

DOI: 10.24193/cechinox.2024.46.08

Introduction

The Northeast region of Brazil was where the Portuguese arrived and began their occupation, with the cultivation of sugar cane and coffee. With the deterioration of the soil, the region was abandoned, and they left for other regions of the country. Some rich families, landowners, stayed and lived in a type of feudalism, with semi-slave labor until more than half of the 20th century. After the abolition of slavery and the arrival of immigrants to the south of the country, there was a growth towards a supposed modernity. The idea and image of the Northeast being the poorest and most backward region in the country was then constructed in the media.

Ravaged by constant droughts, particularly the one that occurred in 1877, the Northeast became the stage for political and economic practices of solidarity (charity) to combat the misery that ravaged the region. These practices served as a connecting bridge between large landowners, traders, cattle breeders and producers, forming the so-called *regional elite*, which capitalized on these arguments, together with

cangaço¹ and messianism, whose existence was linked, exclusively, to the misery caused by droughts, assume the pejorative image of symbolizing the Northeast, through journalistic reports that describe the two phenomena as *barbarism* and *madness*.

Cariri is a region in the south of the State of Ceará, which received its name from its main native people, called Kariiris. There are still many doubts about how the occupation of the territory occurred, but, according to reports by naturalists such as George Gardner (1838), João da Silva Feijó (1814), and historians such as Irineu Pinheiro (1950), from Commercial Licences, Warnings, Minutes, Bands, Royal Letters, Letters from Chief Captains, Letters from Ombudsmen, Certificates, Consultations, Decrees, Extracts, Maps, Memorials from individuals aspiring to Chief Captains, Letters, Requests, Regulations, Opinions and other historical documents, it is concluded that this happened, mainly, with the arrival of Chief Captains who violently expelled the natives, and Missions, who co-opted them, and both managed to take possession of land through Sesmarias².

The first religious people to work in Cariri were the Carmelites of the Order of Nossa Senhora do Carmo from Olinda (Pernambuco), an Order that arrived in Brazil in 1580, and built a consistent heritage, including houses, mills, farms and land. The faithful contributed financial donations and land in exchange for benefits offered by regular members, which allowed the expansion of the Order. In Cariri, they established the first village near a waterfall in what is now the city of Missão Velha.

The second, and most important, was the Capuchin friars who, in 1737, built a stone and lime church and, in 1743, built

the village, using land donated by Chief Captain Domingos Alvares de Matos. Settled on land owned by the Gil de Miranda family, it was named *Missão do Miranda*. It came to cover a vast territory in the region and, from the second half of the 18th century, with the objective of economically and administratively integrating the villages and natives dispersed throughout the backlands, it was called a Village of Indians, in 1759 and, in 1783, with the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil and the concern to incorporate indigenous people into society, most of the villages were reclassified as White Village, and became Vila Real do Crato.

Cariri had a rapid population, based on agriculture, mainly with sugar cane; livestock, especially with cattle, in addition to a rapid gold rush, which occurred from 1752 onwards. This settlement, which, according to Guilherme Studart³, brought to the region an emigrant population and adventurers from all over lineage, left to themselves, were undisciplined and almost barbaric, causing fear and unrest due to their propensity for violence and the lack of control by the authorities.

This was, in general, the occupation of the backlands territories, violent and unrestrained, and, with the support of the Church, oligarchies were formed that dominated and exploited the work of the poor.

Father Cícero Romão Batista

On March 24, 1844, in the city of Crato, the connecting figure who would become most responsible for the transformation and organization of Cariri was born, whose references continue to this

day, Cícero Romão Batista, ordained a priest in 1870.

At Christmas 1871, Father Cícero was invited to perform the Midnight Mass in the village of Tabuleiro Grande, belonging to Crato, and returned there in April of the following year, with luggage and family, to take up residence.

Since his training, it went against the elite of the Catholic Church, focusing more on the needs of the poor, thus serving as a great advisor to the village's inhabitants, acting, from the sale of animals and properties, to love conflicts or debts, guidance for professional activities and health care, and brought harmony to the place⁴.

And, in 1889, a phenomenon occurred that shaped the entire history of Cariri from then on: when handing the host to Beata⁵ Maria de Araújo, her mouth filled with blood, which was considered by those present as a miracle, the *miracle of the host*. The fact was repeated dozens of times, the news spread and real pilgrimages soon began in that small village to meet Father Cícero and the then called *Land of the Mother of God*, transforming, day by day, into one of the biggest demonstrations of popular devotion in the country⁶.

Many people took up residence and the small village grew dramatically in a very short time, acquiring its independence and becoming a city, with the name of Juazeiro do Norte by State Law No. 1,028, of 07/02/1911.

Father Cícero, then, had to organize and find employment for so many people who arrived there, including indication for work, support for opening small businesses or even, simply, land to plant subsistence crops.

Baixa Dantas Site

Among these pilgrims who arrived there was the young José Lourenço, who soon became a great disciple and friend of Father Cícero. There he entered an order of penitents that practiced self-flagellation, became Beato and, given the great consideration he gained, received from Father Cícero, the lease of land belonging to Colonel João de Brito, in the municipality of Crato, where he should move together with family members and other families, to live there from agriculture, it was Baixa Dantas Site⁷.

It was their first experience as an Intentional Community, they lived there for more than 30 years (1894-1926), routinely receiving more pilgrims sent by Father Cícero to live there and produce their own livelihood. According to the testimony of contemporary J.H. there were around 2000 people who lived from work and prayer⁸. The priest sent needy pilgrims to Baixa Dantas, including persecuted fugitives and those who needed to be re-educated through work⁹.

The place soon transformed from a desert into a productive area with many Orange, mango, jackfruit, lime, coconut, lemon, banana and coffee trees, as well as vegetables, cereals and cotton¹⁰. They lived far from labor exploitation, shared everything that was produced and were well regarded by their neighbors, to whom, from time to time, they lent labor for some sporadic activity.

Two events shook life in peace on the Baixa Dantas site, the first was the issue of Sedition, also called the "War of 14". The sedition of Juazeiro do Norte, which occurred in 1913-1914, in Ceará, was a

confrontation between the Ceará oligarchies and the Federal Government, with the aim of deposing the Interventor Governor appointed by it. Despite the community not having participated in the conflict, Baixa Dantas Site had its lands invaded and its crops lost, in addition to incidents of murders of residents there¹¹.

In 1921, Father Cícero received as a gift from businessman Delmiro Gouveia, a Zebu ox and handed him over to the care of Beato José Lourenço in the Community of Baixa Dantas. Because it belonged to Father Cícero, the ox was very well cared for and loved by everyone in the community¹². According to reports, he was very gentle, hence his name *Boi Mansinho*¹³, and allowed himself to be touched and ridden by everyone, including children, and began to be decorated with ribbons, garlands and flowers..

It is from there that *Boi Mansinho* becomes the central character of the second event that shook peace in the Community of Baixa Dantas. The residents there began to be accused of worshiping the ox, as was done with the Golden Calf, from ancient Egypt, accusations that even revealed that the ox's urine and feces were ingested in the belief that they performed cures and miracles.

Deputy Floro Bartolomeu¹⁴, very uncomfortable with the repercussion of the mockery surrounding the incident, coming mainly from the capital, Fortaleza, ordered the ox to be sacrificed and Beato José Lourenço arrested, whom he called *the Negro*¹⁵. The meat of the dead ox was offered to the population, who refused to eat it, and the soldiers were forced to consume it. José Lourenço spent 17 days in jail and was released following intervention on his

behalf by Father Cícero and some prestigious neighbors, on the Baixa Dantas farm, where he returned and stayed until 1926¹⁶.

From that event onwards, society's eyes towards the community were never the same again, they were once and for all pre-judged as being "religious fanatics" and this situation bothered the owner of the land, who sold it. José Lourenço was expropriated, without compensation, for the improvements made and went to a farm at the foot of Araripe Plateau, known as *Caldeirão dos Jesuítas*, which belonged to Father Cícero. The priest encouraged local agriculture by sending migrants to cultivate the Cariri lands. He received tithes, which were donations from devotees, including land donated by rich pilgrims. In addition, he also used part of the tithe money to acquire land. Thus, he sent pilgrims, poor and landless farmers, to these uninhabited and agricultural areas of Cariri¹⁷.

Caldeirão Site

Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto was a peasant community, which existed for 10 years (1926-1936), which received approximately, according to some authors, between 1700 people¹⁸ and 5 thousand people¹⁹. Initially, Caldeirão was formed by a small group led by José Lourenço, whose main focus was devotion to the Holy Cross. The community developed a system of production and distribution of basic goods, such as food, instruments, work opportunities, housing and spiritual nourishment. This system had self-management characteristics, where everything was shared among all members of the community. There was no clear distinction between leaders and executors in the production process, according

to reports from interviews carried out with remnants of the time.

In the early years, Caldeirão was mainly an agricultural community. However, as more people from the backlands were attracted to the lifestyle practiced there, the community began to diversify its productive activities. In addition to farmers, bricklayers, carpenters, blacksmiths and artisans specialized in the manufacture of tinplate objects, such as cups, pans and buckets, arrived. This diversification of jobs reflected the growth and expansion of the community, as well as the influence of new members on its economy.

The bricklayers built a “big house”, made of bricks and covered with tiles, the others that followed were mostly made of mud and some covered with straw, and they built two dams²⁰. The carpenters manufactured furniture used by the peasants and also a wooden mill, for the production of *rapadura* honey, a food much appreciated by the country people, and a Flour House, for the production of flour, *tapioca* and *beiju*, from cassava. The production of ceramic objects, baskets or bags made from vines, and even soap also appears. They also produced clothes using handlooms: clothes, bags, hammocks, sheets, towels... and, certainly for religious reasons, the fabrics were dyed black²¹.

In Caldeirão, surplus agricultural products were sold to purchase items that were not produced locally or were saved for extra needs or charitable actions. The socioeconomic organization of Caldeirão differed from the large estates, as production was shared and everyone received what was necessary to live well. This encouraged work, as members realized the benefits of cooperativism. There was no internal

circulation of money, since internal trade did not exist. Agricultural products were stored in warehouses and distributed according to the needs of each individual²².

In short, in Caldeirão, life was centered on work and prayer. The blessed, as a representative of Popular Catholicism, guided the inhabitants in that direction. The community held processions, litanies, and observed holy days and Sundays as holidays, without work. The predominant religiosity was an important factor of union and solidarity, motivating work and inspiring a cooperative life based on Christian fraternity. The world was seen through a religious perspective, regulating ethical and behavioral values. The dialectical relationship between daily work and religious feeling resulted in a well-organized community for production²³.

In the community, there was no exploitation of the workforce, since the means of production were collective. No one considered themselves the owner of anything, as D. Marina Gurgel, a remnant of Caldeirão, stated that everything belonged to everyone and nothing belonged to anyone. Everyone worked for the common good, without competition to accumulate more than others. This way of life, based on the teachings of Beato José Lourenço, was widely approved by members of the community. After all, they enjoyed a much better standard of living than the majority of dispossessed northeasterners²⁴.

Periods of great drought are quite common in the calendar of Northeast Brazil, but they are not treated seriously, as they constitute opportunities for assistance and palliative measures by the government, to preserve the misery and profit from it. Northeast is, to a large extent, the child of

droughts; imagetic-discursive product of a whole series of images and texts produced regarding this phenomenon²⁵.

One of the most common measures taken by the Government during periods of drought was to establish service fronts, which provided jobs to those affected by the drought, but which, in fact, served to bring great benefits to landowners, such as, for example, the construction of dams on private properties, whose waters would never benefit the general population, continuing the same problems as always: misery, deaths, forced migration, invasion of cities and benefits for a few²⁶.

In every period of drought, there is a huge exodus of people from the countryside to the cities, in search of better opportunities and also charity, a true invasion of large urban centers that causes fear among the elites, who demand government action to control and discipline²⁷. For this reason, during the great drought of 1932, six *Concentration Camps* were created in Ceará (Fortaleza, Patu, Quixeramobim, Crato, Cariús and Ipu), which were nothing more than prisons where people caught at railway stations or traveling on roads towards large centers were sent, this idea had already been put into practice since 1915, when the Alagadiço Concentration Camp was created, the setting for the novel *O Quinze*, by Raquel de Queiroz. The Concentration Camps initiative was created by the then President of the State, Cel. Benjamim Barroso, with the aim of facilitating the distribution of aid and allowing more humane treatment for those affected. However, in practice, given the lack of financial resources and administrative control, what existed were poor housing conditions, in addition to food shortages and poor hygiene²⁸.

In Crato, the Concentration Camp was located in the Buriti district (close to the urban area), and was soon called *Buriti Corral* by the people. It was made up of streets organized according to the alignment of the huts built by the victims to shelter themselves. In Buriti, thousands of victims lived in extremely precarious conditions, even facing death. Conditions were so unsanitary that certain areas were permeated with a strong smell of feces due to the spread of diarrhea. Paradoxically, these poor country people often held parties. As reported by survivor José Cassiano, people died every day in the Buriti corral, but there was a party every day²⁹.

The situation in Curral do Buriti was so perilous that it had capacity for a maximum of 5 thousand people, but came to house around 18 thousand³⁰, others say around 60 thousand³¹, while the two camps near the capital housed around 5.5 thousand people. The diet was based on daily rations of (only) cassava flour – often spoiled – and water, with the biggest cause of death being stuffiness due to this diet. The dead were buried in large mass graves.

This apocalyptic episode of the 1932 drought near the Concentration Camps gave Caldeirão the opportunity to play a heroic role and, even though this was not the purpose, publicize its life and charity project. Even suffering the effects of the drought, thanks to its agricultural and social structure, Caldeirão was able to welcome more than 500 people who fled the Concentration Camp, or sought shelter during this period. Despite he had not even heard the names of Marx and Engels, Blessed José Lourenço practiced a socialist system, spontaneously, regardless of the fact that he did not know the forms that already existed in the world³².

This event gave visibility to Caldeirão, which had triumphed over the Government and the landowning Colonels, by showing that it was possible to give a dignified life to the dispossessed country people, and that the way was totally different from the plans and projects created by them until then, unmasking the farce of semi-feudal servitude, and this bothered them, generating the beginning of all the discord that was to come. Caldeirão also began to be the target of pilgrimages, next to Juazeiro, thanks to Severino Tavares, Lourenço's right-hand man, who used to travel throughout the Northeast, mainly to Rio Grande do Norte, preaching about Caldeirão and attracting people to the Promised Land., some even rich, who gave up their possessions in favor of life in cooperatives in Caldeirão.

These caused effects of the demographic change from 1932 onwards, when the population doubled, and this meant that such changes were also seen by society beyond the limits of Caldeirão. Until then, for example, with little population, the people from Caldeirão traveled to attend mass in the chapel in the town of Santa Fé, about 10km away from Caldeirão. With the growth of the population, the construction of a chapel in the community began, and accusations began against the *distorted and gross Catholicism of those fanatics*. Caldeirão begins to be marginalized by the Official Church, despite, or perhaps because of, its fraternal and evangelizing character. José Lourenço stops going to masses in Santa Fé, then, due to the hostilities of the Clergy³³.

Brazil was going through the *Vargas Era*, which governed the country for 15 years (1930-1945), an era marked by

paranoia and, later, censorship of the media and the arts. Caldeirão drew attention fueled by rumors that they were "communists", the flagship of paranoia at the time. And, yes, they were communists, they were even anarchists, in terms of not owning property, but they were far from posing a threat, as they were said to be an organized communist cell planning a possible coup. As already mentioned, they had no contact with the communist ideas propagated by post-Industrial Revolution thinkers, they were based on fraternity and cooperativism preached by primitive Christianity, their organization was based on Jesuit Missions and just wanted to live in peace, away from the competitive life and elitist Catholicism of society.

Between 1924-1927, the Coluna Prestes³⁴ movement broke out in the country, which reached a high point when it passed through Rio Grande do Norte, a state from where many people migrated to Caldeirão. It didn't take long, then, to associate the Caldeirão Community with the communist ideas of overthrowing the oligarchies and ecclesiastical authorities in the region. It was then up to the State, as soon as possible, to curb this experience of reference to the oppressed peoples of the region and which, in their collective practices and in the knowledge and practices linked to them, regardless of their political consciousness, denied the dominant social practices³⁵.

The Caldeirão way of life and other expressions of popular Catholicism were frowned upon by the Church, as pilgrimages and the so-called *fanaticism* were considered a social disorder. The large landowners, holders of power, saw the dissemination of the way of life of the

inhabitants of the Caldeirão community as a threat to the established order and the maintenance of the status quo. Furthermore, the community life promoted by the movement outside private property represented, in their view, a dangerous discourse in that historical context.

The media, known as the *fourth power*, is the main source of information in society. However, it also has a power of manipulation that can function as a form of social control. This can lead to a large number of people without their own opinions, who are induced to accept the other's speech without question. Some newspapers, such as *O Povo*, from the state of Ceará, at the time, were capable of building opinions, influencing attitudes and behaviors, replacing values and influencing social contexts. Thus, they became arbiters of values and truths, acting as instruments of manipulation in the service of private interests and great powers. During the Caldeirão era, newspapers played an important role in disseminating ideological discourse, promoting ways of life considered models to be followed. Anything that deviated from the traditional was frowned upon by society at the time.

Newspapers, which were the main means of information, since the first radio in Fortaleza was only opened in 1932 and only became a popular vehicle in Ceará from the 1940s onwards, began a campaign against Beato José Lourenço and his community, as evidenced in the article entitled *Os fanáticos do Caldeirão*, published in the newspaper *O Povo*. The article stated, among other things, that José Lourenço and Severino Tavares were *tricksters* exploiting the memory of Padre Cícero in Cariri. For the Catholic hierarchy, Caldeirão represented a threat, as José

Lourenço could become a new *saint* like Father Cícero, but without the control of the Church, similar to Antonio Conselheiro³⁶. Alarmed landowners, political and religious elites systematically attacked the community. Rumors spread that José Lourenço performed sacraments in a barbaric and sacrilegious way, lived in concubinage with Beatas, had a harem of 16 women (José Lourenço was already 65 years old at that time) and exploited the ignorance and fanaticism of the peasants to enrich himself using his workforce.

According to testimonies in Ramos (2011) and Cordeiro (2013), there are no records and it is even denied that José Lourenço performed any liturgical ritual that he was not allowed to do, while he was fully aware of what he was allowed to do or not in that respect. The construction of the Church also came from this need that arose, as the residents of Caldeirão were no longer well regarded when attending masses in neighboring communities, they decided to build a Church in the community, in honor of their Patron Saint: Ignatius of Loyola, which would have masses celebrated by invited vicars. It is a shame that the community came to an end without ever having this invitation accepted, to this day, it has not yet been consecrated, the masses that take place during pilgrimages to the place are held outside, in the church courtyard.

Another unfinished dream in the community would be the construction of a school. In 1935, three women who knew how to read and write arrived in the community: Mrs. Madalena, from Alagoas, Francisca de Sousa, from Sobral and Marina Gurgel, from Rio Grande do Norte, and began a process of Basic Education for the members of the community³⁷.

With the death of Father Cícero, in 1934, the Caldeirão Community lost its greatest protector, and legal owner of the place. In his will, the priest left all his assets to the Salesian Order. Father Cícero died with his priestly orders suspended since the events of the supposed miracle and, apparently, he believed that the Salesians would continue their charitable projects and organization of the lives of the pilgrims who kept arriving in Juazeiro.

The attack against the Caldeirão community was motivated by political, economic and religious factors. In the political aspect, the community was seen as a threat to the Republic, being accused of promoting monarchical and communist ideals. Economically, farmers were dissatisfied with the lack of labor on their properties due to the mass migration of peasants there, this represented a threat to the land system, based on latifundia and slavery. Furthermore, José Lourenço's preaching diminished the influence of the Catholic Church in the region, which bothered the institution. The Church allied itself with government authorities to repress the movement and put an end to it.

In 1936, in Fortaleza, a meeting took place to decide and outline the destiny of the Community of Caldeirão, representatives of six institutions were present: diocese of Crato, Order of Salesian Priests, Catholic Electoral League, Political Police (DEOPS), Military Police and Government from Ceará, the meeting was chaired by Captain Bezerra³⁸ and was the result of the plan of the Salesians' lawyer, Norões Milfont, Deputy of the Catholic Electoral League – LEC (of a fascist nature). Milfont began to propagate that Caldeirão was a new Canudos, that the community had

hidden weapons and that it represented a serious threat to the State, as it belonged to a communist cell.

The aim was to find a pretext for the expulsion of the community members and recover the land, which now belonged to his client. To this end, Captain Bezerra had been sent to the community on a spy mission, disguised as an industrialist interested in oiticica. Upon being admitted to the Beato's residence, Bezerra observed everything, especially the wealth accumulated on the site, the result of the community's hard work, arousing his interest. In his report, he described the place as a *new Canudos*, a refuge for fanatics and a terrible danger of communist influence, and requested urgent intervention. The decision was made to intervene, and Lieutenant José Góis de Campos Barros led the expedition in September 1936³⁹.

The destruction of the community occurred in three moments. The first moment was the police invasion, which took place on September 11, 1936. According to the police report, made by Lieutenant José Góes de C. Barros, which was later published in a newspaper and turned into a book, entitled *A Ordem dos Penitentes*, the policemen were welcomed into the community by the Beato's *secretary*, lunch was even offered to the invaders by members of the community⁴⁰. Out of caution, lest something worse happen in his presence, Beato had fled before the police arrived.

However, what happened was a summary order for everyone to collect their belongings and return to their places of origin, train and ship tickets would be offered by the Government. This was unanimously rejected, in addition to the fact that no one had property to manage, as everything

belonged to everyone, but there was no owner. With the impasse established, Captain Cordeiro radioed the Governor to decide what to do. The Captain, who considered the nucleus very dangerous, was forced to set fire to the houses (around 400) and hand over the goods to the municipality so that the Judiciary could decide what to do.

And so it was done, men, women and children were crowded and compressed, like animals in a corral, while the houses were being set on fire, in the face of great silence and sporadic peaceful protests. With exquisite cruelty, Captain Bezerra, to further increase the pain of the peasants, killed Beato's horse, much loved by everyone⁴¹, called Trancelim⁴².

After the invasion and dismantling of the community, the order was to disperse the peasants. Some were arrested and taken to Fortaleza, such as Eleutério Tavares and Isaías (the secretary), others sought shelter in Juazeiro or neighboring states with relatives and friends and many others are grouped in Serra do Araripe, in a region called *Mata dos Cavalos*⁴³. In this place, the group, once united, concise and obedient to the Beato's instructions regarding passivity and forgiveness, divided into two groups, these others, under the leadership of Severino Tavares, defended revenge and the reconquest of Caldeirão.

On May 10, 1837, eight months after the invasion of Caldeirão, rumors arose that *Beato's fanatics*, led by Severino Tavares, would attack the city of Crato and, even before receiving official orders from the capital, Captain Bezerra, along with a group of 11 other soldiers, heads to Serra to investigate the rumor. There, they were seen by a woman who ran away screaming, raising the alarm that the police were

approaching. In pursuit, the police ended up entering the camp zone of the peasants, who, under the leadership of Severino Tavares, attacked them with batons and sickles. Severino Tavares was seriously injured, dying some time later, Captain Bezerra also died in the confrontation, only 2 police officers escaped with their lives⁴⁴.

There is no doubt that such a violent procedure was to the complete displeasure of Beato José Lourenço, who always instructed his companions to peacefully resolve any and all actions of displeasure or attack⁴⁵. But, even though it was an isolated action by a small group, the media treated the case as an attack carried out by the community, placing the dead police officers as heroes and sensitizing public opinion with sensationalist reports, generating the trigger that was needed so that, definitively, the Caldeirão community was considered a real and highly dangerous enemy, to be destroyed, with no mercy.

Ceará considered facing a situation similar to that of Canudos. The government activated the military forces. On May 11, 1937, following the order of the Minister of War of the Getúlio Vargas government, the military police of Ceará, with two hundred men and two planes sent by the Ministry of War, attacked the peasants in *Mata dos Cavalos* at dawn. The result was a massacre. The peasants, northerners, religious and pacifists, an unarmed population exterminated. There is no consensus as to whether there really was bombing by the planes or whether they were just used for area reconnaissance and support, but the attack with firearms from the ground was tremendously brutal. The number of deaths is not known for sure, it is said that there were between 700 and 1500 victims, who were possibly

buried in a common grave. A metaphor for the end of the world, people died without knowing the cause or having any chance to defend themselves. The attack left little time for the peasants to react. The end came to them at the hands of the Church, the State and the semi-feudal society of the north-eastern region. They had no time to pray or express their messianic hope. These events are discussed by several authors, including Maia (1987), Cordeiro (2002), Monteiro (2006) and Gomes (2009).

As for the goods seized in the invasion, according to several testimonies a good part was stolen and used for the benefit of the invaders themselves, only a small part was sold with legal registration and the money obtained was handed over to the Judge of Law of Crato⁴⁶. Even the media had a small glimpse of impartiality and the newspaper *O Povo* even released two short reports on the subject (09/30/1936 and 11/11/1936), a rare occasion where a defense of Caldeirão was outlined.

Due to the impossibility of staying in Caldeirão, using a certain amount of money acquired from the sale of some Caldeirão products after the police invasion, Beato buys land in Exu, Pernambuco, a city on the border with Crato, 65km away from there.

There, he rebuilds a community, but, fearful after so many defamations and invasions, he takes care not to encourage its demographic increase, making it restricted to a circle of friends, but still in the form of fraternity and cooperative life, with the practice of mutual aid towards neighboring properties. According to the writer Napoleão Tavares, nephew of Aristides Aires de Alencar, buyer of the site after Beato's death, Sítio União could be considered a

private bank for the population of Exu at that time, since there were no banks there yet, it was a large agricultural granary, with lots of abundance, order and discipline⁴⁷.

José Lourenço lived at Sítio União, surrounded by friends and constantly visited by pilgrims until his death on February 12, 1946, from bubonic plague. His body was transported on foot to Juazeiro do Norte, where the funeral mass was refused by the vicar at the time, Mons. Joviano Barreto, who reportedly said "I don't celebrate mass for criminals"⁴⁸, the body was laid to rest on the sidewalk of the parish that kept its doors closed⁴⁹.

José Lourenço is buried in the cemetery adjacent to the Church of *Perpétuo Socorro*, where Father Cícero is buried. After his death, Sítio União was sold and with the money a tomb was built for him, in the form of a small chapel, which was looked after by Mr. Eleutério Tavares⁵⁰, in which a plaque made by the José Marrocos Institute for Socio-Cultural Research – IPESC, belonging to the Regional University of Cariri – URCA, and signed together with the Vale do Cariri Institute, City Hall and Municipal Chamber of Juazeiro do Norte, with the following words:

Grave of Beato José Lourenço, who died on February 12, 1946, aged 74. A great figure in the history of Juazeiro do Norte and Cariri. Builder of the Equal Community of Caldeirão, one of the most positive social experiences ever carried out in Brazil and leader of a people who, united in the most fraternal cooperativism, following the advice of Father Cícero, made collective work a life lesson forged in prayer. Here his mortal remains rest awaiting

God's grace under the recognition and admiration of his beloved followers and the Juazeirense community⁵¹.

The tomb of Beato José Lourenço is one of the most visited in the city, especially during pilgrimage times. Visitors bring flowers, light candles, pray and some perform a ritual of entering barefoot and leaving without turning their backs on the tomb⁵².

José Lourenço's Utopia

Researching and analyzing the past is a way of understanding the resourcefulness of the present, it is through understanding the organization of the pieces that we can reach plausible conclusions about realities at certain moments in time, as well as their function and constitution.

The intentional community of Caldeirão da Santa Cruz do Deserto, in the Cariri region, south of the State of Ceará, then, based on research and representations, since its existence and, mainly, after its destruction, has shown itself to be a true cauldron of meanings, which bring information and explain much of the history, culture, memory and identity of the region, and can therefore be classified as a true cultural artifact, something man-made that provides information about the culture of its creator and its users, means a mediating object that references the world and the individual.

Utopia was a term coined by Thomas More in 1916, it acquired the status of a literary genre and permeates various aspects of art, culture, law and politics⁵³.

Regarding regulations specific to a utopian society, we can highlight as some of the main characteristics:

1. Utopia is a normative vision that idealizes a world as it should be, contrasting with the real world.

2. Utopia is always comprehensive and critical of existing society, as it represents an alternative society that contradicts every aspect of current society, including institutions, values, power, property, laws, religion, family, and interpersonal relationships. It creates a complete world opposite to the existing world.

3. Utopia sees the present as marked by anguish, crisis, injustice, evil, corruption, pauperism, hunger, privileges and needs, interpreting it as a violent reality⁵⁴.

The Caldeirão Intentional Community, like Utopia, manages to insert itself into various concepts, representations and symbolism. Despite being made up of illiterate people, it followed the model of a project already in vogue in the Americas since the arrival of Vasco de Quiroga, in Mexico, who used Thomas More's book as a kind of manual for the experiment⁵⁵. Even without a contextualization or reference, on the part of those people regarding the book, we can affirm that this knowledge and model was replicated by the Jesuits, taken to the Northeast of Brazil through Father Ibiapina and passed on to Blessed José Lourenço by Father Cícero.

As for the architectural form, the composition of Caldeirão followed the shape of the *Polis*, proposed by Quiroga, in Santa Fé, with the houses built in the shape of semicircles, directed towards the central area, where there was a church and a large courtyard in front⁵⁶.

The social organization was based on Primitive Christianity, with an emphasis on Jesuit conduct, having even adopted Saint Ignatius of Loyola as the community's patron saint, founder of the Society of Jesus.

More than a thousand people lived in the community during the 10 years of its existence, under a regime of self-management and community work, without possessions or properties, everything belonged to everyone, a true utopia in relation to the society of the time, a manifestation of an early Eden in life.

According to Sachs' (1993) definition of Social Sustainability, Caldeirão empirically presented this characteristic, given that there were no relationships subordinated to the law of Capital, there was no search for profit, nor competition in possessions or merit⁵⁷, all production was divided according to the needs of each family.

Just like the society created by Vasco de Quiroga, where common ownership of goods was established, as well as the integration of large families, work for men and women, division of products according to the needs of each person and the precedent of luxury⁵⁸. While Quiroga and the Jesuits aimed to create communities to protect the native peoples from contact with the colonizer and the consequent extermination⁵⁹, Father Ibiapina and, later, Father Cícero did so to protect the poor and illiterate country population from being co-opted into banditry in the region, a way of guaranteeing a political and social order at each time.

From the 1980s onwards, when the silence surrounding the history of Caldeirão began to be broken, the urgency was felt, as was the case with the history of the Nazi Holocaust, to collect testimonies from remnants and contemporaries of the same, as many of them had already died and the living were already at an advanced age.

As explained by the authors who collected testimonies, there are certain inconsistencies and different versions in their

narratives, especially among the remnants (people who lived in the community) and contemporaries (people who lived at the time, but participated only as spectators), with the task of group them, according to the meanings they have based on the memories constructed⁶⁰. It is necessary to understand man as an animal tied to webs of meanings that he himself has woven, the analysis of a culture is not an experimental science in search of laws, and yes, an interpretative science, in search of meanings, a construction of symbols about life⁶¹.

Regarding inconsistencies in the narratives, the constitution of values, symbols and myths were taken more into account than the real and total veracity. A myth is not necessarily a false or invented story, it is a story that acquires meaning by expanding the meaning of an event, whether factual or not. The importance of the myth depends on whether the individual is perceived as representative of the whole or as an alternative to the whole⁶².

Utopia materialized in the feeling of the perception of abundance, in the face of a reality so close to going hungry, having something to eat, and a lot of it, represented the height of happiness. And it was not for mere ostentation, the abundant table should be shared by everyone, from the producers of it, as well as anyone who was invited or had a need.

In addition to the abundance of food, there was an abundance of beauty in the ornamentation, from the gardens, to the raising of birds, and the organization of how this work was done, with tasks shared by everyone, for the general well-being of the community.

Based on this understanding, the memories reported about the communities

led by Beato José Lourenço refer to *social alternatives for overcoming*⁶³, be it the drought, with guardhouses for victims, storage of agricultural products and living, as well as other options for corporate assets, such as work options, division of assets and food. A true Christian Utopia on earth that created a form of survival and coexistence with equity, opposing the normality of the current system, which only benefited the powerful and landowners.

Conclusion

After almost 100 years of its destruction, the history of the Communities of Beato José Lourenço, in particular that of Caldeirão, emerges from new points of view, corroborating that it can truly be qualified as a third way that emerged in the lives of the poor of the time, with a dignified, peaceful and progressive life, based on the Christian principles in which everyone believed, a true Utopia that created a break with the system of the time.

From religious fanatics and outlaws, they are now considered resistance heroes

and important names in the region's history by the same media and government that condemned them. It is a moment of reflection and historical reparation for what happened, which has given rise, in addition to all the restructuring of history, to academic research on various aspects of the community context, artistic works (such as music, poetry, xylograph, paintings, sculptures, films and theatrical plays), as well as the emergence of rites and places of memory, such as pilgrimages and celebrations celebrating José Lourenço's birthday and other dates, camps, trail meetings and picnics under the motto of sharing the food brought by everyone, among others things.

The place where the community existed today is listed as a Government State Park, will gain a Memorial Museum and should become a geosite of Araripe Geopark, a UNESCO facility that promotes development and sustainable tourism. It is the Caldeirão returning to continue being a symbol of peasant Utopia in the Brazilian northeastern backlands.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albuquerque Junior, Durval Muniz de, *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes*, 5ª ed., São Paulo, Cortez, 2011.
- Alves, Tarcísio Marcos, *A Santa Cruz do Deserto*, Recife, UFPE, 1994. Masters Dissertation.
- Araújo, João Mauro, *Sopro de Liberdade: A tragédia de uma utopia de igualdade e autosuficiência*, Problemas Brasileiros, São Paulo, n. 370, p. 38-43, jul/ago. 2005.
- Barros, Luitgarde Oliveira Cavalcanti, *A Terra da Mãe de Deus*, Rio de Janeiro, Francisco Alves, 1988.
- Chauí, Marilena, *Notas sobre Utopia*, in Sousa, C. M., org., *Um convite à utopia* [online]. Campina Grande: EDUEPB, 2016. *Um convite à utopia collection*, vol. 1, p. 29-45. ISBN: 978-85-7879-488-0. Available from: doi: 10.7476/9788578794880.0002. Also available in ePUB from: <http://books.scielo.org/id/kcdz2/epub/sousa-9788578794880.epub>.
- Chordas, Nina, *Forms in early modern utopia: the ethnography of perfection*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010.
- Cordeiro, Domingos Sávio Almeida, *Um Beato Líder: narrativas memoráveis do Caldeirão*, Fortaleza, CE, Brasil, Imprensa Universitária Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2004.

- Della Cava, Ralph, *Milagre em Joazeiro*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2014.
- Geertz, Clifford, *A Interpretação das Culturas*, Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 1978.
- Lima, Maria Lourêto de, *José Lourenço, o Beato perseguido: uma história real*, Fortaleza, Imeph, 2013.
- Maia, Verálúcia Gomes, *Caldeirão: Uma comunidade cristã de camponeses*, Masters Dissertation, Natal, Centro de Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, 1987.
- Neves, Frederico de Castro, *Curral dos bárbaros: os campos de concentração no Ceará (1915 e 1932)*, Revista Brasileira de História, São Paulo: v.15, nº 29, p. 93-122, 1999.
- Pinheiro, Irineu, *Efemérides do Cariri*, Fortaleza, Edições-UFC, 2010.
- Portelli, Alessandro, *A filosofia e os fatos. Narração, significados e interpretação nas memórias e nas fontes orais*, Rio de Janeiro, Tempo, vol.1, n. 2, p. 59-72, 1996.
- Ramos, Francisco Regis Lopes, *Caldeirão: Estudo histórico sobre o Beato José Lourenço e suas comunidades*, Fortaleza, CE, Instituto Frei Tito de Alencar, 2ª ed., 2011.
- Sousa, Célia Camelo de, *Saberes e Práticas Educativas no Caldeirão de Santa Cruz do Deserto*, Paper, Fortaleza, UECE, p. 58, 2009.
- Studart, Guilherme, *Notas para história do Ceará*. Brasília, Edições do Senado Federal, vol. 29, 2004.
- Verástique, Bernardino, *Michoacán and Eden : Vasco de Quiroga and the evangelization of western Mexico*, Texas, University of Texas Press, 2000.

NOTES

1. Cangaço was a banditry movement that occurred in the Northeast of Brazil between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. There are two views that explain cangaço in Brazilian historiography: the first classifies it as a form of social resistance and fight against oppression; the second classifies it as organized crime, without any political and social orientation. Campos, Tiago Soares. "Cangaço"; Brasil Escola. <https://brasilestudo.uol.com.br/brasil/cangaco.htm>.
2. Sesmarias were uncultivated and abandoned land, handed over by the Portuguese Monarchy, since the 12th century, to people who committed to colonizing them within a previously established period. Arquivo Histórico do Estado de São Paulo, <http://www.historica.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/materias/antecedentes/edicao02/materia03/>.
3. Guilherme Studart, *Notas para história do Ceará*, Brasília, Edições do Senado Federal, vol. 29, 2004, p. 43.
4. Ralph Della Cava, *Milagre em Joazeiro*, Companhia das Letras, São Paulo, 2014, p. 135.
5. Beata(o) was a title instituted in the region by Father Ibiapina, without canonical approval of the Church, given to people who took vows of a life of chastity, work, charity and faith (Della Cava, 2014, p. 55).
6. Domingos Sávio Cordeiro, *Um Beato Líder: narrativas memoráveis do Caldeirão*, Fortaleza, CE, Brasil, Imprensa Universitária Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2004, p. 34.
7. Tarcísio Marcos Alves, *A Santa Cruz do Deserto*, Recife, UFPE, 1994, Masters Dissertation, p. 70.
8. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.
9. Luitgarde Barros, *A Terra da Mãe de Deus*, Rio de Janeiro, Francisco Alves, 1988, p. 300.
10. Francisco Régis Lopes Ramos, *Caldeirão: Estudo histórico sobre o Beato José Lourenço e suas comunidades*, Fortaleza, CE, Instituto Frei Tito de Alencar, 2ª ed. 2011, p. 45.
11. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 45-46.
12. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
13. Gentle Bull.
14. Floro Bartolomeu was a doctor from Bahia who arrived in Juazeiro do Norte in search of copper mines, became Padre Cícero's best friend and advisor, became a deputy and was the region's great political organizer, often using extreme violent methods. Pinheiro, Raimundo Teles, <https://www.institutodoceara.org.br/revista/Rev-apresentacao/RevPorAno/1979/1979-CaudilhoDeputadoFloroBartolomeuCosta.pdf>.

15. Pejorative and racist word (nigger).
16. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
17. Ralph Della Della Cava, *op. cit.*, p. 143.
18. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
19. Maria Lourêto de Lima, *José Lourenço, o Beato perseguido: uma história real*. Fortaleza, Imeph, 2013, p. 116.
20. Luitgarde Oliveira Cavalcanti Barros, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
21. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
22. *Ibidem*, p. 66.
23. *Ibidem*, p. 67.
24. *Ibidem*, p. 68.
25. Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Junior, *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes*. 5ª ed. São Paulo, Cortez, 2011, p. 81.
26. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
27. *Ibidem*.
28. Frederico Neves, *Curral dos bárbaros: os campos de concentração no Ceará (1915 e 1932)*. Revista Brasileira de História, São Paulo: v.15, nº 29, 1999, p. 91-115.
29. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
30. João Mauro Araújo, *Sopro de Liberdade: A tragédia de uma utopia de igualdade e autosuficiência*. Problemas Brasileiros, São Paulo, n. 370, jul/ago 2005, p. 40.
31. Frederico Neves, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
32. Veralúcia Gomes Maia, *Caldeirão: Uma comunidade cristã de camponeses*. Masters Dissertation, Natal, Centro de Ciências Humanas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, 1987, p. 121.
33. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
34. A rebellious military movement that marched through the interior of the country between 1925 and 1927. Demanded a secret vote, the reform of public education, mandatory primary education and the moralization of politics. They also denounced the miserable living conditions and exploitation of the poorest sectors. <https://brasilecola.uol.com.br/o-que-e/historia/o-que-foi-a-coluna-prestes.htm>.
35. Célia Camelo de Sousa, *Saberes e Práticas Educativas no Caldeirão de Santa Cruz do Deserto*. Paper, Fortaleza, UECE, 2009, p. 58.
36. Antônio Conselheiro (1830-1897) was a religious leader and the founder of the Belo Monte camp, better known as Canudos. He was considered a religious fanatic at the time he lived, as this was a way for the republican government to justify the massacre perpetrated against his followers. Bezerra, Juliana, <https://www.todamateria.com.br/antonio-conselheiro/>.
37. Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
38. Optato Gueiros (1952), in Tarcísio Marcos. *A Santa Cruz do Deserto*. Recife, UFPE, Masters Dissertation, 1994, p. 135, describes Captain José Gonçalves Bezerra as one of the most famous *authority bandits* in the state of Ceará. He was known for being a relentless hunter of Cangaço bandits, although in reality he acted as one himself, disguised under a police uniform.
39. Luitgarde Oliveira Cavalcanti Barros, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
40. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
41. *Ibidem*, p. 110-113.
42. Name of a children's game with elastic.
43. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
44. *Ibidem*, p.145.
45. *Ibidem*, p. 146.
46. *Ibidem*, p. 113.
47. *Ibidem*, p. 180.
48. Original quote: "Eu não celebrou missa para bandidos".

49. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
50. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
51. Original quote: "Jazigo do Beato José Lourenço, falecido em 12 de fevereiro de 1946, aos 74 anos de idade. Grande vulto da história de Juazeiro do Norte e do Cariri. Construtor da Comunidade Igualitária do Caldeirão, uma das mais positivas experiências sociais já realizadas no Brasil e condutor de um povo que, unido no mais fraterno cooperativismo, seguindo os conselhos do Padre Cícero, fez do trabalho coletivo uma lição de vida forjada na oração. Aqui seus restos mortais repousam à espera da graça de Deus sob o reconhecimento e admiração dos seus diletos seguidores e da comunidade Juazeirense".
52. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
53. Nina Chordas, *Forms in early modern utopia: the ethnography of perfection*. Farnham. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010, p. 66.
54. Marinela Chauí, *Notas sobre Utopia*, in Sousa, C. M., org. *Um convite à utopia* [online]. Campina Grande: EDUEPB, 2016. *Um convite à utopia collection*, vol. 1, p. 29-45. ISBN: 978-85-7879-488-0. Available from: doi: 10.7476/9788578794880.0002. Also available in ePUB from: <http://books.scielo.org/id/kcdz2/epub/sousa-9788578794880.epub>, p. 8.
55. Nina Chordas, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
56. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
57. Francisco Regis Lopes Ramos, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
58. Zavala, 1955, in Chordas, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
59. Bernardino Verástique, *Michoacán and Eden : Vasco de Quiroga and the evangelization of western Mexico*, Texas, University of Texas Press, 2000, p. 96.
60. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
61. Clifford Geertz, *A Interpretação das Culturas*, Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 1978, p. 143-159.
62. Alessandro Portelli, *A filosofia e os fatos. Narração, significados e interpretação nas memórias e nas fontes orais*, Rio de Janeiro, Tempo, vol. 1, no. 2, 1996, p. 59-72.
63. Domingos Sávio Almeida Cordeiro, *op. cit.*, p. 28.