



# The Epistemic and Political (Re) Configuration of the Quilombo Category-Historical and Contemporary Narratives

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## Abstract

The aim of this article, based on a brief historical and theoretical review, is to highlight the different conceptions of the Quilombo category over the years in Brazil. Some legal, social and political advances were achieved due to the struggles of the social and black movements in the country, when the communities were present in the Brazilian government agenda, from the recognition of the definitive ownership of the lands that were occupied by their remnants, guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution - Article 68 of the Transitory Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), thus constituting a quilombola social agenda, having its institutionalization through the creation of the Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR) and the National Council of Promotion of Racial Equality, both in 2003. We thus present the arguments around memory, uses and meanings of history and legislation on quilombos.

**Keywords:** Quilombo; History; Quilombos; Traditional Communities; Rights

## Introduction

For Oliveira FB, et al. [1]:

[...] talking about quilombos is not accepting or just exposing simplistic terms and meanings that, for many times, permeate the academy. It is not about making considerations that are not committed to the reality of this social group. To speak of quilombos is to highlight, among other meanings, the life trajectory of certain social groups in Brazil that, due to historical and ecological contexts, were forces to resist against the political and economic obstinacy of the ruling classes, especially throughout the seventeenth to XIX [1].

Quilombos emerged in Brazil in the context of enslavement and, even after abolition, not having been

covered by state public policies, these modes of resistance continued and became stronger. Such a situation made these groups living on the margins of state policies and leading them to resist and survive, autonom black woman over the centuries, exercising her otherness before a society that imposed a discriminatory, miscegenating and homogenizing order on her. In a recent publication on "Afro Resistance in Latin America", Pinho O, et al. [2] assert that the presence of peoples, cultures and traditions of African origin in Latin America has been resisting, for more than three centuries, extermination, modern conflicts and colonial, structural racism, state violence, miscegenation ideology, invisibility policies, epistemicide and religious or moral persecution; in addition to that "this resistance was only possible thanks to the innumerable vernacular or erudite, community modalities and strategies, in the quilombos and palenques, in the urban peripheries and in the universities" [2].

With regard to the demands for reparation of black communities in Brazil in the struggle for cultural and legal-political recognition, Brandão JPM [3] states that: ously, in quilombos, religious groups, favelas, among other forms of association.

[...] the constitution of an Afro-Brazilian heritage in the 1980s, through the preservation of the Serra da Barriga-considered the site of the Quilombo dos Palmares, in the 17th century, played an important role in incorporating the cultural and legal-political dimension of recognition, influencing the dimension of reparation that the “quilombo” category gained in the Federal Constitution of 1988 [3].

For the author, it was “from the constitutional legal system, with the creation of the category “remnant quilombo community and the expansion of the instruments used for identification and recognition of cultural heritage by the State”. Brandão JPM [3] also points out that:

Heritage policies and narratives were able to recognize more than the historical disrespect of slavery and the subaltern position of Afro-descendants in Brazilian society. These also allowed the recognition of specific forms of social and cultural organization that, in this case, generate the particular designation quilombola.

According to the Terra de Direitos organization, “historically, quilombos have organized themselves as spaces of resistance and the construction of freedom and black autonomy, one of their fundamental characteristics being the occupation and use of land, urban and rural”, this happened as a way of making a dignified life possible for the community, through the reproduction of their ways of life and their own customs.

### Historical and Ethnographic Conceptions

According to ethnography, the word community originates from the Latin term *Communitas* and represents a group that has a common identity by differentiating it from other groups or other communities, which may share, for example, elements such as language, customs, geographic location, world view or values [4].

According to Ratts A [5], studies on quilombos only began to emerge among the Brazilian intelligentsia from the 1970s onwards. However, state action to protect the so-called quilombolas communities and their descendants has expanded in recent decades, although in the last 4 years, there has been a disregard on the part of the authorities, with a very tense relationship with the so-called immigrants (squatters, land grabbers, prospectors) in territories, states and regions across Brazil [6].

Throughout Brazilian history, some meanings of the term quilombo were constituted, such as the definitions of the Overseas Council of 1740, by Gomes FS [7], which define it around historical aspects and documents, such as in the articles: “Stories of Quilombolas-mocambos and slave quarters communities in Rio de Janeiro – XIX century”, by Gomes FS [7], and “Memory, Citizenship and Rights of Remnant Communities”, by Yabeta D, et al. [8].

For Marques CE [9], due to the different processes through which they were constituted as a group with regional and historical peculiarities, studies on quilombos can be grouped into three currents: political-Marxist; the technician; resemantization.

Some researchers assure that the semantics of the word quilombo carries with it the strength of resistance and Afro-Brazilian culture and that its concept goes far beyond the ancient descendant groups of escaped enslaved people during the colonial and imperial periods.

With regard to this issue, Leite IB [10] and Arruti M [11] present fundamental contributions to understanding the genesis of this “remaining historical subject”. According to Arruti M [11], two perspectives must be observed in the search for the realization of quilombola rights: the first based on the recognition of the systematic exclusion suffered by these communities; the second is due to the recognition of the specificities of these groups and the implementation of unique policies that manage to deal with their particularities.

According to Leite IB [10], dealing with the subject presupposes not only focusing on a political struggle, but also on a scientific reflection in the process of construction. Both Leite IB [10] and Arruti JM [11] expand the definition of a quilombola community, based on its history, culture, social memory and cultural identity of its population.

For Almeida AW [12], quilombola identity is linked to the relationship of these groups with the territory, in a direct relationship with ancestry, culture and traditions, and the common use of the land, with the family unit as an essential element of ethnic and cultural affirmation. policy.

Almeida AB [13], declares that the term quilombo refers to rural communities and urban groups that define themselves as black communities. Some request the registration of their space as a “black territory”, they recognize themselves as “Mocambos”, “Terra de Pretos”, “Black Rural Communities”, “Traditional Rural Communities” and “Terras de Santo”, for example – what expresses its diversity.

Mundinha Araújo, in an interview with Alberti V, et al. [14], reaffirms Wagner’s conception:

“Terra de preto” was attributed, just as “quilombo” was attributed. At most, they spoke as a community, I think because of the work of the Base Ecclesial Communities. Everywhere there were these priests working. And they called everything communities [...] at that time, we only talked about community. And when it was just a case of black people, the black community. Now, the lands of black, Alfredo Wagner is going to call. Within this agrarian structure, he says, there are Indian lands, black lands, saint lands...it was already a classification assigned by the anthropologist. Terra de santo can even be terra de preto [14].

Within this perspective, many researchers consider the process of occupation and maintenance of the ethnic community, through the concept of terra de preto, as a symbol of resistance to forms of exclusion and invisibility of black people in the midst of the rural environment.

### The Quilombo Theme in Academic Research

The analysis of theses, dissertations and articles recently mapped by Brazilian public agencies in the most important databases in the country - CNPq, CAPES, Scielo, ANPED, etc; reveal that the academic work produced to date on the Quilombo category has presented, as the main analytical framework, historical and legal approaches; conceptions about the term (semantics, etc.) and related to identity (collective and representativeness), health and education, the latter mainly regarding the school environment. Between 2019 and 2020, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Flacso) and Porticus in Brazil focused on Brazilian education, in search of differentiated education projects (indigenous, quilombola, rural and border) in northeastern and Border States, northerners.

Also, as demonstrated by the extensive survey carried out by Matos WS, et al. [15], with the descriptors quilombo and quilombola community, in the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), “the institutions with the greatest number of researches on the subject are the University of Brasília (UNB), Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCAR) and University of São Paulo”. According to the authors, “most of them were carried out in graduate programs in the area of Education, with emphasis on the following research themes: public policies, identity and pedagogical practices”. According to them, “Education has become a favourable field for carrying out research that seeks to know and reveal different elements present in the history and daily life of quilombola communities”.

In addition, in the theoretical set on the quilombo theme, interesting studies arise, such as in Geography: Alex

Ratts, with “Pontos negros na Terra da Luz: mappings of rural black quilombola communities in Ceará”, and Maria de Lourdes Carril, with “Quilombo, Territory and Geography”. The latter shows how the “identification and representation of the quilombo becomes the basis for physical and cultural survival, also meaning an attempt at social and spatial re-rooting or the creation of a new territoriality” [16].

Already in interface with the theme Public Policies, we have the study around social determinants of health and public policies for riverside and quilombola children in the Amazon, and research inquiries as in Carvalho e Silva AF [17], which used the ethnographic approach and its instruments to analyze the symbolic and social perceptions of the quilombolas in the offer of agricultural food to the National School Feeding Program to promote food security and nutrition in Quilombo de Tijuaçu; finally, there is also the study by Brauer AM [18] on “Socioeconomic, Demographic, Parasitological and Hematological Assessment of Quilombola Communities”, confirming the relevance of the appropriation of the theme by different areas of knowledge.

It is important to say that, in the Brazilian literature, there is also the advancement of studies on specific territorialities that have been demonstrating how the territory has been observed in its functional or operational character; that is, “it becomes a practical concept, especially for its applicability in public policies, focused on planning and ordering the territory”. These are researches that are almost always anchored in the experiences of reality in the territories, such as those of Silva AF [17], regarding the “Discourse on Quilombola Ethnodevelopment in the Lula Government” – a theoretical disposition also demonstrated in other researches, such as: “Subtleties between Science, Politics and Practical Life: adult literacy in a quilomba remnant community”, by Grokorriski CR [19]; or “The Quilombola Community Kalunga do Engenho II: Culture, Food Production and Ecology of Knowledge”, by Ungarelli DB [20].

Debates about the importance of quilombola peoples for sustainable development are also recent, especially when it comes to the experiences of people living in rural areas of the Brazilian Amazon. At the end of the 20th century, there was a significant increase in discussions on this topic, which has contributed to studies on quilombola peoples in the Legal Amazon by discussing the idea of a quilombo, for example, linked not only to the organization of enslaved people and their struggle against slavery, proposing a redefinition of this term, according to Almeida AWB [21], Castro M [6], who analyzed the different political organization strategies of quilombola communities in the Amazon, among them: the formation of associations, legally recognized institutions to interpret and administer the interests of the group. Amaral brings contributions regarding daily practices and

organizations related to the occupation of space and the use of territory by “remaining quilombo communities” and their influences on the socio-environmental dynamics of these regions.

Concepts such as productive practices, sustainability, ethnobotany, ethnodevelopment and collective health management are highlighted in works such as “Pandemia e Território” [22], which reveal the impact of COVID on traditional communities, including quilombolas. Its importance must be to the fact that traditional peoples and communities are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19. But even so, some gaps are present, regarding, for example, research on the access and academic perspectives of quilombolas in Brazilian Higher Education.

This aspect has been directly related to the execution of public policies of Affirmative Action, as well as to specific courses created for this public, such as the specialization course “State and Law of Traditional Peoples and Communities”, of the Graduate Program in Civil Society Law. Federal University of Bahia inserted in the proposal of Open University of Brazil/UFBA (CAPES/UAB) and organized by the Superintendence of Distance Learning.

### The Quilombo as a Collective Experience and Belonging

From the 1970s onwards, with the so-called “boom of the 70s”, the theme of quilombos gained relevance among black struggles in Brazil – one can cite as examples the theoretical studies of Nascimento B [23], Gonzales L [24] and Nascimento A [25]. For Nascimento B [23], the quilombo “is a place where freedom was practiced, where ethnic and ancestral ties were reinvigorated”, that is, the quilombo would be the individuals themselves when they incorporated into society.

According to Nascimento A [25], quilombos resulted from the vital demand of enslaved Africans, in an effort to rescue their freedom and dignity through escape from captivity and the organization of a free society. By approaching black consciousness and developing an innovative epistemological approach - with the term Quilombismo, an emerging concept of the historical-cultural process of the Afro- Brazilian population, in which the distortions, the various strategies and the expedients of which it is used against the significant antiquity dimension of Afro-Brazilian memory –, Abdias does so from conscience and feeling. For the author:

Quilombismo was structured in associative forms that could either be located in the heart of forests with difficult access, which facilitated its defense and its own economic and social organization, but also assumed models of permitted or tolerated

organizations, often with ostensible religious (Catholic) purposes. ), recreational, charitable, sports, cultural or mutual assistance [25].

Such historical-social scientific concept, according to Nascimento A [25], proposes this legacy as a basic reference for a proposal for the political mobilization of the Afro-descendant population in the Americas, based on its own historical and cultural experience. He also articulates an Afro-Brazilian proposal for the contemporary national State, a multiethnic and pluricultural Brazil.

### The Quilombo-Territoriality and Territory

Understanding the dimensions of the quilombola identification and recognition process requires approaching the concepts of territory, territoriality and ethnicity. For the inhabitants of the remaining quilombo communities, “land is cultural heritage, land is planting to support the family, land is life, land is celebration, land is the history of ancestors, it is religiosity. Earth is EVERYTHING” [26]. This represents the maintenance of the way of life, the cult of the sacred, the relationships built and the quilombola identity, which was established from the territory.

The “formation of a territory gives the people who inhabit it the awareness of their participation, provoking the sense of territoriality that, subjectively, creates an awareness of fraternization between them” [17]. The territory is not just “the physical environment where human, animal and plant life unfolds, and where material resources are contained, but a space for interactions of natural, constructed and social subsystems, in which human activity modifies the space”. , adding identity”.

It is, therefore, a space that encompasses the idea of totality; is the universalization of life, because in it and from it human life is fully realized: The territory is the place where all actions, all passions, all powers, all strengths, all weaknesses flow , that is, where the history of man is fully realized from the manifestations of his existence.

It is necessary to remember that the representation of a territory has to do with space and that, although both are not equivalent terms, the territory is formed from space– “it is the result of an action conducted by a syntagmatic actor (actor who performs a program) at any level”. From this perspective, the territory “is a space in which work has been projected, be it energy or information, and which, consequently, reveals relationships marked by power”. Anyway, territoriality for Raffestin:

[...] acquires a very particular value, as it reflects the multidimensionality of the territorial “lived” by the members of a collectivity, by societies in general.



Men “live”, at the same time, the territorial process and the territorial product through a system of existential and/or productivist relations.

Matos WS, et al. [15] understands the territory as “used territory”, that is, one that “comprises the ground and the population, that is, an identity and the fact and feeling of belonging to what belongs to us. The territory is the foundation of work, the place of residence, material and spiritual exchanges and the exercise of life”.

For Silva AF [17] “the territory is the space appropriated and instituted by subjects and social groups that affirm themselves through it” and confirm this context by bringing the case of quilombola communities that:

They are in the process of ethnic-racial and territorial reaffirmation, asserting them culturally and claiming the demarcation of their territories and the titling of their historically appropriated lands. For the author, given this perspective, the territory is a primordial condition for the cultural (self) affirmation of the quilombolas.

In recent years, we have verified studies of specific territorialities, which is why the territory has been seen in its functional or operational character, that is, “it becomes a practical concept, especially for its applicability in public policies, aimed at planning and spatial planning”. Different theoretical perspectives were constituted related to the definition of quilombola communities and the production process of their ethnicity. For Yabeta D, et al. [8], it is from the 1980s onwards that “a new trend is outlined that points to the concern to understand the phenomenon of black communities in their contemporaneity.

During this period, a series of interconnected studies began at USP, which began to operate with the concept of ethnicity. According to Arruti JM [27],

By 1988, three master’s theses had been produced and two doctoral theses, while other works were in progress. In 1997, the Nucleus of Studies on Identity and Interethnic Relations (NUER) of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) presented a survey of guides, books, periodicals, theses and texts that mix works related to dealing with the issue of quilombos in their contemporaneity and indicate new trends in studies [27].

This relationship between black communities and the land takes place, historically and socially, through the collective, not limited to the sphere of private law, precisely because these subjects are social, that is, they are linked to a collectively. Studies on the local organization of black communities – such as those by Maria de Nazaré Baiocchi:

“Negros de Cedro”, observing the issue of the Kalunga, in Goiás; “The quilombos of the Trombetas River Basin”, in Pará; José Jorge de Carvalho, Siglia Zambrotti Dória and Adolfo Oliveira Jr.: “O quilombo do rio das Rãs”, in Bahia and Leite IB [10]: “Ethnic classifications and black lands in southern Brazil” – helped to bring the right of black communities to the Constituent Assembly; but the resumption of this theme, at the end of a long journey, for Yabeta D, et al. [8]:

It highlights a gap between studies that analyze quilombos from a historical perspective (until the Abolition of 1888) and those that start to deal with black communities dealing with the relationship between race and land from the 1980s onwards”, motivated mainly by the introduction, in the 1988 Constitution, of article 68 of the ADCT.

In the contemporary debate on quilombos, researcher Alfredo Wagner de Almeida stands out, with new theoretical contributions and presentation of territorial dynamics that are not inert, such as georeferencing and social cartography, which elaborate social maps, expressing the reality of specific populations, developed with the participation of these communities – which is used as an instrument to defend their rights [28].

### The Constitutional Legal Order

The articulation of the Brazilian Black Movement, since the 1970s, made it:

Protagonist in the historical and political reflection about the quilombo and blacks in slave condition. This movement strengthened the analysis of the quilombo, elevating it to the object of political and historical reflection, to the extent that it came to be identified as a fertile place for cultural recreations of Africa in Brazil, which gained prominence in the expression that the quilombo it would be the “African State in Brazil” [29].

The chaining of local struggles of black communities, together with black social movements in Brazil, made it possible to access some rights and establish territoriality for such communities in the 1988 Constitution, through article 68 of the ADCT, also giving rise to a theoretical production, more legal, around the quilombola issue.

According to Matos WS, et al. [15], communities were officially defined by the Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR) as:

groups with their own historical trajectory, whose origin refers to different situations, such as land donations made from the disintegration of monocultures; purchase of land by the subjects themselves, with the end of the slave system; land

obtained in exchange for providing services; or areas occupied in the process of resistance to the slave system [18].

It is from the legal apparatus that the approaches carried out on the term quilombo are expanded, supported by academic and legal clashes around the recognition, regulation and titling of quilombola lands, with important mobilizations of social movements and reactions from opposing sectors. From the point of view of public policies for quilombola communities, still according to Matos WS, et al. [15], it is with the 1988 Constitution that the term quilombola is incorporated, after many struggles, into article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), granting rights to the remnants of communities. According to article 2 of Decree nº 4.887, of November 20, 2003, quilombolas are “ethnic-racial groups defined by self-attribution, with their own historical trajectory, endowed with specific territorial relations, with presumption of black ancestry related to resistance to historical oppression”. This element of self-attribution is one of the main elements of the regulatory framework that antagonists of quilombola law oppose.

The interpretative dispute in the field of law about the titling and demarcation of territories provoked by the Direct Action of Unconstitutionality (ADI) 3239/2004, filed by the Democratic Party against Decree nº 4887/2003, which mobilized a high number of internal and external agents in the legal field. ADI 3239/2004 had a long process in the Federal Supreme Court, with a high degree of exposure of interpretive conflicts, which were finalized only in February 2018. The judgment brought perplexity and new questions to the field of law and society in general by raising issues related to guaranteeing the fundamental right to life and material, cultural, social and symbolic reproduction of these peoples.

For Yabeta D, et al. [8], the “trajectory-experience of the quilombos is a dimension of the constitutional dispute silenced in Brazilian constitutional history”, and their “control over the narrative of the struggle for rights impacts on the moment of affirmation or denial of rights in the present”. In the understanding of Solazzi, constitutional interpretation and legal pluralism have gained a decolonial and intercultural approach from Decree nº 4.887/2003 on the quilombola issue today in Brazil. The report of the National Research on Education and Ethnic-Racial Relations: State of the Art on the production of scientific research on Quilombo, published in 2018, identified “as a predominant trend in research the use of a notion of quilombos derived from the legal recognition of the remaining communities of quilombo”, based on the “adoption of a conception of identity built in the midst of the logic of functioning of racism and the dilemmas of belonging to a certain material and symbolic

territory”. Within the scope of national state measures, some actions were taken in relation to quilombola communities, with the example of the Brasil Quilombola Program (PBQ), linked to the Ministry of Agrarian Development and the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR), responsible for create the program.

The PBQ focuses on “4 axes: land regulation; infrastructure and services; economic and social development; control and social participation”; in the field of Education, it favours basic education, “with a definition of priority given to quality and the democratization of education, extending from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education, creating mechanisms for the provision of education for young people and adults with an emphasis on combating illiteracy”.

The perception of some communities regarding the PBQ implementation process for productive inclusion and local development, as well as the community’s main aspirations in relation to this development, is that it has been flawed and poorly operationalized by partner agencies and/or executors. In addition, the economic development of communities has depended on the solidification of new productive, commercial and organizational practices, reciprocal and solidary, demanding a greater effort from those involved to establish good relationships in the management of future enterprises, which has not been happening. In recent decades, a series of national and international norms have been instituted, such as Federal Decree No. 6,872, of June 4, 2009, which approved the National Plan of Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality (PLANAPIR), establishing the Coordination and Monitoring Committee, aimed at black, gypsy and indigenous groups, terreiro communities and quilombola communities. Among the main national and international norms linked to the Rights of Traditional Peoples are Art. 68 of the ADCT of CF/88, Decree No. 3912 of 09/10/2001, Decree No. 5051 of 04/19/2004 which regulates ILO Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Traditional Peoples, Decree No. 4887 of 11/20/2003, Decree No. 6,040 of 02/07/2007, Normative Instruction No. 57 of 10/20/2009, Law No. 12,288 of 7/20/2010, Law No. 13,043 of 11/13/2014, Ordinance No. 175 of 04/19/2016, Direct Action of Unconstitutionality - ADI No. 3239 published on 02/01/2019, Decree No. 10,088 of 11/05/2019.

### The Resemantized Quilombo

The resignification of the term “quilombo” and the resumption of the values of the African cultural and civilizing repertoire exercised by the black movement were called by Abdias do Nascimento Quilombismo [25]. According to this concept:

Broadened the concept of quilombo, shifting it from the mythologized representation of slavery

to a movement that made it possible to understand any form of exploitation and discrimination. Thus, Quilombo does not mean runaway slave. Quilombo means fraternal and free gathering, solidarity, coexistence, existential communion [25].

For Nascimento A [25], the Quilombo would then be:

as a human, ethnic and cultural affirmation, at the same time integrating a practice of liberation and assuming command of history itself”, being genuine foci of physical and cultural resistance, as were the black associations, the brotherhoods, the confraternities, the clubs, the guilds, the terreiros, the centers, the afochés, the samba schools, the gafieiras, etc., consecrated as quilombos legalized by the dominant society.

From the perspective of Beatriz Nascimento B [23], quilombo also assumes the character of continuity and recreation, as, for her, it becomes a receptacle of memory and “alternative systems” of organization.

In Almeida MG [28] reading, the re-semanticized quilombo is a rupture with the historically crystallized legal-formal definition, having as a starting point the dynamics of the movement of struggle for quilombola territorialities and political-organizational instruments that seek to ensure their constitutional rights and make feasible the recognition of their own forms of appropriation and territoriality. The author considers that being a quilombola corresponds to an ethnic and political statement, since identity and territory are inseparable and it is essential to have a specific territoriality cut by the ethnic vector, in which the group/individual seeks recognition and who’s social and political processes that allow the group autonomy.

It is important to think of the quilombo as an affirmation of the autonomy of a good part of the black population, as active subjects of their own history, being a relevant expression of black agency both in the fight against racism and in their action for citizenship, freedom, equality and access to land, despite its concealment in the nation’s narrative.

The inclusion of quilombola cultural practices and their ethnic identity in the Brazilian social repertoire has given these groups a new mark of distinctiveness, which leads them to claim rights for active participation in society.

Reinforcing this conception, Almeida AB [13] recalls that the social process of ethnic affirmation, referred to the quilombolas, was not necessarily triggered from the 1988 Constitution, since it itself is the result of intense mobilizations, fierce conflicts and social struggles that consolidated, in a certain way,

the different modalities of territorialization of the remaining quilombo communities.

As we can see, the resemanticization of the term has been going through a long temporal and discursive path, being analyzed from different theories and perspectives. A more adequate analysis of the term, according to Marques CE [9], is necessary to work with this category already in its re-semanticized meaning, since “it allows groups that self-identify as ‘quilombo remnants’ or quilombolas, with a effective participation in political and public life, as subjects of law; and with that, the historical diversity and the specificity of each group are affirmed”. Still according to the authors, resemanticization enables quilombolas “an effective participation in political and public life, as subjects of law, in addition affirms the historical diversity and specificity of each group” [15].

Throughout the Brazilian territory, the political and identity organization of traditional peoples, and among them the quilombolas, is still very incipient, although in the 2000s there were several initiatives by NGOs, universities and the public power itself (legal frameworks and new legislation) promoting the concepts and rights of black communities. These new “collective identities”, however, were generated in circumstances of conflicts or opportunities for access to public policies.

In this sense, the experiences and demands of the quilombolas – in the struggle for access to public policies that can ensure their way of life and the maintenance of their identity in contemporary times, based on ancestral traditions, as well as their desires to guarantee their territory – encompass both the organization of their communities to meet the bureaucratic needs required by the Brazilian State for their recognition and title, and their organization and political-social articulation in Associations and Coordinations representative of regional and national quilombos, such as the National Coordination of Quilombola Communities (CONAQ).

The struggle for quilombola rights joined the struggles of the black population in general in the post-abolition period, becoming a strong banner of organized black movements during the 19th and 21st centuries. This process of strengthening the struggle for the rights of these groups built, according to Bárbara Souza, another important facet from a political and organizational point of view, which is the constitution of the quilombola movement, with its specificities in relation to the urban black movement. Such relationships have been established between the quilombola movement, the Brazilian State, the private sector, civil society organizations and other actors involved in their process of asserting rights.

## The Accommodation

A new concept related to the quilombo has been gaining eloquence among researchers and historians, which is the act of becoming a quilombo, that is, of:

Organizing against any attitude or oppressive system becomes, therefore, nowadays, the rekindled flame to [...] give meaning, stimulate, and strengthen the fight against discrimination and its effects. Now comes to illuminate a part of the past, the one that catches the eye by the emphatic reference contained in the statistics where blacks are the majority of the socially excluded [10].

The search for recognition goes through the consideration of fundamental aspects of the identity construction of quilombola communities, such as autonomy and resistance. According to Souza, the idea of the moment to settle down “lies in the various strategies and mobilizations filed by the quilombos, mocambos, terra de preto, terra de santo, among other denominations existing throughout the history of the country to remain intact physically, socially and culturally”. For the author, therefore, being in Quilombola is:

[...] a continuous action of autonomous existence in the face of antagonisms that are characterized in different ways throughout the history of these communities, and that demand actions of struggle over generations so that these subjects have the fundamental right to resist and exist with their uses and customs. This existence has a movement that is strongly focused on collectivity, on the ties that link the quilombolas to each other and that, in a broader and more recent movement, unites communities from different regions”.

Through the most distinct and possible political-organizational strategies, quilombola communities have been establishing themselves as a locus of otherness in relation to society and claiming the recognition of their culture, their customs, their forms of organization and their rights.

## Quilombos in Contemporary Times

Currently, according to data from the Palmares Cultural Foundation, there are around 1,800 processes pending at INCRA and 2,500 quilombola territories not recognized by it. According to a survey carried out by the National Coordination for the Articulation of Quilombola Communities (CONAQ), only 162 of the 3,477 quilombola communities already recognized by the Palmares Cultural Foundation hold total or partial ownership of the land – equivalent to almost 5% –, something very symbolic. From a legal point of view.

Government statistical data do not have the necessary disaggregation to identify who is a quilombola in the total numbers referring to rural black communities in the country, which makes thousands of women and men in the quilombos invisible to specific public policies, leading them to lack of access to rights (such as health, education, basic sanitation and quality public transport) and legal instability in relation to the right to own territory, thus revealing how the institutional racism of the Brazilian State has been denying a dignified life for such groups.

In recent decades, we have witnessed a considerable growth in the social demand of groups that have historically been made invisible and established in the peripheral places of society. We are witnessing, for example, the empowerment of actions by the remnants of quilombos in various states and places in Brazil – Alcântara (in Maranhão), the indigenous people in the Amazon, the *geraizeiros* in Minas Gerais, etc. Mundinha Araújo reports that the processes of mobilization of quilombola communities in Maranhão, for example, took place from the actions of the Black Movement, more specifically from the Centro de Cultura Negra do Maranhão (CCN), with direct interference in the guarantee of territorial rights, through mapping projects, records of agrarian conflicts and the emergence of specific organized segments for the communities.

[...] we already knew that blacks had had different forms of access to land, not necessarily just that of being a remnant from a quilombo. I think that from 1980 to 1988 this issue was one of the priorities of the CCN, because we also prioritized education, prioritized this denouncement and prioritized land. Now, from 1988 onwards, CNN will focus more on the rural zone: throughout society in the 1990s [14].

According to Silva AF [17], due to the creation of these new legal figures, the so-called “Insurgent Rights”, space and prominence are gained by traditional populations and mainly by the remaining communities of quilombos. In addition, in the historical resumption of these populations and the analysis mainly of the guarantee of rights of their current reality, new contributions have been emerging and there are also significant conquests at the conceptual level, the result of the debate between historians, anthropologists, geographers (as) and jurists, both at the normative and legal levels, among others already exposed here [30].

A significant effect of these changes is the pilot project “Climate Changes in the face of the Recognition of Black Territories”, carried out by the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN), in partnership with the Institute of Climate and Society (ICS) and some universities, such as UFBA. One of the main activities of the project is the



promotion of research with scientific initiation scholarships for quilombola basic education and undergraduate students linked to the Nucleus of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies (NEABI) at the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFs)-headquartered in the semi-arid region on campuses: Penedo (Alagoas); Feira de Santana, Itaberaba and Seabra (Bahia); and Pau dos Ferros (Rio Grande do Norte).

Some Latin American countries have constitutional texts that recognize the rights of Afro-descendants and black communities, such as Colombia (cimarrones), Afro-Ecuadorian Ecuador, Honduras (garifunda), Nicaragua (creoles) and Brazil (quilombos). In these countries, mobilizations have contributed to the establishment of constitutional and social gains regarding the recognition of identities and rights, material and symbolic redistribution and political representation.

According to Miotto T [31]:

Identities are being created in the “in-between place”, enhancing new representations, which allows characterizing the quilombo as a “learning place” that also needs to be recognized as a “teaching place”, unfortunately they are still little contemplated under this aspect in academic research.

The epistemic and political (re)configuration of the quilombo category in the works produced has not yet been able to offer a comprehensive overview of the living conditions of communities and quilombolas in this country, however its thematization, in recent times, tries to remedy a historical debt, that is, to recognize identities and rights of material and symbolic redistribution and political representation for them.

### The Pandemic and Covid in the Territories

The lack of care and the invisibility of COVID cases in quilombola territories and black communities reveal how these places have not received specific attention from both the health departments and the Ministry of Health itself; in addition to the official media, which underreport disease transmission data. This whole scenario has contributed to the lack of access to rights and to violence in the countryside. According to CONAQ, this is due to the structural failure of successive governments and the dynamics of institutional racism, leaving the quilombos without a mainly structured health system [32-35].

### Final Considerations

Unfortunately, the process of drafting the 1988 Constitution, which “enhanced the presence of quilombola communities by guaranteeing land ownership to settled

quilombolas”, did not translate into the acquisition of definitive ownership of the land, much less in promoting the integral development of communities. In the fight for the realization of the constitutional right of access to land and education, important initiatives have been set up with strategic litigation, such as training and political advocacy activities, identity construction, which act in the defense, promotion and enforcement of rights, especially economic, social, cultural and environmental. Actions have been developed through collective and community demands, in partnership with popular social movements, to implement public policies, recognizing them as active subjects in the social process and struggles for rights. The incorporation of the quilombola political-social project into the legal system has not been enough to change the practices of land expropriation and control, the difficulties for the implementation of affirmative policies for quilombolas in education, the government’s failure to protect them and the situation of precariousness in which black groups live today.

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